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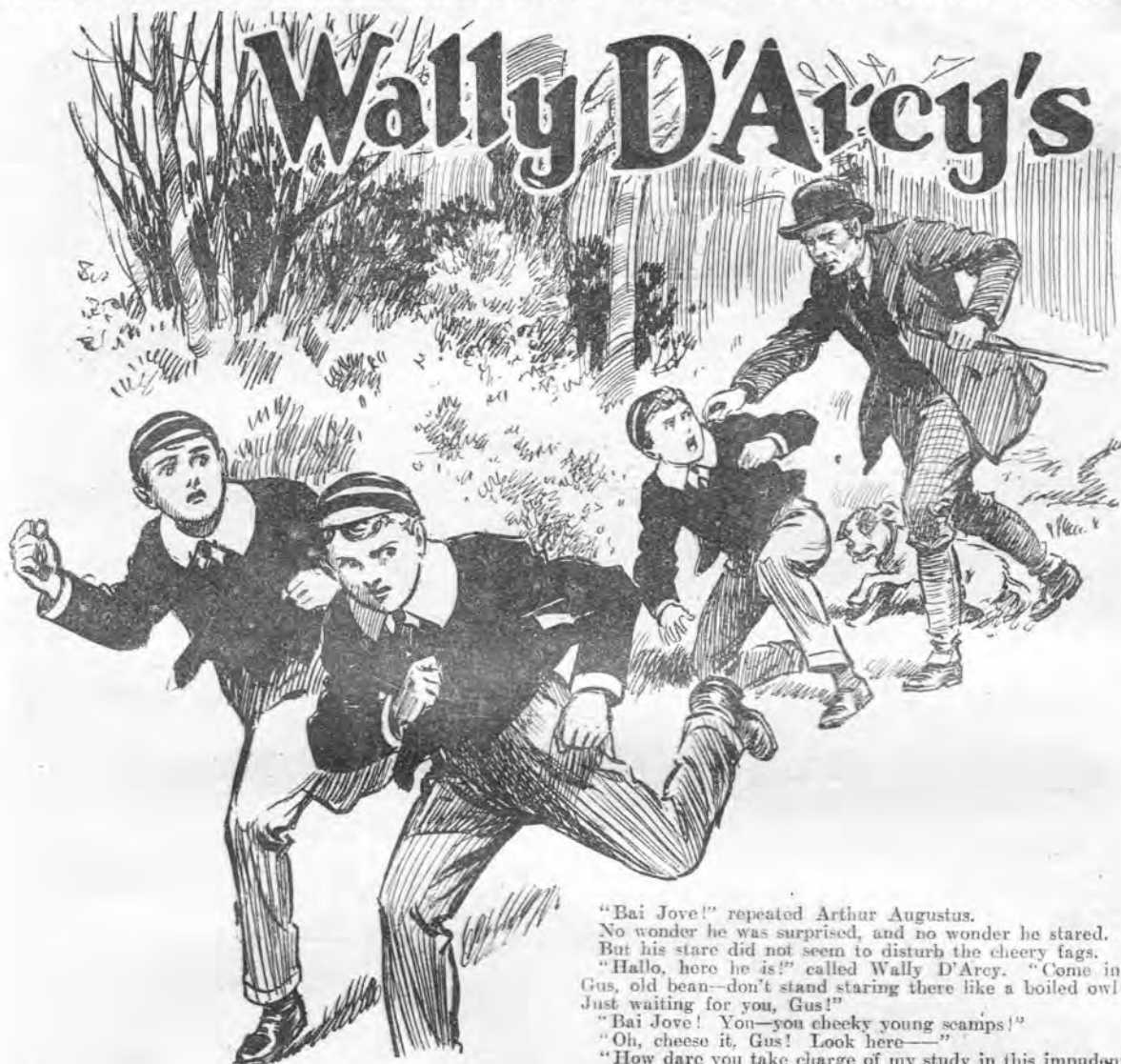
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EVERY "DOG" HAS HIS DAY!

(Read how Knox of the Sixth gets "collared" in this week's grand school yarn.)

A GRAND EXTRA-LONG SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.—



CHAPTER 1.

An Ingenious Idea!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared. The swell of the Fourth at St. Jim's paused in the doorway of Study No. 6, and stared in astonishment and wrath. Having left Blake, Herries, and Digby, his study-mates, downstairs in the Hall, Arthur Augustus had expected to find the study unoccupied. Instead of which, he found it very much occupied.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the chums of the School House—Blake & Co. of the Fourth and Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell—had planned to go for a long cycling spin. When about to get their bikes, however, Arthur Augustus had discovered he had forgotten his trouser-clips, and he was now returning to the study for them.

Instead of finding the room empty, Arthur Augustus found it occupied by five Third-Formers, who were evidently feeling quite at home there. Three of them—Curly Gibson, Reggie Manners, and Joe Frayne—sat on the table, swinging their legs; a fourth—Jameson—sprawled in the arm-chair; and the fifth—Wally D'Arcy, Gussy's young-brother, lay on the couch with his muddy feet up on the seat.

These cheery youths were usually to be seen in the company of Frank Levison; but Levison minor, together with his elder brother Ernest, had recently left St. Jim's for Greyfriars. Certainly the fags missed their chum, but it was not in their nature to understudy the Rachel of old, who mourned and would not be comforted.

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"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. No wonder he was surprised, and no wonder he stared. But his stare did not seem to disturb the cheery fags. "Hallo, here he is!" called Wally D'Arcy. "Come in, Gus, old bean—don't stand staring there like a boiled owl! Just waiting for you, Gus!"

"Bai Jove! Yon—you cheeky young scamps!" "Oh, cheese it, Gus! Look here—" "How dare you take charge of my study in this impudent mannah?" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "Wally, take your muddy feet off that couch this instant, you disreputable young wascal!"

"Rats!" "If you say 'wats' to me, Wally—" "Rats! Heaps of rats, old bean!" said Wally cheerfully. "Look here, Gus—"

"I wefuse to look heah! Your hair is untidy, and your face is inky, and your collah is cwumpled, and altogethah you are a perfect disgwace, Wally!"

"Go hon!" "I am ashamed of you!" went on Arthur Augustus, with growing exasperation. "And if you do not take your muddy feet off that couch this instant I shall be obliged to take you by the sewuff of your neck and sling you out of my studay."

"Go it!" said Wally encouragingly. "Take it easy, you men, while old Gus wags his chin." "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the "men." "You disrespeckful young wascal."

"Bow-wow!" "But for my bwothahly wegard for you I would administrah a feahful thwashin'!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Good! What a lucky thing for you that brotherly regard is!" said Wally.

"You—you—" Arthur Augustus paused, breathing hard, his aristocratic features going pink with wrath at the chuckles of the cheeky fags. Arthur Augustus looked upon it as his duty to keep a brotherly eye on his minor; unfortunately, that irrepressible youngster had neither gratitude nor respect

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—OF ST. JIM'S, STARRING WALLY D'ARCY OF THE THIRD!



Young Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form thinks the world of his mongrel terrier Pongo, and is always ready to turn a blind eye to any of Pongo's mischievous pranks. But Pongo's latest prank lands his youthful master into big trouble—just how big you will learn from this breezy yarn of school life and adventure.

for his major's sense of duty, and, in fact, he looked upon the well-meant advice and brotherly "eye" of the noble Gussy in a very humorous light. It was, indeed, the standing joke in the Third.

Wally grinned up at him cheerfully.

"Tired of wagging your chin, Gus?" he inquired. "Good! Well, now we can talk business! We want you to lend us—"

"I uttably wefuse to lend you anything, you young wascal!" hooted Arthur Augustus. "And as you wefuse to take your mudday shoes off that couch, I shall have to remove you by force!"

And Arthur Augustus, his noble eye gleaming behind his monocle, proceeded to remove Wally by force—or, rather, to attempt to do so. He grasped Wally by the legs, and pulled hard; Wally grinned, and clung to the couch.

A tug-of-war would have doubtless resulted, but for an interruption just then.

As Gussy grabbed his minor, a diminutive, shaggy figure trotted round the back of the armchair, and a pair of bright little eyes took in the scene.

It was Pongo, Wally's beloved pet mongrel.

Hanging from Pongo's mouth was the ragged, torn remnants of a slipper—one of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's silk-covered, fur-lined slippers.

But the slipper dropped from Pongo's teeth as Pongo sighted Gussy laying sacrilegious hands on his master.

Without warning, Pongo trotted up behind Gussy and gave his elegant calf a swift nip.

"Yawwoooooogh!"

It was not a severe nip at all—on the contrary, it was merely a pinch, for Pongo knew how far he might go in the "nipping" line. But it was quite enough to make the startled Arthur Augustus howl and leap into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yawwoogh! Oh, gweat Scott!" yelled Arthur Augustus, dropping his minor's legs on the instant and jumping backwards. "Wally, you young wuffian, take that feahful bwute away! Oh ewikey! Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped from the fireplace and grabbed the poker as Pongo came nosing round him again in a highly significant manner.

"Here, keep that poker to yourself!" shouted Wally, jumping up in great alarm. "Don't you dare— Here, Pongo! Pongo!"

Wally grabbed Pongo and held him, glaring at his major the while—though whether he expected Gussy would have used the poker on Pongo was extremely doubtful.

"You—you rotter, Gus!" he spluttered. "Fancy getting a rotten poker to old Pongo! As if Pongo would hurt anyone!"

"Hurt anyone!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "He has hurt me, bai Jove! And look at the wip in my bags! That feahful bwute ought to be— Gweat Scott!"

Just then Arthur Augustus sighted the torn remnants of his elegant slipper.

"My slippah!" he roared. "Look at it! That wretched little beast has torn my slippah to wags!"

"Oh, that's all right, Gus!" said Wally, chuckling. "Plenty more slippers left, haven't you, old bean? I thought the little beggar was very quiet! He usually goes for you the moment he spots you, too—doesn't he, Gus? That explains why he didn't when you came in. He was busy chewing your slipper up."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags roared at the expression on the face of Arthur Augustus.

"Now, don't get excited, Gus!" advised Wally. "After all, what's a blessed slipper? And Pongo must have a bit of play like anyone else."

"That fwithful bwute—"

"Frightful brute yourself!" said Wally warmly. "Fancy getting a poker to a poor, harmless dog! I'm ashamed of you, Gus!"

"You—you—"

"You're only making old Pongo restless by getting excited like that!" warned

Wally. "A fellow feeling, I suppose, though I'm really insulting Pongo by saying so. Still, I can't hold him much longer—"

"Get out of my study, you cheeky young wascals!" shouted Arthur Augustus, spluttering. "If you don't—"

"But we haven't got what we came for yet!" objected Wally. "Look here, Gus, we came to ask you to lend us your electric-torch—"

"I uttably wefuse—"

"And also Blake's airgun!" went on Wally cheerfully. "I know he won't lend it if I ask him; that's pretty certain. But my idea is for you to borrow it from him, and then lend it to us without him knowing it—see?"

"Bai Jove!"

That ingenious idea almost took Gussy's breath away.

"Now, don't say 'No!'" pleaded Wally, winking at his grinning chums. "We know what a generous-hearted chap you are, Gus—always ready and willing to help us men who look up to you so. You're a guide and a shining example to us in the Third, and you'll honour us no end if you'll lend us your torch and Blake's gun. Is it a go, old chap?"

From the expression on Gussy's face, it was very clearly not a "go."

"I will lend you nothin', you young scamp!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "And, in any case, I do not approve of young wascals like you havin' an airgun in your possession!" he added, giving his minor a very severe look. "I have no doubt you are contemplatin' some weekless escapade—"

"My hat! Can't he talk!" remarked Jameson admiringly. "Like a giddy dictionary!"

"You shut up, young Jameson!" said Wally. "It's all right, Gus—no need to worry about us, old chap! We're only going ratting—"

"Bai Jove! Wattin'? Weally, Wally—"

"That's it! No harm in that!" said Wally cheerily. "Just a bit of harmless sport, you know. That old baro on Colonel Bland's estate is fairly swarming with rats, I believe. Well, we're taking Pongo—he's a fair corker for rats, you know—but we want an airgun in case some of the giddy rodents escape Pongo and swarm up the walls. See? With Blake's airgun—"

"You—you little wascals!" stuttered Arthur Augustus, his wrath giving place suddenly to great alarm. "I knew you contemplated some weekless twick or othah! Wally, I forbid you to do anythin' of the kind!"

"Bow-wow!"

"As your eldah bwothah, I uttably wefuse to allow you to embark upon such a wisky and wotten game!" said Arthur Augustus, in great excitement. "Not onlay is it infra dig to a St. Jim's fellow, but the Wylcombe Manah estate is

strictly out of bounds! Colonel Bland is wathah a cross-gwained old gentleman, and he is also a governah of St. Jim's! I uttably wufuse—"

"Oh, don't sing that over again to us, Gus!" said Wally. "What harm shall we be doing—I ask you? Old Bland will be jolly grateful to us for clearing his blessed barn of rats, won't he?"

"Wubbish! I uttably wufuse—"

"Oh, don't begin again! Cheese it, old nut! You talk much too much, you know, Gus! Now, about that gun and torch—is it a go?"

"No!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "It is not a go!"

"You won't hand 'em over?"

"Wathah not! I absolutely wufuse! Moreovah, I forbid you to wisk sewious twouble by—"

"He's off again!" groaned Wally. "Is that final, Gus?"

"Yaas, wathah! Absolutely! I wufuse—"

"Then we'll have to help ourselves!" said Wally, shaking his head regretfully. "We're sorry to have to handle you, Gus, especially as you're our guide and protector, but—Collar him, you men!"

"What-ho!"

"Bai Jove! Weally—what—here— Gweat Scott!"

Thump!

The astonished and startled Arthur Augustus yelled as he was grasped in many youthful hands and seated with a thump in the armchair which Jameson had just vacated.

"Bai Jove, you young wascals!" shrieked Gussy. "Welease me at once! I ordah you—"

"Bow-wow!" said Wally disrespectfully. "Hold him down, chaps, while I root out some cord!"

The rest of the fags held Gussy down—with great difficulty, for Arthur Augustus, in towering wrath now, struggled furiously. But they managed it until Wally found some cord. Then the splattering swell of the Fourth was tied securely into the chair—his own chair.

"There!" remarked Wally. "Your own fault, Gus! Better stop wriggling, as Pongo doesn't seem to like it!"

Arthur Augustus stopped wriggling instantly. Wally had released Pongo in order to lend a hand, and now Pongo was nosing round the elegant trousers of Arthur Augustus.

"You—you feahful young wufians!" panted Gussy. "If you do not welease me this vewy instant, Wally—"

"We'll let him run on while we're hunting for the things," said Wally, evidently referring to Arthur Augustus. "Go it, Gus! Don't mind us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags started to hunt for the airgun and for the torch. And Arthur Augustus did "run on." But his remarks, scorching as they were, seemed to have no effect whatever on Wally or his chums. They coolly continued the search, and presently Wally found the torch in his major's desk.

But they did not find the airgun; an airgun was not an article looked upon with favour by the school authorities, and Blake had, naturally enough, hidden it in a safe place—under the floorboards, as a matter of fact.

"Never mind!" said Wally, giving it up at last. "Have to manage without. After all, old Pongo won't miss many, I can tell you!"

"Perhaps," murmured Curly Gibson—"and perhaps not!"

"Look here, Curly!"—Wally glared at Curly Gibson—"if you want a thick ear—"

"Oh, cheeze it, and let's get off!" said Jameson. "Come on!"

Wally scowled—any doubts as to the wonderful abilities of Pongo always upset Wally—but he allowed the doubt to pass and started to leave the study. He pocketed the torch and picked up Pongo, intending to smuggle him out under his coat, just as he smuggled him in.

Arthur Augustus shrieked after them.

"Come back! Come back and welease me, you young wascals!"

"Not much! Sorry, old nut!" called back Wally. "You'd only try to chip in and stop us going! You know what you are, Gus! Your own fault, you know!"

"Come back!"

"Rats!"

And Wally followed his chums out of the study, closing the door after him, and leaving Arthur Augustus, tied to an armchair, in a state of mind that could only be described as ferocious.

CHAPTER 2. Gussy Insists!

"THAT ass—"

"That silly dummy—"

"Kept us waiting again, the burbling chump!"

On the School House steps Tom Merry & Co. were waxing wrathful and exasperated as they waited for Arthur Augustus.

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"Isn't it just like him!" growled Jack Blake. "I expect he's up in the dorm changing his necktie, or waistcoat, or something."

"Let's go without him!" snorted Herries.

"Not much!" said Blake, with a chuckle. "Gussy's about the only chap among us with any cash. On occasions like this, when we're all stony, Gussy is the most important member of the party."

"Ha, ha! Yes. I forgot that!"

"Hallo! Here's his giddy minor," said Tom Merry. "Seen Gussy, Wally?"

Wally D'Arcy, carrying Pongo under his coat, came out of the School House with his chums behind him. All of them were grinning.

"Yes," chuckled Wally. "We've just left him in Study No. 6."

"What the thump was the dummy doing?"

"Sitting in the armchair," explained Wally calmly. "Are you waiting for him?"

"Yes. The burbling—"

"Cheek, I call it," said Wally. "Fancy sitting there in that armchair while you fellows are waiting!"

"Awful!" chuckled Curly Gibson.

"Most inconsiderate!" said Jameson.

"Well, I'm blowing!" gasped Blake. "Sitting in the armchair, was he? Why, I'll— Come on, you chaps!"

"Here, hold on!" said Wally. "Will you lend me your airgun, Blake?"

"I'll lend you my boot!" snapped Blake.

"What d'you want the airgun for, anyway?" demanded Tom Merry, eyeing the scamp of the Third suspiciously.

"You are up to something, I guess!"

"To shoot with, of course," said Wally blandly. "What a pity I haven't it now I've met you! But it's always the way—always seeing something to shoot at when you haven't a gun with you!"

"You cheeky young—"

"But if you really want to know, I'll tell you. Rats!" said Wally cheerfully.

"If you say 'rats' to me, young D'Arcy—"

"Well, you asked me what I wanted the gun for, and I'm telling you—rats!" grinned Wally. "You see— Here, keep off, you ass! Mind Pong—"

But Tom Merry neither kept off nor did he mind Pongo. It was scarcely to be expected that the junior captain of St. Jim's would stand cheek from a fag in the Third.

He made a grab at the humorous Wally, and Pongo slipped from Wally's grasp as he jumped backwards.

Unfortunately, Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, emerged from the House doorway at the same moment, and there was a sudden gasp as the fag and the master collided violently.

"Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Selby staggered backwards, fell over Pongo, and sat down on the top of the steps, just missing sitting on Wally's mongrel as he did so.

None the less, Pongo was hurt, and he retaliated by nipping sharply at Mr. Selby's leg, Pongo having no respect whatever for masters, not even for the irritable and cross-grained master of the Third.

Luckily the nip only closed on Mr. Selby's trousers and not on the master's august leg.

Still, it was bad enough as it was.

Mr. Selby staggered up, a tear in his trousers, his gown dusty and crumpled.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wally. "Pongo! Here, Pongo!"

The scared fag made a desperate grab at Pongo, who seemed about to repeat the operation. He caught him and lifted him up, the mongrel wriggling and protesting with low growls.

"Ow! Ow-ow!" gasped Mr. Selby, glowering at the Third-Former. "Keep—keep that wretched animal away, boy! Boy—D'Arcy, you shall suffer for this! Ow! I am hurt—severely hurt and shaken! That—that dangerous brute—"

"Sorry, sir," murmured Wally. "It—it was an accident! And old Pongo wouldn't really bite you, you know. So sorry, sir!"

"It was really my fault, sir," added Tom Merry. Tom knew what a tyrant Mr. Selby was, and he was anxious to save the scamp of the Third, who was generally in trouble enough, and to spare, with his Form master. "My fault entirely, in fact. I was just chasing him, sir."

"I—I am quite aware of that, Merry!" snapped the master. "I shall report you to Mr. Linton for punishment. In your position as head boy of the Lower School you should know better than to indulge in horseplay in the hall doorway."

"Oh, sir!"

"That does not excuse D'Arcy minor, however," said Mr. Selby, glaring at Wally. "He has undoubtedly had that wretched animal indoors, though he is perfectly well aware

it's against rules. I shall speak to Mr. Railton regarding the dog. You will also report to me at six o'clock for a severe caning, D'Arcy minor."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Selby rustled indoors, holding his gown over the tear in his nether garments. Really, for once, Mr. Selby's wrath was understandable.

"My hat!" groaned Wally D'Arcy. "That means a record licking for me. But old Pongo! What will Railton do about him? B-r-r-r-r! This is all your silly fault, Tom Merry!"

"You cheeky young ass—"

"Oh, rats! Go and eat coke!"

With a gloomy brow, Wally marched across the quad with Pongo, his chums gathering round him in sympathy. Wally was undoubtedly "for it" at six o'clock.

"It was really my fault," said Tom, looking after the scamp of the Third. "Old Selby will make the kid squirm, I expect."

"Fags shouldn't be cheeky," remarked Blake, shaking his head. "Still, it's hard lines!"

But the sympathy of Tom Merry & Co. did not last for

Merry. "If they want a torch and an airgun, then they're up to no good."

"The young scamps are goin' waddin'," explained Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Waddin'? Oh, I see! You mean ratting," said Blake.

"Well, that's just like one of their little games."

"Yaas; but they mean to go waddin' in that old barn on the Wylcombe Manor estate," said Arthur Augustus, hurriedly straightening out the creases in his elegant trousers.

"That is strictly out of bounds, and the young wascals are almost certain to get into twouble!"



long. It lasted, in fact, until they arrived at Study No. 6 and saw Arthur Augustus tied down in the armchair.

They had hurried up, meaning to give Arthur Augustus a warm few minutes for keeping them waiting; but they changed their intention when they saw why Arthur Augustus was sitting in the armchair.

"My only aunt!" said Blake, staring. "Who did this, Gussy—those kids?"

"I bet it was!" chuckled Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus fairly spluttered with wrath. "Pway welease me without delay. I shall weally give young Wally a feahful thwashin' for this. I feel fully justified in doin' so."

Tom Merry grinned as he cut the swell of the Fourth free.

"They—they did it just because I wefused to lend them my torch and Blake's airgun," explained Arthur Augustus, rubbing his cramped limbs. "Weally, the cheek of those young wuffians is too much to tolewate, bai Jove!"

"Well, my hat!" said Blake. Funny as it was, Blake saw only the deadly insult to Study No. 6. "Well, you awful idiot, Gussy, to allow those kids to put it across you like that!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's their little game, Gussy?" demanded Tom

"My hat! Yes, rather!" agreed Tom Merry, with a whistle. "The young asses!"

"Let 'em rip!" grinned Blake.

"I have no intention of lettin' them wip, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with a determined shake of the head. "I am goin' to stop them. Aftahwards I am goin' to give ther. a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"But the bike-ride, fathead?" exclaimed Herries. "Let them—"

"You youngstahs must go on your own," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "It is uttably imposs for me to allow my minah to wun such feahful wisks! As his eldah bwothah, I—"

"You silly dummy—"

"I wefuse to be called a sillay dummay, Blake," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "My mind is quite made up. I consider it my duty to go aftah those iwvesponsible youngstahs in ordah to save them fwom gettin' into vewy sewious twouble."

"Well, that's right enough," said Tom Merry seriously, looking at Jack Blake. "The kids are fairly asking for trouble if that's their game."

"Begging for it," said Manners, nodding. "Old Bland's

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a blessed governor, too! Those kids have a nerve, and no mistake!"

"They should be stopped, as Gussy says," said Tom Merry, frowning. "I fancy it's my job to go after them and stop them, too!"

"There is no weason why you should go, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway leave the mattah in my hands!"

"And get tied up again?" asked Lowther. "Better leave 'em alone, Gussy. They're rather above your weight."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I should have thought Gussy had had enough," grinned Tom Merry. "Still, these youngsters ought to be stopped. They deserve a licking for daring to treat our Gussy like this!"

"They're going to be!" said Blake, breathing hard. "We'll teach the cheeky young rotters to play tricks like that in this study!"

"Buck up, then!" said Tom. "The sooner we get after them the better, too! Look here! There's no need for you fellows to miss the spin, though—"

"If you go fag dry-nursing, we go, too," chuckled Lowther. "After all, it will be one way to spend the half, and may prove more exciting than a giddy bike-spin. I rather fancy it will."

"Bai Jove! There is weally no weason—"

"There's every reason why we shouldn't let you go on such a job alone, Gussy," said Tom Merry kindly. "In the first place, you'd only make a frightful muck of it, and in the second place we're not going to allow those cheeky fags to play any more tricks on you, see? We're coming to look after you as well as deal with Wally."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, don't start again, Gussy!" said Blake, interrupting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's indignant remarks. "If you really mean it, Tommy—"

"I do," said Tom, setting his lips. "Now we know their game, it's really up to us to chip in. Anyway, as junior skipper, it's up to me!"

"Well, I suppose that's so," agreed Blake, with a grunt.

"Well, I'm on; but we'll make those little sweeps squirm for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors were emphatically agreed on that point.

They were prepared to give up their half-holiday in order to prevent the reckless fags from running into very serious trouble. None the less, they fully intended to give the young scamps a very warm time when they did accomplish their task. And all were looking very grim when they hurried out and made tracks for the scene of the fags' proposed rat-hunt.

CHAPTER 3.

Trapped!

"RATS!"

"But look here—"

"Rot!"

"If Pongo hadn't—"

"Bunkum!" said Wally D'Arcy wraithfully. "If you say another word against old Pongo, young Manners, I'll dot you on the nose. So mind your eye!"

"Or your nose!" murmured Jameson.

"You shut up, young Jameson!"

Evidently the leader of the Third was not in the best of humours.

Having arrived at the forbidden barn, using necessary caution, Wally & Co. had sneaked inside and got down to the business in hand.

At least, they had done what they could to get down to the business of rat-hunting. Unfortunately, though the young rascals hunted high and low, they found no rats. Which partly explains Wally's wrath and exasperation. To add fuel to his wrath, Wally's chums insisted upon putting the blame for the absence of rats on to Pongo.

Undoubtedly the barn had been swarming with rats—the ancient wood-work, riddled with rat-holes, testified to that; indeed, when visiting the forbidden barn quite recently—without Pongo—the fags had seen plenty, and had heard their frightened squeaks and scuttlings as they vanished into holes and crevices in walls and floor.

Now not one was to be seen or heard—only a distant squeak had greeted the fags' ears on first entering the barn. Possibly this was because Pongo, despite

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his master's frantic exhortations and threats, had insisted upon approaching the barn to the accompaniment of an outburst of excited and defiant yelps and barks.

At all events, Wally's chums claimed that this was the reason, and no other—that Pongo's excited outcries had given the rats plenty of warning, and had frightened them away, which was a very likely possibility.

Needless to say, Wally did not share that opinion, though from his crimson face and inarticulate wrath, it was fairly clear that he was far from being easy in his own mind on that score.

Wally had said that Pongo was a splendid ratter, and Wally was ready to "dot" anyone on the nose who dared to say he wasn't.

"It's just bad luck!" explained the hero of the Third, glaring defiantly about him. "The blessed rats must have scented Pongo, and that ain't Pongo's fault, is it?"

"H'm! Nunno!"

The fags were ready to agree to that. The leader of the Third was a hefty fighting-man.

"Or else some asses have been here before us and cleared 'em out," went on Wally. "We'll have to come at night-time, that's all!"

"Oh, my hat! With Pongo?" asked Curly Gibson.

"Yes; of course!"

"Then count me out!"

"You—you silly dummies!" spluttered Wally. "If you're all asking for a thick ear—"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Jameson. "We're fed-up at being let down like this. Might as well clear out and chuck the game up now, anyway."

Wally snorted.

"We're jolly well not chucking it up! I'm going to show you rotters just what old Pongo can do!"

"You've shown us," said Reggie Manners. "Pongo can frighten the giddy rats away, and no mistake!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, let's get off!" said Joe Frayne peaceably. "What's the good of wrangling here?"

"That blessed dog will be bringing the keepers here before long," warned Jameson. "Quieten him, for goodness sake!"

"Blow the keepers!" said Wally scornfully.

But he made a grab at Pongo, who was whining and barking excitedly at one of the rat-holes in the floor of the barn.

"Poor old Pongo!" he growled. "Quiet, old chap! He's disappointed—that's what's the matter with him, you men. He's not going to be done out of his sport, though. Come on, chaps, we're going to have a go at that old hut in the woods now."

"Wha-at?"

"That's the programme," said Wally recklessly. "I know there are rats there, and we'll risk the giddy keepers. If you funk it—"

"We jolly well do!" said Reggie Manners warmly. "Why, it's far more risky than coming here—right near the blessed preserves. We'll have the keepers on us in no time!"

"Rot! If you funks won't come, I'm going myself with old Pongo."

"But look here—"

"Rats!"

Evidently Wally's mind was made up. His chums looked at each other dully. There was only one thing to be done. To let themselves be called funks was out of the question.

"Oh, all right!" growled Jameson. "I suppose we'll have to come. But it's jolly risky."

"Blow the risk!"

Wally, with the struggling, whining Pongo in his arms, started for the doors of the barn, his chums following him very reluctantly.

The old hut Wally referred to was deep in the heart of the woods on the Rylcombe Manor estate. To trespass in private woods, strictly out of bounds to St. Jim's fellows, was a risky proceeding in itself. But a ratting expedition, accompanied by a dog like Pongo, seemed to the Third-Formers to be simply "asking for it."

As they emerged from the gloomy barn, however, Wally halted, with a grunt.

"Hallo! Well, my hat! Look who's coming!"

Following his glance, the fags saw seven distinct figures rapidly approaching the barn. They were still several fields away, but they easily recognised Tom Merry & Co.

"It's your giddy major, Wally," grinned Curly Gibson. "He's

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S "HIDDEN NAMES" PUZZLE.

1. Montague Lowther.
2. Doctor Richard Holmes.
3. William Gunn.
4. Philip Lefevre.
5. Ralph Cardew.
6. Richard Brooke.
7. Horace Ratchiff.
8. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.
9. Patrick Mulvaney.

bringing those chaps to put us through it for tying him up in that chair. Let's scoot, quick!"

"Hold on!" said Wally, his eyes gleaming. "It means more than that. Tom Merry and the others wouldn't come all this way just to lick us for putting it across old Gus. They mean to stop our giddy rat-hunt. Check!"

"Awful check!"

"Let's clear, though," grinned Manners minor.

"Not likely—yet!" said Wally grimly. "It's like those chaps' cheek to interfere with us. Why should they?"

"Tom Merry's junior skipper," said Curly Gibson.

"Blow Tom Merry! He's not going to chip in on our affairs," said Wally warmly. "We're not allowing those rotters to spoil our fun—not likely!"

"Let's go while the going's good," urged Reggie Manners uneasily.

"Rot! Look here," said Wally, watching the distant figures fixedly. "They'll be dipping into that hollow presently. The moment they vanish you fellows hide behind the giddy barn, and leave the rest to me."

"But, I say—"

"Shut up! Any chap who disobeys me is booked for a thick ear!" warned Wally.

There were no more remarks after that. Wally had won his leadership by right of conquest, and his chums knew better than to risk a "thick ear." They waited until the distant figures vanished into a deep depression in the rolling meadows, and then they hurriedly hid behind the barn. Wally closed the door and took up his hiding-place behind a thick hawthorn close by.

With his hand closed over Pongo's jaws, Wally waited, Pongo seeming to realise there was more urgent necessity for quietness now.

Some moments passed, and then footsteps and voices sounded as Tom Merry & Co. hurried up to the barn breathlessly.

"Here we are," said Jack Blake. "Don't see the little bounders anywhere."

"They're here all right," said Tom Merry.

"The beggars spotted us coming, and are hiding somewhere."

"I saw them round the doorway from across the fields," said Manners, looking keenly about him.

"Come on!" said Tom. "We'll jolly soon root the cheeky young imps out of that."

Tom dragged open the door of the barn and entered, his chums at his heels. A glance round the gloomy barn showed no sign of the fags.

"Up in the giddy loft," grinned Tom. He raised his voice. "Now, kids, down you come! We know you're there, my pippins!"

No answer.

"We spotted them," said Blake. "They must be here. Can't have got clear without us seeing 'em."

"That's so," said Tom. "We'll soon settle their hash." All the juniors were in the barn now. Tom started to climb the rickety, broken stairway. He had reached within a couple of steps of the top, with Arthur Augustus and Blake at his heels, when suddenly, with startling abruptness, the light in the doorway was blotted out. Then followed a heavy crash as the door slammed shut.

"Bai Jove!"

For a single instant the astounded juniors stood silent, and then they understood, as a yell of laughter came from outside.

"Done!" gasped Blake. "Done, by jingo!"

With a roar of wrath he led the rush to the doors. But they were too late. As they reached it they heard the heavy bar of wood being jammed into the rusted sockets.

Outside the barn Wally & Co. were roaring with laughter. They had intended to steal silently away like the Arabs of old, but they knew that they had been recognised, and that it was useless to keep their identity a secret. The

future held plenty of trouble for the reckless fags, but they were determined to enjoy the present.

"You young rotters!" roared Tom Merry through a chink in the old door. "Let us out!"

"Rats!"

"Let us out, and we'll give you a hiding all round!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"More rats!" called Wally cheerfully. "Can't you make a better offer than that, Lowther?"

"You—you cheeky young villains!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of departing footsteps, and within the old barn Tom Merry & Co. eyed each other in the gloom with feelings too deep for words.

CHAPTER 4.

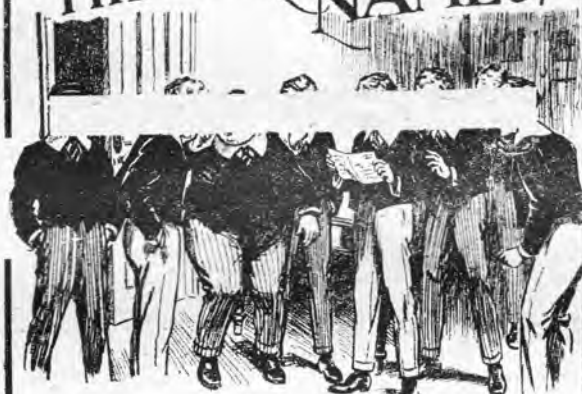
Pongo Disgraces Himself!

"H A, ha, ha!"

Roaring with laughter, the young rascals of the Third left the old barn, a perfect uproar of bangs and thumps and yells from the barn following them.

**HERE'S A NOVEL PUZZLE,
BOYS!**

HIDDEN NAMES!



ANAGRAMS.

This week we are introducing the names of some well-known Greyfriars characters into our "Anagrams" feature. See how many names you can discover by transposing letters in each of the following sentences. The solution will be given next week.

1. I will meet a bun gorger.
2. I slog—am willing.
3. "Cocoa, Kerr, eh?"
4. Rushing here.
5. Go eager—get win!
6. My real link.
7. If her tart is on shelf.
8. Skip over lip.
9. "This month never err, B—"

"That'll settle them for a bit!" chuckled Wally at length. "Now we can get on with the job without fear of them chipping in."

"We'll get it hot for this later on," said Reggie Manners, with a grimace. "My major will flay me alive!"

"Blow your major!" said Wally witheringly. "Think I care for my silly major? Let 'em go and eat coke! They shouldn't have the cheek to come chipping in on our affairs! We'll send somebody to let 'em out when we've finished the job, anyway."

"They'll be raving by that time," said Jameson.

"Let 'em rave!"

"There'll be trouble tonight!" said Curly Gibson.

"Blow trouble! For goodness' sake stop croaking!"

Evidently Wally was in an unusually reckless mood.

But his companions did not seem quite so careless of the probable results of their trick on Tom Merry & Co. They were looking rather thoughtful now. Tom Merry & Co. were not the fellows to be tricked and imprisoned with impunity. Moreover, they had already got to face the music in regard to the ragging of Arthur Augustus.

In addition, Wally's chums were very uneasy in regard to the danger of their new expedition. Trespassing in the woods was a far different matter from trespassing in the barn in the meadows. They

glanced about them uneasily as they tramped on.

They were near the woods now—crossing a spinney riddled with rabbit-holes that fringed them at that spot. And Wally suddenly chuckled.

"Look at the giddy bunnies!" he murmured. "Shall I drop old Pongo and let him have a go at 'em?"

"Wha-at? You awful ass!"

"Wally, you fearful chump!"

"I was only pulling your legs," grinned Wally. "In any case, if I dropped him, Pongo wouldn't go for 'em unless I told him to."

"Stick tight to the beggar, anyway," said Joe Frayne uneasily. "Don't risk it, Wally, you fathead!"

"My dear man, don't get the wind up," advised Wally. "Pongo's got brains; he knows just how far to go, and he knows better than to act without orders from me. Pongo's got more sense in his giddy eyebrows than some of you chaps have—Oh crumbs! Oh—Pongo—Pongo, you ass! Here, you brute! Stop him!"

Wally's voice ended in a howl of alarm.

But there was no stopping Pongo.

While Wally was enlarging on his virtues Pongo's quick eyes had sighted a rabbit, and he leaped from his master's clasp like a jack-in-a-box.

Then he was off like a streak of lightning.

"Oh, great pip!"

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"That's done it!"

In great alarm Wally & Co. blinked after Pongo.

Only for a moment, and then Wally awoke to action and went in chase of his pet, his alarmed chums at his heels.

But they were much too late to be of use.

Pongo was on the rabbit like a swooping hawk.

As Wally & Co. raced up, Pongo met them cheerily with the hapless rabbit in his sharp teeth. It almost seemed as if he was quite proud and pleased at his prowess, and that he had done it merely as a thanks-offering to Wally.

He trotted up and dropped the rabbit at Wally's feet. Then he looked up at Wally and wagged his short, ragged tail.

Wally glared down at him speechlessly for a moment, his face crimson. The fag was more indignant at being "let down" by his pet than at the crime committed.

"You—you little rascal!" he gasped, finding his breath at last and grabbing the poacher. "You—you cheeky little beggar! I believe you knew what I was saying and—Oh, jumping crackers! Run for it!"

Once again Wally & Co. ran for it; and it was desperately necessary this time.

Out from the woods emerged three burly keepers, and they went for the startled fags with a rush and a shout.

"Stop! Stop, you little villains!"

"Go it!" panted Wally. "Oh, my hat!"

Wally & Co. turned and bolted for dear life.

Crash!

Scarcely had Wally taken a dozen steps when he tripped over a trailing root and went down heavily. A shrill yelp came from Pongo, who was clasped in Wally's arms and, therefore, got the brunt of the fall.

As he staggered up, half stunned by the jolt, the nearest keeper thudded up, and a heavy hand grasped the fag ere he could flee again.

"Got you! Arter the others, lads!"

It was evidently the head keeper, and the other two went pounding in pursuit of Wally's companions.

But those young rascals had a good start, and, being unaware of Wally's capture, they fairly flew. Capture meant serious trouble, and they put all they knew into it. In their heavy boots and clothes, the burly keepers were soon outpaced, and they gave it up at last and returned to the head keeper, who had the hapless Wally in a firm grasp, the while he kept off Pongo with his boot.

And Pongo wanted some keeping off indeed. Pongo allowed nobody to take liberties with his master—if he could help it; and he yapped and snarled ferociously in his mad efforts to get his teeth into the keeper's gaiters.

"Take that little brute away, Luke!" bawled the head keeper. "By hokey, he's a little spitfire! 'Urry up, durn it! He's dang near ripped my gaiters ter ribbons!"

Luke did his best to obey, and the other keeper, thudding up just then, lent a hand also. Between them they managed to get hold of the frantic Pongo and hold him.

"You hurt him if you dare!" panted Wally, ceasing to struggle at last. "You dare to—"

"We shan't hurt 'im, youngster," grinned the head keeper, who looked a good-humoured individual. "He's a good 'un, that dog is, if he is a mongrel! Couldn't let him chew me up, though. Jim, fetch that darned rabbit here, and run and fetch the boss, Luke."

"No need!" said Luke briefly, and he jerked his thumb towards the woods.

An elderly gentleman was just emerging from the woods—a rather ferocious-looking gentleman with a fierce, white

moustache and very red cheeks. Wally knew him at a glance.

"Oh crumbs!" he groaned.

"Here's the colonel now," said the head keeper, sighting him. "A fair cop, kid! A St. Jim's youngster—poaching, eh? My heve! You're for it, youngster!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wally gave a jump at that. He had never expected to be called a poacher, at all events. That luckless rabbit—

"You—you ass!" he gasped in great alarm. "Don't tell old Bland we were poaching, for goodness' sake! We weren't, of course! That blessed dog got loose, though, and—"

"O' course not!" grinned the keeper, winking at his mate. "Only takin' a little walk, weren't you? You tell that yarn to the colonel, youngster! Here 'e is!"

The colonel stamped up, his face redder than ever with wrath. He glowered at Pongo and then at Wally, his glinting eye taking in Wally's cap at once.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "So—so it's a St. Jim's boy, hey? What the deuce d'you mean by it, hey? After my rabbits, begad! Poaching on my estate, hey? You—you young rascal!"

"I—I wasn't poaching, sir!" gasped Wally. "It—it's a mistake!"

"Silence! Don't attempt to deny it, you young rascal!" roared the old gentleman, shaking his hunting-crop at the hapless fag. "Look at that, boy! What the deuce does that mean, then?"

He pointed to Jim, who came stumping up at that moment with the luckless rabbit in his hand. He held it up for the colonel's inspection.

Wally groaned.

"I—I—I—"

"Silence! Not another word!" spluttered the old warrior furiously. "Your headmaster shall hear of this! Come! I will take you to St. Jim's myself, and I shall insist upon knowing the names of your rascally accomplices!"

With that Colonel Bland made a grab at Wally's collar, presumably with the intention of leading the fag away. But it seemed to Pongo that his intentions were of a very different nature, especially as the fiery old gentleman shook his hunting-crop in a decidedly menacing manner.

At all events, Pongo acted swiftly and unexpectedly.

He gave a low, deep growl, wriggled free from Luke's clumsy grasp, and leaped at the old gentleman.

"Pongo! Down, Pongo!" yelled Wally, in alarm.

He sprang at Pongo and grasped his collar desperately, though not before Pongo's sharp, gleaming teeth had snapped on the handle of the whip, grazing the colonel's hand.

The colonel gave a hoarse bellow of pain and rage, and danced about, his knuckles to his mouth where Pongo's teeth had scratched the skin.

That did it!

The next moment the startled keepers had caught the wriggling, snapping mongrel and held him fast. The head keeper grabbed Wally again, and held him also.

"Hold the little brute!" gasped Colonel Bland. "Good gad! The—the vicious brute has bitten me—actually bitten me! Deuce take it! Hold him! Hold that young villain, too! Bring them both along! This—is this too much!"

"You shouldn't—" began Wally desperately.

"Silence! Not another word!" bellowed the colonel. "Thompson, you're sacked if you let either of them go again! Understand?"

"Yessir!"

"Bring them along! Lock them in the stables until I get the trap ready! Good gad! Attacked and bitten on my own land by a rascally poaching dog! Get on!"

And the party got on, both the hapless fag and his pet firmly held now. Thompson or his men were not likely to allow them to escape or to do further damage. Pongo had disgraced both himself and his master this time. And the scamp of the Third groaned inwardly as he tramped through the wood and thought of the trouble in store.

CHAPTER 5. Rescue!

"THE—the cheeky young rotters!"

"The young villains!"

"The little sweeps!"

"Yaas, wathah! Those w'etched youngsters are the limit, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. were eloquently discussing Wally and his friends of the Third.

Really, it was decidedly exasperating, to say the least of it. They had been tricked and trapped by mere fags—the very youngsters for whom they had sacrificed the afternoon's outing, in order to save from trouble.

"No good banging on the blessed door!" growled Tom Merry at last. "Better have a try to get out somehow! Oh, won't we just smash those kids for this!"



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Tom Merry & Co. fumed as they tramped round the dusty barn, searching in vain for a means of escape. But though the brickwork and woodwork was old, the barn was solidly built, and the juniors soon gave it up as hopeless.

"Have to wait until someone comes along!" growled Blake at last. "I suppose those cheeky little scamps wouldn't dare to leave us here very long."

"They'll see we get out somehow!" said Tom grimly. "But we don't want to spend the whole afternoon here! And if we yell we may only bring keepers, or— Hallo! Here they come back again!"

It was the fags, right enough—the juniors recognised their voices; they also sighted Wally & Co. through chinks in the woodwork of the door.

"Wally and Pongo aren't with them!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, frowning. "Bai Jove, I am afraid somethin' is the mattah, deah boys!"

"Something will be the matter when I get my hands on

"Let us out, and then we'll talk about making it pax!" snorted Blake.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, his face grave. "This looks jolly serious, chaps! Better make it pax with the kids!"

"Yaas, wathah! This is just what I feahed, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "Fway make it pax!"

"Oh, all right!"

Much as it went against the grain, the juniors agreed to the fags' request. The fags opened the door in some trepidation, and it certainly needed all the juniors' self-control to prevent them smiting the fags hip and thigh.

But they refrained; the sight of the fags' scared faces was enough. And they soon learned that matters were more serious than they had imagined.

"You mean to say that beastly dog killed a rabbit?" exclaimed Tom, aghast.

Mr. Railton gave one amazed glance at the runaway trap, at the barking Pongo, and at Wally racing behind, and then he acted swiftly. He leaped for the reins and grabbed at them,

(See Chapter 6.)



those kids!" fumed Blake. "Hi! Jameson—Gibson, you little sweeps, let us out!"

"We'll smash you for this!" bellowed Herries. "Open this dashed door!"

Tom Merry eyed the approaching fags grimly. They were not laughing now—indeed, they all looked more than a trifle scared.

"I say, you chaps," called Curly Gibson breathlessly, "make it pax, and we'll let you out!"

"We'll see you blowed first!" bawled Blake. "If you don't open this dashed door—"

"I—I say," gasped Jameson breathlessly, "Wally's been collared—collared by keepers! He's missing, anyway!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"The keepers chased us near the woods," said Reggie Manners. "We've only just discovered Wally and Pongo are missing! They must have been caught!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors understood now why the fags had come back and why they were looking so scared. They evidently hoped that Tom Merry & Co. would do something to help.

"Look here," went on Jameson, "make it pax, and come and help us rescue Wally! He can't have been taken far!"

"That's it! Poor old Wally will be taken to St. Jim's unless we rescue him!" said Joe Frayne.

"Yes. He did it before anybody could stop him!"

"And the keepers spotted it?" said Tom.

"Yes—must have done! They came rushing out of the woods and chased us! We only missed Wally when we stopped running!"

"Phew!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"This is jolly serious, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry. "I can't see what we can do, though, now; only make matters worse perhaps. They'll have taken the kid to the house by this time."

"We could go to the house and scout round," suggested Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! We must do something for the weekless young ass!"

That was the general view, and, without further loss of time, Tom led the way towards the manor; there seemed nothing else that could be done. To have attempted a rescue by main force would have only made matters more serious, and, in any case, it was too late for that now.

The juniors and fags crossed the meadows, and, skirting the thick woods, they made their way swiftly towards the house. Reaching a woodland bridle-path at last, they followed it up, and came out in the lane opposite to the manor.

As they did so a shrill, excited barking reached their ears.

"That's Pongo!" gasped Jameson. "Pongo, for a pension!"

"Sounds like him," said Tom. "We'll make sure, anyway."

They were in the public lane now, and caution was not necessary. The barking seemed to come from the stables of Rylcombe Manor, which ran alongside the lane beyond a high wall. The St. Jim's juniors hurried across to the double iron gates that gave admittance to the yard of the stables.

The gates were open, and a glance inside the yard was enough for the juniors and fags.

Pongo was there right enough—leaping and straining at a rope that tethered him to a post up against one of the outbuildings.

"That means Wally can't be far away," said Tom Merry, his eyes scanning the yard.

"Bai Joye! I have it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his eyes gleaming. "Pongo is twyin' to get to that out-buildin' theah—the one with the closed door. That means—"

"Wally's locked up there," said Tom nodding. "And, if I'm not mistaken, those chaps are getting the pony and trap ready to take him to St. Jim's."

"Looks like it," said Blake.

It certainly did look like it. Wally was obviously a prisoner in that room—probably a saddle-room; and in the stable next door was a footman, busy harnessing a pony. Standing watching him was a burly keeper. Through the open doorway the St. Jim's fellows could see the men clearly and hear their voices.

"It's now or never!" breathed Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "Get ready to bolt, chaps!"

"But, what—"

Tom Merry did not stay to explain. In a flash he had left them, and was speeding softly across the yard, keeping against the wall. His keen eyes had noted that only a peg of wood secured the door of the saddle-room—if it was that—and a swift idea had come to him.

The stable door was, fortunately, farthest away from Tom, and in a moment he had reached the closed door of the out-building and was fumbling with the peg.

It came out, and next second the door swung wide.

"Wally!" he breathed. "Quiet!"

"My hat!"

Wally's muttered exclamation sounded, and as he appeared Tom motioned for silence.

"Run for it!" he whispered. "I'll see to Pongo!"

Without another word Tom, risking being seen now, scudded over to Pongo, and in a flash he had his knife out and was slashing through the rope.

Pongo gave vent to a series of delighted yelps, and jumped up at Tom—until suddenly sighting Wally, he made a bound for him.

But his frantic outcries had given the alarm, and there came a sudden shout from inside the stable.

"Run for it!"

Tom Merry yelled as Wally hesitated. But the shout had awakened Wally to the danger, and he tore off for the gates, Pongo leaping and bounding at his heels. After them went Tom at top speed.

"Hi! Come back! You little rascals—"

Out of the stable shot the keeper and footman, their faces showing their anger and amazement. But the juniors at the gates had not been idle spectators of Tom's risky attempt, and the pursuers found an obstacle in their path.

When Tom, Wally, and Pongo came tearing up they found one gate closed, Blake holding the other one open for them. The moment they were through Blake dragged the gate shut, and then hurried after his chums.

"Wun! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

But the "deah boys" did not need to be told. They fairly flew, Pongo rending the afternoon air with his excited barking. But Blake's swift act in closing the gate had given them a few valuable seconds' start, and they made the most of it.

By the time the angry footman and keeper were out in the lane the St. Jim's fellows were well away. Not until they were quite certain the men had given up the chase did the juniors and fags stop running, however.

"Safe enough now, I fancy! That was a bit of luck!" panted Tom Merry. "Wally, you young rascal—"

"Oh, don't rub it in!" gasped Wally, stooping to pick up Pongo. "It's bad enough, without you chaps jawing me now!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"And, for goodness' sake, don't you start, Gus!" growled

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the fag. "This is the fault of you and your silly old fogies, Tom Merry!"

"What-at?"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you hadn't chipped in in the first place this mightn't have happened at all," said Wally calmly. "Anyway, no good grousing about that now. I'm afraid my number's up!"

"Do you mean to say they've got your name?" demanded Tom. "Then we might as well have left you to it!"

"No, they haven't!" snorted Wally. "But the old colonel's seen me, and the old hunk is bound to recognise me again. Besides, the beaks will know it was me, because of Pongo!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom. "Then—then, it looks as if you're in the soup, Wally. Does the old chap know about the rabbit?"

"Of course, he does. And old Pongo's bitten him, too—"

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just a bit of a scratch by accident, but the old brute was raving mad about it!"

"Oh cwmbs! Wally, you are a weckless, iwvesponsible young—"

"Oh, ring off, Gus!" snorted Wally. "I must say I blame you silly chumps for this—chipping in and upsetting the programme! You see what you've done now!"

"Well, you cheeky—"

"Oh rats! Go and eat coke! Come on, you men!"

And, calling his fellow fags, Wally hurried on ahead, Pongo, chirpy as ever now—trotting at his heels.

"Well," said Blake, taking a deep breath, "there's gratitude for you!"

"Let's go after them and mop the lot of them up!" growled Herries wrathfully. "The cheeky imps—"

"Oh, let 'em rip!" said Tom Merry. "I'm afraid young Wally's booked for enough trouble as it is. I was hoping the colonel hadn't seen him and didn't know his name, and that the keeper chaps would never recognise him again. But, now—"

"That's off!" agreed Blake, frowning. "The old chap has only to pick Wally out, and if he can't do that, he's only got to describe Pongo, and the beaks will know him."

"Yaas, wathah! Oh deah! It is weally wotten, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, looking very disturbed indeed. "Perhaps the old colonel will not bothah to visit St. Jim's, howevah, now Wally has escaped. He is not weally a bad old chap, I believe—only vevy bad-temphed and unweasonably particular about twespassin'."

"Won't he?" said Blake derisively. "Of course he will, you ass! There's going to be trouble!"

And the rest agreed with Blake there. And they returned to St. Jim's very concerned on Wally's account—probably far more concerned than was the scamp of the Third himself.

CHAPTER 6.
More Trouble!

"YOU'RE for it, Wally—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yes, but—"

"Dry up!" said Wally D'Arcy crossly. "What's the good of croaking? I'm not bowled out yet, anyway."

"We told you how it would be," remarked Reggie Manners glumly. "It was simply asking for trouble taking that rotten mongrel among those rabbits."

"If you call old Pongo a mongrel again, young Manners, I'll punch your silly head!" snorted Wally angrily. "And if any of you silly fatheads say 'I told you so' again I'll—I'll—"

"Well, didn't we?" said Manners. "I mean, it was all Pongo's doing, of course—"

"If you blame it on Pongo—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Jameson. "No good arguing about it now, and, after all, it's Wally who will get it in the neck."

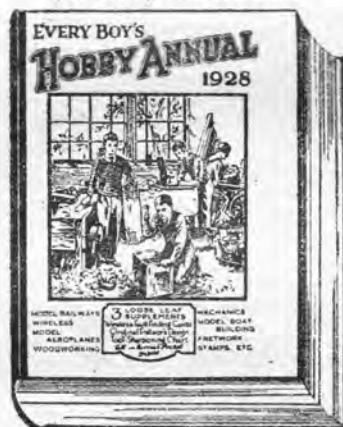
"Glad you've come to see that at last," said Wally, with heavy sarcasm. "I'm not worrying so much, anyway. It was sheer bad luck. You can't blame old Pongo—he must have imagined I wanted him to go for the silly rabbits. And as for those footling asses, Tom Merry and—"

"Steady on, Wally," grinned Curly Gibson. "You can't blame them, you know. And, after all, the beggars tried their best to save you; in fact, it was jolly decent of Tom Merry to take that risk like he did."

"That's right!" said Joe Frayne. "You wouldn't be here now but for him, Wally."

Wally grunted. It was clear enough that he was worrying over the matter more than he would admit. And it was a very unusual matter for the light-hearted and reckless leader of the Third to worry about anything.

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"It all depends whether old Bland remembers me," he said glumly. "After all, any chap might have had a dog, and the Head will need proof that it was me and Pongo."

"Let's hope the old chap won't follow the thing up, anyway," said Curly Gibson.

It was a forlorn hope—and a hope that Wally & Co. very soon had reason to abandon. The fags had just reached the school gates, and as Wally finished speaking a smart pony and trap came bowling up behind them.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jameson. "It's old Bland! Get that blessed dog out of sight, Wally."

"Cut off to the kennels with him!" hissed Jameson.

But it was too late for that. Before the elusive Pongo could be gathered up, the trap had reached them. It was Colonel Bland right enough—the grim martinet was handling the reins, and behind him sat the footman the fags

had seen harnessing the pony at the Manor stables. Colonel Bland was an old-fashioned gentleman who detested cars, and who still stuck to horses.

His eyes glittered under his brows as they rested on the hapless Wally, just making a grab at Pongo.

He pulled up the pony in a flash, and waved his whip at the startled, dismayed fags.

"Ha! So you thought to escape me, did you?" he snorted, glaring down at Wally. "Begad! I came along just in time. I know you, and I know your confounded dog! Wilkinson, get down and hold that— Good gad!"

The colonel broke off with a gasp, for at that instant Pongo took a hand in the proceedings. Pongo had easily evaded Wally's grasp, and at the old gentleman's rasping voice had pricked-up his ears.

Then he saw the colonel, and obviously he recognised his late enemy.

He gave a deep growl, and made a ferocious leap for the trap.

"Down, Pongo!" yelled Wally in alarm. "Pon— Oh, my aunt!"

His command came too late to be of use. As Pongo sprang, the startled pony reared. Then it started off through the gateway, the colonel making frantic grabs at the tossing reins.

"Pongo—Pongo, you villain!" panted Wally.

But Pongo was far too excited to hear or heed his master. He went leaping after the trap, making futile leaps upwards, and missing being run over again and again as if by a miracle.

It was all up now—Wally had already realised that. The only thing to be done was to capture the wretched Pongo ere he did further damage.

Wally tore after the trap, calling Pongo at the top of his youthful voice.

Fortunately, the pony was not going fast—indeed, the yelping Pongo gave him little chance. And luckily Colonel Bland managed to grab the reins, and after a brief struggle he succeeded in holding in the frightened pony to some extent as it plunged and reared.

But they were almost up to the old archway leading to the quad now, and what might have happened can only be guessed. As it was, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came hurrying under the archway just then, attracted by the shouts and commotion.

He stared for a moment in amazement at the rocking trap with its startled occupants, at Pongo, and at Wally racing behind, and then he acted swiftly.

He sprang to the side of the gravel drive, waited until the pony was almost upon him, and then he leaped for the reins and grabbed them.

His strong grasp held, and the next moment Wilkinson was out of the trap and was at the pony's head. At the same instant Wally reached Pongo and grabbed him fast. It had all happened in a few brief seconds, and it was exceedingly lucky that it had ended as it had.

Wally realised that, and his face was quite pale now.

"That—that confounded dog!" spluttered Colonel Bland. He hurriedly dismounted, his features red and furious. "Thank you, Railton! Good gad! This—this is the last straw! That confounded dog must be shot—I shall insist upon it, begad! And that young rascal shall be soundly flogged!"

"Colonel Bland! My dear sir," exclaimed the astonished Mr. Railton, "what has happened?"

"That—that mongrel!" hooted the old gentleman. "Good gad! It might have ended in a nasty accident! Wilkinson, look after that pony until I return. Railton, I insist upon an interview with Dr. Holmes without a moment's delay. Poaching on my estate, begad! Biting me—me! You understand, Railton? That—that wretched animal! And now—now nearly causing a serious accident, begad!"

"Colonel, what—?" began Mr. Railton in surprise.

"I mean what I say!" hooted the old gentleman, shaking his whip at the hapless Wally, who was holding the wriggling, barking Pongo with difficulty. "That boy and his confounded dog have been poaching on my estate—after rabbits, begad! A St. Jim's boy—poaching!"

"Good heavens!" said the Housemaster, with a start. "Impossible, colonel."

"It is a fact, I tell you!" bellowed the colonel, glaring at the astounded Housemaster. "And, to add insult to injury, that—that dangerous animal bit me—bit my hand! And now—"

The excited colonel choked with wrath and indignation. Mr. Railton looked astounded. He glanced sharply at the scared Wally, and then he set his lips.

"I will see to this matter without delay, sir," he said. "D'Arcy, take your dog to the kennels at once. Afterwards, go to your Form-room and wait there until you are sent for."

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Wally.

"Will you kindly come with me, colonel," said Mr. Railton, turning again to the old gentleman. "Dr. Holmes is in, and this matter will certainly be inquired into without delay."

The Housemaster led the way under the archway, and the colonel followed him, giving Wally and the startled fags and juniors who had come up a parting glare.

"Oh crumbs! That's done it!" groaned Jameson. "Oh, my only aunt! What awful luck!"

"Better buck up, Wally!" said Curly Gibson. "Here, we'll see to Pongo; you cut off to the Form-room. Never mind; we'll back you up, old man!"

Wally nodded, and handed over Pongo. That troublesome animal was docile enough now; he seemed to realise he had done wrong this time. Wally patted him, and then he hurried away to the Third Form room. It was no good risking making the Head "waxy" by not being on the spot when wanted.

"What awful luck!" said Tom Merry. The juniors had been among the first on the scene, and their faces were graver than ever now. "Young Wally's booked for trouble this time!"

"No doubt about that," said Blake. "Well, he fairly asked for it before, but this is a bit of sheer bad luck!"

"It's frightful, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus dismally. "I wealdly think I'd better hupwy in and see the Head myself."

"Don't be an ass!" grunted Blake. "You'd only make matters worse, you dummy! You know what you are for putting your silly hoof in things!"

"Wealdy, Blake—"

"We might do some good for the kid, though," said Tom Merry. "We can prove that he wasn't after the blessed rabbits, anyway! And, what's more, we will! Let's go in and see what's happening!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

And the scared crowd hurried indoors to see what happened to the luckless Wally. It was certainly not Wally D'Arcy's lucky day!

CHAPTER 7.

The Fiat Goes Forth!

WALLY D'ARCY was feeling far from cheerful as he waited in the Form-room for the expected summons to visit the Head's study.

For once, the scamp of the Third was really alarmed. Colonel Bland was a governor of St. Jim's, and also a very "big" man locally. There really was no knowing what punishment he might insist upon for the unfortunate series of "accidents." For Wally persisted upon looking on them as accidents.

Not that Wally was afraid of a licking—or a flogging, for that matter. But Wally realised only too well that there was more than a possibility that it might mean more than that.

And the fag's face was not a little white and strained as the summons came at last, and he followed Kildare to the Head's study.

To Wally's surprise, Colonel Bland was not in the room—which was some measure of relief, at all events. But Mr. Railton was with the Head, and they both gave Wally very stern glances as he stood before the desk.

"D'Arcy minor," said the Head quietly. "I have sent for you to answer a very serious charge brought against you by Colonel Bland, of Rylcombe Manor. To me, it seems an amazing and shocking charge to bring against any boy from this school—and especially against a member of the Third Form. The colonel claims that, together with other members of your Form, you were found poaching on his estates."

"We—I wasn't poaching at all, sir!" said Wally steadily. "It was just an accident. Pongo, my dog, slipped away from me and went after a rabbit. I tried to stop him, but couldn't. I wouldn't dream of going after rabbits, sir!"

"Then why were you there with that dog at all, D'Arcy?" asked Dr. Holmes sternly. "You are aware that the estate is strictly out of bounds."

For a moment Wally hesitated. But it was the choice of two evils, and there was no help for it.

"We—that is, I was ratting, sir."

"What?"

"I was after rats, sir," stammered Wally. "Pongo's jolly good—I mean, very good at killing rats, and I'd heard there were plenty in the old hut in the woods. I—I

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felt sure the colonel would be glad to have his rats killed. People don't like rats about, do they, sir?"

It was rather ingenious of Wally to finish up with that; but it left Dr. Holmes unmoved, and he did not answer the question.

His face set grimly.

"Who were your companions, D'Arcy minor?" he snapped.

Wally's lips set. He did not reply.

"Very well; I will not pursue that question," said Dr. Holmes. "Mr. Railton will make strict inquiries, however. You have acted in an outrageous manner and with a flagrant disregard for the rules of this school. Colonel Bland, however, insists that you were engaged in poaching, and it will be necessary for you to prove your statement that you were not."

"I'm speaking the truth, sir!" said Wally eagerly. "We went to the old barn first, sir, but there were no rats there, and so we went on towards the woods. Then Pongo spotted—I mean saw those rabbits and—"

Knock!

A knock at the door interrupted Wally. Then the door opened, and the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared. Behind him showed various other juniors. An excited whispering sounded.

"Gussy, you ass!"

"Come back, you idiot!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus marched gracefully into the study, Blake's frantic clutch just missing him by an inch. The door closed. Wally could not help grinning a little. It was clear that his noble major was on the warpath—that he was "chipping in" as usual, and that Blake & Co. had tried to stop him. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton looked at him in surprise.

"D'Arcy major!" said the Head angrily. "Leave the room!"

"Pway pardon this intwusion, sir," said Arthur Augustus; "but I felt bound to come in orдах to explain my minah's weckless conduct—"

"If you know anything of this matter, you may proceed, D'Arcy major!" snapped the Head. "Kindly be brief!"

"Oh, yaas, sir! You see, sir—"

Knock!

Arthur Augustus himself was interrupted this time. The door opened, and Tom Merry, looking very red in the face, marched in. Dr. Holmes glared at him.

"Merry—"

"Excuse me, sir," said Tom, rather breathlessly, "but I felt I ought to come to explain what I know of this matter of D'Arcy minor!"

"If you know the circumstances of the case, Merry, I shall be glad to hear what you have to say," said the Head, rather irritably.

"Wealdy, Tom Mewwy—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! Kindly proceed, Merry!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus frowned very deeply. That Dr. Holmes was overlooking his prior claim to explain was amazing and very annoying to the noble Arthur Augustus. As a matter of fact, Tom had felt obliged to "chip in" simply in order to stop Arthur Augustus from making a "muck" of things—a fact that would have annoyed Gussy still more had he known it.

The next moment Tom was explaining the circumstances quietly and clearly, carefully refraining, however, from bringing any other names into the matter. Tom saw, more than anyone else, that the matter might turn out very seriously for Wally, unless the true facts were made known and proved.

"Very well, my boy," said the Head grimly at last. "Have you anything to add to what Merry has stated, D'Arcy major?"

"No, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust, howevah, that you will not ovahlook the fact that my minah is only a youngstah, and that he appears to have been let down vewy badly by Pongo, sir."

"Look here, Gus—"

"Silence, D'Arcy minor! I am not likely to overlook that fact, D'Arcy," snapped the Head. "I am glad that your evidence supports D'Arcy minor's claim. His offence is serious enough, however, and Colonel Bland insists upon a very severe punishment. The unfortunate incident in the quadrangle has severely shaken him, and he has been obliged to return home, leaving me to deal with the matter. Merry."

"Yes, sir."



"Your action in aiding this wretched boy to escape from his detention in the manor stables was foolish and lawless. For that D'Arcy major appears to be equally to blame, and I shall punish you both, despite the fact that your attempt to prevent this reckless escapade in the first place is to be commended."

"Oh, ye-es, sir!"

The Head rose and selected a cane from his desk drawer. "Hold out your hand, Merry!"

Tom Merry held out his hand. He had expected punishment, and he was ready for it. Three on each hand he received as his share, and then Arthur Augustus had his share, which was the same.

"Now you may go!" snapped the Head.

Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus went, tucking their tingling palms under their arms and looking very sorry for themselves.

"Now, D'Arcy minor," exclaimed the Head, as the door closed, "you will be severely caned, and I shall ask Mr. Railton to set you a heavy imposition. In addition, you will, of course, get rid of that troublesome and dangerous dog. After what has happened it is impossible for him to remain at this school."

"Oh, sir!"

Wally's face became the picture of misery. He had feared something of the kind—had dreaded it. But now the blow had fallen his heart sank in dismay.

"Oh, sir," he panted huskily, "don't—don't send old Pongo away! I don't care what you do to me. I'd rather be flogged, or anything, than lose old Pongo, sir! It wasn't his fault; it was mine for taking him among those rabbits. He couldn't resist going for them. Please, sir—"

"Silence! I am sorry, D'Arcy minor," said the Head, his stern face relaxing a little, "but it is impossible for me to allow this dog to remain after what has happened. It was only by a miracle that a serious accident was avoided this afternoon in the quadrangle. The dog is quite uncontrollable, and must be sent away. Only this afternoon, I understand, he attacked Mr. Selby, who has complained more than once that the dog is troublesome and dangerous. You may either sell him, or have him sent to your own home. I will ask Kildare to see that this is done at the earliest possible moment."

"But, sir—please, sir—"

"That is enough, my boy," said the Head, raising his hand. "It is impossible for me to reconsider my decision."

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

Dr. Holmes picked up his cane again. But at the abject misery in the fag's eyes he hesitated, and then he laid it down again. There were tears in Wally's eyes and his lips were quivering. It was obvious that no punishment could be so severe as the punishment of depriving the hapless fag of his pet.

But, though a kindly man, Dr. Holmes felt that his decision was very necessary, and he had no intention of revoking it.

"I shall not cane you, after all, my boy," he said briefly. "You may go. I shall expect to hear that the dog has been sent away before to-morrow noon at the latest, however."

"Please listen to me, sir—" begged Wally tremblingly; but the Head pointed to the door.

"That is enough. Go!"

And Wally went, his eyes glistening, his head sunk in the deepest misery. He passed out, and found a group of juniors and fags waiting in the passage.

"Wally!" said Tom Merry, as the door closed. "What—what—Here, hold up, kid!"

"Bai Jove! What has happened, Wally?" said Arthur Augustus, startled at the look on his minor's face. "It—it's not the sack?"

"No."

"Then—then what—"

"Pongo!" almost whispered the fag. "Pongo's got to go. The Head says I've to send him away."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove. But weally, Wally—"

"Leave me alone!" muttered Wally, shaking off his major's grasp almost savagely.

The fag walked blindly on, leaving the crowd staring after him.

"Bai Jove! What—"

"Just what I feared," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "It had to come, after what's happened. But—but poor old Wally! I'm sorry for the kid!"

"He looks fairly floored," agreed Blake. "It's hard lines!"

Wally lived and moved and had his being in Pongo, and they could realise well enough what the sentence meant to the hapless fag. And the juniors round the door of the Head's study broke up in silence.

CHAPTER 8.

Wally's Scheme!

"READY with that dog, kid?"

Eric Kildare asked the question the following afternoon, shortly after lessons were ended. Tom Merry & Co., with Wally D'Arcy and several of his chums of the Third, were round at the kennels.

Since the previous evening most of the fellows had been very sympathetic towards the scapegrace of the Third. Herries of the Fourth, especially, could feel for the fag in his trouble. Herries knew how he would feel if he was ordered to send Towser, his own pet bulldog, home. And as Herries knew all that was to be known about dogs—or he claimed he did—and as he had often sent Towser away by train to various dog shows, he had very kindly volunteered to help Wally to get Pongo packed up and sent off, so to speak.

Wally, naturally enough, had not been in any hurry to carry the Head's order out. Indeed, he had left it until the last possible moment, hoping against hope that the Head would relent.

But the Head remained firm. And though Wally had visited Mr. Railton and had pleaded with him to try to get the Head to change his decision, it had all been in vain. Pongo must go!

So Wally had perforce to scurry round and obtain Herries' aid in the job of packing up Pongo. And though Herries had been about to start for Wayland with his chums, he kindly postponed the start in order to help Wally.

Curiously enough, the Third-Former did not seem dismayed at the prospect of losing Pongo. Indeed, he was almost his old cheeky self when Kildare turned up to see if all was ready for Pongo's departure. As it happened, Herries had lent Wally a special hamper, and when Kildare arrived Pongo was safely ensconced inside it, though the juniors had had a far from easy job to get him in. Pongo

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seemed to know that something serious was amiss, and from the noise he was making now he obviously did not like the hamper.

"Yes, all ready, Kildare," said Tom Merry. "Are you going to carry the hamper to the station?"

"Eh? Not likely!" said Kildare. "I've something else to do than cart fag's animals about the county!"

"There's no need for it, Kildare, anyway," said Wally eagerly. "I'll see to it, and my pals will help me carry it."

"No, you won't!" said Kildare grimly. "Cripps, the carrier, is in the quad waiting for this hamper now. He'll take Pongo to the station and see him in the guard's van, my lad."

As he spoke Kildare stooped and glanced at the label on the hamper. It was addressed to Eastwood House, Hampshire, and Kildare nodded.

"All serene, kid! You've written home to explain matters, I suppose?"

"Nunno—not yet," admitted Wally.

"You young ass! Better write to-night, then—mind you do! Now, come on! My time's valuable."

Kildare evidently was none too pleased with the job of seeing Pongo off safely. He grabbed one of the handles of the hamper, and Wally grabbed the other. They started off for the quad, the other fellows bringing up the rear.

In the quadrangle Cripps' cart was waiting, and Kildare lifted in the yelping, wildly protesting Pongo.

"I'll just say a last good-bye to the old chap, Kildare," said Wally meekly.

"Oh, all right, kid!"

Kildare moved to give instructions to Cripps, who was standing at the horse's head. Wally scrambled into the cart and stooped over the hamper, speaking to the excited and luckless Pongo. He was only a few brief seconds in the cart, however, and then he jumped down again; and a moment later Cripps' cart was on the move, to the accompaniment of terrific yelps and howls from Pongo.

Kildare walked away, smiling grimly; and Wally D'Arcy, not even stopping to see the cart out of the quad, scudded away with his chums.

"Well, that's the last of Pongo!" grinned Blake. "Aren't you glad, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus was looking very thoughtful.

"Bai Jove! I am afraid I am not sowwy in many ways," he remarked, shaking his head, as he stared after his departing minor. "The feahful little beast was wathah a nuisance, though I am vewy sowwy for Wally's sake. Howevah, I am glad Wally does not seem to be wowwyin' about it now. It is wathah wemarkable."

"It is," agreed Tom Merry, frowning. "I—I suppose he's got used to the idea and sees it's no good being cut up about it. Still, I'm rather surprised the kid has taken it like this. Anyway, let's get off now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors got their cycles from the cycle-shed and started out for Wayland. They had some shopping to do in the town, and they also intended to have tea there, afterwards spending half an hour at the cinema.

It was not until Tom Merry & Co. were riding homewards along the dark lane that they were reminded again of Wally D'Arcy and his pet.

The juniors were riding hard, for it was close on lock-up, and they had just reached the spot where the footpath from Rylcombe joined the lane, when something happened.

Out from the stile dashed a small, furry, white object and scudded across the lane—right before the front wheel of Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, great Scott!"

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

"Yawooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus had jammed on his brakes hard—fortunately for the dog, but with unfortunate results to himself and his chums behind.

As Arthur Augustus slowed up, his chums crashed into him from behind—being a second later in clapping on their brakes.

The next moment five of them were mixed up in the heap on the ground, amid a fearful clatter of machines and startled yells. Only Tom Merry and Lowther, being well on the outside, had escaped the smash-up.

Arthur Augustus sat up dizzily and blinked about him. He was just in time to see the cause of the trouble—a little shaggy mongrel—grab up his silk hat, which lay in the dust of the lane, and bolt into the hedge with it.

From beyond the hedge came a smothered laugh, and then the sound of worrying—apparently the dog was busy with the silk hat.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

It was adding insult to injury with a vengeance. Hurt and dazed as he was, Arthur Augustus gave a yell of wrath, and, leaping to his feet, he swarmed over the stile in pursuit.

"Oh, my hat!"

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"Wha-what was it?"

"Ow! My neck's broken, I think!"

Feeling very much the worse for wear, Blake and the others scrambled up and began to dust themselves down.

"It was a dashed dog!" gasped Herries. "It—it almost looked to me like— Hallo! What's happening to that ass Gussy?"

Something, apparently, was happening to Arthur Augustus. From the dusky trees lining the hedgerow came smothered yells in Gussy's well-known tones.

Most of the juniors were hurt; but, fortunately, none of



them seriously. They scrambled up and followed Tom Merry as he leaped over the stile. The howls of Arthur Augustus soon took them to the spot. They found him lying on a bed of ferns under the dusky trees. He was still hatless, and his jacket had been pulled up over his head. He just managed to pull it down as the astonished juniors came up to him. His noble face was crimson with wrath.

"Gussy! What the thump—"

"What's happened?" demanded Blake. "Who—"

"Gwoogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have been attacked—savagely attacked by some young wuffians who were hidin' heah! I wished atfah that w'etched dog that took my toppah! Bai Jove, there it is!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up and grabbed up his silk hat. Even under the dark trees a glance was enough to show him that it was not likely to be used as headgear again. The brim was almost bitten through, and the silk lining torn, likewise the crown itself.

"Oh, bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "It is absolutely wuined!"

"But who on earth—"

"There were some kids with the dog," said Tom Merry, looking about him sharply. "I spotted them through the hedge."

"I was just goin' for that wotten animal when the wuffians flung themselves upon me," explained Arthur Augustus, with a groan. "Befoah I had the chance to see them they pulled my jacket ovah my head, and then they bolted with the wotten dog."



As a small, furry object dashed across the lane, right before his front wheel, Arthur Augustus jammed on his brakes hard. The next moment he was flying over the handlebars of his bike, and his chums behind were following his example. Crash! Clatter! Crash! (See Chapter 8.)

"My hat!"

The juniors looked about them, astonished. But not for long. From a thicket a few yards away came a sudden scuffling, and then a strange gurgling sound, followed by a strangled yelp.

It was enough for the juniors. In a second they had dashed to the spot. Then they all yelled.

"Wally!"

"Those cheeky fags!"

"And Pongo!"

The latter was a yell.

For it was Wally & Co.—and it was Pongo!

They were crouching in hiding behind the thicket, and Wally had Pongo in his arms and was holding his hand over that troublesome animal's jaws—which explained the gurgles and strangled yelp.

"Well, you—you young villains!"

"Bai Jove! You—you little wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It was you, then! You—you cheeky—"

"Hold on!" gasped Wally. "Hold on! It's all right! It was only an accident!"

"Accident be blowed!" hooted Lowther, who was rubbing a bruise on his head. "That blessed dog—"

"Oh, don't make a fuss about a little smash-up like that! And what about old Pongo?" demanded Wally indignantly.

"You might have run over him!"

"Oh, you—you—"

"In any case, how could I help it?" went on the leader of the Third. "The little beggar got loose and dashed ahead of us—I couldn't stop him! It was your own fault for not keeping your eyes open."

"Bai Jove! But what about me?" spluttered Arthur Augustus. "You young wuffians! You attacked me in a wuffianly mannah—"

"Oh, go on!" said Wally bitterly. "Make a fuss over a little thing like that. We had to do it to stop you spotting Pongo, of course. And now you've all seen him, I suppose you'll split and give the game away."

"But—but this beats me!" exclaimed Tom Merry, fairly blinking at Pongo as if that lively animal was a ghost. "How in thunder has Pongo got here, you young villains? I—I saw him shoved on Cripps' cart with my own eyes."

Wally chuckled and patted Pongo.

"Oh, I managed that easily enough!" he answered airily. "Catch me letting old Pongo be sent away. When I jumped into the cart to say a last good-bye I changed the giddy labels—took the one addressed to Eastwood House off, and shoved another label on, addressed to me at Wayland Junction."

"Bai Jove!"

"Easy as winking!" grinned the scamp of the Third. "I had the label all ready in case Kildare wouldn't let me take Pongo to the station myself. Well, he wouldn't, so I wangled it like that. Then we cut off to the station, and, luckily just caught the train. We travelled to Wayland in the same train as Pongo, and when we got there the guard shoved him on the platform, of course, and we claimed him. And—well, here he is!"

"Bai Jove! You—you dawin' young wascal!"

"Well, I wasn't going to part with old Pongo," said Wally grimly. "I never intended to let Pongo go—if he goes I jolly well go! If I hadn't worked it that way I should have worked it some other way, you bet!"

"Phew! You'll be sacked if this comes out!" gasped Tom Merry. "And where the thump are you going to keep him, Wally?"

"That would be telling!" grinned Wally. "I know of a little place where he can stay for to-night, anyway. Tomorrow I'll find a home for him somewhere close to St. Jim's."

"Well, you've got a nerve!" breathed Blake. "If you're found out—"

"Oh, cheese it!" sniffed Wally. "Like your cheek to chip in again! You silly asses clear off!"

"Look here, Wally," said Tom grimly, "take my tip—send that dog home and drop this mad game."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wally—"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy! You talk too much!"

"Bai Jove! If evah a cheeky fag wequiahed a feahful thwashin' you do, Wally!"

"Oh, dry up! Go and eat coke! You old fogies make me tired!"

"Yes, and we'll make you feel more tired in a minute," said Tom Merry grimly. "Put the cheeky young rotter through it, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here, hold on— Ow! Yaroooh!"

The juniors piled in with a will. They were all more or less feeling the effects of the smash up in the lane, and they were not in the mood to stand more of Wally's cheek—Arthur Augustus less than anyone. At a word from Tom Merry, Herries grabbed and held Pongo, while the rest set to work to teach the three cheeky fags a little respect for their elders.

There were three other fags with Wally—Jameson, Curly Gibson, and Joe Frayne—and the wrathful juniors swarmed over them amid a chorus of startled howls. They rolled the fags in the brambles, and stuffed their caps and handfuls of grass and moss down the back of their necks. Then they grabbed them and bumped them down one on top of the other in a bed of nettles.

Then, Herries releasing the barking Pongo, they departed, leaving the yelling fags in a scrambled, struggling heap.

Feeling a bit better, Tom Merry & Co. picked up their machines and started back for St. Jim's. Luckily, save for paint scratched off, and sundry dents, the machines had not suffered from the accident, and soon the juniors were pedalling home in the early dusk. But Tom Merry, at least, was looking very serious and thoughtful as he thought

of Wally and Pongo. There had been plenty of trouble at St. Jim's over Pongo; but Tom felt certain there was going to be more over that mischievous animal. And he was right!

CHAPTER 9.

Very Mysterious!

"HALLO! What—"
"What the thump—"
"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. halted, quite startled.

It was just after dinner the following day, and the Terrible Three had joined Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, who were strolling near the ruined tower of the school.

They were sauntering on, discussing footer, and had just reached the ancient ruins, when suddenly, without warning, a terrific outcry of growling and barking, together with a series of terrified yells, reached their startled ears.

They stared about them blankly for a moment, and then Tom Merry gasped.

"It sounds like that—that dashed dog again!"

"It's Pongo for a pension!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "And it sounds as if he's having a bit of a dust-up with someone."

It certainly did sound like it. And the commotion seemed to come from the old, ivy-clad tower.

As the juniors started forwards it a figure scrambled through one of the shattered lower windows of the tower and dropped hurriedly to the ground.

It proved to be a fag—young Piggott of the Third. His face was white and scared, and there was a big rip in his trousers at the rear.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, with a grim chuckle. "So that's it! Wally's shoved Pongo in the tower, and Piggott—the rotten little sneak—has been sneaking round and found him!"

"He's found him all right!" grinned Lowther. "Hallo! What's the matter, Piggott?"

Piggott came hurrying towards them, but he halted in confusion as he saw the juniors.

"Ow! Ow-wow!" he gasped. "That—that rotten beast! I thought—I mean, I didn't know the beast was there!"

Piggott seemed scared out of his wits. As a matter of fact, it was just as Tom Merry had said. As usual, Piggott had been sneaking round. He had seen Wally & Co. go round that way in rather a cautious manner that morning, and, full of suspicion, the cad of the Third had been investigating—with the kindly intention of finding out something against Wally & Co. if he could. Piggott always had a good many scores to settle with Wally & Co.

But Piggott had never dreamed of the truth, and the very sight of Pongo had been a shock to him—and Pongo had evidently resented the intrusion. Pongo did not like Piggott.

"Spying again, what?" asked Lowther pleasantly. "What a dear, kindly little fellow you are! Always looking for trouble for other people, and always finding it for yourself instead!"

"I—I wasn't spying!" panted Piggott, scowling. "I—I just happened to hear a noise from the tower, and I went to see what it was. I shinned through the window, and then—that beast flew at me!"

"Which beast?" asked Blake innocently.

"Pongo, D'Arcy minor's beastly dog!" said Piggott, his beady eyes glittering with spite. "He hasn't been sent away, after all, the little beast is tied up in the tower there! It was all spoof, his being sent away! I thought something was on—I mean, I—I thought—"

"Just so!" agreed Blake. "Here, that piece of your trousers is hanging down loose! Let's see if I can fix it right with my boot!"

And Blake made a lunge at Piggott's rear with his boot.

"Yoooop! Oh, you rotter!"

Piggott scuttled away, apparently not wanting Blake to help him with his boot. Tom Merry & Co. saw him reach the Close, and just as he did so Knox of the Sixth met him. Knox noted his appearance at once, and, being a very officious prefect, he stopped the fag.

"Here, you little sweep!" he snapped. "What are you doing prowling about in that state, you disreputable young scoundrel? Go indoors at once and change, and take fifty lines for appearing in public like that!"

"It wasn't my fault!" said Piggott sulkily, though the listening juniors guessed he was more than pleased at being given the chance to sneak. "I couldn't help the dog going for me, could I?"

"Eh—what dog?" said Knox, with a start. "That beast of Herries', you mean?"

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"No. It was—I don't want to tell tales, Knox; but if you order me to speak—"

"I do order you, Piggott!" snapped Knox, suddenly interested.

"Well, it was Pongo, D'Arcy minor's dog!" said Piggott, unable to restrain the note of triumph in his voice. "He's tied up in the old tower; he's not sent away at all! I happened to hear a noise there, and when I went to see what it was the beast flew at me!"

"Wha-at! Is—is that a fact?" gasped Knox.

"Yes. Look at my trousers!"

"Right! We'll thundering well see about that!" snapped Knox. "Go and find Kildare, kid—and Mr. Railton, too, for that matter! Tell them what you've told me and ask them to come to the old tower! Cut off—sharp!"

"Right, Knox!"

Piggott "cut" off, feeling that the fright he had had and the tear in his trousers were worth it, after all. Knox hesitated a moment, and then he hurried towards the old tower.

"Oh, my hat! That's done it!" breathed Blake.

"That wotten little worm!" gasped Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "Bai Jove, how wotten! Cannot we do anythin', deah boys!"

"Too late I'm afraid!" muttered Tom Merry. "But wait! There's a chance yet! Stand back! Don't let Knox see us!"

The prefect had reached the tower, and, after trying the door, he turned and hurried back again, obviously not having sighted the juniors standing just beyond the corner at the back of the chapel.

"Gone to Taggles' lodge to get the key," said Tom briefly. "Good job he never thought of the window!"

"He must have heard Pongo barking, though," said Lowther. "Hark at the little beggar!"

"Now's our chance, anyway!" said Tom Merry. "We're not letting Knox and that little sweep Piggott score, and we're not going to stand by and see Wally sacked either, if we can help it!"

"Wathah not! But—"

"Come on—sharp!" snapped Tom. "We've got a few scores to settle with dear old Knoxy, and here's a chance! We'll teach him not to be so anxious to get fellows into trouble!"

And, without waiting for a reply, Tom started off for the tower at top speed, his chums following instantly.

"Now hide!" snapped Tom, as they arrived there. "And when Knox starts to open the door, go for him and bowl him over! Shove something over his eyes if you can—he mustn't spot us, or the fat will be in the fire! Herries, you slip in and get Pongo away somehow! You can manage him easily enough!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've got an old collar of Towser's in my pocket!" grinned Herries. "There's no name on it, and it wouldn't be a bad idea to shove it round Knox's neck and tie the sneaky brute up in Pongo's place! It would be a nice surprise for Railton!"

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chorus of chuckles as the juniors took up their positions. The ivy was thick round the walls of the shattered tower, and huge blocks of masonry lay near it—affording ample hiding-places for the juniors.

They had scarcely taken up their positions when footsteps sounded, and Knox came hurrying up. His eyes were gleaming, and it was clear that he did not mean to miss the opportunity of making trouble for Wally D'Arcy. All was fish that came into Knox's net, and though the leader of the Third to him was very small "fry," the prefect knew what a sensation would be caused in the school when Wally's daring scheme was known.

Knox fitted the ancient, rusty key in the lock and turned it. But that was all he was allowed to do. There was a whispered order from Tom Merry, and the next instant Knox got the shock of his life.

As one man seven juniors sprang upon him, and as he was borne back, giving vent to a startled yell, a handkerchief was whipped over his eyes.

He struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain. Knox was a big fellow, but the seven active juniors were too many for him. Moreover, they knew the grave risk they were running, and they made no mistake.

Nor were they any too gentle with the bullying prefect: they had far too many old scores to settle with him for that.

There was a brief, desperate struggle, and the next thing Knox realised was that his hands were pinned and tied in front of him. Then the door was flung wide, and he was shoved into the dingy, moss-grown basement of the tower.

He strove to release his hands and to wriggle the handkerchief from his eyes in vain.

"You little fiends!" he bellowed. "I know who you are! Let me go, confound you! By gad, you—you'll suffer for this!"

Only a chuckle answered him. In less time than it takes to tell, Herries was outside with the delighted Pongo, and he vanished in a flash, having handed Tom Merry the dog-collar that had once adorned Towser. It was the work of a moment to slip this round Knox's neck and strap it there. Then, with the aid of his chuckling chums, Tom Merry attached it to the rope that had been used for tethering Pongo.

Knox roared and danced with rage and amazement.

But Tom Merry and his chums did not linger to listen or to look, entertaining as Knox's behaviour was. They snatched the handkerchief from his eyes and fled.

They did not go very far, however. Reaching the cloisters, they hid there and waited to see the fun.

Only just in time! Scarcely had they hidden when footsteps sounded, and Kildare hurried up, with Darrell behind him, their faces showing annoyance and disbelief. They were followed by quite a crowd of excited juniors and lads and several seniors. Evidently Piggott wanted a good audience to witness Wally D'Arcy's "bowling-out."

"Safe enough now!" murmured Tom Merry. "Let's mix with the crowd and get a front seat!"

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry & Co. left their places cautiously, and, watching their chance, they joined the crowd round the tower.

On leaving the tower the juniors had closed and locked the door, and Kildare's face showed a bit of interest as he found the key in the lock. Evidently Kildare had been suspecting a "spoof." But the next moment he jumped as Knox's voice came from within in a roar, Knox having heard their arrival.

"Do you hear?" he was bellowing. "Let me loose, confound you! I'll get you sacked for this, you little fiends!"

Apparently Knox took the newcomers for his enemies again.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Kildare. "Knox is in there, anyway!"

There was a general chuckle. Most of the juniors, at all events, guessed that something unpleasant had happened to the bullying prefect.

They soon saw what it was.

As Kildare flung the door wide there was a general yell of surprise, followed by a howl of laughter. With his hands tied in front of him and the dog-collar round his neck, Knox certainly looked a weird and ludicrous sight.

Just then Mr. Railton strode up, frowning, as he heard the laughter.

"What is the matter?" he began. "Kildare, I was given to understand—Why, what—Knox!"

"Cut me loose, some of you!" hooted Knox, realising who the newcomers were now. "Cut me loose, you cackling fools!"

"Knox!" gasped Mr. Railton; he was scarcely able to believe his eyes as he blinked at the hapless prefect.

Kildare's face wore a curious grin as he cut Knox free. The raging prefect struggled furiously with the dog-collar, amid a yell of laughter from the crowd.

"Well, Knox has done some collaring in his time," murmured Monty Lowther. "But he's fairly collared himself now."

"Silence!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Knox, you foolish fellow, what does this absurd affair mean?"

"I—I—I—" Knox spluttered and choked with rage. "It was some young villains! They—they did this to me!"

"But—but—"

"It was that young villain D'Arcy minor and his pals!" spluttered Knox, glaring about him furiously. "They did it to stop me finding that beastly dog here."

"Knox! What are you talking about?"

"I mean what I say!" said Knox furiously. "Piggott told me that D'Arcy minor's dog was tied up in here—that it was

"You clear off of this, miss," began the leader of the villagers. But he got no further, for Wally D'Arcy had arrived on the scene like a whirlwind. His fist smacked home under the chin of the village boy, sending him crashing back with a yell. (See Chapter 10.)



all spoof the dog being sent away. I came here and heard the dog barking myself. I went for the key, after sending for you, and when I came back the young villains attacked me."

"What—what nonsense!" said the Housemaster, eyeing Knox in annoyed amazement. "The dog was sent away yesterday. You have made a foolish and absurd mistake, Knox. You have also wasted my time, and made yourself look ridiculous!"

"It's true, I tell you!" gasped Knox, almost beside himself with rage. "I heard—There's young Piggott now."

Piggott, who was hovering on the fringe of the crowd, looking absolutely astounded, backed away, but Mr. Railton called to him.

"Piggott," he demanded sternly, "what do you know of this matter?"

"I—I can't understand it, sir!" babbled Piggott. "I—I happened to be round here just now, and I heard a dog barking in there. I slipped through the window to see what it was, and Pongo went for me—he tore my trousers," added the fag, showing his torn nether garments.

"Nonsense! Rubbish!" Kildare saw the dog you speak of placed in the carrier's cart. It should be at D'Arcy's home by this time."

"That's so, sir," said Kildare, smiling grimly. "I helped D'Arcy minor to lift it in the cart myself."

"But it mustn't have gone, sir!" gasped Piggott. "I saw Pongo; I know him well, sir. He flew at me and did this."

"Did you see the dog, Knox?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"No, sir! I heard it, though, and I'm certain it was D'Arcy's dog! If it wasn't, then why should I be attacked

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like this?" snarled Knox, his face crimson. "They did it to stop me seeing it."

"Rubbish!" said Mr. Railton tartly. "It is an absurd mistake on behalf of this foolish boy Piggott. It could not possibly have been Pongo, D'Arcy minor's dog. There are several other boys at St. Jim's who own dogs."

"Then why was I attacked?" almost hooted Knox.

"That is for you to discover, Knox," said Mr. Railton dryly. "The whole thing is obviously a foolish, practical joke of which you are the victim. I am very annoyed with you, Knox. You should have made quite certain before wasting my time in this manner."

"But, sir—" spluttered Knox.

"None the less," proceeded the Housemaster grimly, his stern glance going over the crowd, "to attack a prefect is a very serious matter, and the culprits, if discovered, will be punished very severely indeed. Ah, here is D'Arcy minor now!"

Wally D'Arcy came hurrying along, with Curly Gibson and Jameson behind him. The fags were looking startled. They stared as they ran up, but a look of deep relief came over Wally's face as he noted that Pongo was not present—also at the reassuring wink that Blake managed to give him.

"D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton sternly. "Piggott claims that your dog was in this tower a few minutes ago, tied up, and Knox supports that claim. Is it possible that—"

"Pongo!" exclaimed Wally in well-assumed astonishment. "Why, Pongo was put in Cripps' cart yesterday afternoon; you know, the Head ordered him to be sent to my home, sir. Kildare will tell you, sir—"

"Kildare has already assured me on that point," said Mr. Railton, "and I am quite satisfied that the animal did go. It is absurd to suppose otherwise. Knox, however, has also been assaulted, D'Arcy minor, in a scandalous manner, and he claims that you had a hand in the outrage. Do you know anything about it, boy?"

Wally shook his head; the scamp of the Third was on his mettle, and he knew he was on very dangerous ground.

"I certainly know nothing about it, then, sir," he answered. "I have only just left the Form-room; Mr. Selby detained me, with Jameson and Gibson. I've only just come away. Selby—I mean, Mr. Selby will tell you that, sir."

"Very good," said Mr. Railton. "I am quite satisfied without asking Mr. Selby, my boy. Knox, it is impossible, obviously, that D'Arcy minor took part in the attack; you must see that now. If, however, you discover the culprits, you may report them to me, and I will see they are punished suitably."

And with that Mr. Railton rustled away, giving the furious Knox a far from genial glance as he did so. Mr. Railton knew Knox fairly well, and he obviously guessed the prefect had come to grief while nosing round looking for a "mare's-nest," as he often did. Possibly the Housemaster felt it served him right. And the crowd dispersed, Knox almost beside himself with rage, and the rest of the crowd grinning openly and delightedly.

Wally D'Arcy, his cheeky face showing his great relief, joined Tom Merry & Co., who were in high glee at the success of their jape.

"I say, you fellows," he demanded eagerly. "what's happened?"

Tom Merry told him—taking due care nobody was within hearing as he did so.

"Phew!" breathed Wally. "What a giddy narrow escape! Thanks, you chaps! But—but where's Pongo?"

"Herries hasn't come back yet—Hullo! Here he is now!"

Herries, a broad grin on his face, joined the group. He had missed the fun, but Trimble had just told him what had happened.

"All serene?" demanded Tom.

"Yes; I handed over Pongo to young Frayne and Reggie Manners," said Herries. "They've yanked him off across the playing fields somewhere—goodness knows where! He's well away now, though."

"Don't you know where?" demanded Wally.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Why the thump didn't you ask 'em?" said Wally, with a grunt.

"That some more of your gratitude?" asked Herries. "You'll get my boot, you cheeky young—"

"Hold on!" grinned Tom Merry. "Leave the kid alone now. Wally, you young rascal, you'd better be careful, my lad. You're heading for the sack."

"Bow-wow!"

"If you'll take my tip," said Tom, becoming serious, "you'll send that blessed mongrel home now while you've got the chance. You see what's just happened—"

"I wish I had seen it, old bean!"

"You may not have the luck again," said Tom patiently. "And you'd better watch young Piggott."

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"I'm going to give the sweep the hiding of his life!" said Wally.

"That won't do any good," said Tom. "Look here—"

"Rats!" said Wally cheerfully. "And he walked away with Curly Gibson and Jameson. Apparently the scapegrace of the Third did not feel in need of Tom Merry's advice, good as it undoubtedly was."

CHAPTER 10.

To the Rescue!

"OH, here you are, you men! Well?"

Wally D'Arcy greeted Reggie Manners and Joe Frayne eagerly as they came in some time afterwards. Naturally, Wally was very anxious indeed to know what had happened to Pongo, and he had been waiting for his chums' return in a fever of impatience.

The two fags grinned, and nodded.

"All serene!" murmured Reggie Manners, after a glance round. "Pongo's all right."

"But where is he?"

Joe Frayne looked a bit dubious about answering.

"Right as rain," said Reggie Manners. "We've tied him up in old Bland's barn. He's all right there until you've found a giddy home for him."

"In—in Bland's barn?" ejaculated Wally.

"Yes. Good a place as any, ain't it?"

"Only place we could think of, Wally," said Joe Frayne. "I'm blessed if I could think of a place for him, but Reggie suggested that."

"Well, nobody ever goes there," said Manners. "It's out of bounds, and easily got at. I thought we'd better take him somewhere where none of our fellows were likely to go."

"Well, you silly chumps!" said Wally. "Fancy shoving the poor beggar there!"

"Well, he likes rats, doesn't he?" grinned Reggie. "And they'll keep him amused."

"If you want a thick ear—"

"No good getting your rag out, Wally," said Joe Frayne.

"We did our best, you know, and, after all, where the thump could we have taken him?"

"Blessed if I know!" grunted Wally, admitting the difficulty. "There's Pepper's barn—"

"Locked up!" said Joe Frayne promptly. "We thought of that. And the boathouse and pavilion are too risky. Anyway, you'll be able to go and get him out after afternoon class, Wally."

"I'm fed-up with the blessed animal, anyway," grunted Reggie Manners. "If you're not satisfied with what we've done, you can look after the little beggar yourself."

And Manners minor walked away, his hands in his pockets.

Wally snorted. Though he couldn't himself think of a place to take the outcast Pongo, he wasn't at all satisfied with his chums' selection. The thought of Pongo being imprisoned in that gloomy barn was very disturbing to Wally. A cosy study with a good fire and plenty of comfy cushions was Wally's idea of a suitable place for his pet.

Still, that was out of the question—even Wally admitted that.

Certainly, Pongo was not likely to be discovered. The barn was some little distance from the lane, and it was not likely to be visited by keepers, either. But—

"Look here!" said Wally, making his mind up. "I'm going to have a look at the little beggar!"

"Right!" said Curly Gibson good-naturedly. "I'll be ready after class, and I'll come with you, old chap."

"After class!" snorted Wally. "I'm not leaving poor old Pongo there all alone until then. Why, the poor beggar will be eating his heart out. I'm going now!"

"But—but it's nearly time for class!"

"Blow class! Tell old Selby from me to go and chop chips! I'm off!"

With that, Wally scudded off towards the gates, leaving his startled chum staring after him. Curly Gibson was not likely to give that message to Mr. Selby.

But he saw it was useless to attempt to stop his reckless chum. Indeed, Wally was already through the gates, unheeding Taggles' wrathful shouts.

At top speed the leader of the Third scudded for the barn. What he intended to do with Pongo when he got him Wally had no clear idea as yet. But he was determined to get him out of that gloomy barn without delay. He trusted to be able to think of a way out of the difficulty when that was accomplished.

As he left the lane and drew nearer to the barn, Wally was aware of angry barking, alternating with shrill yelps—yelps of pain!

Then Wally became aware also of hoarse shouts and guffaws of laughter from the distant barn, and as he heard them his jaw set, and he put on speed for all he was worth.

There was no mistaking what the mixture of sounds meant—it was too significant.

He was through a gap in the hedge now, and the barn was in sight. His eyes gleamed as he made out a group of youths—village louts, apparently—gathered round the doorway of the barn.

Then he sighted someone else—a slight, girlish figure, standing defiantly before the villagers. The coarse laughter had ceased now, and Wally grasped the position as he heard the girl's clear, defiant tones above the threatening yells.

"You dare!" she was storming indignantly. "You cruel bullies, to torture a poor dog like that! You shan't do it again, you hateful brutes!"

"Look 'ere, miss!" came the savage yell. "You clear outer this! What's it gotter do with you? You clear out, or you'll get 'urt! Who asked you to—"

The leader of the villagers got no further. For at that moment Wally arrived like a whirlwind.

His fist smacked home under the chin of the village boy, cutting short his remarks—at least, those that were intelligible. He gave a strangled howl as he went crashing against the post of the barn door.

"Yarooooogh!"

That yell was followed by a whole series of yells, as Wally

The sight of Pongo, released now, was enough for the villagers—they fairly flew. They had quite enjoyed pelting Pongo with turfs and horse-chestnuts—not at all afraid of him when he was tied up.

But now he was loose!

In a couple of seconds the youths were through the hedge and vanishing at a great speed across the meadows.

Wally could not help grinning, angry as he had been. He had had no intention of letting Pongo go after them—though Pongo was more than ready to do so. It was with difficulty that the fag held his pet in.

The girl laughed merrily.

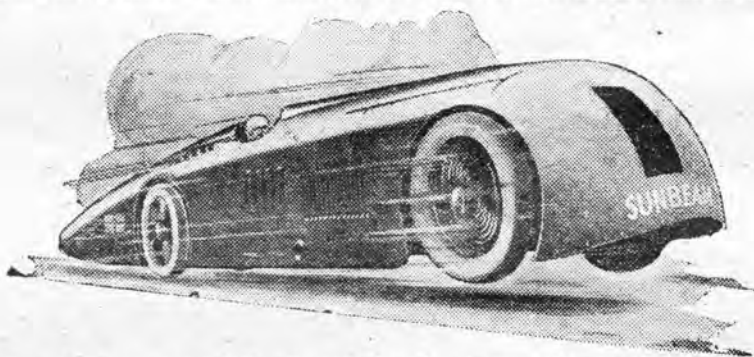
"You shouldn't have told him to go after them and then held him back," she cried. "That was too bad. See how disappointed he is."

Wally flushed crimson as he turned and looked at the girl. In the young hero of the Third's view girls were rather a nuisance and very "small beer" indeed. Wally was very scornful on the subject of girls.

But he looked at this girl now with obvious admiration and respect. She was about his own age, pretty and self-possessed, with bobbed auburn hair. Her face was flushed with excitement now, and her teeth flashed white as she laughed.

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got to work in real earnest. Wally was a little fire-eater at any time; but this was one of the occasions when Wally excelled himself in that line.

He was seething with wrath and indignation, and his savage rush scattered the crowd of youths to right and left.

"Look out!"

"Oh, 'elp! Here, whatcher— Yooooop!"

"Lor' lummy— Yarooooogh!"

"Ow! Run for it!"

For one bewildering moment the youths must have thought it was a dozen Wally's instead of one. The way he waded into them was a sight to see. But they did not stay long—a few brief, whirling seconds' acquaintance with the hitting powers of the champion fighting-man of the Third was enough for those young hooligans of the village. They were nearly all older than Wally, but none of them seemed disposed to put up a fight.

They broke up and fled, yelling.

In a flash Wally was inside the shed, and in a couple of seconds he had released Pongo, who was now nearly frantic with joy.

Taking a tight grip of the leash, Wally ran him out.

"After them, Pongo!"

"Oh, look out!"

"Run for it!"

"I had to frighten those cads away somehow," said Wally. "The bounders were too many for me to handle. They won't come back now, though. What were the brutes doing—pelting old Pongo?" he added, lifting the barking mongrel up and patting him.

"Yes. I came along and tried to stop them," the girl said, her indignation returning. "The brutes were pelting him with turfs and things. I don't know what would have happened if you hadn't come along just then. But, does he belong to you?" she added, nodding and smiling at Pongo.

"Yes, rather!"

"But why was he tied up in there?" demanded the girl, eyeing the fag curiously. "You are from St. Jim's, aren't you?"

"Yes. You—you see—"

Wally hesitated, but he felt very grateful indeed to the stranger, and her frank interest invited confidence. So far as he remembered, Wally had not seen her before, and he wondered who she could be.

"I say, you—you're a good sort, chipping in like that and stopping those cads," he said in a burst of gratitude. "I can't stand girls, as a rule."

"Can't you? You're very frank, anyway."

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Wally flushed.

"The—the fact is," he stammered, "I don't know what on earth to do with old Pongo. The beaks—that is, the Head has ordered me to send him home. You know that old beast, Colonel Bland, who owns this barn?"

The girl stared and then she laughed.

"Oh, yes, I know him!"

"Well, it was all his doing, just because old Pongo collared one of his rabbits and scratched his blessed hand, you know. An accident it was—nothing else. Well, the old beast reported it to the Head, and the Head ordered me to send him home. As if I could, you know!"

"You couldn't!" said the girl warmly. "I should jolly well think not!"

Wally, gaining confidence now he saw the girl's sympathies were with him, told her his sad story, and she listened, with a curious smile on her face.

"How horrid!" she remarked when Wally finished.

"Then you've nowhere to take him now?"

"Nowhere," said Wally glumly. "I'm in an awful hole. I shall have to find a home for him in Rylcombe somewhere, but I can't get the chance until after class this afternoon. I shall be late as it is, and I'll get it hot from old Selby."

"Then why not let me take him?"

"Eh? What? You?"

"Yes," was the cool answer. "I'm fond of dogs, and Pongo's a dear. Let me have him."

She took Pongo from Wally's reluctant grasp, and Pongo went willingly enough, and instantly licked the girl's hand.

"By jingo!" said Wally. "He's made friends already. I say, do you really mean it?"

"Of course! My uncle hates dogs, but he'll never know I've got him. I'll keep him in the summer-house at the bottom of the garden; that's my own den, and nobody ever goes near it but me."

"Yes, but—but—"

"He'll be all right. I'll see he's looked after well," said the girl eagerly. "Pongo and I will be great chums."

"Oh, but I say, I don't even know your name!" said Wally.

"Pamela! What's yours?"

"Wally," said the fag, "Wally D'Arcy. But look here—"

"Very well, Wally," said Pamela, with a charming smile, "you leave Pongo with me, and I'll be here at five this evening waiting with him. You can give him a run, and I'll be here again an hour later to take him back. We can manage nicely like that, and you'll be able to take him for a run every night."

"It's jolly good of you," said Wally, his eyes shining. "I say, you're jolly decent, you know. I never thought much of girls before, but—well, you're different somehow."

The girl laughed.

"Thanks! Then it's all serene?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, but I say, it's putting you to an awful lot of trouble."

"Not at all; in fact, I shall be only too glad. You see, I'm very lonely here, and as I'm fond of dogs—well, it suits me splendidly. I shall be getting a pet for nothing, you know. Oh, please don't back out now!"

Wally grinned and his face cleared.

"That's the ripping!" he said. "Now you put it like that it's different, of course. If you really do mean it?"

"I do. And I hope you won't be in a hurry to get a new home for him," said Pamela, hugging Pongo, who looked pleased as Punch. "I'll expect you here at five, then."

"Oh, good! And—and thanks so much," said Wally, colouring. "You're jolly good, and I'm no end grateful to you for saving Pongo from those roughs. But I shall have to cut off now, if old Pongo will let me go."

"He'll be all right if he doesn't see you go," was the answer. "Slip away while I keep him in here."

"Good wheeze."

And Pamela slipped inside the barn, half-closing the door, and calling good-bye to Wally, who raised his cap and hurried away. No outcries came from within the barn as he went, and realising with deep relief that Pongo had taken to his new friend, Wally put on speed and scudded back to St. Jim's. And it was only when he reached St. Jim's that Wally realised he hadn't even got the girl's full name or where she came from. Still, the single fact alone that Pongo had taken to Pamela was enough for Wally, and his face was brighter as he entered the Form-room some moments later. Nor did the severe caning he got from Mr. Selby for being late for class upset Wally's satisfaction. Pongo was in good hands—the hapless outcast had a good home at last, and that was all that mattered to the scapegrace of the Third.

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CHAPTER 11.

Wally's Great Wheeze!

"I'VE got it!"

Wally made that announcement the following afternoon, and the deep chuckle that accompanied it made his chums, Jameson, Curly Gibson, Joe Frayne, and Reggie Manners, look at him quickly. When the scamp of the Third chuckled like that he usually had something very interesting "on."

"Eh? You've got what, Wally?" demanded Jameson. "Some new wheeze for hiding Pongo?" he added sarcastically.

"No, you ass! Pongo's all right—right as rain!"

"Then what—"

"The very wheeze I've been wanting," said Wally calmly. "The very wheeze to put it across that old beast, Colonel Bland."

"Oh!"

Wally's chums looked at him rather uneasily.

So far, the arrangement Wally had made with his new friend, Pamela, looked like working out well. At the hour appointed on the previous evening Wally had turned up for Pongo. He had turned up alone, for Wally had a mortal fear of his chums knowing about Pamela. He knew only too well they would pull his leg remorselessly when it came out.

Possibly they would have to know about the arrangement sooner or later. But Wally was resolved to keep it from them as long as possible. He had met Pamela alone, and after hearing that all had gone well, and that Pongo had had a great time, he had taken his pet and had joined his chums later on for a run in the woods—even Wally realised that his runs with Pongo were going to be very risky undertakings, and that he would need great caution.

But all had gone well, and once again leaving the mystified Third-Formers—promising them a "thick ear" if they chipped in and followed him—he had returned Pongo to Pamela before rejoining his chums to return in time for lock-up.

And as everything seemed to be going so well the announcement that he had "got it" was surprising, to say the least. When Pongo had been sent away in the first place, Wally had made the most terrific and blood-curdling threats regarding how he would "pay out" Colonel Bland. But he had scarcely mentioned them since Pongo had found a home, and they imagined—and fondly hoped—he had forgotten and forgiven.

But it was evident that he hadn't! Wally, though knowing Pongo was being well looked after, keenly felt his separation from his pet, and he was inwardly still smouldering with bitter resentment against the cause of Pongo's banishment. That the colonel had some reason to be so annoyed Wally would not admit. And though not usually a vengeful fag, Wally was apparently not going to allow the matter to rest there.

"Chuck it, Wally!" said Curly Gibson, frowning. "Leave the crusty old stick alone, you awful ass! You'll be heading for the sack if you play any more games with him. Let him rip!"

"Yes, let the old buffer rip!" said Jameson.

"My dear chaps," said Wally coolly, "I'm blessed if I know what's coming over you chicken-hearted fatheads! What's the harm in ragging the old chap, anyway? Hasn't he asked for it? Isn't he always grouching and reporting chaps for trespassing?"

"Well, yes; but he's a governor, remember; playing tricks on him is too jolly risky!"

"Rats!" said Wally obstinately. "I'm going to make him sit up for what he's done to Pongo. Besides, he got me a thumping big impot—a thousand lines—and I haven't finished 'em yet, even though you chaps are helping me. Anyway, I've been thinking the jape out all day, and I've got it all worked out now."

"What is it?" asked Jameson, with more interest. Wally's chums were as fond of a jape as Wally himself, and usually quite as reckless, if anything. The leader of the Third knew that they wouldn't need much persuading, and he chuckled.

"It's easy as falling off a form," he said calmly. "You know the colonel hates dogs, of course."

"Oh, yes!" grinned Curly Gibson. "If it's something to do with dogs—"

"Lots! Old Bland hates dogs, and so we're going to see he has plenty to hate! Now, my idea is to get some notices printed, advertising for dogs—dogs of all kinds and breeds and sizes. Heaps of dogs—all for Colonel Bland."

"What the dickens—"

"You see the idea?" said Wally, with enthusiasm. "We get these notices printed—the printer Johnny will have them distributed round the neighbourhood."

"H'm! Yes, but—"

"It's the jape of a lifetime, you asses!" went on Wally,

glaring at his chums' somewhat mystified faces. "Don't you see? The notice will tell the giddy public to apply at a certain time—to-morrow afternoon will be best, so that we can see the fun—to Rylcombe Manor with the giddy mongrels. Good prices given and all that. See? There'll be swarms of dogs turning up at the manor at once. Just fancy old Bland's face when they turn up!"

"Phew!"

"M-my hat! What a wheeze! But how——"

"You'll see in a sec. Come on!"

"Here, I say——"



As the portly form of the enraged colonel appeared at the top of the steps, the crowd of men, boys, and dogs surged forward. A feeble cheer went up. "Urrah! 'Ere 'e is!" "Stop shoving—I was first!" (See Chapter 13.)

"Dry up! Buck up—no time to waste!"

And Wally led the way out of the room chuckling. His chums looked at each other, and then they followed, broad grins on their faces. It was plain that, despite their earlier scruples, Wally's chums were greatly taken with the wheeze. The young rascals of the Third were always ready for a jape, and they rarely looked ahead to count the cost.

They followed Wally eagerly enough now as he marched along to the prefects' room. As Wally put his head round the door and looked in his chums guessed what his object was.

At that hour there was rarely anyone in the prefects' Common-room, and Wally chuckled and beckoned his chums in after him.

"Stand by the door, some of you, and keep cave," he whispered. "I'll soon see this through. Watch me!"

Wally went to the telephone and rang up the exchange. He gave a number—a number he had already looked up in the "Rylcombe Gazette." It was, in fact, a small advertisement placed therein by Mr. Jobbins, a local printer, that had given Wally his daring idea.

He was soon put through to Mr. Jobbins.

"Is that Mr. Jobbins?" asked Wally, speaking in a deep voice—as near as he could get to Colonel Bland's well-known sharp bark.

There was a surprised exclamation at the other end of the wires.

"Oh, yes, sir! Mr. Jobbins speaking, sir. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, Colonel Bland, sir?"

"You evidently know my voice, Jobbins," said Wally, stifling an inward chuckle. "I wish to place an order with you, Jobbins—an urgent order—wanted at the earliest possible moment!" said Wally. "Will you print me some handbills—a couple of hundred will be enough, I think—to be completed and distributed by to-morrow noon at latest."

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir! But that—that is rather short notice, sir. If——"

"Nonsense!" barked Wally. "You can print them this afternoon, I suppose, and I understand that you have an organisation for delivering handbills for tradespeople. That can be done to-morrow morning. If you refuse to accept my order on these terms——"

"Not at all, sir! Certainly, sir. I will do my very best, sir. In fact, I can give you my assurance that they will be done to time, sir," said Mr. Jobbins hurriedly. Colonel Bland was a very important gentleman in the neighbourhood, and Mr. Jobbins had no desire to offend him, quite the reverse, in fact. "I can arrange for them to

be distributed by noon to-morrow, sir—in Rylcombe and Wayland, I presume, sir?"

"Yes. Exactly, Jobbins! Kindly take down the notice now, Jobbins!"

"One moment, sir!" There was a silence at the end of the line. Then: "Ready, sir!"

"You will head the notice with the one word, 'Wanted,' Jobbins—in big letters, of course!"

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir!"

"I will leave the arrangement of the rest of the notice to you, Jobbins. I think I can trust you to set it out in a striking and arresting manner, Jobbins."

"Oh, certainly, sir! You may rely upon that, sir."

"Very good! Here it is, then: 'Wanted. Dogs of all breeds and descriptions; prize dogs, sporting dogs, pet dogs, stray dogs, handsome dogs, ugly dogs, dogs with pedigrees and dogs without, aristocratic dogs, and mongrels. All kinds and all qualities of dogs urgently required!' Got that, Jobbins?"

There came a curious sound over the wires—like a startled gasp.

"Oh! Ah! Yessir! Certainly, sir! Ahem! You—you wish me to—to print that on the handbill, Colonel Bland?"

"Certainly! Haven't I made that clear, Jobbins?" barked

Wally, winking at the receiver of the telephone. "Here is the remainder; 'Good prices paid—expense no object. Apply in person with dogs at three o'clock prompt to Colonel Bland, Rylcombe Manor, Rylcombe, Sussex.' Have you got that down, Jobbins?"

"Oh, yessir! Certainly, sir! I—I will repeat it to you, sir."

Wally listened while the printer—obviously quite overcome at the curious nature of the "order"—repeated it.

"Right!" said Wally at last. "Quite correct, Jobbins! Send the account to me in the usual way—what, what?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Order completed at noon to-morrow. I can rely upon that, Jobbins?"

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir! If there is anything, sir—"

"Nothing, Jobbins! That is all, Jobbins!"

Wally replaced the receiver and turned a perspiring, grinning face to his scared chums. Wally's "nerve" had left his chums gasping. But the strain of keeping up the conversation in such a deep voice had all but taken Wally's breath away.

"Oh, you—you—" choked Jameson, nearly helpless with laughter.

"Chuck it, you dummy!" gasped Wally, grabbing his chum. "We can't stop to laugh here, you fatheads! Come on! Out of this!"

And Wally hustled his gurgling chums out of the prefects' room. So far the great wheeze looked like turning out a success. But whether it would continue a success remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 12.

Amazing!

LIKE to sell old Towser, Herries?" Wally D'Arcy poked his cheeky face into Study No. 6 the following afternoon, and asked that question quite seriously.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and Blake & Co. were wondering what to do with themselves, there being no football match on. They were just discussing the important problem when Wally looked in.

Herries fairly glared at Wally. It was nothing more than an insult to George Herries to be asked that question. Herries would probably have sold his last possession before parting with his precious bulldog.

Blake and Digby merely chuckled, but Arthur Augustus looked very severely at his irrepressible minor. Arthur Augustus did not approve of Wally's cheek at any time.

"Weally, Wally—" "Sussell Towser!" stuttered Herries. "Why, you cheeky young villain, if you dare to suggest a thing like that to me—"

"You young leg-puller!" said Blake, eyeing Wally curiously. "What's this game, Wally?"

"It isn't a game at all," said Wally, coming into the study—with a cautious eye on Herries, however. "I was wondering if Herries wanted to sell Towser. Here, hold on, Herries, you ass! No offence meant! I mean it!"

"What the thump—"

"Haven't you fellows seen the handbills?" demanded Wally. "The chance of a lifetime to a fellow who wants to sell his giddy bow-wow! Dogs of all kinds wanted—good prices paid! Here's a handbill. I went over on my jigger to Rylcombe just after dinner. They're all over the place. I got one from a kid handing 'em out in the High Street."

"Weally, Wally—"

"It ought to interest you, Herries," said Wally, getting ready to make a bolt for it. "It's advertising for mongrels—any old stray and bag of old bones will do, so Towser should stand a chance! If I were you, I'd— Oh crumbs!"

A Latin dictionary missed Wally by an inch and crashed into a photo-frame on the wall, smashing the glass to atoms. Herries, heedless of the damage, followed it up by a blind rush at the grinning Wally. Wally dodged and leaped for the door, just missing Blake's boot as he went.

"You burbling chump, Herries!" howled Digby. "Look what you've done! That's my frame—smashed to smithereens!"

"I'll smash that cheeky young cad to smithereens before I've finished with him!" hooted Herries, his face red with wrath. "Sell Towser—eh? Bag of bones—mongrel! The cheeky young villain!"

"But what the thump's he burbling about?" said Blake, with a chuckle, picking up from the table the handbill Wally had flung there. "The kid's got some— Oh, great Scott!"

"Bai Jove! What—"

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"Great pip! Listen to this!" said Blake, in wonder. "If this doesn't beat the giddy band!"

And Blake read out the contents of the handbill. It was word for word as the scamp of the Third had dictated it carefully to Mr. Jobbins, the Rylcombe printer. And it was certainly set out in a striking, bold manner, as Mr. Jobbins had promised.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Digby.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, taking the handbill from Blake's hand and staring at it through his monocle. "This is weally vewy remarkable, Blake! I always undahstood that Colonel Bland detested dogs of all descriptions. This is vewy stwango!"

"Prize dogs—eh?" said Blake, a curious gleam coming into his eyes. "Sporting dogs, pet dogs; giddy aristocratic dogs and mongrels; handsome dogs and ugly dogs! Looks to me like a giddy hoax, chaps!"

"Phew! It's queer, anyway!" said Digby, looking at Blake.

"Eh? But how could it be?" said Herries. "It's got the printer's name on it—Jobbins, of Rylcombe."

"Well, that's nothing to go by!" said Blake, chuckling deeply. "I can't see old Colonel Bland getting a thing like that published. Besides, as Gussy says, the old hunk detests dogs. Look at the way he carried on over Pongo! By jingo, I wonder—"

Blake's face became suddenly startled at the thought that had just occurred to him. But before he could say anything more the door opened, and Tom Merry came in, followed by Lowther and Manners. Tom was looking very grave, but Lowther and Manners were grinning.

Tom Merry had one of the handbills in his hand, and it was clear that it was the object of his visit.

"I say, you fellows—" he was beginning, when he sighted the handbill in Blake's hand. "Oh, you've got one, then!" he ended, nodding grimly at it. "What do you fellows think about it?"

"I'm blessed if I know what to think about it!" said Blake, hesitating. "Did—did young Wally give you that?"

"No; found it on my table!" said Tom grimly. "But several fellows have got them, and Trimble says he spotted young Jameson shove one under his study door just now. It's struck me that the thing might be a hoax!"

"I think so, too," said Blake, nodding. "It's a jolly rummy sort of handbill for old Bland to get printed and sent round! It's queer, to say the least of it! And—and if I'm not much mistaken—"

"That young villain Wally knows something about it!" ended Tom Merry grimly.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a jump. "Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, it's jolly queer!" said Tom. "Why should the things be scattered about St. Jim's? And why should Jameson take the trouble to shove them under doors? And who but young Wally would be likely to have it in for the giddy colonel?"

"Wally's just been here," said Blake. "He brought us this—said he'd got it from a kid who was distributing 'em in the village."

"Well, he might have done," said Tom. "And he might have got the rest of the handbills that way. He's seen to it that most of the chaps have got them. A joke isn't much of a joke unless there's a good audience and plenty of fellows to laugh!"

"Phew!"

"If—if it is—" "I don't know," said Tom Merry. "I hope to goodness it isn't for Wally's sake! There'll be a most unholly rumpus if it is a hoax, and the colonel gets to know who did it!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus looked at his chums in dismay. "Do you weally imagine that young Wally could be responsible?"

"He's got nerve enough for anything!" said Tom Merry grimly. "And you know he's threatened to make the giddy colonel sit up. How he's managed to work it—if it is him—goodness knows! But we ought to do something, chaps—for the kid's own sake. Let's go and tackle him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Too late to do anything to stop the game, though," said Blake nodding at the handbills. "But we'd better see the kid for all that."

The juniors hurried from the room, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus, at least, looking very grave. Tom Merry was as fond of a joke as anyone, but playing a hoax like this on a school governor was a joke that might have very serious consequences to the joker.

And in Tom Merry's view it was a hoax—though whether other people would take it as such was another matter. For one thing Tom Merry and his chums knew that dogs were the colonel's pet aversion—which made a lot of difference in the view one took of the handbill, queerly worded as it undoubtedly was.

Certainly, it seemed a wild guess to suspect a lag in the Third Form at St. Jim's in connection with it. Yet the juniors could not forget Wally's threats, and it would certainly be a remarkably fitting vengeance for the banishment of Pongo.

The thought was an alarming one. The juniors never approved of Wally's cheek, and they all agreed that a good licking every day was what he needed to keep him in order. But they were very fond of the scapegrace for all that, and they did not want to see him come to grief.

They were too late, however. From Piggott of the Third they learned that Wally, with a crowd of his chums of the Third, had just gone out of gates.

"D'you know where they've gone, Piggott?" demanded Tom.

"No," Piggott scowled. Since the sneak of the Third's attempt to land Wally in trouble over the affair of the old tower, Piggott had had very good reason to feel far from kindly disposed towards the leader of the Third. "No, I don't!" he repeated. "The cads have got something on—they went out cackling and giggling like anything. I heard Gibson say something about Rylcombe Manor and about the blessed colonel. I believe the rotters have something up against him."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's beginning to look like it," said Tom Merry, his brow grim as they left the fags' Form-room. "Look here, I think we'd better be near the manor at three o'clock. Lots of the fellows think it's a hoax of some sort, and are going I believe. We can see what goes on from the lane—the house is quite close up."

"We'll see some fun anyway!" grinned Lowther. "I'm on."

The other fellows were agreed. If it was a hoax they were quite ready to enjoy it, none of them having much sympathy for the grim old martinet. That crusty old gentleman had not made himself over popular at St. Jim's—though he was a friend of the Head and an old St. Jim's boy.

The juniors got their coats and caps, and started out for the manor. It was not near three yet, and they took their time. They soon found they were not the only ones going to the manor either. Just outside St. Jim's Tom Merry & Co. overtook Cardew and Clive strolling along.

"Hallo! There's dear old Thomas," said Cardew, with a chuckle. "Going to see the fun, dear men?"

"You mean at the manor?"

"Yes," said Cardew, nodding. "You're expecting some fun, then?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry briefly. "It's a hoax."

"Just what we think," said Clive quietly. "And Cardew thinks something more than that. The fathead thinks those young scamps in the Third know something about it, too."

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 13. Paying the Price!

"WE suspect that, too," said Tom Merry, frowning. The very fact that Cardew also had suspicions made Tom more convinced in his own mind. "It's likely. Have you anything to go on, Cardew?"

"Lots!" smiled the whimsical Fourth-Former.

"But how on earth did they manage it?" said Herries.

"I spotted the little men going into the prefects' room yesterday," said Cardew. "And I heard the tinkle of the merry old telephone. That's how they managed it."

"You sound pretty certain, Cardew!"

"I am!" smiled Cardew. "Don't ask me why—only that telephone clue is suspicious, what?"

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

"If Wally's in it, my minor is, too," said Mannors uneasily.

"Bai Jove! The feahful young wascals—"

"No good worrying about it until we know," said Blake; "and until we know the little beggars are bowled out. There'll be some fun, anyway. Hallo! The show's starting already!"

The juniors were near the gates of the manor now. Just ahead of them was a fat lady with a poodle. Behind her was an ancient individual leading an equally ancient sheep-dog. They both turned in at the gates of the manor. Coming from the direction of Rylcombe was a long string of people—all of them apparently leading dogs—dogs of all sorts and sizes and qualities.

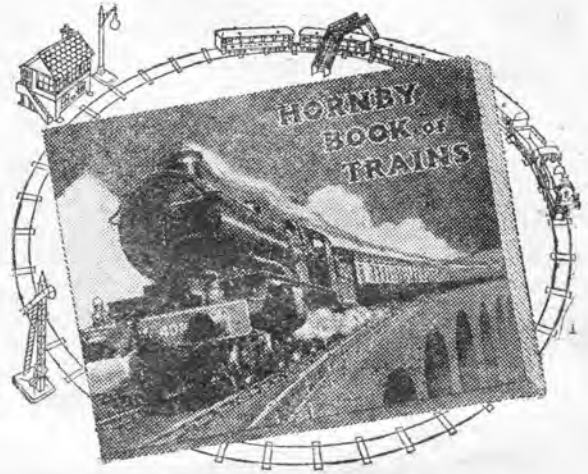
"Oh, my hat!" choked Lowther. "Look at 'em!"

"And it's not three yet!" chuckled Blake. "Oh crumbs! There are the young rascals now—in the bushes yonder!"

Several youthful figures, wearing St. Jim's caps, had just slipped in at the gates. They vanished into the shrubbery lining the drive—though not before Tom Merry & Co. had recognised Wally and his chums.

(Continued overleaf.)

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The ancient gentleman with the sheepdog hesitated just inside the gates. He was joined the next moment by another gentleman with a very red nose and a half-starved collie dog. They exchanged greetings.

"Too early yet, Garge," said the first gentleman. "Never expected ter see you 'ere. What you goin' to arsk for 'im?" he added, nodding at the collie.

"Ain't particular, Joe," said the red-nosed gentleman. "Old Laddie's about on 'is larst legs, like. You won't like partin' wi' Tiger, I'll bet," he added, evidently referring to the sheepdog.

"I ain't partin', either, 'less I gets my price," said the first gentleman grimly. "If the old gent makes an' 'ansome offer, I'm willin' ter come ter terms. Hadn't we better get in? Seems like there's going to be a crowd."

"You've said it, Garge!"

The two stumped down the drive with their dogs. Round by the entrance steps at the end of the drive a little group of villagers were congregated—all of them with dogs. The afternoon air began to resound with yelps and barks and growls.

"Oh, my only Sunday topper!" gurgled Lowther. "What a lark! Those giddy young scamps—"

"I'm for a front seat," murmured Cardew; and he slipped through the gates and vanished into the shrubbery.

"Come on!" said Blake. "Might as well see the fun."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" breathed Tom Merry, as he and his chums reached the front edge of the shrubbery. "We may just as well join the giddy crowd before the house. Hallo! There goes three!"

"And there goes the giddy butler and footmen!" grinned Blake joyously. "What a scream!"

The entrance doors of the manor were open, and on the steps was the butler and two menservants. At the windows a couple of white-capped maidservants were staring out in amazement at the strange scene. Dogs were running about over the flower-beds, and their owners went trampling after them, and the uproar of voices and yelps and barks was terrific.

The butler and footmen looked dazed, and the butler's voice was hoarse as he shouted at the crowd—not, apparently, deeming it safe to descend the steps.

"I tell you it's a mistake! Are you all mad?" he bawled hoarsely, waving his hands wildly. "Go away! If you don't all go away at once the police will be sent for!"

There was a roar from those who heard him.

"Then what about this 'ere—"

"What about these 'ere 'andbills?"

"Where's the old gent? Where's Colonel Bland? It's 'im we want! 'Ere, you look at this 'ere 'andbill, mister!"

"Go away!" shrieked the astounded and exasperated butler. "I tell you it's a mistake—a terrible mistake! I don't want to see any handbill. Go away! The police shall—"

His voice was drowned in a roar. Most of the crowd had come in good faith, and they had taken a lot of trouble getting their dogs ready, and they had come a long way with them. They were not to be put off by a mere butler. They wanted to see the colonel.

They soon got the chance. A figure suddenly appeared behind the gesticulating menservants—a short, portly figure with a red, fierce face and a still fiercer look. It was Colonel Bland, and the crusty old gentleman looked on the point of a fit as he glared out at the strange crowd.

"What—what— Good gad!" he choked. "James—William—Thomas, what the deuce—" Good gad!"

The old warrior's portly form and podgy face looked on the point of bursting. His white moustaches bristled, and his eyes fairly glowed with rage and amazement. There was a feeble cheer as he was sighted.

"'Ere he is!"

"'Ere, you stop yer shovin'; I was 'ere fust!"

"Keep that darned bulldog away, mister!"

"Yarooooo!"

A fierce growl and a sudden yell told that some luckless individual had been bitten by somebody else's dog. It was a marvel there were not many such accidents!

Never had such a scene been enacted before the stately old mansion.

Colonel Bland, apparently, was ignorant of the reason for the invasion of the scores of people and their dogs as yet. He was waving his arms wildly and gesticulating and shouting—apparently ordering James and William and Thomas to clear out the crowd. But it was rather a tall order for those hapless individuals.

There was a gasp from the juniors as a tall, impressive figure appeared behind the colonel. It was Dr. Holmes of St. Jim's.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "I say, get out of sight!"

The St. Jim's fellows among the crowd very soon made their presence less conspicuous. They were surprised indeed

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by the unexpected appearance of that awe-inspiring figure—though the explanation was simple enough. Colonel Bland had invited the Head to come over to see some old prints that had just come into his possession, and the two gentlemen had been busy in the library when the colonel had been sent for. Naturally, hearing the commotion, the Head of St. Jim's had followed him out, in no little curiosity.

It was as well he did so, for the old Head's reverend and imposing figure impressed the crowd far more than did that of the raving colonel.

There was a sudden hush—at least, among the human element.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, in great alarm. "What does this mean, my dear colonel? If I can be of help—"

"I—I haven't the faintest notion!" spluttered the old warrior. "I—I— What the deuce is that, James?"

James handed his master one of the Landbills. Colonel Bland's red face went redder still as he blinked at it and grasped its meaning.

"Good gad!" he choked. "What—what the deuce? Dr. Holmes, look at that! That—that villain Jobbins must be mad—stark, staring mad! I—I never gave such an announcement! Monstrous! Abominable! I—I—"

"A stupid, wicked hoax!" said the Head, scanning the precious handbill. "Obviously a scandalous hoax, my dear colonel!"

"A hoax!"

A murmur went round the crowd—a deep murmur of wrath and disappointment. There was a buzz of indignant voices.

"A bloomin' hoax!"

"Arter us comin' all this way!"

"It's a shame!"

"Go away!" roared Colonel Bland. "The police have been telephoned for! I will have you all summoned—summoned for trespass, begad! Go! James—William—Thomas, clear them out! Don't stand there like stone images! Clear them out!"

James, William, and Thomas looked at each other and they looked at the crowd in a very sickly way. But, luckily, the colonel's words had their effect. The more peaceful element were already departing. They were disappointed, but they understood, and they were only too glad to get away.

And after a few derisive boos and yells the rest followed. The mention of the police was enough, and, moreover, many of them remembered suddenly that Colonel Bland was a magistrate, as well as a big land-owner.

The hubbub died away at last, and the colonel and the Head went in, the colonel trembling with wrath. Dr. Holmes was a very kindly gentleman, and felt as sorry for the disappointed crowd as he did for the colonel. He would have dealt with the matter in a more considerate way than had the fiery old martinet. But it was for the colonel to settle the matter.

Meanwhile, the St. Jim's fellows had made themselves scarce. They started back for St. Jim's, most of them yelling with laughter. Tom Merry & Co. overtook Wally D'Arcy and his chums lower down the lane. The fags were tottering along, almost weeping with laughter.

"Wally—"

"Wally, you young spoofer—"

"Bai Jove! Wally, you young wascal, I want to speak to you!"

"Hallo, old nuts! What's the matter?" The scamp of the Third stopped and turned a grinning face to the juniors, who tried hard to look severe and serious. "Well, did you enjoy the entertainment? What price bow-wow?"

"Wally," gasped Arthur Augustus. "I demand to know who was responsible for that hoax? I stwongly suspect—"

"I wonder," chuckled Wally. "Do you men know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Third-Formers.

The suspicions of Tom Merry & Co. became a certainty.

"Then—then it was you, Wally!" said Tom Merry, taking a deep breath. "Oh, you—you—"

"Of course it was me!" yelled Wally. "I said I'd pay out that old rotter for getting Pongo kicked out, didn't I? Well, I've done it. I made out that jolly old handbill. Prime, wasn't it? And I dictated it to old Jobbins on the giddy telephone in the prefects'-room. I said I'd make old Bland sit up, and I've done it! I bet he won't—"

"D'Arcy!"

A voice interrupted the fag—a voice seemingly coming from nowhere.

It was a deep, terrible voice—a voice only too well known.

"Oh, great Scott!"

"M-mum-my hat!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

A sudden, awful silence fell after those few startled exclamations.

(Continued on page 28.)

CONCLUDING CHAPTERS OF THIS POPULAR SERIAL.

MORNINGTON DOES THE TRICK! Morny's the last thing in dandies, but he's got heaps of nerve, and it's his daring wheeze that saves Jimmy Silver & Co. from disgrace at the eleventh hour!

The Rookwood Dictator!

By Owen Conquest.



Mornington's Offer!

HOW do you like the idea of a police investigation, Punter, old bean?" said Mornington.
"You wouldn't dare—"

Captain Punter gasped.

There was no doubt—no doubt whatever—that the captain did not want a police investigation. Mornington was right concerning his previous character—it would not stand him in good stead. And he knew that the police would not rest till they had ferreted out all the facts. With bitter chagrin, Punter realised that Lattrey was not the kind of fellow to stand up against a police interrogation, and a word from Lattrey would bring his whole scheme toppling about his ears like a card castle.

His look, as it rested on Mornington, was not pleasant.

Morny bore that burning glance quite imperturbably.

He had the captain in a cleft-stick, and none knew it better than he. Erroll was smiling grimly now. He, too, could see that Captain Punter was trapped.

Once the police received news, Mornington had little doubt that the truth would come out, and the same conviction was in the rascally sharper's mind.

His glance, from one that burned, became almost haggard. He sank down into his chair again, all the stuffing knocked out of him. Mornington's cool handling of the situation had reduced him to impotence.

"Now perhaps you'll listen to a suggestion, Punter?" asked Morny coolly.

"Go to the police, and be hanged to you!" snarled the captain.

"I'm suggestin' a way out, dear man. Don't you want to get clear?"

The sudden look in Punter's eyes told how eagerly he would grasp at the chance.

"Listen!" went on Mornington. "Carthew an' Lattrey both want to get out of this mess. If everything comes out, the Head will bunk them for gamblin', and Lattrey will capture a floggin' probably as well. I've agreed to get them clear, an' you're goin' to help me."

"How?"

"I've taken rather drastic measures to stop Silver an' the rest from bein' expelled," said Morny coolly. "By shuttin' the Head in the vaults beneath the old abbey ruins—"

"Morny, you haven't?" interrupted Erroll.

"I have, dear man. It was the only thing to do. Now, my idea is this: Punter will come back to Rookwood with us, an' I'll release the Head. Then Punter can confess, takin' all the blame, and sayin' that Carthew was mistaken if he thinks there were more than one attacker. The Head will probably be a little bit doubtful, an' then we come to the master stroke."

"Handing me over to the police—eh?" demanded Punter. "Not quite good enough, thanks!"

"Nothin' of the kind!" said Mornington. "Erroll and I will be near you, holdin' you, if possible. If we're not, we'll bump into the fellows who are. Anyway, after you've confessed you make a sudden dash for freedom, an' Erroll and I keep you from bein' grabbed. Do you think you could get away across the playin' fields, Punter?"

"Of course! Easily, if you hinder them. But supposing Dr. Chisholm puts the police on my track—what then?"

"He won't."

"The Head won't want an official inquiry and the publicity," explained Erroll. "You'll get off scot free, which is more than you deserve, you scoundrel!"

"Hard words break no bones!" sneered the captain. "All I'm worrying about is my get-away. But I think it could be worked—if you two promise to help me."

"You've got it," said Mornington. "Easy as fallin' off a form. An' you can think yourself lucky I don't go straight to Inspector Sharpe at Lantham!"

Captain Punter rose from his chair, looking very unlike the supercilious dandy who had lounged in it only a few minutes previously.

"You've got me!" he remarked resignedly. "Remember, you get me clear!"

"Come on!" said Mornington crisply. "An' bear in mind, your gettin' clear depends on your keepin' Carthew an' Lattrey out of it. You savvy that?"

Captain Punter nodded grimly.

The Triumph of the Dictator!

BLESS my soul!"

Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, stared at the gates. Mr. Greely, who was with him, stared also.

It was morning break, and most of the junior school were taking an airing in the quad preparatory to resuming classes.

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WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organization called the Fascist Band of Rookwood. In due course, Carthew and his cronies are given the ragging of their lives, the Fascists being careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their members to act on each occasion.

Later, Lattrey bumps into Captain Punter, a rascally book-maker, who expounds a scheme to get Jimmy Silver & Co. expelled from Rookwood. Lattrey is forced to fall in with the rascal's wishes, as also is Carthew, with the result that the latter is found shortly afterwards, lying stunned in a narrow lane. Determined to clear the Fisticat Four Mornington hires the Head of Rookwood down into the abbey vaults, after which he interviews Carthew from whom he wrings a confession. Punter is denying all knowledge of the affair, when Mornington threatens to put the matter in the hands of the police.

(Now read on.)

Messrs. Dalton and Greely were not taking an airing; they were looking, as were the majority of the masters and seniors of Rookwood, for the Head.

Dr. Chisholm had been missing since before breakfast, and continuous searching had produced no result. The reverend Head had disappeared as completely as though he had been wafted away into thin air.

"Really, sir, that is not the headmaster! I thought for the moment that it was he at last!" ejaculated Mr. Greely.

"It is Mornington and Erroll, the juniors who cut classes this morning," explained Mr. Dalton. "And they are bringing a man here. Do you not perceive that they have hold of his arms, Mr. Greely?"

Mr. Greely peered through his glasses towards the approaching figures.

There was no doubt about it.

As Mornington and Erroll came nearer, it could be seen plainly that they were holding a man between them—a very tall and quite distinguished-looking gentleman, it seemed.

"This is remarkable, Mr. Dalton! The man appears to be a prisoner."

"Mornington! Erroll!" rapped Mr. Dalton.

His voice drew the attention of several fellows, and there was a gasp as Morny and Erroll came up to the two masters with Captain Punter between them.

"Mornington, you and Erroll were absent from class this morning! How do you explain this? And who—who is this man?"

"Sorry to cut class, sir!" said Mornington coolly. "But we had no choice, as it happened. This is a witness for Jimmy Silver, sir. Captain Gerald Punter, at your service!"

"A—a witness?" boomed Mr. Greely, in amazement. "Do you mean to affirm that Silver is innocent, and that this man can prove it?"

"Just that, sir," assented Morny. "Captain Punter has very kindly consented to come along and explain a few circumstances, you see. Would you mind if I take him straight along to see the Head, Mr. Dalton?"

The master of the Fourth gave Mornington a fixed look.

"Do you know where Dr. Chisholm is, Mornington?"

"I think so, sir."

"Then you may lead Mr. Greely and myself to him at once."

"Very well, sir."

With a cheery smile on his face Mornington started for the playing-fields, still with his grip on Punter's arm. Erroll marched on the other side, and the two masters followed, deeply mystified. A few yards behind them a crowd of interested juniors trailed eagerly.

Punter himself was silent. He realised that his safety depended on his fulfilling his part of the contract, and he had steeled himself to carry it through. He was relying a great deal on the utter amazement which his statements would cause to aid his escape.

Mornington's destination was speedily apparent.

The junior paused at length in the midst of the ruins, and beckoned to Conroy, who was among those behind.

"Take his arm, Conroy, old chap."

"Right you are."

"What—why—is the headmaster down in the vaults?" demanded Mr. Greely anxiously.

"You'll see, sir," answered Morny cheerily.

He stepped across the moss-grown flags to the stone slab with which he had sealed the Head's prison. One wrench, and it was moved aside, revealing the opening leading down into the musty vaults.

A gasp from below greeted the moving back of the stone.

"Bless my soul! It—is that you, you rascal?"

"It is I—Mornington, sir!" called back Morny coolly.

"Shall I come down and help you up, sir?"

"Pray do not bother. I am coming up at once."

The Head's august features as his face appeared over the edge of the cavity in the flags was a sight to be remembered. It was grimy and it was grubby, and it was grim with foreboding. The one thought in Dr. Chisholm's mind just then was to discover who had confined him in the vaults, and make an example of them.

As his eyes fell on the two masters and the crowd of juniors behind, amazement appeared in place of anger.

"Mr. Dalton—Mr. Greely. What is the meaning of this?"

"I do not know, sir," responded Mr. Dalton. "Mornington led us here, from which I deduce that he had something to do with your disappearance this morning. Beyond that, I am as much in the dark as yourself. Perhaps you will question the boy?"

"Indeed, I will, sir," remarked Dr. Chisholm grimly.

He turned a glance of thunder on Mornington.

But the junior forestalled him.

"If you'll let me explain, sir—"

"I shall be greatly surprised if you are able to explain these remarkable circumstances, sir!" retorted the Head majestically.

"I can explain everythin' if you'll listen for a few moments, sir," answered the junior calmly. "This fellow here has come to act as witness for Jimmy Silver an' his chums—"

"Who are you, sir?" interrupted the Head.

"My name is Captain Punter," responded the captain, with a slight bow.

"And what is your business?"

"I am here at the request of these two boys," answered Punter, nodding to Mornington and Erroll. "They apparently discovered that I, and not a pack of juniors, was responsible for the attack on Carthew recently. I have come here as a witness to clear four innocent boys of the blame which is attached to them."

"You—you attacked Carthew?" For once the Head's dignity forsook him. He was amazed—he hardly knew whether he was upon his head or his heels.

"I did. I had my reasons—good ones, if only you knew. But I failed, and these boys got on my track. They threatened to put the matter in the hands of the police if I refused to come here and confess to you."

"Bless my soul!"

"Then you are the guilty party, sir?" demanded Mr. Dalton, regaining his breath first.

Punter took a quick glance round and made a sudden movement.

"Seize him, boys!" rapped Mr. Dalton. "Quickly!"

Conroy, who was nearest, made a grab at the captain's coat-tails. But Mornington somehow stumbled against him, and they fell together. Erroll was a second too late, and Punter had a good start.

"After him!"

"The rotten hooligan!"

"He knocked Carthew out! Rag the cad!"

A swarm of whooping juniors gave chase at once to the fleeing sharper.

But the captain was possessed of long legs, and his start served him well. Also, he knew what to expect if he were caught. He ran as he had never run before, and took a flying leap over the distant hedge into the lane.

Mornington turned, grinning, to the Head.

"He's got away, sir. But I think that clears Silver an' the others, doesn't it?"

Dr. Chisholm gave him a penetrating look.

"Mornington, did you shut me in the vaults?"

"Ahem! Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"You see, if I hadn't, Jimmy Silver & Co. would have been expelled by now, sir. I knew I could make Punter own up—and a chat with Carthew confirmed my suspicions of the man. As you saw, he was glad to confess rather than bring the police into it."

"I perceive that, Mornington. There is no doubt that Silver and Lovell and their friends have suffered a great wrong. Only your exceedingly cool grasp of the situation has saved them, Mornington."

"I hope you didn't mind me shuttin' you in the vaults, sir?"

There was a faint chuckle among the crowd, to be silenced by a stern glance from Mr. Dalton.

"I am coming to that, my boy," went on Dr. Chisholm grimly. "There was no need to have taken such extreme measure as that. Had you come to me with your story I should have listened and taken what measures I deemed fit. You will regard yourself as severely reprimanded. Mornington. In the—ahem—circumstances, I cannot find it in myself to punish you as you deserve. The sentences on the four juniors in the punishment-room are rescinded."

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the Head!"

The cheers were given with a will. And they were followed by three more, with great gusto, for Mornington—the fellow to whom Jimmy Silver & Co. owed the clearing of their names.

And then there was a rush for Mornington, and, gasping with alarm, he was lifted on high and borne in triumph into the House.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"More ginger-pop this way, Erroll!"

"Gentlemen—" recommenced Arthur Edward Lovell, holding up a brimming glass.

"I say, is there a cream bun left?" demanded Tubby Muffin, who had somehow squeezed into the spread.

"Gentlemen, I give you a toast!" roared Lovell, over the noise and clatter of the festive board in the End Study.

"Good man, Lovell!"

"On the ball!"

"And what's the toast?" asked Jimmy Silver, filling his glass.

"The Rookwood Dictator!" said Lovell, with a glance at Valentine Mornington. "The chap who cleared us—even when it meant shutting the Head in the vaults—"

"Ha ha, ha!"

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," said Lovell seriously. "Therefore, I propose to honour our guest by the toast of the evening—the Rookwood Dictator!"

"Seconded!" said Jimmy Silver promptly.

"Carried unanimously!" shouted Conroy.

The juniors gathered round the table in the End Study rose to their feet. Mornington gave a gasp.

"Sit down, you asses! I didn't do anythin'!"

"The Rookwood Dictator!" announced Lovell.

Solemnly the juniors drained their glasses, and sat down again.

"And that's that!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, in high glee.

"If it hadn't been for Morny, we'd have been going home by now—when it was that rotter Punter all the giddy time!"

"There's one chap to be dealt with yet," remarked Mornington quietly.

"Who's that?"

"Lattrey. Listen, and I'll tell you."

In a few words Mornington outlined Mark Lattrey's part in fixing the guilt on the shoulders of the Fistical Four. There was a burst of indignation at the finish.

"My hat! And the sneaking cad gets off scot free!" ejaculated Conroy.

"Hands up we rag the life out of him!" shouted Higgs excitedly. "Morny made it a condition that Punter shouldn't split on the chap, but that's no reason why he should escape. Let's make a clean slate all round, while we're at it. Carthew's had his dose from the captain himself."

"Good egg! Find Lattrey!" exclaimed Oswald.

"And smash him!" concurred Van Ryn.

There was a movement towards the door, but Jimmy Silver held up his hand.

"Hold on a minute, you fellows!"

"What's the matter, Jimmy?"

"Let him off!" urged the junior captain of Rookwood.

"Wh-a-a-at?"

"Off your onion, old chap?"

"I know he's a worm!" admitted Uncle James, colouring.

"He is!"

"And a howling cad, too. But it's all over now. If Lovell's willing, let's call it square."

"You ass!"

"Well, I'm willing," put in Arthur Edward Lovell grimly.

"In fact, chuck it. The chap will feel it bad enough when he finds we don't intend to hurt him. Let it rest."

"Good man!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver happily.

"You asses!" said Conroy.

"Thanks!"

"Blithering soft-hearted cuckoos, in fact!"

"Any old thing!"

"Chuckle-headed idiots!" added Mornington.

"Look here, shut up!" roared Lovell, jumping up. "Say another word—"

"Here, stop him! Don't you know Morny's your giddy guardian angel, you ass?" grinned Jimmy Silver, leaping up to intervene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whereat Lovell subsided, and the subject of Lattrey was dropped at the celebration feast in the End Study.

But it was long ere Lattrey quite got over his fear that his part in the whole miserable affair might come to light—and not till he heard that Captain Punter had left the district did he feel safe.

And it was longer still before Rookwood as a whole forgot the regime of the Band of Fascists and the debt of the Fistical Four to the Rookwood Dictator.

THE END.

(Your old favourites of Rookwood will appear again in a GRAND NEW SERIAL entitled: "HIS OWN ENEMY!" by Owen Conquest—the opening chapters of which will appear in the GEM the week after next. It's a treat not to be missed, chums, so look out for it!)

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"Wally D'Arcy's Feud!"

(Continued from page 24.)

The hapless Wally D'Arcy stood as if rooted to the ground. His eyes were fixed in a horrified stare at a tall impressive figure just climbing over a stile into the lane.

It was Dr. Holmes. And behind Dr. Holmes was Colonel Bland.

And both of them could obviously not have helped hearing Wally's every word.

That much was quite certain. The Head's brow was thunderous. Colonel Bland's face was a sight.

The horrified juniors did not need to wonder how they came there at that luckless moment. The stile was the end of a field-path through the colonel's estate, and obviously the old warrior was walking with the Head a little way towards St. Jim's. As a matter of fact, the colonel was just about to part from the Head at the stile. But he followed the Head over the stile now.

"D'Arcy!" gasped Dr. Holmes, fixing a terrible look on the luckless fag. "Is it possible—can it be possible that what I overheard a moment ago is true?"

Wally said nothing—he couldn't! For once the scapegrace of the Third was absolutely floored. His face was sufficient answer to the question, however.

"D'Arcy!" gasped the Head. "D'Arcy minor, I—I am shocked, amazed beyond measure. I am not accustomed to take notice of anything I accidentally overhear. But it is impossible for me to overlook—to ignore this. You have just made the astounding assertion that you were the author of that—that disgraceful hoax on Colonel Bland, a governor of St. Jim's, and a gentleman to whom our highest respect is due. If you were speaking foolishly—if you were making an untruthful and absurd boast—in order to impress your schoolfellows, you will be well-advised to admit it here and now, boy. Otherwise—"

The Head paused meaningfully, his face stern and set. The colonel spluttered.

"Dr. Holmes, the matter is clear!" he spluttered. "Good gad! I might have known it! That—that young rascal—that impudent young villain is the culprit!"

"Kindly allow me to deal with this matter, colonel," said the Head. "D'Arcy minor, I am waiting. Were you speaking the truth just now when you claimed to be the author of that—that wicked hoax?"

Wally held his head up, and his eyes gleamed. "Yes, sir!" he gasped. "I was speaking the truth. It—it was only a joke, sir. I scarcely expected it to turn out such a—a big thing. But—but I did it just as I said. I did it on my own, though—none of these fellows are responsible in any way."

"The Head's kind old face grew stern.

"Very well, D'Arcy minor. That you have admitted your fault frankly, and that you claim the full responsibility, is some measure of credit to you. But you have perpetrated a wicked, senseless hoax, which has not only caused Colonel Bland intense annoyance, but put a large number of poor people to a great deal of trouble, and probably expense."

"I—I'm sorry, sir," stammered Wally. "I never looked at it like that, sir."

"Probably not. However, it was a senseless, wicked hoax, and you must suffer the consequences!" said the Head sternly. "You will return to the school with me, and you will remain in the punishment-room until I have consulted with Mr. Railton and your Form master as to my final decision. Come! Colonel, if you will kindly excuse me—"

"Very well, doctor!" grunted Colonel Bland.

He nodded as the Head strode away, taking the hapless fag with him. For the moment he seemed about to follow, as if to speak to Dr. Holmes again. Actually, the colonel was not a bad-hearted old gentleman, and the misery in the fag's face had touched his crusty nature strangely. But after a brief hesitation he grunted again, and, with a glare at the scared juniors, he mounted the stile and disappeared.

"Well, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "That's finished it! Poor old Wally! If any kid ever asked for trouble he did. But I'm sorry—dashed sorry!"

The other juniors nodded gloomily.

It certainly seemed as if Wally D'Arcy's Feud had ended disastrously.

THE END.

(Now look out for the sequel to this magnificent yarn, entitled: "BACKING UP WALLY!" which will appear in next week's bumper number of the GEM.)



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