

"THE FIGHTING FAG!" Grand School Story of Fun and Adventure INSIDE!

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

The GEM

2^d



D'ARCY
MINOR
Makes a SPLASH!

A BUMPER BOOK FOR BOYS

No. 1,287. Vol. XLII.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending October 15th, 1932.

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.



WALLY D'ARCY'S FIRST DAY AT ST. JIM'S—

The FIGHTING FAG!



When St. Jim's learns that Gussy's minor is coming to the school they fully expect to see a miniature edition of the elegant Arthur Augustus. But St. Jim's get the shock of the term with the advent of Master Wally D'Arcy, for he's a "scrapper" from the word "Go!" and for cool cheek he takes the cake!

CHAPTER 1.

A "Joyful" Surprise!

"WHAT'S the time, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round with a slightly bored expression. The chums of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy—were standing on the steps of the School House, evidently waiting for something or somebody.

It was a keen October afternoon, and the juniors—three of them, at least—were tattooing on the stone with their heels to keep their feet warm.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaned in a graceful attitude against the stone balustrade. His manners never failed to have that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Weally, Blake, that is the third time you have asked me that question!" he said, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Is it?" said Blake. "Well, what's the time? That's the fourth time."

"I weally do not know. If you go down the steps and cress the quadwangle, you can see the clock in the towah. The clock in the towah was wight by my watch this mornin'."

"Yes; I'm likely to do that when you've got a watch in your pocket. Why can't you tell me the time, ass?"

"I object to bein' called an ass!"

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"Why can't you tell me the time?" roared Blake.

"Well, I could, you know; but it cweases my waistcoat to keep on pullin' out my watch. Howevah, I suppose I must tell you the time once more, deah boy."

And the swell of St. Jim's pulled out his handsome gold watch and cast a languid eye upon it.

"It's a quartah to six," he said. "The postman is late, and he may be here any minute now."

"Good business!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, good," said Digby dubiously, "if D'Arcy's letter comes; but—"

"It's bound to come, deah boy. My wespected matak told me in her lettah last week that there would be a gweat and pleasant surprise for me in her lettah this week, and, of course, that statement can only have one meanin'."

Jack Blake nodded thoughtfully.

"I suppose," he assented, "it must mean a tip, and a decent one."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here comes the postman!" exclaimed Blake, looking round suddenly.

The portly figure of Blagg, the Rylcombe postman, could be seen crossing the quad from the direction of the gates of St. Jim's.

The four juniors looked eager. Even Arthur Augustus allowed some signs of interest to appear in his face. He

—IS FULL OF HECTIC FUN AND THRILLING ADVENTURE!

By Martin Clifford.

jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and fixed it on the postman.

"Yaas, here he is," he remarked. "Now the feahful suspense will soon be ovah, deah boys!"

"Well, I hope it will be a remittance, that's all," said Digby, who seemed determined to keep up the character of Doubting Thomas.

"Oh, that's all wight, Dig! I tell you my matah is bound to turn up twumps. She said distinctly that there was a joyful surprise for me comin' in her next lettah. It can't be less than a pound, and it may be a fivah!"

"Well, a pound would tide us over till Saturday," said Blake.

"It's weally much more pwob that it is a fivah, deah boys."

The postman plodded up to the School House. The juniors descended to the steps to meet him, and Blagg stopped.

"Anything for us?" asked Blake. "That is to say, anything for D'Arcy?"

Blagg nodded his head and fumbled in his bag. He withdrew a letter addressed to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and handed it over. Then he continued his way up the School House steps.

Arthur Augustus slit the envelope with a penknife, drew forth his mater's letter, and unfolded it.

There was no enclosure, and D'Arcy's face grew longer.

"Well," said Blake pleasantly, "hand over the bank-note."

"There doesn't seem to be any banknote, deah boy."

"Then chuck out the postal orders!"

"There doesn't seem to be any postal ordahs, I'm afwaid."

"What did I tell you?" asked Digby, addressing no one in particular.

"That's right," said Blake, turning on his chum, "begin to cackle like a girl!"

"Blake, I cannot bear to hear you pass such wemarks upon the gentle sex. I have a gweat wespect for them, and I wefuse—"

"Read your letter! Perhaps there's some tin coming by the next post!"

"I wefuse to hear you pass dispawagin' wemarks upon gals!"

"Read your letter!" howled Blake.

"It is twue that Dig was a pwovokin' ass, but—"

"Eh, what's that?" said Digby.

"I was wemarkin' that it is twue you were a pwovokin' ass, Dig; but that does not justify any dispawagin' wemarks upon the gentle sex."

"Are you going to read that letter?" shrieked Blake.

"Not until you have withdwawn your dispawagin' wemarks about gals," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

The swell of the School House was awfully near at that moment to being hurled bodily into the puddle left by the recent rain at the foot of the School House steps. But Blake restrained himself.

"I withdraw them," he said, breathing hard through his nose. "I withdraw everything I said and didn't say, all that was implied and all that wasn't implied. Now read the letter!"

"I am satisfied, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "If you young persons will keep quiet for a little while I will pewuse this lettah."

And he perused it, the chums of Study No. 6 watching him the while. An expression of amazement overspread D'Arcy's face. He ejaculated "Bai Jove!" twice, and whistled once.

"Well, what's the surprise?" demanded Blake. "Is your governor coming to visit you?"

"No, deah boy, that's not it."

"Is there a fiver coming by the next post?"

"No. I am sowwy to say that my matah has ovahlooked the wathah important fact that I am stony bwoke. Women are so thoughtless, you know."

"Well, what's the news, then? I suppose there's some news?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus looked worried. And Blake's manner, as soon as he saw the troubled look on his chum's face, changed at once.

"I say, nothing wrong at home, is there, old chap?" he asked.

"Oh, no! I am afwaid there's goin' to be somethin' wong here, though."

"What's the matter?"

"My young bwothah is comin' to St. Jim's."

"Your young brother?"

"Yaas, wathah; my young bwothah Wally."

"And that's the joyful surprise?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "He's comin' to-night, and is goin' in the Third Form," said D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, he is comin' by the half-past six twain at Wylcombe. The matah wants me to go down to the station to meet him."

"Well, that would only be a brotherly thing to do!"

"I'll wire to my matah for some cash to meet the expenses of seein' young Wally comfortably placed in the school. Of course, it will come feahfully expensive, and I don't see how I am to meet it out of my own resources—especially as I haven't any resources at the pwesent time!"

Jack Blake clapped the swell of the School House on the shoulder with a force that made him stagger.

"Ripping! And we'll look after young Wally, and regard him as the apple of our eye!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rubbed his shoulder.

"Vewy well, Blake; but I weally wish you would not dislocate my beastlay backbone, you know! Have you a shillin'?"

"Nix!"

"Have you a shillin', Dig?"

"Not the ghost of one!"

"Have you a shillin', Hewwies?"

"I've got a French penny!"

"I'm afwaid the charmin' young lady in the post office wouldn't consent to send a telegwam in exchange for a French penny, deah boy!"

"Perhaps she might, if you gave her your most killing smile, Gussy!"

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"Still, it might have fatal results, and we don't want to try any risky experiments! I dare say Tom Merry has a shilling or two. Let's go and see, and then we shall have to buzz off to Rycombe without wasting time!"

"Wight-ho! Let's go and see Tom Mewwy!"

The chums of the Fourth made their way to the Shell passage, and Blake kicked at Tom Merry's door. The door flew open with a jerk, and there was an angry yell from Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three.

"Tom Merry, old son," said Blake, "have you a shilling?"

"Lots!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I've had a postal order from Huckleberry Heath by the post that's just come in. It's not cashed yet!"

"Then we'll cash it for you; we're going to the village!"

"Good! It's for a pound, and you can take the bob and bring me the change."

"If it's all the same to you, we will take the change and bring you the bob," said Jack Blake. "We're in want of cash for a most important purpose. A younger scion of the house of D'Arcy is going to honour the Third Form at St. Jim's by enterin' it to-day!"

There was a general movement of interest in the study.

"By Jove!" said Monty Lowther. "Are there any more at home like you, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Good!" said Manners. "I'll take him as my fag, if you like, Gussy!"

"Wally would uttably wefuse to fag for you, Mannahs!"

"Oh, his name's Wally, is it?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Walthah Adolphus D'Arcy."

"Ha, ha, ha! And is he like his elder brother?"

"I wegwet to say that Wally does not wesemble me vewy much at pwesent, but I have hopes of him, Tom Mewwy. He may impwove as he gwows oldah."

"Then he's more likely to get on in the Third Form," said Tom Merry, laughing. "As a matter of fact, two Gussies would be rather overpowering! I've often thought that one was too much!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Where's that postal order?" said Blake.

"Here you are. You can have half of it till Saturday, if you like."

"Thanks; I will! We're going down to meet young D'Arcy, and we want to get a lift of some sort back. We were thinking of standing a feed to celebrate his coming."

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I should like to kill the fatheaded calf, you know, only Lowther's people might object to the funeral expenses!"

"Eh? What's that?" said Monty Lowther.

"If you fellows like," said Blake, "I'll tell you what—your study is bigger than ours, and we'll have the feed here, and you can join in!"

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "But won't it be making too much of a Third Form kid? It would be bad for him to get a swelled head—and it runs in the family, you know!"

"Woally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, we could give him a licking to-morrow, if necessary, to take him down a peg," said Blake. "But I expect he's some shy, mum-chance little beggar, and it would make him feel at home to make rather a fuss of him at first!"

"Good! I'll get in the things from the tuckshop while you're gone, and you might bring in some extras from Mother Murphy's in the village," said Tom Merry.

"Right you are!"

And Jack Blake put the postal order in his waistcoat pocket, and the Fourth-Formers quitted the study.

Monty Lowther broke into a chuckle when the door closed.

"My hat!" he said. "I'm curious to see D'Arcy minor! If he's anything like Gussy, the Third Form will rag him to extinction! Some shy little rotter, I expect—all high collar and silk hat! My word!"

CHAPTER 2.

A Kicking for Three Cads!

"H A, ha, ha! It's a lark!"

It was Gore of the Shell who spoke, and Jack Blake heard the words as he came out of Tom Merry's study. Gore, Mellish, and Sharp were chuckling over some little joke in a group, and Jack Blake looked at them curiously. That it was some ill-natured joke he was certain, or it would not have amused Gore and Mellish so much.

"What's on?" asked Blake, as he came along the passage.

The juniors looked round, and Gore gave them a grin.

"Such a lark!" he chuckled.

"What's a lark?"

"It's Mary, the housemaid, you know. Haven't you noticed her?"

"Blessed if I have!" said Blake.

"I have," said D'Arcy. "I wemembah she has been lookin' wathah queeah lately. When I wequested her yestah-day to see that my shoes were made just a little bwright by that lazy young wascal of a boy, she was cwyin'. I assuahed her that it was weally a mattah of no such gweat importance as all that, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Gore. "Do you think she was crying about your rotten shoes, you ass?"

"My shoes are not wotten, and I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"It's a regular romance," said Gore. "You've heard of that young chap, Lynn? There was a lot of jaw about him a few weeks ago."

"I remember," said Blake. "He was under-keeper on Sir Neville Boyle's estate, and he showed us a jolly lot of places for fishing in the Rhyl last summer. He was a decent sort, and that yarn about his being mixed up with poachers was all rot, in my opinion."

"I suppose you didn't know that he was engaged to Mary, the housemaid?" grinned Gore.

"No; I don't take such an interest in other people's affairs as you do, Gore."

"Well, it was a fact, anyway," said Gore; "and since he's got the sack from Sir Neville, Mary has been going about looking like the ghost in a drama. Stand here, and you'll see her coming along in a minute."

"Well, you rotten pig!" said Blake, with great frankness. "Do you see anything funny in that?"

"Well, yes, rather; it's a jolly good joke, I think. You see—"

"And you're waiting here to see her, because she looks down in the mouth?" asked Blake, with a gleam of his eye.

"You mind your own business, Blake!"

"I make this my business on the spot," said Blake. "This is where we clear the passage. Follow your uncle, my pippins!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Goah as a beast, and I think it's the pwopah thing to do to administah a feahful thwashin' to him."

"Look here—"

"Hands off—"

"Ow! Yarocoght! Ow! Ow!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby charged as if they were charging down a football field.

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Gore and Mellish and Sharp yelled with anguish and went reeling away, and a series of powerful kicks helped them towards the stairs, down which they were bundled at top speed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood looking on through his eyeglass. He would have lent a hand if it had been necessary; but as it was not needed there was no sense in rumpling his clothes for nothing.

The three unlucky humorists rolled down the stairs, and Blake & Co. plunged after them, still kicking.

There was a light step in the passage, and D'Arcy turned round to see Mary, the housemaid. She was a neat and pretty girl. D'Arcy, when he came into contact with her, had always treated her with great politeness. He made her a graceful bow now, and the girl, seeing that he wished to speak, stopped.

"I am awfully sowwy to heah that you are in twouble, Maw!" said D'Arcy. "Is it twue that young Lynn has had the ordah of the push—I mean, that he has been discharged by Sir Neville Boyle?"

Mary's eyes filled with tears. There was no doubt that she was taking the matter very much to heart. To Mary, young William Lynn was all the world, and the matter, indifferent to all others, was a tragedy to her.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy. And it's not true that he had anything to do with the poaching. It's not true!"

"Don't cwy, my deah gal," said D'Arcy. "I'm quite suah it's not twue. I wemembah Lynn wescued my toppah for me when it dwopped into the wivah one day, and I was vewy grateful, and so I am suah that he couldn't have had any dealings with any wascally poachahs. I believe Sir Neville is a wathah unweasonable old gentleman, but pewwaps the mattah can be explained. Don't cwy! I'll look into it for you."

Mary's tears were flowing, and D'Arcy's generous assurance did not stop them. Perhaps Mary did not think that D'Arcy's looking into it would improve the matter very much.

"I believe the case was not pwoved, was it?" said D'Arcy.

"No; but Sir Neville's head-keeper was against William from the first," said Mary, crying softly, "and he told wicked stories about him."

"Bai Jove, that must be looked into!" said D'Arcy. "Now, don't cry, Maw, my deah gal, and I'll look into the mattah, and set it wight."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked on after his chums.

The maid smiled a little through her tears. She did not think that D'Arcy could help her; but, at all events, sympathy was something, and D'Arcy's sympathy was very genuine.

The swell of St. Jim's found his three comrades in the hall. Gore, Sharp, and Mellish had disappeared.

"Are you weady?" asked D'Arcy. "Bottah get our coats!"

"Rats! Better walk sharp."

"Suppose it comes on to wain?"

"No time for dressing up for the occasion," said Blake, "and it won't rain much. Come on!"

"My toppah is upstairs."

"It can stay there. Here's your cap."

"On such an occasion as this, when my youngah bwothah is comin' to the coll, I weally think we might dwess decently for once," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Blake replied by seizing him by the shoulder and running him out into the dusky quad.

The swell of the School House struggled in vain in his leader's muscular grip.

"Welsease me, Blake, you wottah! You are cwumplin' my jacket."

"I say, we shall want a pass," said Digby suddenly. "They've made lockin'-up earlier now, you know, now that Summer Time is finished. We shall be out after Taggles has locked up."

"I forgot that!" grunted Blake. "Wait for me. I'll ask Kildare for a pass. He's bound to give it me when I tell him it's to meet a new kid."

Blake re-entered the School House. Herries and Digby waited on the steps in the growing October dusk, and D'Arcy took the advantage of the opportunity to slip into the House for a silk hat.

Blake hurried to Kildare's study, but it was vacant. The captain of St. Jim's was out. He came out again, and encountered Darrell of the Sixth in the passage.

Darrell was outside-right in the First Eleven, and the finest winger at St. Jim's. He was a somewhat grave and quiet fellow, and Kildare's closest chum.

"Hallo, Darrell!" said Blake cheerfully. "You'll do!"

"Eh? What's that?" said Darrell, looking at him.

"I wanted to see Kildare; but you'll do. I want a pass for myself and three others, to go to the railway station."

"Can't be done!" said Darrell, shaking his head. "You



Blake, Herries, and Digby charged as if they were charging down a football field, and Gore, Mellish, and Sharp let out yells of anguish as a series of powerful kicks helped them towards the stairs. "Ow! Yarsoogh! Ow! Ow!"

wouldn't be back before locking-up, and you've had too many passes lately."

"This is a special occasion."

"Yes; it always is."

"But this is really special," explained Blake. "D'Arcy's younger brother is coming to St. Jim's, and his mother has written to Gus to meet the train at half-past six."

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Darrell good-naturedly. "Come into my room, and I'll write out the pass. Mind you come straight back!"

"Well, the lane winds a lot, you know, and if we leave the road—"

"Cheese it!"

Two minutes later Jack Blake rejoined his chums with the pass in his pocket.

Arthur Augustus came out at the same moment arrayed in a nobby autumn coat and silk hat.

"Got it?" asked Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah—"

"Ass! I was speaking to Blake. Have you the pass, Blake?"

"Yes, I got it from Darrell. Come on!"

And the chums of the Fourth lost no time in getting down to the gates, and were soon striding through the gathering dusk towards Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy's Decision.

CRACK, crack!

Jack Blake started, and glanced at the dark woods that bordered the lane. The sounds of the gunshots came eerily through the thickening dusk of the October evening.

"Bai Jove, that sudden wow thwew me into quite a fluttah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I pwesume that is some poachah at work."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Digby. "There has been a lot of poaching in this part of the county lately, and they're making a lot of fuss about the matter, too. Hallo! Who's that?"

A tall figure in coat and gaiters suddenly appeared from the shadows of the trees, and looked out into the road. The man was a burly fellow, with a short black beard, and he carried a gun under his arm.

The juniors halted instinctively at the sight of him, and Blake signed to his comrades to be silent. Where the chums had stopped a tree threw its dark shadow over the lane, and it was plain that the man looking out of the wood did not see them.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "Is it a poachah, deah boys?"

"No," muttered Blake. "Lknow that chap's chivvy. It's Barberry, Sir Neville Boyle's head-keeper."

The keeper looked up and down the lane, as if in expectation of seeing someone. It was a lonely way after dark, and Blake wondered whom the head-keeper expected. But as it was no poacher, there was no reason for the juniors to keep out of sight, and they walked on.

The keeper gave a start as they came out of the shadows of the big tree and came into view in the dusk of the lane.

"You have been a long time!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Have we?" said Blake cheerfully. "You see, we didn't know you were waiting for us, Mr. Barberry— Hallo, he's gone!"

The keeper started at Blake's voice. He had evidently mistaken the boys in the thick dusk for the persons he had been expecting, whoever they were. As Blake spoke, Barberry turned round, and strode abruptly back into the wood.

The junior grinned.

"He doesn't seem pleased to see us, and I'm sure I spoke to him most politely," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah, there was weally nothin' left to be deashed in that respect, Blake."

"Thank you! I was brought up to be well-mannered, Gussy."

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"I don't like that chap's chivvy," Blake remarked thoughtfully, as they walked on. "I like a chap who says a civil good-evening, instead of looking at you like a demon in a pantomime."

"Yaas, wathah! And speakin' on this subject, I am thinkin' of takin' up my amateur detective work again, deah boys."

"Good! You are going to investigate and discover why Barbewwy is so surly? Have you any clue?"

"Pway don't wot, deah boy! I had a little conversation with Mawwy, the housemaid, while you were wollin' those wottahs downstairs, and weally I was vewy touched."

"You've been touched a long time, old chap!"

"Weally, Blake, I should be obliged if you would not intewrupt me with wude and iwrelevant wemarks. I was deeply touched by her grief. She seems to be suffewin' frow melancholy, pewwaps a bwakin' heart, and a bwakin' heart is a sewious thing, you know."

"Oh, of course! You always have a breaking heart when you fall in love, so you ought to know," assented Blake.

"Pway be sewious. I have only been in love thwee times, as you know perfectly well."

"And is Mary to be the fourth?" demanded Digby.

"I shall take it as a favah, Digby, if you will speak with more respect of myself, and that extremewy respectable and mewitowious young person," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"This is not a subject for jokin'. Sewiously, Mawwy is wowywvin' about that young chap Lynn, who has been sacked by Sir Neville Boyle for acting in collusion with the wotten poachahs. Now, I don't believe he was weally guilty, and he seems to have been sacked on suspish."

"It's rather a sewious matter for them," said Digby. "They were going to be married at Christmas."

"Yaas, it's vewy hard on both of them—"

"What is—being married at Christmas?"

"No, certainly not. It is vawy hard on both of them to have their mawwiage mucked up like this, and, as a mattah of fact, deah boys, I have pwomised Mawwy to look into the mattah."

"You have whatted Mary what?"

"I have pwomised Mawwy to look into the mattah."

"And what difference will that make?"

"I hope it will make a gweat difference. The poor gal is cwyin' like anythin', you know, and I hate to see a gal cwy. Something ought to be done, so I have pwomised to look into the mattah. She says William—young Lynn, you know—is innocent, and I weally think him a most respect-able young fellow myself, because he wescued my silk hat for me one day when it fell into the wivah."

"I don't see how you could have a clearer proof than that of a chap's absolute respectability," assented Blake solemnly.

"I believe you are wottin', you wottah! But it does weally show that a chap's heart is in the wight place when he wrealises the importance of a silk hat not bein' lost or damaged. He was vewy civil, too, and showed me a nice place to fish, and explained quite politely that I mustn't fish on Sir Neville Boyle's bank of the wivah. If he had put it wudely, I should have insisted upon fishin' there, of course."

"And get run in for poachin'?"

"Well, it would have been a question of dig with me, and I could not vewy well have given way. But he weally put it vewy nicely, and I weward him as a most respect-able and mewitowious young man, and—quite deservin' that I should look into the mattah."

"You young ass! What good do you think you are going to do?"

"I object to bein' called an ass! As for the good I am going to do, I expect to cleah young Lynn; and if he's cleared of suspish, Sir Neville will take him on again, and then those respect-able and mewitowious young people can get mawried at Christmas, all the same. I shall give them my blessin'," said D'Arcy, with quite a paternal air. "I'd like to see the young people happy."

"I don't see what you're going to do."

"Neithah do I, at pwesent, but I have pwomised to look into the mattah, and I shall keep my word. Of course, I have a clue to the weal facts."

"What is the clue?"

"Mawwy says that the head-keepah told wicked stowies about Lynn to Sir Neville. Now, if Lynn was condemned on Barbewwy's evidence, and he is innocent, it stands to weason that Barbewwy was tellin' lies."

"Did you work that out in your head?"

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"Yaas, wathah! Now, to continue the line of weasonin'—what was Barbewwy's motive?"

"Don't ask me conundrums!"

"I wasn't askin' you a conundrum. I said, what was Barbewwy's motive? I weward it as wathah plain that he put the thin' on young Lynn to keep himself cleah. You see, it seems pwetty plain that somebody was in collusion with the poachahs, and it may have been necessary to find a scapegoat."

"My hat!" said Blake. "There may be somethin' in that! I never like a chap who can't say a civil good-evening."

"Yaas, and young Lynn is weally a vewy civil young person, and he wescued my toppah."

"Good! We'll look into this."

Half-past six chimed from the village church as Blake spoke, and he gave a start.

"Hallo! The train's in!" he exclaimed.

"Bei Jove! That's wathah wotten! Buck up, deah boy! It's awfully bad form to keep a chap waitin' when you're goin' to meet him at the station. Wun like anythin'!"

And the juniors sprinted, and a couple of minutes later arrived breathless at the station.

A cheerful-looking youth, with his hands in his trousers pockets, and his cap on the back of his head, was standing in the station entrance.

D'Arcy uttered an exclamation.

"That's young Wally! He's awwived!"

Blake gave a long, long whistle.

"That's D'Arcy minor! My only hat!"

CHAPTER 4.

Master Wally.

D'ARCY MINOR looked coolly at the juniors from St. Jim's.

He did not bear much resemblance to D'Arcy major. There was a resemblance of features, but in "manners and customs" the youthful Wally was amazingly unlike his brother.

There were some untidy fags in the Third Form at St. Jim's, but the inkies of the Third Form fags did not seem to Blake's mind quite so untidy as D'Arcy minor.

D'Arcy minor was dressed in Etons. His waistcoat was crumpled, and there was a smear of toffee on his trousers. His jacket was plentifully adorned with little hairs, apparently from the coat of some animal. His collar was awry, and soiled in a way that made Arthur Augustus shudder to look at it. His hair was untidy, and his cap was on the back of his head. His shoes were muddy, and the laces of one were undone and trailing round his shoe. Withal, there was a cheerful grin upon his none-too-clean face that was very taking.

"Hallo, kid!" he said, addressing D'Arcy. "So you've come."

Arthur Augustus screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed his younger brother majestically. Blake, Herries, and Digby were beginning to grin, and Arthur Augustus felt that if his dignity as elder brother was not asserted at once it was in danger of being lost for good and all.

"Wally!"

"Hallo! Same old Gussy!" said Wally cheerfully. "Same old windowpane!"

"Wally!"

"Blessed if I know what you want to keep on repeating my name like a giddy parrot for! Ain't you going to shake hands with your brother, after being parted for weeks and weeks?" demanded Wally, extending a grimy paw.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at the hand—and did not take it.

"I am sowwy!" he said, with dignity. "I will shake hands with you pwesently, when you have had a wash. I cannot have my gloves wuined!"

"Looks a bit spotty, doesn't it?" agreed Wally complacently.

"Where are your gloves, young 'un?"

"Blessed if I know. The mater gave them to me when I started. I think Pongo gnawed one of them in the railway carriage, and the othe. must have been left on the seat."

"Pongo!" said D'Arcy faintly. "You don't mean to say you've bwought that howlid, wotten mongrel to St. Jim's?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wally. "There was a row about it, but I argued it out with the mater. Here, Pongo, Pongo!"

He whistled, and a ragged-looking cur came slinking up. Wally patted his rough head affectionately.

"He's a jolly good ratter!" he said. "If you've got rats in the studies at St. Jim's, he'll clear 'em out for you. Bites like anything, too. He bit the guard of the train, and there was a row. I had to nurse him most of the way down."

"Yaas, you look like it."

"That's the worst of Pongo," said Wally, glancing down at his dusty, hairy jacket. "His wool does come off, and no mistake!"

"You ought to have the howwid bwute ddowned!" "Rats!" said Wally. "You never liked him since the time he got his teeth into your trucks. It was your eyeglass he didn't like. I told you he would let you alone if you chucked your eyeglass. You didn't."

"I am hardly likely, I pvesume, to change my habits for the sake of pleasin' a wotten mongwel, Wally."

"Then you can't blame him if he goes for you. Don't be afraid, now, though. I've got my eye on him. If he goes for you, I'll have him off before he hurts you. But, I say, if these chaps are friends of yours, you may as well introduce me. I know you're overcome with joy by my arrival, but you mustn't forget your manners, you know, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to be addresssed as Gussy. My name is Arthur."

"Oh, don't be particular about a trifle! I'll call you Arty, if you like."

"If you address me as Arty, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Wally cocked his eye thoughtfully at his indignant brother.

"I rather think you couldn't do it," he remarked. "But keep your wool on, old son! Down, Pongo! Down, you young rascal!"

"Keep that wotten bwute farthah away fwom my legs!"

watching him in dismay. Herries and Digby were grinning, and urging more tarts upon the cheerful youth.

D'Arcy minor's box was in the cab outside. The youngster looked up at Blake with a decidedly jammy grin.

"Come and sample these tarts," he said. "They're ripping!"

"My good youth, it's against college etiquette for a Fourth-Former to devour tarts with an infant!" said Blake severely.

"Well, I'm not an infant, my pippin!"

"The Third Form are called the infants at St. Jim's."

"They'd better not call me an infant, or somebody will get his nose punched!" remarked Wally, jamming another tart into his mouth.

Jack Blake chuckled.

"I can foresee a high old time for this young merchant in the Third Form," he observed. "Young Jameson and Curly Gibson will give him a few lessons, I think. Lemme see. I told Tom Merry I would take in a few things. May as well have some tarts, if young Wally hasn't cleared out the stock. Do you always eat jam with the outside of your face, Wally?"

D'Arcy minor grinned.

Blake made the necessary purchases, and the juniors left the tuckshop, followed by Pongo, and got into the cab. Then it drove off through the October gloom towards the ancient college of St. Jim's.

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"It's your eyeglass that worries him. I've warned you of it before. Couldn't you take it off for a bit?"

"Certainly not!" D'Arcy turned to Blake & Co.

"Blake, deah boy, allow me to pwsent my youngah bwothah Wally. You need not wouble to shake hands with him. Wally, this is Jack Blake, and this is Digby, and this is Hewwies. You will have the kindness to treat them with pwopah wespsect, as my fwinds, and as membahs of a highah Form."

"Oh, certainly!" said Wally. "I suppose you fellows always treat chaps in a higher Form with great respect?"

Jack Blake coughed.

"That's nothing to do with the matter," he remarked. "If Third Form kids don't behave themselves, they get licked. You ought to bear that in mind. It may be useful to you. Now, Gussy, I've got to go to the post office to cash Tom Merry's postal order. Take this young ragamuffin away, and get a cab, and I'll meet you at the tuckshop."

"Golly," said Wally, smacking his lips, "I'm hungry!"

Jack Blake hurried away. There was a grin on his face. D'Arcy minor had surprised the chums of the Fourth. Blake wondered what Tom Merry would think of him. The cheerful youth evidently had no idea of keeping his place as a humble and insignificant Third-Former.

There were probably ructions ahead for Master Wally.

Blake cashed Tom Merry's postal order, and then walked over to the tuckshop. There he found Wally eating jam tarts. A considerable portion of jam seemed to be spreading itself over his face and hands. Arthur Augustus was

CHAPTER 5.

Skimpole on the Warpath!

TOM MERRY looked round the study with an approving eye. The cloth was laid, and the crockery set. Cups and saucers, borrowed from all quarters, adorned the table, and if no cup matched a saucer, and no saucer matched any other saucer, what did a detail like that matter?

Plates, too, were there in plenty in an assorted heap, and the soap-dish containing the jam glistened in the gas-light. There were good things galore on the study table. The feeds in Study No. 10 in the Shell were well-known, and the Fifth and Sixth-Formers had been known to speak of them with respect. There was little doubt that Master Wally would be both pleased and impressed.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther. "A lot of trouble to take over a Third Form kid, though."

"It's a special occasion. D'Arcy isn't a bad sort when he's not funny. I expect his brother will be a chap like himself, but younger and shyer. Some little kid who can't say boo to a goose, and sit quite quiet, you know."

Monty Lowther laughed.

"He'll have a high old time among the Third Form fags, if that's the kind of kid he is," he remarked. "They'll roast him!"

"We might keep a fatherly eye on him at first," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Three fatherly eyes, in fact—I mean, three pairs of fatherly eyes."

"I don't know. If Jameson & Co. thought he was backed

up by fellows in a higher Form, they'd make his life a burden on principle."

"Something in that," remarked Manners. "Still, we could give young Jameson a licking to start with. He's the most obstreperous of those young rascals."

"Better give him a feed," said Tom Merry, laughing. "He would pass a licking on to D'Arcy minor. Now everything seems to be ready, and I think we may as well go down to the gates to look for them."

"Jolly cold weather for waiting at the gates."

"Well, we can chip Taggles to pass the time away."

The Terrible Three arrived at the gates, which had been closed by Taggles. A cab loomed up from the dusk of the road, and halted, and Blake & Co. and D'Arcy minor alighted from it.

Taggles came grumbling out of his lodge to open the gates as Blake rang the bell.

The juniors walked into the quadrangle, where the Terrible Three were waiting them.

Tom Merry looked round for D'Arcy minor. That young gentleman was whistling to his dog with a piercing note that made Tom Merry stop his ears.

"Where's D'Arcy minor?"

"There he is."

"My only Aunt Janel!"

Wally looked round at Tom Merry. His dog had answered his whistle at last, and Wally had taken a grip on his collar, and lifted him into his arms. Pongo struggled a little, and deposited a fresh coating of frowy hairs on Wally's jacket.

"Tom Mewwy, this is my youngah bwothah Wally," said D'Arcy feebly. "I—I am afraid you will think him a fearful young wagamuffin. I have tried to bring him up in the way he should go, but it is a fearfully difficult task."

"So I should imagine," said Tom Merry, looking at D'Arcy minor.

"Keep still, Pongo! Good doggie! Keep still!"

"Nice dog—that!" said Lowther.

"Yes, he's ripping!" said Wally. "You should see him rabbiting; nothing will stop him. Are you allowed to hunt rabbits in these parts?"

"Yes; if you can pay the fines, or do the hard labour afterwards."

Wally grinned.

"Then I expect Pongo will get into fearful rows. Nothing can stop him when he's on the scent of a rabbit. It comes cheap, in a way, because he keeps himself, you see, and he costs me next to nothing for dog biscuits."

"What breed is he?" asked Manners.

"Fox-terrier-pointer-retriever-bulldog-Newfoundland-bloodhound," said Wally calmly. "Rather a mixed breed, you know."

Manners was silent. He had asked that question from politeness, but perhaps Wally had scented a hint of patronage in the manner of the Shell boy.

"Pway come in, Wally!" said D'Arcy brusquely.

"Leave that beast in the quad!"

"No fear! It's time for Pongo to have a feed. If he can't have a rabbit, he will have to have a biscuit. Anybody got a dog biscuit in his pocket?"

"Sorry," said Tom Merry ironically. "I usually have plenty of them about me, but I gave my last one to the poor."

"Does anyone here keep a dog?" asked Wally.

"Yes, I do," said Herries. "If you like, I'll show you where to keep that brute, and give you a biscuit for him."

"Thanks; you're a decent chap!"

"Vewy good!" said D'Arcy. "Show him where to put the beast, Hewwies, and then bring him in. I will take him to a bath-woom."

Herries conducted Wally to the building behind the New House, where the boys of St. Jim's kept their pets. There Herries' bulldog Towser—the most hated animal in the school—reposed in his kennel.

Towser looked out, with a growl, at approaching footsteps, and his eyes burned at the sight of another dog.

Wally still had Pongo in his arms, and he looked distrustfully at the powerful bulldog.

"I say, he won't get loose, will he?" asked D'Arcy minor.

"No; he's on his chain. Don't be nervous!"

"Who are you getting at?" asked Wally pleasantly. "I'm not afraid of any old bulldog, but I don't want a brute that size to go for Pongo. Pongo is certain to go for him, but he will be able to get out of it again if your brute's on a chain, so that's all right."

"You can keep him in this box till you get a kennel," said Herries. "Better tie him up, too, in case he gets wandering. They always make a row here if my bulldog gets loose, though he's a pleasant and harmless animal."

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Wally chuckled.

"No good tying up Pongo. He's such an artful beggar! He would be bound to get loose. He'll be off somewhere, as sure as a gun."

"If he gets into the woods after rabbits he'll get shot," said Herries warningly. "Barberry has shot twice at my bulldog, and he's a nice, quiet animal!"

"Yes, he looks it," agreed Wally, glancing at the savage-looking bulldog. "And who may Barberry happen to be?"

"Sir Neville Boyle's head-keeper."

"There will be a row if he shoots at my dog!" said Wally. "Pongo is bound to go rabbiting; it's his nature. Blessed if I can see why people can't let a dog be happy! My mater made an awful fuss because I had him in my room one night, and he tore up the pillows and bolster. Mater isn't fond of animals. She wouldn't let me bring my ferret to school. You'd like him; such a comical little beggar!"

"Here's a biscuit," said Herries.

"Thanks, very much!" said Wally. "There's a lot of animals here!"

"Lots of fellows keep pets."

"Good! I like that! Pongo always kills white mice and rats. I dare say there will be some rows about that, too!" said Wally, with a chuckle.

Herries vouchsafed no reply. He felt that this new ornament of the Third Form was a little too much for him. He led him back to the quadrangle, and as they passed the angle of the New House three juniors in running flannels came into sight.

They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House, taking their evening sprint round the quad to keep in form.

Figgins & Co. halted as they saw Herries and his companion.

"Hallo!" said Figgins affably. "I hear that D'Arcy's young brother is coming to St. Jim's. Is it a fact, Herries?"

"Yes, rather; here he is!"

Figgins & Co. looked closely at Wally. They looked at him, and then they looked at one another. Then three distinct chuckles were heard in the quiet of the October evening.

"My only hat!" said Figgins.

"My giddy Aunt Matilda!" murmured Kerr.

"Great pip!" remarked Fatty Wynn.

And Figgins & Co. sprinted on, still chuckling.

D'Arcy minor stared after them.

"Who may those merchants happen to be?" he asked.

"Figgins & Co. of the New House."

"Oh, you have separate Houses here?" asked Wally, as they walked on through the dusk towards the School House. "I think I remember Gussy telling me something about it. You have House rows, I believe?"

"That's it," said Herries. "The School House is Cock House at St. Jim's, you know, and we have to keep Figgins & Co. in their places!"

"Do you always lick them?"

"Oh, yes, always—except—except when they lick us! Here we are!"

They entered the School House. Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for them in the Hall. Arthur Augustus looked depressed.

Wally gave him a friendly dig in the ribs that made him start violently.

"Cheer up, Gussy!" said Wally.

"Weally, Wally, if you address me in that disrespectful mannah—"

"Oh, don't get on the high horse, Gussy! I've had enough of that in the holidays!" said Wally, in a tone of remonstrance. "The pater was talking to me in the same strain, too, just before I left! I suppose I had better go in and see the boss."

"The—the—the what?"

"The Head, then."

"If he heard you allude to him as the boss," said Tom Merry, "there would be a licking for the cheekiest kid at St. Jim's!"

"Oh, but he didn't hear, so it's all right! Where is his den?"

"You must come and have a wash and brush-up, Wally," said D'Arcy; "and you had better report yourself to the Housemaster in the first place. I presume that arrangements have been made for you to be in the School House?"

"I hope so. I shall want to keep Pongo in my study."

"Pets are not allowed in the House, and Third Form kids don't have studies," said Tom Merry.

Wally stared.

"Ain't I going to have a study to myself, then?"

"No. You'll do your prep in the Third Form room, with the rest of the infants, and you'll have a locker there to keep your things in, if you can find an empty one. The other infants often take two or three when there are vacant places, and you might have to fight somebody for one!"

Wally pushed back his soiled cuffs with a grin of anticipation.

"Oh, I shan't mind that," he said; "I know Gussy will hold my coat!"

"Weally, Wally, I should wufese to do anythin' of the sort," said D'Arcy. "Come with me, pway, and make yourself a little tidy. Tom Mowwy has been kind enough to have a feed pwepared in his study for you to celebrate your awival. This is an unpwecedented honah for a Third Form kid."

"I hope it's an unpwecedented feed, too," said Wally; "I'm jolly hungry!"

"Pway come along!"

Arthur Augustus marched his terrible younger brother off.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances and chuckled.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "This will be a sad trial for the one-and-only Gus! I hardly expected to see anything like this!"

"Well, perhaps you are right," he said. "As a matter of fact, I am going into the wood to make investigations concerning Mary, the housemaid. My idea is to take plenty of grub with me and hide it in the hollow oak, so that I can get meals there, and pursue my investigations without interruption. You can see that poor Mary is almost breaking her heart over that young fellow Lynn getting the sack, and it would be a great comfort to her to know that he deserves it. When I have proved him guilty——"

"When you have proved him what?" roared Blake.

"When I have proved him guilty, she will, naturally, cease to think of such a worthless fellow, and will be happy again."

"You crass idiot!"

"Really, Blake, I cannot help regarding that expression as almost rude. But I shall do my best, in spite of opposition. A sincere Determinist is only made the more determined by opposition. Pray do not delay me any more; I am in a great hurry!"



As Blake & Co. arrived breathless at the station, they saw a cheerful-looking youth, with his hands in his pockets, standing at the entrance. "That's young Wally!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "He's awvived!"

"Nor I," grinned Blake. "He came as a surprise! Poor old Gus! And his mater told him that Wally was coming as a joyful surprise!"

"Let's get up to the study," said Lowther. "We may as well have the feed quite ready by the time his lordship comes up."

"Right-ho! Hallo, Skimmy, going out?"

Skimpole had just come downstairs with a leather bag in his hand and his cap obviously concealed under his jacket. He seemed inclined to avoid the chums of the Shell, but it was impossible, and he stopped.

"Yes; I am going for—a little walk," he said. "It is a—very pleasant October evening, and—and, in short, I am going for a little walk."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, it's a pleasant misty evening, with a pleasant little drizzle coming on," he agreed. "May as well speak out, Skimmy. You are going out to play the giddy goat!"

"Really, Tom Merry, I——"

"You are going out of bounds," said Tom Merry severely, "and that bag contains grub, doesn't it?"

Skimpole turned very red and looked uneasy,

Tom Merry laid his hand on the freak of the Shell's shoulder.

"Look here, Skimmy, you can't play the giddy goat!" he said. "You'll get into a fearful row if you go out of bounds at night! You've done it before, and been let off lightly, but you can't impose on Mr. Railton's patience too often, you know!"

"I should not hesitate as a sincere Determinist to break bounds for the sake of doing so," said Skimpole; "but, as it happens, I have a pass out of bounds to-night!"

"A pass!" said Tom Merry suspiciously. "Where did you get it?"

"Knox gave it to me," said Skimpole. "I told him I particularly wanted to go down Rylcombe way, and he has given me a pass. I am going to do a little shopping for him in the village."

Jack Blake gave a sniff.

"Yes, I know what that means! You are going to get cigarettes for him!"

"Really, Blake, I suppose a prefect can do as he likes?"

If Knox chooses to ruin his wind by smoking cigarettes, why shouldn't he? It's his own wind, isn't it?

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "You're talking rot; but, you always are, so we won't argue that point! If you hadn't a pass, I should march you in again by the scruff of your neck. As it is, I suppose I can't stop you playing the giddy goat."

"I am only able to conclude, Merry, that your absurd remarks are dictated by an envy of my wonderful ability as a detective."

"Exactly," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Go ahead, ass! Come on, you chaps!"

Skimpole left the House rather hurriedly, as Tom Merry & Co. went upstairs.

"Of all the asses!" he remarked, "I think Skimmy takes the cake! He's going to make Mary happy by proving her sweetheart guilty, and he's got the necessary provisions for his expedition in search of the poachers! What he wants is a strait-jacket!"

"Wonder where he got the grub from?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I dare say he has raided Gore's cupboard; he generally does when he's in want!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The party entered Tom Merry's study. The gas was turned up, showing that someone had been there since the chums of the Shell left the room. Tom Merry looked round quickly, then he gave a whoop.

"My hat! Look!"

His shout was echoed by Manners and Lowther. The good things that had been piled on the table had disappeared—hardly a thing was left. In the place of the feast destined for D'Arcy minor's honour, was a scrawled note, pinned to the tablecloth. They did not need to guess that it was Herbert Skimpole's handwriting.

Tom Merry picked it up and read it out:

"Dear Merry—I have been compelled by necessity to borrow your feed. I shall return the full value of it to you out of the profits of my book on Determinism, which will be published before Christmas.

Yours sincerely,
Herbert Skimpole."



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The chums looked at one another. Blake sat down, gasping. Digby burst into a roar. Herries stared at the denuded table. The Terrible Three were furious.

"I think this takes the cake," said Jack Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Skimmy has passed the limit this time," said Lowther wildly. "Give me the chopper. He can't be out of the gates yet."

Tom Merry brightened up.

"Good! He can't be gone yet. Come on, kids! We may catch him, and get the grub back, and give him a fearful hiding into the bargain."

The juniors did not need bidding twice. Tom Merry rushed from the study, and the others followed him fast. They rushed headlong down the stairs and out into the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 6.

Wally Hits Out!

"HERE'S the bath-room, Wally!"
"Right-ho!" said D'Arcy minor. "Show us a light, will you? While I'm having a wash you might find out where they put my box, and get me out a clean collar, will you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And bring me a brush to get some of this dust off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't forget to give the chap a tip for carrying my box up. I don't want to be mean."

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus faintly.

And he left his young brother to clean up, and went away in search of the cheerful infant's box. It was decidedly infra dig for a Fourth Form fellow to run errands for an infant in the Third Form. But D'Arcy's desire to render his brother's appearance a little more respectable before he saw the Housemaster overpowered every other feeling. He scouted in the Third Form dormitory, and found the box, which Taggles was just placing on the floor.

He gave Taggles a shilling for Wally, and the porter grunted and left the dormitory. D'Arcy stooped down to open the box, and remembered that he had forgotten to ask Wally for the key.

"Bai Jove!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "That young boundah will exhaust me at this wate. I shall have to go down again."

He descended to the bath-room. Wally was puffing and blowing under a flowing tap, and did not see or hear him.

D'Arcy tapped him on the bare back to gain his attention, and Wally started and suddenly raised his head, sending a big shower of cold water over Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy started back with a gasp.

"You uttah young ass! You've wetted me."

"Hallo!" said Wally. "Is that you? You startled me, Sorry!"

"Yaas, I should think you are sowwy," said D'Arcy witheringly, as he mopped his splashed face with a towel. "I wegard you as a careless and flippant young beast. You did not give me the key of your twunk, and I have had to come down again for it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Wally cheerfully; "it's not locked!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I lost the key ages ago. It's just corded up."

D'Arcy did not reply; his feelings were too deep. He left the bath-room and ascended to the Third Form dormitory once more. He sawed through the cord with his pen-knife, and the lid of the trunk started up. It was evidently crammed to its fullest capacity, and a little over.

Arthur Augustus' boxes were models of neatness. But Wally did not follow in his elder brother's footsteps in this respect.

Doubtless his fond mamma had seen to the packing of the box. But Wally had been at it since then, to pack in his own personal treasures.

D'Arcy raised the lid, and gave a sniff of disgust at the wild disarray that met his eyes.

Shirts and collars were jammed together with sweaters and shoes, and a natty little autumn overcoat was crammed round a muddy football. Shoes and caps, pegtops and marbles, dog biscuits and white collars, formed a heap of untidiness that made the flesh of the School House swell creep.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! The young wascal!"

It was rather difficult to find a collar without a stain of some kind on it.

Arthur Augustus selected the cleanest, and sorted out a clothes-brush. He carried them down to the bath-room, and found the young junior putting on his shirt.

"Thanks!" said Wally. "You're a brick!"

“Your box is in a feathful state, you young wascal!”
 “Yes, isn’t it?” chuckled Wally. “Curious thing that my box always gets like that, isn’t it? You shall tidy it up for me to-morrow, Gus.”

“Pway get finished, and let me take you to the House-mastah,” said D’Arcy.

Wally did not take long to finish. Three rubs with the brush, and he announced that his clothes were all right. One hack with the comb, and his hair was finished. D’Arcy looked at him hopelessly, and led him out. He certainly looked cleaner and tidier, and a little more of a credit to the swell of the School House.

Arthur Augustus tapped at Mr. Railton’s study door. The Housemaster bade him enter, and the brothers went in. Wally held his cap in his hand, but he did not look at all scared. He glanced round the room, and ducked his head to Mr. Railton. The master of the School House looked at them curiously.

“If you, please, sir, this is my young bwothah,” said D’Arcy. “He has awvived at the school, sir, and I have bwrought him to you.”

“Ah, I’m glad to see you, D’Arcy minor,” said the Housemaster. “Dr. Holmes has spoken to me about you, and I have been expecting you. I understand that you have been at a preparatory school, and the Head informs me that you will go into the Third Form.”

“Yes, sir,” said Wally meekly.

“You will have a locker in the Third Form room for your books and other things, and you will do your preparation there,” said Mr. Railton. “Your brother will, I have no doubt, show you about the school and explain matters to you. You had better go and report yourself to your Form master, Mr. Selby, in the next room.”

And Mr. Railton shook hands with the new School House boy, and D’Arcy led him from the study.

Wally was looking thoughtful.

“I rather like Railton,” he remarked. “Seems a decent sort of merchant.”

“Mr. Wailton is wathah a decent sort,” said D’Arcy, with some emphasis on the “Mr.”

“I wonder what my own boss will be like?”

“Mr. Selby is wathah a sharp man, and he will keep you up to the mark. I wish you would not use that extremely vulgah word, Wally.”

“Oh, rats! Let’s wake the old boy up!”

And Wally thumped on the door of the study next to Mr. Railton’s.

D’Arcy jumped, and a thin voice bade the boys enter.

Mr. Selby was a gentleman with weak nerves, sometimes very lenient, and sometimes very severe with his boys. He was fortunately in a lenient mood now, or that thump on the door might have cost D’Arcy minor dear.

“Ah, D’Arcy!” he said, looking over a book on his table.

“D’Arcy minor—yes, quite correct. What is your full name, D’Arcy minor?”

“Walter Adolphus Montague Fitzroy Plantagenet Tudor D’Arcy, sir,” said Wally, with a face as grave as that of a graven image.

Mr. Selby gave a start, and looked curiously at the new junior. Then he wrote the name down in his book.

“Dear me!” he remarked. “I think Walter D’Arcy will do for—all ordinary purposes. You will be known as D’Arcy minor, as you have an elder brother here. I shall examine you further in the morning, and assign you your place in the Form. You will have—er—No. 10 locker in the Third Form room. You will—or—ask Jameson for the key, Jameson having been allowed to use the locker while it was empty. You will find the rules for your conduct written up in the Form-room, and I have no doubt that your brother will explain everything to you. You may go.”

“Thank you, sir!” said Wally demurely.

And they went.

The moment the door had closed Arthur Augustus took a grip on his brother’s ear that made that young gentleman wriggle.

“Here, hold on, Gus!” grunted D’Arcy minor. “Hold on! Let go!”

“You young wascal! Why did you tell Mr. Selby that widdleous list of names? He will find out some time that you have only two Chwistian names.”

Wally chuckled.

“Can’t you understand a joke, you solemn old owl?” he said. “I think I shall have to liven you up a little, Gus. There’s a little too much of the grandpa about you.”

“Don’t be an impertinent young wascal! I suppose I had better show you to the Form-room while I’m about it, as I shall have no time to attend to you to-morrow.”

“Right-ho! Lead on, Macduff!”

Arthur Augustus led the way to the Third Form room. A considerable amount of noise was proceeding from that

apartment. The juniors of the Third Form did their prep in that room, having no studies of their own. Prep over, they were allowed to use the room till bed-time, and they preferred it to the Common-room, where they had to sit quietly, or be cuffed by their elders in the Fourth Form and the Shell.

Prep was over in the Third Form room now. The “infants,” as they were called at St. Jim’s, were enjoying their relaxation. The Form-rooms were common property between the two Houses, and there were New House as well as School House boys there.

Twenty-five or thirty youngsters were in the room, most of them with inky fingers, and a great many with inky faces.

The Third-Formers were playing leap-frog down the centre of the room, and Jameson, the leader of the Form, had just alighted close to the door when Arthur Augustus opened it.

Jameson turned round and looked at the swell of the School House aggressively.

“Hallo! Here’s a lark!” he exclaimed. “If it isn’t Gussy!”

D’Arcy gave him a withering look. Jameson was bigger than D’Arcy, as a matter of fact, and nearly as old, but he was an infant, while Arthur Augustus was in the Fourth. Therefore, he should have been respectful; but he wasn’t.

“Jameson,” said D’Arcy frigidly, “you will have the great kindness to give the key of No. 10 locker to my young bwothah, who is comin’ into the Third.”

“What a lark!” roared Jameson. “Another Gussy, and in the Third! Won’t we warm him—eh?”

“Well, rather!” said Curly Gibson, a little fellow with an innocent face, flaxen hair, blue eyes, and the most mischievous disposition in the School House. “Won’t we just!”

Arthur Augustus looked a little dismayed. Wally was a trouble to him and a worry—that could not be denied—but in his heart the swell of St. Jim’s had a real regard for his younger brother.

He wanted to make things easy for him at the beginning at St. Jim’s. It looked as if they were to be far from easy.

“If you treat my bwothah with wudeness, Jameson,” he said, “I shall give you a feathful thwashin’!”

“Rats!” said Jameson promptly. “Get out! Travel! Slide! We don’t allow Fourth-Formers in this room! Bunk!”

“I uttahly wufuse to bunk!”

“Then we’ll jolly well bunk you!” shouted Jameson. “Come on, kids!”

An inky-fingered crowd surrounded the swell of St. Jim’s at once. In their own quarters the Third Form were cheekier than they ventured to be in the quad or the Common-room. Jameson laid violent hands upon Arthur Augustus, and Arthur promptly knocked him down. Curly Gibson collared D’Arcy minor. D’Arcy minor did not show any signs of being scared. He let out his left with scientific accuracy, and Gibson sat down. He sat down without knowing exactly how he got there, but feeling as if his chin had been kicked off by a particularly powerful mule. He felt for it, and was almost surprised to find it still there. Gibson looked at D’Arcy minor doubtfully, and retired. He had no desire to sample further what Wally could do with his left.

But the odds were great. The brothers were rushed to the door by force of numbers, and hurled into the passage. The doorway was crowded with a pack of jeering fags. Arthur Augustus, with his blood at fever heat with indignation, was charging back, when Wally caught him by the sleeve and stopped him.

“Cheese it, kid!” he said. “No go!”

“Velease me, Wally!”

“Rats! Let’s got along and have that feed.”

“Jameson has not given you the key of that lockah.”

“I’ll make him give it to me presently,” grinned Wally.

“I think I could knock that merchant out, big as he is. But, the fact is, if I’m backed up by a fellow in a higher Form, they’ll be down on me,” went on Wally as he dragged his brother along the passage. “I don’t want to make a start like that.”

“Yaas, there is certainly something in that,” admitted Arthur Augustus.

“As a matter of fact,” went on Wally, “it’s rather up against a fellow to have a brother in a higher Form. Of course, I don’t blame you,” added Wally magnanimously.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose. It was up against a fellow in the Fourth to have a brother in the “infants,” and to risk being continually dragged into the rows and squabbles of a set of inky fags. It had never

occurred to the swell of St. Jim's that there was an opposite side to the question, too. At the same time, he felt a little relieved in his mind.

Wally was evidently able to take care of himself. He was not likely to need any assistance in keeping his end up among the Third-Formers.

"Very well. Let's get to Tom Mewwy's study," said Arthur Augustus.

They went down the long corridors, and came out into the School House passage. Tom Merry came in from the quadrangle at the same moment, looking very flushed and annoyed.

"Anythin' the mattah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes; the feed's been scoffed."

CHAPTER 7.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study.

WALLY gave a grunt. The news was particularly unwelcome to him, because he was very hungry, and he had been looking forward to the feed. He would have been fighting Jameson now had not the thought of the feed in Tom Merry's study drawn him away from the Third Form room. Naturally, he felt annoyed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is a New House raid!"

"No; it's that villain Skimpole. He's borrowed the feed and walked it off. The silly ass is going out to track down the poachers, and he's taken our provisions along with him. We've hunted round the quadrangle for him, and can't find him. He's vanished!"

"He's gone out right enough," said Monty Lowther, coming in. "I've asked Taggles, and he says he let him out, and Brown's man gave him a lift to the village in his trap."

"Then it's all up with the grub."

"I say, that's rotten!" said Wally. "I'm pretty sharp set. What are you going to do?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We won't let you starve, youngster. Where's Blake? I suppose he brought in the things from Rylcombe. Did you bring in much, Blake?"

"Fair amount," said Jack Blake, coming in. "You see, I thought you had most of the feed here. But I dare say there will be enough to go round. Let's see, anyway. I left the stuff up in my study."

They ascended to the study. Blake's parcel was still there, lying on the table. It was unwrapped, and the quantity of good things it contained satisfied the juniors.

"We've got some grub left," Manners remarked. "There's heaps of bread, and lots of butter and jam in the cupboard, and part of a ham."

"I don't know about that ham," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I was going to have some of it last night, and it was rather—rather—well, ratherish!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Manners, opening the cupboard and taking out the ham. "Things keep any time in this cold weather. I don't want any ham myself. I don't care for it much; but this is perfectly good, and you needn't be afraid of it."

"I don't know that I care for ham much," remarked Lowther. "But put it on the table, by all means. Do you care for ham, young D'Arcy?"

"Sometimes," said Wally; "not that kind, though. I suppose this is a high tea; but I don't believe in having it too high. That ham is simply scoring!"

Tom Merry smiled in a sickly sort of way.

"Better shove it out of the window, Manners!" he remarked.

Manners opened the window and slung out the ham with a swing of his arm. There was a terrific yell from the darkness below.

"Ow! Ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That's Gore's voice. You've stumped him!"

"Blessed if I knew anybody was there!" said Manners. "I suppose he's gone out into the quad to do some of his filthy smoking on the quiet. Serve him right!"

"Well, we've seen the last of that ham, that's one comfort!" said D'Arcy minor.

But D'Arcy minor was mistaken. There was a sudden crash of breaking glass, and the ham came whizzing back into the room. Gore had returned it—through the window pane. The ham dropped on the knees of Arthur Augustus who had just sat down.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "What's that? Ow!"

He jumped up, and the ham rolled on the floor. There was a yell of laughter from the quadrangle. Gore considered that he had got his own back.

Manners picked up the ham once more, and started towards the door, with a vengeful look.

"Where are you going?" called out Tom Merry.

"To find Gore!"

"Cheese it! You've banged him on the napper, you know!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"He's busted our window, and it hasn't been broken for more than a week!"

"Never mind; you must have nearly busted his napper. Chuck the ham into his study, and come in and feed."

Manners grinned, and went along the Shell passage to the next study. He hurled the ham into it, and closed the door.

He came back, with a faint, lingering scent of the ham about him.

Wally sniffed a little.

"Never mind the window," he said. "We want a little fresh air after that ham. If you've got any potatoes, I'll show you how to bake them in their skins a treat."

"We haven't any," said Monty Lowther. "And we know how to bake them in their skins a treat, without instruction in that important branch of knowledge from a Third Form kid!"

"Oh, keep your wool on, old son!"

"Yaas, wathah; keep your wool on, Lowthah! My young bwothah only wants to be obligin'."

"Oh, don't you begin!" said D'Arcy's young brother ungratefully. "Never saw such a solemn old owl as Gus. I say, is that feed ever going to be ready? I'm jolly hungry!"

"Sit down, dear boy!" said Lowther affectionately, pushing a chair towards D'Arcy minor. "Make yourself comfortable, and don't stand on ceremony. Dear me!"

One leg of the chair gave way as D'Arcy minor sat on it, and he rolled on the floor.

Lowther gazed at him with great concern.

"Dear me! I hope you're not hurt!" he said. "How stupid of me to forget that that was the visitors' chair—I

Potts, the Office Boy!



mean, that that was the one with the weak leg. Not hurt, I hope?"

"Oh, no!" said Wally, rubbing his leg. "Not at all—not a bit."

He sat down on another chair. The chums gathered round the table. The absolute coolness and self-possession of the Third Form junior had, as Blake put it, flabbergasted the boys of the Fourth and the Shell. Exactly how to deal with him they did not know—Arthur Augustus least of all. But he was a guest for the time being, and so they possessed their souls with patience.

Manners made the tea, and Tom Merry poured it out. "Pass my cup, kid!" said Lowther, who was sitting next to Wally.

"Certainly!" said Wally politely.

He was busy with knife and fork on a pork pie. He laid them down and passed Lowther's cup of tea along. As it approached Lowther, the cup slid from the saucer, and inverted itself on Lowther's knee. Monty gave a fearful shriek and jumped up, knocking the table with his knees and making the crockeryware dance.

"Oh! Ow! I'm scalded!"

"Dear me!" said D'Arcy minor. "I'm so sorry! I hope you're not hurt!"

"You young—"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry warningly. "Visitors!"

"Ow! My trousers are soaked, and I'm scalded!"

"Well, I'm sorry," said Wally, "as sorry as you were for giving me the visitors' chair by mistake. I can't say more."

Lowther looked daggers at the new junior. The others burst into a roar.

Monty Lowther mopped the tea off his trousers with his handkerchief and sat down again. He took care to get a little further from D'Arcy minor. That youth pursued his meal with a cheerful smile upon his face.

D'Arcy minor was hungry, and he did ample justice to the feed in Tom Merry's study. The juniors looked after him well. Lowther was unusually quiet, and Manners did not seem to have much to say. But Tom Merry took the cheek and coolness of the new "infant" with perfect good-humour.

D'Arcy minor amused him.

Arthur Augustus' young brother was quite unconscious of either exasperating or amusing anybody. He had a good tea, and was comfortable. When the feed was over, he rose at last with a very satisfied expression, and a smear of jam upon his chubby face.

"Well, that was a jolly good feed, and I'm much obliged," he said. "If you fellows would like to see some fun, you can look into the Third Form room presently."

"You had better not go back there now, Wally."

"My dear kid, I must get the matter settled to-night, and start clear to-morrow. I've got to make Jameson give me the key of my locker, and I know jolly well that he won't give it up without a hiding."

"You—you young ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "Jameson will make mincemeat of you!"

"Gammon!" said the younger son of Lord Eastwood cheerfully. "You can come and look on if you like. Mind, you're not to back me up. It's bad form to be backed up by fellows higher up in the school. I wouldn't stand that. You can look on if you like."

"We may as well go and see him slaughtered!" said Blake. "It will be rather amusing, and we can bury him quietly behind the woodshed when the fags have done with him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "We'll just go along, and we won't interfere unless D'Arcy minor asks us to. It's settled."

"I shan't ask you to, my pippins!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Come on, kids!"

And Wally led the way.

The juniors followed—Tom Merry laughing, Lowther frowning, and the rest of the juniors wearing mingled expressions, as if they did not quite know what they thought about the latest addition to the Third Form at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

Wally's Win.

D'ARCY MINOR opened the door of the Third Form room. There was still a great deal of noise in that apartment. Some of the youngsters were reading or playing draughts or dominoes. But some were boxing, and Jameson and Gibson were having a bout with foils.

But the various occupations ceased at once as the face of D'Arcy minor, with its bland smile and its smear of jam, was seen in the doorway.

Jameson dropped his foil.

"Hallo! Here's that kid again!" he exclaimed. "Have you come back to be slaughtered?"

"I've come for the key of my locker, please," said Wally.

"The what?" said Jameson, in a terrifying voice.

"The key of my locker. I am to have No. 10, and Mr. Selby says that you have the key, as you've been using the locker while it was empty."

"And I'm going to continue to use it, my son," said Jameson, grinning. "You can shove your books and things under a desk, or in the coalbox. Keep 'em in the box-room. That's good enough for a new fag. Here, what are these outsiders doing here? We don't allow the Fourth Form and the Shell in this room!"

Tom Merry & Co. had walked in.

"You'd better kick us out, then," said Blake sweetly. "Come on, we're waiting to be kicked out, Jameson—simply yearning for it, in fact."

"Oh, don't let's have a Form row!" said Curly Gibson.

"Let young jam-face have his key!"

"Rats!" said Jameson angrily.

"Look here, if all these fellows have come here to back him up, it's no good having a row," muttered Curly. "You can bung him in the eye to-morrow to make up."

Jameson shook his head obstinately.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wally. "You're making a little mistake. These chaps haven't come to back me up. They're here to see the fun. They've promised not to interfere under any circumstances."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Unless D'Arcy minor asks us to," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy minor sniffed.

"I'm not likely to ask you to, Merry. I can look after myself. You see, you kids? These chaps are only spectators. Jameson is going to give me my locker key, or I shall make him—off my own bat."

Jameson laughed, and the other Third-Formers joined in the laugh. Wally was a head shorter than Jameson, and slighter built in every way.

"You'd better be careful, kid," murmured Tom Merry.

POSTHASTE!



"Oh, rats, Merry!"

Wally crossed over to Jameson.

"I want the key of my locker," said Wally.

"Can't be done," said Jameson. "I have three lockers at present. I need them all. One of the other fellows will let you have a corner of his, perhaps, if you stand him some tarts. Gibson might."

"Well, I might let you keep something in my locker, young D'Arcy," said Gibson. "We'll talk it over in the tuckshop to-morrow morning."

"Thank you for nothing," said D'Arcy minor. "I'm not looking for a conversation in the tuckshop. I want the key of my locker."

"You'll have to go on wanting for a considerable time, I think," said Jameson, yawning.

"If you don't give it up I shall fight you for it."

"If you don't stop your cheek I shall lick you," said Jameson, beginning to get red in the face. "I've had about enough of it, you know. Drop it!"

Wally put up his right, and gave Jameson a slight tap on the nose. The cock of the Third staggered back. He was not hurt, but he was utterly amazed.

"You—you cheeky young villain!" he gasped.

"Is that enough?" asked Wally. "Or do you want one in the eye to warm you up?"

For answer, Jameson hurled himself at the new boy in the Third.

Wally dodged the clumsy rush, and gave Jameson a dig in the ribs in passing, which made him reel against a desk. He leaned on the desk and stared at Wally. Some of the Third gave a yell.

"Bravo, young jam-face!"

Perhaps they were not sorry to see Jameson knocked about a little. There were few in the Form whom he had not knocked about, more or less, himself.

Jameson's face went very dark. He slipped off his jacket and passed it to Carly Gibson.

"Right-ho!" he said. "If you mean it, I'll give you a chance to show what you can do. Mind, I'm going to smash you into little pieces!"

"Good!" said Wally, without appearing much alarmed. "That's what I want!"

He glanced towards Tom Merry & Co., who had closed the door and arranged themselves in a row just inside the room, leaning back against the wall to look on.

"Which of you kids is going to be my second?" he asked.

"Bai Jove, I will back you up, Wally, deah boy!"

Wally, dear boy, shook his head.

"You don't know enough about the game, Gus," he said.

"I'd depend on you like a shot in choosing a silk hat, but you don't know enough about this sort of thing!"

"Really, young Wally—"

"Will I do?" asked Tom Merry, with exaggerated humility. "I shall be happy to act as second for a young gentleman whom I regard with so much respect and admiration."

"Not so much toffee," said the young gentleman; "but you'll do. Get a basin of water and a sponge from somewhere—this chap will need 'em!"

It was rather new to Tom Merry to receive orders from a Third Form infant, but he did as he was directed, with a droll look upon his face. The basin and the sponge were soon procured.

Meanwhile, the adversaries had stripped for the combat. Jameson had a swaggering manner, as if he expected to knock his enemy out in a round or two. All the same, he made careful preparations. He realised, in spite of his swagger, that the new boy in the Third would be a tough nut to crack.

He took off his waistcoat and tied his braces round his waist, and rolled back his cuffs. A pair of brawny arms were exposed to view.

Wally's were about two-thirds the size of them. But Wally's arms were hard as nails, while Jameson's were just a little flabby. From what could be seen of Wally, it was pretty clear that he was "hard."

"Shove the basin there," said D'Arcy minor. "Stick the sponge in it. You can stand back, too, and don't get in the way!"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry.

"Who's going to be timekeeper?"

"I see you know all about it, young shaver."

"I knocked out every fellow in my Form at the preparatory school," said Wally modestly, "and I've fought with nearly every boy in the village near my pater's house at home. I like to go by the rules, you know. None of your scrambling for me. Still, it's just as you like, Jameson. Will you have rounds, or rough-and-tumble?"

"Rats!" said Jameson.

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"We'll say rounds, then—three-minute rounds and one-minute rests."

"Will your lordship deign to honour me by allowing me to keep time?" asked Jack Blake.

"No gammon! You can keep time, but keep an eye on your watch, and don't get mooning!"

Blake gasped. But he took up his position, watch in hand.

The adversaries toed an inky mark on the floor, which had apparently been placed there on a previous occasion of the same sort. They shook hands in the approved style, and then Jameson hit out. His fist went within an inch of Wally's nose, and then glided upward as the blow was guarded, and D'Arcy minor came in under the guard with left and right.

Jameson took the right on the chin and the left just under the nose, and staggered back, and sat on Gibson's knee.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Bravo, jam-face!" yelled the Third Form.

Jameson sprang forward again, his face dark and convulsed with anger. The shout of the Third-Formers showed



There was a startled exclamation from one of the men as he stumbled, for a poacher was on the boy and in

him upon what an insecure tenure he held his dominion in the Third. The young rascals were ready to welcome any new champion, and most of them would be glad to see Jameson licked and pulled off his perch, as they would have expressed it.

Jameson's rush was heavy, and hard to withstand by a boy of so much lighter weight. Wally did not try to stop him. He feinted and dodged, and Jameson followed him furiously round the ring, hitting out every moment. But nearly every blow was guarded.

It was not till the end of the round that he managed, by sheer weight and strength, to get through Wally's guard, and got home a blow from the shoulder. But that blow was a telling one, with the burly junior's strength behind it.

Wally spun half-round, and crashed down on the floor in a heap, and Jameson panted over him triumphantly.

"Time!" cried Jack Blake.

"Rot!" growled Jameson. "Get up, you cheeky young beggar, and be finished off!"

"Time!" said Blake, with unpleasant emphasis. "If you transgress the rules of this combat, Jameson, I shall have to take a hand in it myself!"

"Oh rats!" said Jameson sulkily. But he stepped back, and rested on a desk for the one-minute interval.

Tom Merry helped D'Arcy minor to his feet. He sponged his face, Wally sitting on his knee the while.

Wally gasped for breath. He had had a very hard knock, and it had had its effect upon him. But it was easy to see that his spirit was as undaunted as ever.

"Feel all right?" asked Tom Merry, when the minute had ticked away.

"Of course," said D'Arcy minor. "You don't think I mind a tap like that, do you?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I should have minded it myself, that's all."

"Well, really," said Wally, in a lower voice. "it was a hard knock, and a few more like that would send me to



ver the crouching Wally. The next moment the grasp of the dragged out into the glade.

sleep. I was an ass to let him do it! He won't do it again!"

"I hope not. Up you get!"

"Time!" said Blake.

The Third-Formers crowded round eagerly to watch the second round.

Tom Merry looked on with keen interest. Third Form fights were usually wild scrambles, unworthy of the attention of a fellow in the Shell; but Wally was rather an original Third-Former. The fight in the Form-room was worth watching.

Tom Merry was curious to see how it would turn out, and he was beginning to think that the now "infant" would prove the victor, in spite of the size and strength of his adversary.

Wally was evidently very proficient, for a junior, in the art of self-defence.

Jameson pushed his young opponent hard, driving him

round the ring, attempting to get in another knock-down blow. A couple more of such heavy hits would have knocked Wally out for a time, and both of them knew it. But it was not so easy to get in such a drive again.

Wally was as watchful as a cat.

At last Jameson saw his opportunity. A careless guard, and Jameson went forward with plunging fists. But it happened to be only a feint—a trap into which the bigger boy had fallen blindly.

Wally's left whipped round in time to dash aside his drive, and then Wally's right came crashing forward.

Jameson's guard was completely lost; he had given himself quite away.

Wally's right bumped on his jaw, and he staggered. Then Wally's left came crashing home, and there was a spurt of red from Jameson's nose. He reeled back, his hands dropping blindly, and Wally sprang forward like a little tiger, both fists coming out one after another in a series of grand drives.

Crash they went upon Jameson's chest, and the leader of the Third was hurled back as if by a cannon-ball. The bump of his fall on the floor rang through the room.

"Bravo!" roared the juniors. "Bravo, jam-face!"

"Huwwah!" cried Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "Huwwah! Bwavo! Wippin'!"

Tom Merry patted his principal on the shoulder. The round was not quite up, and Wally would have been justified in claiming the combat if his adversary did not rise when ten were counted. And Jameson could not have done it.

But the youthful Walter Adolphus was evidently a sportsman. He grinned at Tom Merry.

"What do you think now, my son?" he asked.

"Jolly good, daddy," replied Tom Merry gravely.

D'Arcy minor laughed a little breathlessly.

"To tell you the truth, Merry, he's a tough nut," he said. "He doesn't know much about fighting, but he's as strong as an ox. I suppose he has found it easy to crow over these kids because he's so big. He was just waiting for a boxer to come along."

"And now one has come along," laughed Tom Merry.

"Exactly! I think one more round would be enough for him. What?"

"I think so, too."

Jameson would probably have been satisfied without another round, but his backers were urging him on. He felt that he was licked, but the Third Form were by no means tired of the entertainment yet.

A dozen voices urged Jameson to proceed, and some lingering hope of yet snatching victory from the jaws of defeat urged him on also. He stood up for the third round, looking decidedly groggy.

The third round was nearly a farce, however. The punishment Jameson had received had left him sick and dizzy. His blows were all clumsy and easily guarded, and he hardly stopped one of those that Wally gave him in return.

Wally was a generous foe. He saw that the game was in his hands, and he let his adversary down lightly. The round ended with a smart tap that made Jameson sit down suddenly.

Curly Gibson picked him up as Blake called "Time!"

Jameson was looking dazed. One of his eyes was closed, and his nose was swollen and red. His lip was out, his cheeks growing blue, and the "claret" was flowing in two or three places. It was pretty clear that Jameson of the Third was absolutely done.

"Going on?" asked Curly.

"No!" grunted his principal.

"Better try another round," urged Curly. "You may lick him yet, you know. Ow!"

Curly broke off suddenly as the indignant Jameson let out his left. Curly sat down against a form.

"What did you do that for?" he gasped.

"Oh, you shut up!" said Jameson.

"Time!" called out Jack Blake.

"I'm done!" grunted Jameson.

"Well, you look it!"

"Give us your fist, old son!" said Wally cheerily. "No harm done."

Jameson hesitated a moment, and then shook hands with the victor. In spite of Wally's coolness and usual cheek, there was no trace of crowing in his manner. He seemed like a youth who had been through too many fights to attach much importance to one more.

"You'll let me have the key of my locker," he said politely.

Jameson grinned faintly through his bruises, and

detached a key from a bunch, and gave it to the new junior without a word.

"Thanks awfully!" said Wally. "It's all over, you kids. What are you thumping me on the back for, you fathead?"

"Congratulating you," said Sanders of the Third.

"Well, don't congratulate me again like that, or you'll get hurt. Some of you were talking about ragging me a while ago, I'm ready for the ragging. I'd like to get it all over this evening, and start clear to-morrow. Where are the ragers?"

There was no reply. The Third-Formers looked at one another rather queerly. They would as soon have ragged a wild bull as the new junior who had so easily licked the cock of the Third.

Wally looked round inquiringly, but no one met his eye.

"Any ragers?" he asked again.

"I think not," murmured Curly Gibson. "That was a little joke, you know."

"Good! I'll have my jacket, Merry, if you've done cackling."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry.

Jack Blake helped D'Arcy minor on with his jacket. Then he slapped him on the shoulder.

"Jolly good!" he said. "You know how to use your fists, and I don't think the Third will do any ragging in your case, young 'un!"

"I don't think they will," agreed Wally, "and the Fourth won't, either. From what I've seen it seems to me that the Fourth Form puts on a lot of airs here towards the Third. That won't go down with me, you know."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Now, don't you begin, Gussy. What I mean is, no

fellow will ever put on airs to me without getting a dot on the nose. That's a friendly hint."

Blake looked at Tom Merry, and they both grinned. There was no doubt that D'Arcy minor was a "coughdrop."

Wally set his collar straight—as straight as he ever wore it—and gave his face a rub with the towel, and asked his brother if he looked all right.

"No, you don't look all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "You look vewy wuff and wumped, and you want a wash."

"Well, I shall have one to-morrow morning," said D'Arcy minor. "Where's that chap Herries? I want to go round and see my dog again before bed-time."

"Oh, right-ho!" grinned Herries. "Consider me your guide. Come on!"

D'Arcy minor followed Herries from the room. He left the place in a buzz of comment on his latest exploit. Jameson found himself disregarded. Boys who had trembled at his frown, now openly discussed his licking before his face. Jameson, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof. He went away quietly to bathe his injuries, dolefully conscious that he was no longer leader of the Third.

Tom Merry & Co. walked away, discussing D'Arcy minor with great interest. Arthur Augustus was looking pleased. He regarded all fighting as "wuff" if not "bwutal," but he could not help being proud of the exploit of his young brother.

CHAPTER 9.

French Leave.

D'ARCY MINOR put his hands in his trousers pockets, and whistled cheerily as he followed Herries round the New House to the building where he had left his favourite Pongo.

He did not seem much the worse for the fight. As a matter of fact, he had received only one really serious blow, and he had almost recovered from that. There were a few marks on his chubby face; but he was accustomed to that sort of thing.

The evening was growing cold. It was getting near bed-time for the Third Form, and Wally wanted to see his dog safe for the night before he turned in. He had a strong affection for the sneaking, slinking, ragged, little mongrel, which could not have been greater if Pongo had been a dog of the finest breed.

They entered the building, and Wally whistled for Pongo with that shrill note which was intolerable to any ears but his own and Pongo's.

But the usual reply of Pongo was not to be heard. Wally whistled again, and still there was silence as far as Pongo was concerned.

The other animals were not silent. Herries' bulldog gave a very audible growl. There was a scream from a parrot, and a chatter from a monkey. But the voice of Pongo was not heard.

Wally looked anxious.

"Pongo—Pongo! Good doggie! Pongo!"

But Pongo did not reply.

Wally took a lantern Herries had lighted, and looked round in great anxiety for his pet. Pongo was not to be seen. He was invisible, as well as inaudible. It was clear that he was gone. His collar lay on the ground beside the box where he had been placed. The dog had evidently slipped his collar and escaped.

"He's gone," said Herries.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Wally. "He's always slipping his collar, you know. He goes out after the rabbits at night, and there's no stopping him."

"He'll jolly well get shot if he goes after the rabbits round here," said Herries. "My dog Towser was shot at twice by that brute, Barberry, and he's a nice, quiet animal, as you can see for yourself."

"Yes, I was thinking of that," said Wally, looking anxious. "I wouldn't have old Pongo hurt for anything. If he's got out, I shall have to go and look for him."

Herries laughed.

"You can't go out to-night, you young ass. The gates are locked."

"Have you never got over a gate?" asked Wally.

"Yes; but a kid in the Third can't break bounds."

"That's all you know," said Wally, going out of the building.

"Look here, you young ass, if you are missed at bed-time you'll get a record licking!"

"Well, I'll look round inside the school walls first," said Wally. "But, depend upon it, Pongo has gone rabbiting. He'd get out through a keyhole if there wasn't any other way."

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"I don't see how he could get out if the gate hasn't been opened. Better get along to the porter's lodge, and ask Taggles if he's seen him."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

Taggles was sitting in his little parlour, when a sudden knock came at his door. He rose, with a growl, to go to the door. Nor was his humour improved when he saw two juniors standing there.

"Young himps!" grunted Taggles. "I'll report yer!"

"Have you seen my dog?" asked D'Arcy minor.

"Yes, I have," said Taggles, with much satisfaction. "He ran hout when I hopened the gates last for the 'Ead's car. 'E hain't come in."

"You are sure he went out?"

"Yes, drat yer! You won't never see 'im agin, I 'opes!"

And Taggles closed the door.

"Sorry!" said Herries. "Can't be helped, though. He'll turn up again. I say, where are you going, young 'un?"

"I'm going to look for Pongo."

"You can't. Don't be a young ass!" exclaimed Herries, in alarm. "You'll get into a fearful row. Come in with me."

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor. "I'm going over the wall. I'm not going to have Pongo shot by any rotten keeper. I'm going to look for him. Give me a bunk up."

"Don't be an ass!" urged Herries.

"Give me a bunk up!"

Herries hesitated, but Wally had already taken hold of the ivy. He gave him the required bunk, though with many misgivings. The Third-Former drew himself up on the ivied wall, and dropped down on the other side.

Herries stood staring at the place for some moments, and then turned slowly and walked towards the School House. The moon was coming out over the clock tower, and the night was dry and cold. Herries went in and looked for Blake, and found his leader in the Common-room.

Blake at once noted the disturbed expression on his chum's face.

"Where's young D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Gone out!"

"What?" almost yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "What did you say, Hewwies?"

"He's gone out. That rotten dog of his got out of the gates, and he's gone out to look for him. I warned him not to."

"You ought to have marched him in by the scruff of his neck!" grunted Blake.

"That would have been imposs, Blake. My young bwotah would have uttably wefused to be marched in by the scwuff of his neck."

"Well, there will be a row," said Blake. "Those kids go to bed at nine, and it's close on nine now. Wait till Selby comes to look for him, that's all."

"Yaas, wathah! I am afwaid there will be a wow. There's anothah silly ass gone out, too—that ass Skimpole. Tom Mewwy has been inquitwin' for him, and he can't be found."

"We could go and look for your minor and bring him in by main force," suggested Digby.

"And get into a jolly row ourselves," said Herries.

"Hallo, here's Tom Merry, looking as if he had lost a threepenny-bit! What's the trouble, Merry? Anything wrong?"

"Skimpole hasn't come in."

"Well, let the silly ass stay out, then."

"That's all very well, but I don't want him to get into trouble," said Tom Merry. "It isn't only that he will get a licking for staying out late. That would serve him right. But it looks as if he has really gone looking for the poachers. He may get knocked on the head, as likely as not. I wish I had yanked him in and looked him up in a study now, although he had a pass from Knox."

"If you take it on yourself to keep watch on Skimpole, you'll never be in want of a job!" grunted Blake. "Jolly glad he isn't in the Fourth. I suppose you're responsible as head of the Shell. You ought to bring him up better."

Tom Merry laughed rather uneasily.

"Well, I'm uneasy about him, and I've half a mind to go out and look for him," he said. "He's such an ass. He's bound to lose his way in the wood, if he goes into it, and he never thinks of anything till it happens. He may stay there all night, and it's going to be a jolly cold night."

"It's not a bad idea," said Herries thoughtfully. "If you like, I'll come with you and bring my bulldog. Towser is a wonder at following a scent. You remember how he followed the scent of those burglars who broke into the chapel?"

"Yes—I don't think!"

"If you mean to say that Towser didn't follow that scent—" began Herries warmly.

"My dear chap, I don't mean to say anything about Towser. I'm thinking about Skimpole. He ought to be looked for. I've a good mind to go."

"Yaas, wathah! We might make up a party and look for young Wally at the same time."

"What's that about young Wally? Where is he?"

"He's gone out to look for that wotten mongwel of his."

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"My hat! He's starting his career at St. Jim's pretty well. You'd better give him a hiding when you get him in again."

"Yaas, I was thinkin' of givin' him a feaful thwashin' fwom a sense of duty. I weally think I must go and look for him, at any wate. Are you comin', Blake?"

"Well, you'll get into mischief if I don't come with you!" growled Blake.

"I wefuse to accept your company on those terms, Blake. I wefuse—"

"Rats! We may as well all go together, and take the licking together when we come in. We shall be company for one another in Railton's study when he lays it on."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps if we explain to Mr. Wailton, howevah, we might get permish to go out and look for the young wascal."

"More likely get a wiggling for letting him go, and then he'd go out and look for him himself, or send a couple of prefects," said Blake. "And if two prefects had to go out and find Wally, I should feel sorry for him on the way home."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps we had bettah go now and ask Mr. Wailton's permish aftahwards."

"I suppose so. Are you game, Tom Merry?"

"Oh, yes, rather—and the more the merrier! Better get our coats; it's jolly cold. There's a clear moon, luckily. We'll meet you at the slanting oak."

"Right you are!"

And ten minutes later the juniors were on the outer side of the wall of St. Jim's.

When Mr. Selby marched the Third Form off to bed, D'Arcy minor was missing, and when, at half-past nine, the Fourth Form and the She'l went up to their dormitories, they went up without Study No. 6 or the Terrible Three.

CHAPTER 10.

A Night Out!

"PONGO! Pongo!"

D'Arcy minor called the name softly as he went down the moonlit lane.

The moon, full and round, was sailing above the tower of St. Jim's. The buildings lay, a black mass, in the midst of the trees. Over the lane and the woods the moonlight fell in a silver glimmer. Save where heavy branches overhung the road, the lane was as light as day.

It was a perfect October night—clear and cold and quiet.

Wally D'Arcy kept his eyes about him as he walked down the lane. He called to his dog, and he whistled at intervals; but no sound came in answer from Pongo. It was clear that the dog had made straight for the woods in search of the unfortunate bunnies.

Wally stopped at a spot where a gap showed in the hedge. He bent down and examined the thick, fallen leaves in the ditch. There were traces that seemed to indicate that a dog had lately scrambled across, to the experienced eye of the junior. Wally had often had to follow Pongo to recapture him, and save him from vengeful keepers, and it was no new experience to him.

He plunged through the hedge.

"This is just where the brute would get in!" muttered Wally. "He's after the rabbits. I'll make him sit up when I catch him! The worst of it is, that it's no good whistling him. He won't come if he's on the scent of a bunny."

Although Wally would not have admitted it to anyone else, he knew very well that, while Pongo was tracking rabbits, his master's voice would only have had the effect of making him slink quietly away beyond the sound of it.

Pongo was not a well-disciplined dog.

Wally breathed all sorts of threats as he plunged into the wood. He always did when he was hunting for the truant Pongo. He never carried any of them out, but they were a solace during the hunt.

Crack, crack!

The dull report of a gun echoed twice through the gloomy wood. Wally started, and a strange thrill ran through his veins.

"Poachers!" he murmured.

Another thought flashed into his mind. He remembered

(Continued on page 19.)

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A PAGE OF PITHY PARS FROM—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! I've got a peach of a school story in hand for you next Wednesday. None of you must miss Martin Clifford's latest—

"THE SIXTH-FORMER'S SECRET!"

If you do, you'll be missing the best treat of the week. Another thing—in next week's grand issue of the GEM you will find the opening chapters of a powerful new serial, which is entitled:

"THE LOST LEGION!"

This is a novel story by Don English—unusual, thrilling and packed with interest from first chapter to last. Make no mistake about your GEM next week—order it early. Have I forgotten to mention Potts the Office Boy? Yes, he'll be there also to give you another "tonic laugh."

ANNUALS FOR ALL!

October is a particularly busy month with boys and girls who are fortunate enough to get into the good graces of their uncles and aunts, for the bookstalls and the newsagents have a thrilling display of gift books to tempt people of all ages. Christmas is on the way, and the ideal Christmas present is a really good book. That's how it is so many uncles and aunts find themselves being walked to the bookstalls with dutiful nephews and nieces, dropping a careful hint or two as to what they would like. This is where I can help you. Take a look at the names of the following Annuals, remember them, and rest assured they offer the best value money can buy. The "Holiday Annual," price six shillings; the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories," price two shillings and sixpence; the "Modern Boy's Annual," price six shillings; the "New Zoo Annual," price six shillings; the "Modern Boys' Book of Motors, Ships and Engines," price seven shillings and sixpence. All of these grand Annuals are recommended by your Editor. Have a look at them, anyway, and if you yourself would like to purchase any of them, this can be easily managed through the various Christmas Clubs about which your nearest newsagents will be pleased to give you details.

ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA FLIGHT!

It took Flight-Lieutenant Fox a hundred and thirty days to sail to Australia in the "slow" days before the Great War, and now, if all goes well, he is to attempt to fly there in a special plane and break the record of eight days, twenty hours and forty minutes, set up by Mr. C. W. A. Scott. It is reckoned that the pilot of this special plane will not have to sleep once on land. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1.237.

throughout the trip. When sleep begins to blink at his eyes he will simply hand over the control of the plane to a robot pilot who is "fool proof" in his methods. Even if the engine should fail while the human pilot is taking his forty winks, a special contrivance that buzzes a persistent alarm in his ears will wake him and put him wise to his peril. If the plane should lose height ever so gradually, the delicate mechanism of the robot will pass on the news to the sleeping pilot. Some time during next month the trip to Australia is to take place. It looks as if another record is to be broken!

A QUESTION FROM WALES.

A girl reader of the GEM—who, by the way, admits that she is very plump—writes and asks me how long can a man go without food and water. Records show that a man can deny himself food for a period of sixty-five days and survive, whilst five days is the limit for a man to do without water. We trust our girl chum is not seriously thinking of "alarming" herself to Herbert Skimpole proportions.

THE "Q" CAR.

That's the latest weapon the police are storing up for the modern highwayman. But a glance at one of these "Q" cars wouldn't tell you much. Probably you would see an elderly looking gentleman at the wheel, looking for all the world as if he's just going away for a holiday. Yes, even his luggage is strapped to the rack at the back of the car. But hidden in the sheltering confines of the saloon there might be half a dozen stalwart policemen—waiting for the smart bandit to try his "stand and deliver" stuff. Bandits beware when you see a likely-looking victim on one of those lonely roads, for it may be a "Q" car!

MISS AMERICA X. DOES IT!

A thunderous roar of whirling engines, a shooting cloud of spray and a dim, almost phantom, shape riding clear of the waters—that's all you would have heard and seen had you been one of the privileged spectators present recently when Commodore Gar Wood broke Kaye Don's water speed record. It was only in July that we were all congratulating ourselves that Kaye Don's masterly effort in his Miss England motor-boat, when he established a record of 119.75 miles per hour, was unbeatable. Such is fame. Now America holds the record with a 124.91 miles per hour speed to its credit. Asked afterwards what it felt like travelling at that terrific speed, the commodore replied that he experienced no fear—the speed was too

exhilarating for that—but the air pressure rather worried him: it seemed to push his face out of shape. It's pushed our record out of shape, too. But never mind. Records were made only to be broken. Our turn will come again!

HEARD THIS ONE?

"Will no one bid?" asked the exasperated auctioneer, having wasted an hour of his eloquence trying to sell a piano.

"Yus, guv'nor," came a voice, "I'll bid—I'll bid you goo'-night!"

CHASED BY A PRICKLY PEAR!

An enthusiastic Australian farmer was in a hurry to build a thick hedge to his lands. He wanted something that would grow quickly, so he bought some recommended plants from South Africa. They grew all right—so quickly and thickly, in fact, that they terrified him a year later. By that time his plants had grown into an impenetrable forest of prickles six feet high! Something in the soil evidently agreed with the imported plant pest, for it grew and grew to such dimensions that the farmer had to retire from his farmstead, around which the dreaded prickles had already begun to swarm, a completely ruined man. That "importation" is now known as the deadly Australian prickly pear-cactus. Answer to James Stoddal, of Nottingham.

EVERY BULL HAS HIS DAY!

Bulls, those fellows that take exception to anything red, don't often figure in the news, for, as a rule, they are docile folk. But last month two bulls literally jumped into the news. One took it into its head to jump in front of a train near Seaham Harbour and succeeded, in derailing partly the locomotive and the first coach. Fortunately, no passengers were hurt—but the bull was! He finished up underneath the wheels of the second carriage—very much hurt! Bull number two jumped into freedom in a crowded street at Lowestoft. He scattered the people to right and left, and then jumped through the door of a near-by house and started to smash up the furniture. They "shooed" him out of there and set him galloping on a two miles stretch to Oulton Broad. Here he jumped into a newsagent's shop and became so mixed up with a counter that a carpenter had to saw away a section of the counter to liberate him. That bull hadn't had enough even then. He tried to make another bolt, but this time they caught him before he could jump into any further trouble.

FREE GIFTS!

Don't forget that our splendid companion papers, "Magnet," "Modern Boy," and "Ranger," are giving away each week, to every one of their readers, six super picture-stamps. These grand stamps are in full colour, and they depict Rough-riders of the World, Ships, Aeroplanes, Dogs, Locomotives, and the Art of Self-defence. The full collection of stamps totals a hundred and forty-four, and each reader is given the opportunity of getting this unique collection for nothing. If you are interested—and I rather fancy you are—you've already made up your mind to "look into this matter." That's the idea; these stamps are too good to be missed!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE FIGHTING FAG!

(Continued from page 17.)

Herries' remark concerning Barberry, the head keeper of Sir Neville Boyle. His eyes blazed as he thought that the gun he had just heard might have been levelled at Pongo.

"My hat!" he muttered. "Pongo! Poor old Pongo! If he is—"

He did not finish the reflection, but hurried on in the direction of the shots.

The wood was thick, and dripping with moisture. Only in a few open spaces the moonlight fell. Wally blundered through the thickets. He gave a sudden start at the sound of a rustle close at hand; but before he could escape a hand of iron was on his shoulder.

He struggled instinctively.

"Quiet!" muttered a voice. "Who are you?"

It was a pleasant voice. The strong hand that gripped the junior dragged him into the open, and the moonlight fell upon him.

Wally looked at his captor curiously. He wore the garb of a keeper, but he had no gun. Wally had pictured to himself a savage-featured poacher, and he was relieved to see a handsome, kindly, bronzed face, certainly not more than twenty-five years old—pleasant to look upon, though somewhat clouded in expression.

"Who are you?" said the young man, in a low voice, still keeping a tight grip upon Wally.

"I'm D'Arcy minor."

The young man started, and smiled a little.

"You are from the school?"

"Yes," said Wally.

"And you have come out after rabbits, I suppose?"

Wally flushed.

"I'm not a poacher!"

"Then what are you doing here?" The young man looked at him scrutinisingly. "You ought to be in bed. The boys of St. Jim's are not allowed out at this time."

"I know that. I've taken French leave," said Wally, with a grin. "You see, my dog's bolted."

"Your dog?" said the other, looking puzzled.

"Yes, my dog Pongo. He's a rare old rabbit, you know, and he's out after the bunnies. I've come out to look for him."

"At this time of night?"

"I've been out at midnight looking for the young boulder at home at Eastwood," grinned Wally. "That's nothing new. Pongo is a terror!"

"You are not allowed here, though," said the young man. "There is a public footpath through the wood, and people have to keep to it."

"Are you a keeper?" asked Wally.

To his surprise the young man coloured at the question.

"No," he replied, after a pause; "I am not a keeper—now."

"Then suppose you toddle along and don't interfere with me!" suggested Wally. "If you're not a keeper, it doesn't matter to you what I'm doing here. But you look like a keeper," he added, scanning the young man curiously.

"I was one," said the other shortly; "I was one of Sir Neville Boyle's keepers. This wood is on Sir Neville's land."

Wally gave a low whistle.

"Oh, ho! You're the chap they were talking about in the trap, perhaps—young Lynn?"

"My name is Lynn."

D'Arcy minor chuckled.

"I know now. You are engaged to Mary at the School House at St. Jim's?"

"Yes," said Lynn quietly. "That is no affair of yours, however!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Wally. "I heard Gus—that's my brother Gus—talking about you in the trap when I came from the station. He's awfully sorry about it, because Mary is so cut up; and he thinks you are innocent of what you were charged with, and he says he's going to set matters right—though I'm blessed if I know how!"

Lynn smiled faintly.

"It is very kind of him to think so well of me. I am afraid the matter will not be set right unless I am able to set it right myself. Now, you had better cut off to the school, youngster!"

"Thank you for nothing!" said Wally coolly. "I'm looking for my dog."

"I will look for him, if you like. Give me his description."

"A ragged little rotter, with a cast in the eye, and one ear bitten off."

"Good!" said Lynn, with a smile. "I will look out for him. I shall be about the woods for some time yet. Now cut off."

Wally shook his head.

"I dare say that's very good advice," he remarked; "but I can't take it, you see. I'm here to look for Pongo. He may be shot by some rotten keeper—excuse me! I'm not going in till I've found him!"

Lynn laid his hand earnestly on Wally's shoulder.

"Don't be foolish, my lad! There are poachers in the wood!"

"Were they poachers I heard firing just now?"

"I don't know—very likely." Lynn looked thoughtful. "It sounded to me, though, like the report of Barberry's double-barrelled gun."

"Perhaps he was shooting at Pongo. Let me go!"

"Listen to me. There are poachers in the wood. The magistrates lately have been very severe with them. They would not hesitate to get rid of a witness. If you saw them at work you might be bludgeoned. Go home!"

"I'm not afraid!"

"I tell you you cannot stay here!" said Lynn impatiently. "You must go!"

"I'm not going! I say," broke out Wally suspiciously, "you haven't taken to poaching yourself, have you, now that your governor has sacked you?"

Lynn turned red. His grasp tightened on Wally, and that young gentleman was very near to getting a powerful box on the ear at that moment.

"No," said Lynn quietly; "I have not turned poacher. But I am going to see you out of the wood!" His grip tightened again. "Come with me!"

Wally did not argue the matter. He was determined not to go without Pongo; but he would have been a child in the hands of the powerful young keeper. He walked a few paces beside Lynn without a word, and the young man's grip relaxed. And the moment it relaxed Wally twisted out of his grasp like an eel, and darted out into the wood.

"You young rascal!" cried Lynn. "Come back!"

But Wally was gone.

CHAPTER 11.

Scaring Skimpole!

TOM MERRY & CO. hurried down the moonlit lane, and entered the wood at a point some distance farther on than the place where Wally had entered it.

There was a beaten track leading through to the footpath, and the juniors preferred it to pushing their way through dense thickets. They had left St. Jim's impulsively to look for the trunks, and it was not till they were fairly in the wood that the almost hopeless nature of the search was borne in upon their minds. The woods extended for miles, and the two missing juniors might have taken any path; or might be wandering in the recesses of the wood where no path existed.

But this latter thought spurred the juniors on. If Skimpole or Wally had lost their way, a night passed in the open air might turn out a serious thing for them.

"I suppose we had better separate and shout," said Blake doubtfully. "The trouble is that all the woods on this side of the footpath are on Sir Neville Boyle's land, and his keepers are having rows with the poachers lately. If they heard us, they'd be down on us like a hundred of bricks."

"And they couldn't very well fail to hear us, I should think," Monty Lowther remarked.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"That's so," he said. "We don't want to have a row with the keepers. It would lead to no end of trouble at St. Jim's. They would be bound to think we came out for rabbits, and Sir Neville might go to the Head about it."

"My hat!" said Manners. "That would make a row!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All the same, I don't see how we are to find them without shouting. Skimpole would be pretty certain to answer. But when you come to think of it, young Wally would guess that we were after him, and he would keep mum."

"Yaas; he's a cunnin' young beggah!"

"Let's look round for them first, anyway. We—Hullo! What was that?"

It was a double report; the same that Wally had heard from a different part of the wood. The juniors started as the dull, heavy sound echoed through the dark trees.

"Poachers!" muttered Digby.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I don't know. The poachers use snares for the hares and rabbits, you know; and, as for the birds, they wouldn't"

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be shooting them at this time. That was more likely a keeper's gun. Perhaps young Wally's dog has got it in the neck."

"Poor little beast! It may save Wally from a row, though."

"That's pretty clear proof that somebody's out in the wood, and the less row we make the better," said Monty Lowther.

"True, Hark!"

Tom Merry held up his hand, and the juniors stopped breathlessly. There was a rustle in the thicket. The boys from St. Jim's remained as still as mice, in the thick shadow of a big tree.

Near them was an open patch, where the moonlight fell, and a form was seen to emerge from the thickets into the light.

The moon's rays glimmered on a huge pair of spectacles. Tom Merry muttered a word of warning to his comrades.

"It's Skimmy! Quiet, and we'll give him a lesson about wandering at night. He's as much trouble as Wally's dog, and he ought to learn better."

"What's the game?" muttered Blake.

"He's out looking for poachers. Why shouldn't he find some?"

The juniors chuckled softly. They caught on at once to Tom Merry's idea.

Skimpole, all unconscious of the proximity of the School House boys, paused and looked round him, blinking in the moonlight. His trousers were drenched from the wet thickets, and he was shivering from cold.

"We'll collar him," murmured Tom Merry, "and make him think he's fallen into the clutches of a gang of poachers. We'll make him swear a fearful oath to get out of the wood and never come back again."

Blake chuckled outright. The sound seemed to catch Skimpole's ear, for he turned round, and stared into the black shadows under the big tree.

The glimmer of the moonlight on his spectacles was all that could be seen of his face, and the effect was curious.

"Is anyone there?" said Skimpole, in a voice quivering with the cold. "If anyone is there, I shall be glad to be informed where I am. I have lost my path in this horrid wood. You need not be afraid to let me see you, my dear sir, if you are a poacher. In fact, I might explain—"

Skimpole did not get any farther, for an excellent reason. Tom Merry had crept round in the dark shadows, and got behind the freak of the Shell. A grip on the back of his neck interrupted Skimpole, and before he could think of resistance, he was forced down into the grass upon his face, and a knee was planted in the middle of his back.

"D-dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "This is—is most unpleasant! You are hurting my back! I really wish you would not be so violent."

It was impossible for Skimpole to see his assailants. His face was pressed into the damp grass, and his spectacles were covered with moisture, so that he could not have seen Tom Merry if he had been looking straight at him.

He had not the slightest doubt that he was in the grasp of a gang of poachers. One was kneeling on his back, and another was standing on his legs, and two more were holding his arms.

There wasn't much chance for Skimpole. He could only gasp and wriggle.

"Hold him tight!" said Tom Merry, in a deep bass voice, which bore little resemblance to his usual tones. "He is a spy!"

"I—I am sorry that you should mistake me for a spy!" stammered Skimpole. "I am nothing of the sort. I came into the wood to make certain investigations—"

"You came to spy on us poachers!" said the deep bass voice sternly.

Skimpole wriggled uncomfortably.

"Tell me the truth, minion!"

It did not occur to Skimpole at the time that minion was a rather curious word for a poacher to use. The deep bass voice sent a thrill of terror through every nerve of the brainy man of St. Jim's.

"I—I—I shall certainly tell you the truth!" he stammered. "It is impossible for a sincere Determinist to prevaricate. I certainly did come into the wood to investigate a matter in connection with the poachers, but I had no intention of causing your arrest, I assure you. I merely wished to set the mind of Mary, the housemaid, at rest, by proving to her satisfaction that her sweetheart was guilty—"

A chuckle interrupted Skimpole. But the deep, terrifying voice immediately followed:

"It will be safer to kill him and bury him in the wood, mates!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus

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"You utter idiot!" muttered Tom Merry fiercely. "Shut up!"

"I wefuse—"

Fortunately, Skimpole, with his head plunged in the thick grass, was not in a position to hear very clearly. Nor was he in a state of mind to be observant.

"Make that ass shut up, Blake!" whispered Tom Merry.

"I uttably wefuse!"

D'Aroy was interrupted by a grip of iron on his collar, and Blake's fierce voice in his ear.

"Another word, and I'll squash you!"

Herries and Digby grasped the swell of the School House at the same moment. Arthur Augustus indignantly relapsed into silence.

The deep bass voice went on.

"Have you anything to say, minion, before we bury you?"

"Ye-es," gasped Skimpole. "Yes, rather! I have a strong objection to being buried. I will leave the wood at once, if you wish, and agree not to make any more investigations."

"Can we trust you?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Hold the dagger to his throat while he takes the oath!" growled Tom Merry.

"I—I can swear quite comfortably without the dagger too near," murmured Skimpole. "I would much rather not have the dagger to my throat, if you don't mind."

"Rats—I mean, silence, minion!"

Jack Blake opened his pocket pencil, and jammed the point of the lead against Skimpole's neck. The freak of the Shell gave a shudder at the contact.

"P-p-please take it away!" he murmured. "P-p-please—"

"Hold the trusty dagger there while he takes the oath!" growled Tom Merry.

"Ay, ay, captain!"

"Now, base spy and minion, repeat this fearful oath after me. 'By all you hold sacred, by the Form-room at St. Jim's, the clock-tower and the gym, by the first book of Livy, and the last book of Tacitus, that you will keep secret this dread meeting.'"

There was again a chuckle, but it was lost upon the terrified Skimpole. He repeated the curious oath, trembling in every limb.

"You will immediately leave the wood and go straight back to school and get to bed without saying a word to a soul. Swear by the Iliad of Homer and Æneid of Virgil, by the Georgics, the Bucolics, the Philippics, and the Ars Poetica."

Skimpole swore, and was then allowed to rise.

His assailants disappeared in the wood. The Determinist of St. Jim's blinked round him in dismay.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "I—I should be most happy to leave the wood at once, and I have a strong objection to being murdered, but I really do not know the way."

"Keep straight forward till you get on the beaten track," said the deep voice from the bushes; "then turn to the right, and it will lead you to the lane."

"Thank you very much!" said Skimpole.

And he plunged away through the wood. The track was only a few paces distant, and he was soon running along it for his life. His footsteps died away in the distance, and the amateur poachers leaned against the trees and gasped with merriment.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Skimmy grows funnier every day. I don't think we should have disposed of young Wally so easily."

"Well, we disposed of Skimmy, anyway," said Blake. "He'll go straight home now, and he won't look for poachers again in a hurry."

"Yaas, wathah! And now he is gone, Blake, I wish to call your attention to the wude expressions you took the liberty of applyin' to me."

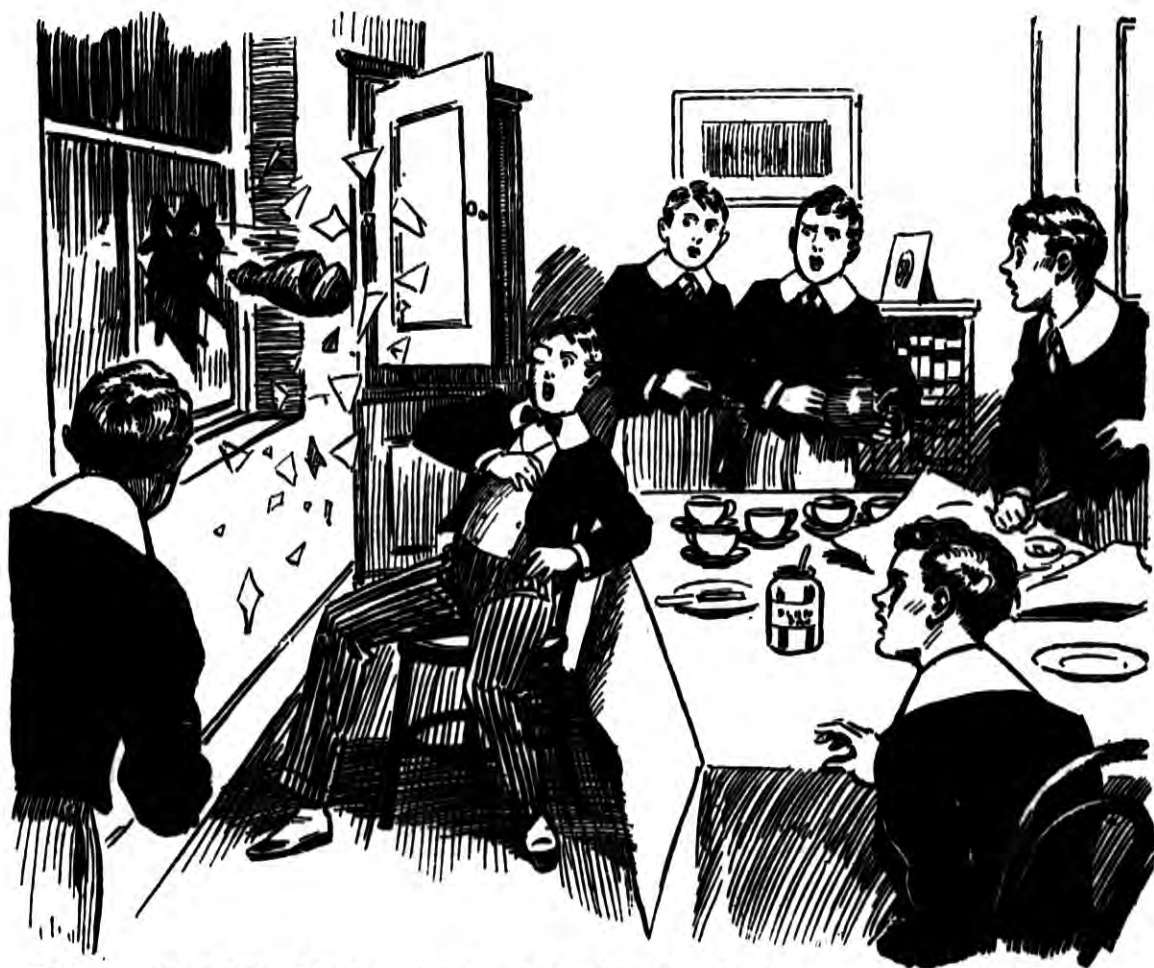
"Oh, ring off, Gussy! We'll go and look for young Wally now."

"I wefuse to wing off! Undah the circs—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy will never be finished talking. I—"

The hero of the Shell broke off abruptly. As the juniors plunged on through the wood a sound came from the distance—a low, strange cry—the cry of a human being in pain. It echoed among the trees for a moment, and then died away, and was followed by silence—a terrible and oppressive silence. The juniors involuntarily halted. They looked at one another in the gloom. They could not see each other's faces. But they knew that they were pale as death.

That low cry seemed to be ringing in their ears yet, and the silence that followed it was more terrible than any sound could have been.



There was a sudden crash of breaking glass, and the ham that Manners had thrown into the quad came whizzing back into the room. It had been returned—through the window pane, and it dropped on the knees of Arthur Augustus!

CHAPTER 12. A Strange Meeting.

WALLY ran on through the wood at top speed after escaping from young Lynn.

The discharged keeper's intentions were kind enough, but they did not agree with the inclinations of the junior. He did not mean to leave the wood without Pongo, and he was haunted by the fear that the shots he had heard had been fired at his favourite.

He ran on for some distance, plunging recklessly through bush and briar, shaking drops over himself from wet branches, and at last stopped to listen. His breath was coming in short gasps, and his heart was throbbing wildly. But there was no sound of pursuit. Lynn, if he had pursued him, had missed him in the darkness of the tangled wood.

"I'm out of that," murmured D'Arcy minor. "Some people are too obliging by half. Now, I wonder where old Pongo is? Pongo! Pongo!"

He called the name softly. He did not want to betray his whereabouts to Lynn, or to the man who had fired the shots, whether he was Barberry, the keeper, or a poacher.

He gave a start as he caught the sound of a low whine in the wood.

"Pongo! Pongo!" whispered Wally breathlessly.

The low whine was audible again.

It was a dog's whine—the whine of an animal in pain. Wally thought again of the two gun-shots, and his heart beat fiercely. He groped through the wood in the direction of the sound.

"Pongo! Good doggie! Is it you, Pongo?"

The dog whined. Wally groped forward, and his hand touched a warm, palpitating body. The body was wet. Was it the dog?

What was it so wet and warm that met the fingers of

the junior? The hot tears started to Wally's eyes; his heart beat thickly. He did not need a light to show him what it was. He knew that it was blood!

"Pongo!" he whispered; and the tears dropped hotly from his eyes upon the snuggling muzzle of the dog. "Pongo!"

The dog snuggled into his arms with a low whine. He knew his master. Wally hugged him in his arms, pressing the warm, throbbing body to his chest.

"Pongo—poor old Pongo! Oh, the brutes! The brutes!"

"The dog had been shot. Pongo had been shot at before by irate keepers, but he had always escaped with nothing worse than a graze. His luck had failed him this time. Whether he was badly hurt, the boy had no means of telling. But he had been hit, and his ragged coat was wet with blood.

Wally choked back his tears. He picked up the shivering mongrel in his arms, and hugged it under his jacket. Pongo lay there contentedly enough. The boy did not give a thought to the state he was making his clothes in. His only idea was to get away—to get Pongo away from further danger—somewhere where he could examine his wound. Holding the dog close in his arms he made his way through the black thickets.

But in the run from the young keeper he had totally lost his bearings. He had found his dog, but he had lost himself. The woods were trackless to a stranger in the daytime; at night there were few who could find their way about, once off the beaten track.

Wally was totally strange to the place. He had not given this aspect of the matter a thought till he tried to find his way homeward. Then he realised that he was hopelessly lost.

"My word!" murmured Wally, in dismay. "My word!"

He had not the faintest idea in which direction St. Jim's lay, or the village, or the road. Black thickets, huge trees,

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with a faint glimmering of the moon on their foliage, enveloped him on all sides. He was lost!

He held the dog close. For the first time the loneliness, the deep and terrible silence, of the solitary woods by night rushed upon his mind. He was glad of the companionship of the dog.

Pongo muzzled and whined faintly.

It was useless for Wally to remain where he was. His only course was to keep on, trusting to luck to find a beaten track, or to emerge by chance at some point of the wood. He moved on slowly, stumbling over tangled twigs, tearing his clothes on thorns, stumbling in masses of fallen and sodden leaves.

The thickets suddenly seemed to recede from him, and there was a glimpse of moonlight. He gave a gasp of relief. Was it a path?

He stopped and looked about him. He was on the edge of a hollow glade. For a moment Wally's heart throbbed with relief at the thought of human beings near at hand. But it was only for a moment.

He thought of a keeper who had shot Pongo, he thought of the poachers. And he drew quickly back into the blackest shadow.

The shadows of huge trees were thick round the glade. At one point was a glimmer of red—of a light!

The light was very close to the ground. It moved slightly, and Wally could see that it was a lantern. The light grew stronger. The boy followed it keenly. The lantern had been partly covered, but now it was exposed. Two or three dim forms moved in the shadows. The moonlight fell upon a man of powerful frame in gaiters, with a gun in the hollow of his arm. Two others were kneeling in the grass.

Wally watched them curiously. The man with the gun looked like a keeper, but the men kneeling in the grass could never have been mistaken for anything but poachers. They were a pair of powerful ruffians, with caps drawn down low over their brows, and cudgels sticking from the pockets of their coats. What they were doing Wally could not at first make out.

But he knew that he was in danger. He knew that he was watching poachers at work, and that one of those cudgels might descend upon his head if he were discovered there. He clasped a hand over Pongo's muzzle to keep him quiet. The dog understood. No sound came from Pongo save his quick, short breathing.

The boy did not stir. It might be as dangerous to retreat as to advance, if the poachers caught a rustle in the thicket. "How many?" asked the man with the gun, in a low, harsh voice.

"Thirty brace."

"Good!"

The men rose to their feet. They held a sack between them, and Wally knew then that they had been filling it with their prey—hares, or rabbits, or birds, he could not tell what. But the third man puzzled him. What was a man clad as a keeper doing watching such a proceeding? Was it a case of collusion between keeper and poacher? It flashed into Wally's mind that that was the explanation.

There was a sudden rustle in the wood, and another figure stepped into the moonlight in the glade. There was a sharp exclamation from the keeper.

"Lynn! You here!"

Wally recognised his old acquaintance. The two poachers dropped the sack, and each grasped his cudgel, and they drew closer together. The man in the keeper's garb seemed too taken aback to move. He stood staring at the young man blankly.

"Yes, Mr. Barberry, I am here!" said Lynn quietly.

"You fool! You fool!"

"Stand back!" Lynn's voice rang out sharply as the two poachers moved towards him. He raised his right hand, and showed a stout blackthorn in the moonlight. "Stand back!"

The ruffians hesitated, and seemed to look to their confederate for guidance.

Barberry was staring helplessly at Lynn.

"You fool!" he muttered again. "You fool!"

"Not fool enough for your purposes, Mr. Barberry!" said the young man, his voice ringing with scorn. "You lied

to Sir Neville about me, but he will soon know the truth now. He knew that someone was in collusion with the poachers, and you made him believe that it was I. He will know better to-morrow!"

"Fool!" said Barberry again.

"I suspected that it was you," resumed Lynn. "Why otherwise should you have lied my character away? I suspected it; and ever since I left Sir Neville's employ I have been on the watch. I knew I should catch you sooner or later if you were guilty—and you are guilty. It is you who are the fool. You could not play this game for ever. You are discovered now."

"Fool, I say! You can never prove—"

"The proof lies in that sack, and in the other which has been taken away."

Barberry started.

"You know nothing—"

"I have been on the watch since nightfall. Five of you have been at work. Two of your confederates have gone with a sack full of rabbits an hour ago. I know their names and where they live. Before morning their houses will be searched by the police, and I think proof enough will be discovered. And you know they will turn upon you to get favour from the magistrate. You know it without my telling you. Your game is up!"

Barberry gritted his teeth savagely.

"And—and you are fool enough to tell me so."

"I want to give you a chance—more than you have given me. Confess to Sir Neville, and clear my name—and go. Otherwise—prison!"

Barberry bowed his head, as if in intense reflection. It was a trick. The next moment he swung the gun suddenly round, and the butt end crashed upon the head of the young keeper. Lynn gave a low, almost strangled cry, and dropped heavily into the grass.

CHAPTER 13.

St. Jim's to the Rescue.

WALLY did not move. He could hardly breathe from horror.

The young man lay in the thick grass of the glade where he had fallen. Wally could not see him, but he pictured him in his mind.

The blow had been a severe one. What had happened to Lynn?

Barberry stood silent, breathing heavily. His two companions stared at the fallen man in terrified silence.

"It was your work," muttered one; "I had no hand in that."

"Nor I."

"Hang you!" muttered Barberry savagely. "Hang your cowardice! If he had gone, all would have been ruined."

He threw the gun into the grass and stooped beside the fallen man. Lynn was insensible, and the blood was oozing from under his thick hair. The blow had stunned him. Barberry rose to his feet again. He had acted upon the savage impulse of the moment. The fear of exposure and the hatred he felt for the man who menaced him had driven him to the act. Now he was nonplussed.

"Get the sack away," he muttered at last.

"And—and that?" muttered one of the poachers. "You— you dare not—"

He did not finish. Barberry laughed shortly.

"Don't be a fool! Do you think I am likely to risk my neck?"

"But what are you going to do? When he comes to himself—"

"I don't know—I must think."

There was a short silence. The men lifted up the sack again, but they seemed reluctant to go. One of them handled his cudgel, and looked at the inert form of the young keeper. When he came to himself, their liberty depended on him, and it would be so easy to silence him now.

"No!" said Barberry, breaking the silence at last. "No, never that! He can be silenced without—without that. Listen to me! Put some of the hares in his pocket, and leave the snare there. Let him be found. I will take care that one of the under-keepers is sent in this direction, and he will find him. He will be arrested as a poacher before he is able to speak. It will be taken for granted that he was poaching, and was knocked down in a row with one of the gang. Do you see?"

One of the ruffians chuckled.

"I see! It will work, but—"

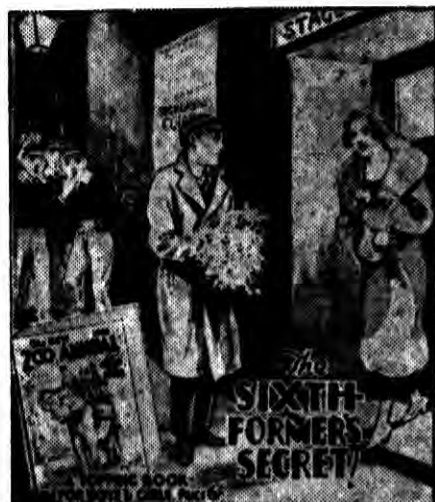
"I shall be there to give suspicion the right turn," said Barberry, with a savage grin, all his lost nerve seeming to return to him as he planned the way out of his danger. "Take that sack away, and shove it in Lynn's cottage."

"Lynn's cottage?"

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"Yes. Leave about a dozen in it; that will be sufficient. I will see that the sack is found there by the proper persons. Then, when he recovers and tells his story, I fancy he will find it hard to make people believe him."

"Good!"

"Get away, then—quick! There's no time to waste!"

Wally crouched quite still, half frozen with horror and fear. The shadowy form of the keeper seemed to him like that of some demon as he listened to his words. The depth of cunning amazed and horrified the boy. But he soon had something nearer to think about. The two poachers, carrying the sack between them, moved from the glade, and strode directly towards the spot where Wally was crouching in the shadow of the trees.

The boy had no time to escape. He could hardly have moved without making a sound to give the alarm; but he had no time to move. The rufians were upon him in a few seconds, and there was a startled exclamation as one of them stumbled over the crouching boy.

Pongo gave a low, fierce growl.

The sack dropped with a dull thud in the grass. The grasp of the poachers was upon Wally the next moment, and he was dragged out into the moonlight of the glade. His heart was beating violently; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He tried to remain cool; he tried to keep his wits about him; but everything seemed to swim before his gaze.

"Who—who is that?" broke in short, gasping syllables from Barberry.

"Some brat; he has been watching."

Barberry pressed his hand to his brow. He realised what it meant to him. His deed had not only been seen, but his plot had been overheard. His look was almost murderous as it was fixed on Wally.

"It is a brat from the school," he muttered. "That—that dog is a brute I shot at an hour ago. I thought I had killed it. Boy—brat—oh, all is lost!"

Wally's terror was passing. His wits began to clear, and he hugged the dog tighter in his arms, not resisting the grasp of the poachers. That would have been futile.

"All is up!" muttered Barberry brokenly. "Unless—unless—"

He looked fixedly at the poachers. They did not meet his glance. They were desperate men, they had done desperate things, but—

"No," muttered one—"no!"

"He will blab! All is lost!"

"Make him promise—"

Barberry laughed savagely. "A lot of use that would be. Do you think a promise would bind a boy's chattering tongue? If he goes back to the school the whole place will ring with this to-morrow."

He grasped Wally fiercely by the shoulder.

"Brat! What are you doing here?"

"I came to look for my dog."

"Your dog? Oh, I wish I had shot you instead! But it is not yet too late—it is not too late!"

He picked up his gun from the grass. What terrible

thought was in his mind Wally could guess only too well. He began to struggle.

"Help, help!"

The boy's cry rang piercingly through the wood. One of the poachers clapped a rough hand savagely over his mouth.

"Quiet, you whelp!"

But the cry had been heard. There was a sound in the wood—of fluttering twigs, of parting thickets and rustling foliage.

The poachers started and listened. Barberry, with his hand on the gun, stood as if suddenly turned to stone. Who were they who were racing at top speed through the dark wood towards the glade?

Wally strove to shout again. He was as amazed by the hurrying footsteps as his captors could be. But the rough hand on his mouth choked his cry.

"Better cut!" muttered a rough voice. "The game's up, Mr. Barberry!"

The keeper did not reply; he seemed almost stunned. The poachers looked at him impatiently, and then, suddenly releasing Wally as the sound of footsteps came closer, they darted into the wood and ran.

The sack lay in the grass where they had dropped it. Wally reeled against a tree, the dog still in his arms.

"Help!" he gasped.

"St. Jim's to the rescue!"

It was the voice of Tom Merry. And Tom Merry & Co. were bursting from the thickets into the moonlit glade. There was a strange sound from Barberry. It was something between a sigh and a groan. He dropped the gun, and, turning, plunged heavily into the wood. He knew that all was lost now—that only arrest remained—arrest and imprisonment, from which only prompt flight could save him.

"Wally!" cried Arthur Augustus. "Wally, where are you?"

"Here I am, Gus!" said Wally, all his coolness returning as he found himself in the presence of the chums of St. Jim's.

"Fancy meeting you!"

"Who was that bolting?" asked Tom Merry breathlessly.

"A couple of poachers and Mr. Barberry."

"What?"

"Fact! He was in league with them. Look at that sack."

"My only hat!"

"Bui Jove! Pewwaps you will admit now, Blake, that I was wight!"

"I never said you weren't, Gussy."

"I am vewy glad I decided to look into the mattah. It has had most fortunate results."

"Why, what have you done?" demanded Monty Lowther. "Weally, Lowthah, it is vathah bad form to carp in that ewtical way!"

"It was you yelled for help, I suppose, you young rascal?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; they had collared me, you see, and that beast Barberry was picking up his gun. Blessed if I know whether he was going to pot me or not, but he looked like it. Much

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obliged to you chaps for coming up like this. But, I say, look at that poor chap; he's in a pretty bad state, I think."

"Who—what? Why, it's young Lynn!"

"Yes; and it was Barberrry clumped him on the head with the butt of his gun."

Tom Merry knelt beside the young man. The moonlight gleamed upon his pallid face as Tom raised his head. The junior shuddered. For a moment he feared that Lynn was dead. But he was breathing, though faintly. The blood, oozing from under his hair, was staining one side of his white face. A huge bruise was forming where the blow had fallen. The juniors gathered round anxiously. Most of them knew Lynn and liked him.

"Is he badly hurt?" asked Blake, in a low voice.

"I can't quite tell. He's stunned, and doesn't show any sign of coming to. We must get him somewhere where he can be seen by a doctor."

"The village is a jolly long way off."

"There's Sir Neville Boyle's place—that's not half a mile from here," said Tom Merry quietly.

Blake gave a start.

"Sir Neville has sacked him, you know."

"He couldn't refuse to take in a wounded man. Besides, it's pretty clear now how the facts of the case stand."

"Jolly clear!" said Wally. "I heard the rotters talking, and I can tell the whole story. Barberrry won't dare to show up again, you can bet on that."

"Well, we'll get him to Sir Neville's place," said Blake. "We can carry him between us. He's no light weight, though."

Lynn was indeed a good weight. But there were seven juniors, none of them weak. They raised Lynn in their arms tenderly enough. He was still quite insensible.

"Good!" said Wally. "And the doctor can attend to my dog at the same time. That beast Barberrry shot him, but I think he isn't badly hurt. He seems lively enough. Do you notice how he keeps on trying to get at you, Gus?"

"You—you young wascal! Keep the bwute away from my twousahs!"

"Certainly! March on, kids!" said D'Arcy minor, with the manner of a master of the ceremonies.

And they marched.

CHAPTER 14.

All's Well!

LIGHTS were gleaming from the drawing-room windows of Sir Neville Boyle's house.

The baronet had company that evening, and the juniors, as they tramped wearily enough up the long drive, heard the sounds of music coming from the lighted rooms. The french windows upon the terrace were open, and the portly form of Sir Neville Boyle, in evening dress, could be seen there.

The baronet uttered a sudden exclamation. He had caught sight of the curious procession on the wide drive. He came quickly forward to the steps of the terrace, and peered down into the darkness.

"What is that?"

"Pway excuse us from this uncwemonious visit at such an extremely unusual hour," came a polite voice from the gloom; "but there was weally no alternative—"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to dry up. I am explainin' the mattah to Sir Neville Boyle. Undah the circs, sir, I think you will excuse this extremely uncwemonious call, as we have an injuahed man here who is gweatly in need of medical attention."

"What on earth does it all mean?" exclaimed Sir Neville, in amazement.

The voices had been heard, and a number of Sir Neville's guests had come out at the french windows. A crowd of men and women in evening dress looked down on the juniors in great amazement. The boys from St. Jim's carried their burden up on the terrace, and there was a general exclamation of horror at the sight of the white face with its terrible stains of red.

"In Heaven's name," cried Sir Neville Boyle, "what has happened?"

"Pway allow me to explain," said D'Arcy.

"This is Lynn, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "He was knocked down and stunned by your head-keeper Barberrry, in the wood."

"Bless me! He was poaching, I presume?"

"No, Barberrry was poaching, and Lynn discovered him—"

"What! You are dreaming!"

"There are plenty of proofs, including an eye witness to the whole matter," said Tom Merry. "But at present

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this chap needs care. He has had a fearful crack. Will you send for a doctor?"

"Of course. Whatever the truth is, he shall not want for proper attention," said the baronet.

And in less than a minute a messenger was speeding by car for a doctor. The injured man, who was still unconscious, was carried into the house.

The merry party in Sir Neville's drawing-room had had its gaiety damped.

"This matter will need explaining," said Sir Neville.

"It—"

"It's all right!" broke out D'Arcy minor.

"Indeed!" said the baronet dryly. "Is it?"

"Eh? I was speaking of Pongo. It's all right."

"What does the boy mean?"

"He means his beastly dog is all wight, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"That's it; he's all right!" said Wally gleefully. "He's only been grazed. There's a lump of skin gone, and he's lost a lot of blood, but he's all right. I can wrap him up in my jacket and carry him home. I say, we'd better be off. The sooner I get poor old Pongo comfortably to bed the better it will be for him."

"Pway wing off, Wally! Sir Neville is speakin'!"

"Sorry, sir! I'm so jolly glad that Pongo is all right, you know."

"You boys had better come into the library and explain this matter," said Sir Neville. And, excusing himself to his guests, he led the way.

The juniors were subjected to a keen examination in the library, and the baronet learned the whole story.

"Poor Lynn!" he said. "He has been greatly wronged, but I could not but believe the testimony of my head-keeper. If Barberrry is to be found he shall be arrested. I had not the slightest suspicion that he was such a rascal. I will send you boys back to the school in the car with a note to Dr. Holmes, which may save you from the punishment you deserve—for you deserve it, you know, though the matter has turned out so fortunately."

"We should like to hear what the doctor says about young Lynn first, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yass, wathah! I wish to be able to inform Mawwy, the housemaid, that I have looked into the matter, and that it is all wight."

"I can hear the doctor now, I think," said Sir Neville. "I will rejoin you."

Sir Neville left the juniors in the library.

As soon as he had gone D'Arcy settled himself comfortably in an armchair, and gazed round at the other juniors through his monocle.

"You know, deah boys," he said, "I can't help thinkin' what a vewy good thing it was that I decided to look into this mattah of young Lynn. Porwaps if I had not done so, that wascally head-keeper Barberrry would nevah have been found out, and then that vewy mewitowious couple, Mawwy the housemaid at St. Jim's and young Lynn, would nevah have been able to get mawwied."

Tom Merry smiled as he looked at D'Arcy, but Lowther snorted.

"I'd like to know what you had to do with it, you silly ass. Why, it was really through your young brother Wally that the matter was cleared up!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I cannot agree with you. It was entially my suggestion, and I pwomised Mawwy that I would look into the mattah. Furthahmore I cannot allow you to address me in such wude terms. Unless you immediately apologise and withdraw your wemarks, I shall have to give you a feahful thwaschin'."

"Really, Gussy," said Tom Merry, "I am surprised at you. Fancy attempting to start a fight in someone else's drawing-room, especially when your host has left you for a few moments."

Arthur Augustus flushed uncomfortably and sat down hastily.

"I am sowwy, deah boys," he said. "I am afwaid that in the heat of the moment I forgot myself. I hope I should nevah be guilty of a bweach of etiquette."

Before anyone else could say anything, the door opened and Sir Neville Boyle came back into the room.

Tom Merry looked at him with eager inquiry.

"How is Lynn, sir?"

"He has had a nasty knock, but the doctor says he will be quite himself again in a week, I am glad to say. And now the car is ready for you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"One word, pway," said D'Arcy. "You may not be awah, Sir Neville, that Lynn was engaged to Mawwy, the housemaid in the School House at St. Jim's, a most wespactable and mewitowious young person."

"No, I cannot say I was aware of it," said Sir Neville, with a smile.

"It is wathah an important mattor to her, sir. You see,



Wally D'Arcy was transfixed with horror as he saw the head game-keeper suddenly swing his gun round and crash the butt-end upon the head of the young keeper. Lynn gave a low, strangled cry and dropped heavily to the ground.

they were goin' to be mawwied at Chwistmas, and when you gave young Lynn the ordah of the boot, it quite mucked up their mawwiage prospects. I was quite touched by Mawy's sowwowful looks, you know, and I've pwomised her to look into the mattah and set it wight, and I am glad that my efforts have turned out so successfully. But may I assuah Mawy that it is all wight, sir—that you are goin' to take young Lynn on again, and they can be mawwied at Chwistmas all the same?"

Sir Neville laughed.

"Certainly, my lad! And you may tell Mary, also, that I am going to make William Lynn my head-keeper, as a compensation for the wrong I unintentionally did him."

"Bai Jove, that is good news! Thank you vewy much, Sir Neville!"

The baronet showed the boys to the waiting car, and shook hands with all of them ere they departed. Wally was still nursing his injured pet.

"I think I managed that affair pwetty well," D'Arcy remarked, as the car rolled schoolward. And as the others were too sleepy to argue the point D'Arcy remained unconfuted.

They arrived at St. Jim's at last. Taggles was so amazed at the sight of the juniors in Sir Neville Boyle's car that he forgot to grumble at the trouble of opening the gate.

Tom Merry rang up the School House, and Mary, the housemaid, came to the door to open it. The girl was looking very quiet, but there were traces of red about her eyes.

Mr. Railton came out of his study with a very severe expression on his face. Tom Merry took off his cap and presented Sir Neville's letter. Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus was explaining matters to Mary, and Wally was taking his pet away to be housed for the night.

"It's all wight, Mawy," said D'Arcy. "You wemembah I pwomised you to look into the mattah. I have been fortunate enough to pwove young Lynn's innocence. Bar-bewwy has made twacks—bunked, you know—and Sir Neville is going to make Lynn his head-keepah."

The girl looked astounded.

"Oh, Master D'Arcy, it is cruel to joke about such a thing!" she murmured.

"Weally, Mawy, can you possibly considah me capable of jokin' on such a mattah?"

"But—but—"

"It's all true, Mary," said Blake—"true as a die! We'll tell you all about it to-morrow; but every word Gussy says is the solid truth, except that he didn't—"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton, having read the letter. "Under the circumstances you will be pardoned, my boys. Go to bed at once!"

"Yes, sir."

"Mary, I am glad to tell you that William Lynn is quite cleared of the charge against him, and that Sir Neville has taken him into his favour again," said Mr. Railton kindly. "There, don't cry, my dear; it will be all right now."

Mary was crying, but it was from happiness now. She went away with her apron to her eyes. D'Arcy minor came in with Herries. The new junior presented a shocking sight. He was covered with mud and blood and canine hairs, and Mr. Railton gave him a very expressive glance.

"You had better take your brother to a bath-room before he goes to bed, D'Arcy," he said.

And D'Arcy did.

Glad enough were the juniors to get to bed again. And glad, too, to escape the licking they had fully expected—and which Skimpole had not escaped. The next day St. Jim's was buzzing with the story, and Figgins & Co. came over from the New House to hear all the details, and to growl at Tom Merry and Blake for leaving them out of the fun.

Arthur Augustus told the story right and left, and worked it out to his own satisfaction that he had looked into the matter and set it right. And he was extremely indignant when he found that most of the fellows were more inclined to attribute the happy result to D'Arcy minor.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's grand football and adventure yarn, "THE SIXTH-FORMER'S SECRET!")

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,267,

THERE ARE THRILLS GALORE IN THE FINAL EPISODE OF—



By J. E. GURDON.

Success!

WITH the compass out of action there was not the remotest chance of holding a course. Like feathers blown about in the eddies of a draughty vault, the two machines were at the mercy of a blind chance.

A bang on the shoulder made him turn round. Strang was standing up in the back seat, gesticulating, and pointing to the starboard wing-tip.

Rex looked, and for a moment thought that the machine was on fire.

From the trailing edge of top and bottom planes there streamed pennants of green flame. The bracing-wires also glowed as though white-hot, and where they crossed one another the junctions were hidden by dazzling incandescent globes.

The machine had become part and parcel of the storm, and was itself electrified like a thundercloud.

"Not much wonder the compass won't work!" muttered Rex, watching the dread display with fascinated eyes. "We shall go off pop in a second! Oh crikey! What's happened to Kelly?"

Two hundred feet higher and some five hundred yards away the single-seater was plunging like a comet through the storm, completely wrapped from propeller to tail in a rippling mantle of light.

It was a terrifying, awe-inspiring sight, but one glance told Rex that his companion was not actually in flames. The mantle of light was only an electrical discharge like that which trailed from his own wings.

"He'll be all right if he keeps his head," he muttered. "Oh, the sap! The chump—"

Speechless with helpless rage he watched a figure stand up in the midst of the blaze, hover a second on the edge of the cockpit, and then fall headlong.

Unnerved by his uncanny plight Kelly had decided to jump.

"Count five!" yelled Rex, though well aware that he might as well be shouting advice across Niagara Falls.

"Count five!"

Almost before the words were uttered he realized that Kelly had failed to count the five vital seconds that would enable him and his parachute to fall clear of the machine. Instead of waiting—a cold, hard feat to achieve—he had pulled the ring of the rip-cord at the very moment of leaving his cockpit.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,287.

Horror stricken, Rex saw the tiny pilot 'chute flash from the falling pack. With a crackling flutter, the big silken shell ballooned open, lunched as it was caught by the single-seater's slipstream, then wrapped itself tightly round rudder, fin, and tail-planes.

Caught and helpless below the empty plane, Kelly hung, spinning and swinging at the end of his harness.

Reasoning did not enter into what Rex then accomplished. Not a fraction of a second did he pause to think, but acted in a flash, eyes, hands, and feet all working in perfect harmony as he judged speeds and angles, and manipulated stick and rudder.

It was as a bird flies that he flew, not merely controlling the movements of the machine, but making them correspond to every wish as though they were his own.

Beneath the plunging scout he swooped, rolled, dived, and zoomed up so that, for one infinitesimal spark of time, his centre-section was dead underneath the dangling figure.

Had Kelly missed that fleeting moment both rescuer and rescued must have dived to their doom, the two machines locked together. But his moment of panic had passed, and he was again master of every nerve.

A twist, and a pressure of the quick-release disc of his harness, and he was free.

Rex felt the crash as a heavy body fell sprawling down across himself and Strang.

Full left stick, full right rudder. With shuddering wires his machine heeled over on a vertical wing to sideslip away before the pilotless plane could foul her.

Too late by an inch!

A trailing rope from the parachute above trailed across and into the propeller. Screeching, the blades burst asunder, while the engine roared like a maddened beast of prey—then silence as Rex's fingers found and flicked the switch.

Although still calm and competent, Rex felt the icy clutch of apprehension as his machine sank down through the blinding rain and turbulent gusts. As a rule, he rather enjoyed a forced landing, but not with an overloaded machine, in the midst of a tornado, and without even knowing whether land or water awaited him below!

This last point was settled when the altimeter needle had crept back across its dial to mark a mere five hundred feet.

It was open water, rolling, and menacing.

"This is where we pull up stumps at last!" Rex told

himself, with grim resignation. "The old bus won't float for more than ten minutes in that swell!"

But though without hope, he was determined that his last landing should be a good one.

Gently he pulled back the stick, skilfully correcting bumps with the ailerons, stretching out the glide flatter and flatter, until the machine flopped like a pancake on to the rollers.

In every detail his alighting was correct and perfectly carried out, but within the first second he knew that the end was very near, for the swell was even more tremendous than he had expected.

Like a twig in a rapid, the plane soared and dipped, now climbing a towering ridge of water, now lurching dizzily into the following trough.

Soon the lower wings were submerged, and foam began to hiss and sluice about the cockpit. Another two minutes, or possibly three, and the weight of the engine would overcome all buoyancy—then a plunge, a gurgle, and the darkness of the abyss.

Rex pushed up his useless goggles, and looked back with a grin and a shrug at Kelly and Strang, who were wedged miserably together in the after cockpit.

It was then that the machine quivered.

"What was that?" shouted Strang.

The boy did not reply. With unbelieving eyes he was staring along the cowl.

Although nothing could be seen but a surrounding waste of heaving water, the cowl was rising slowly and steadily, as though thrust upwards from beneath by some titanic, invisible force.

A sucking splash told that the submerged lower planes had broken surface.

Kelly yelled—a hoarse, inarticulate yell.

Looking back, Rex saw Q47's huge steel conning-tower rising through the waves. Perched on her deck, like a drowned fly scooped up by a toy boat, the wrecked two-seater was lifted into safety.

A hatch opened. Three drenched figures thankfully slid down into the hospitable hull. Then, as silently and majestically as she had appeared, the submarine sank back into the depths.

"Your brother got in touch with us by wireless as soon as he left the ground," explained Commander Sherwell, in reply to Rex's breathless questions. "He reported that you and Kelly were being forced down, and by great good luck we sighted you just before you hit the water. So we dived and bobbed up underneath the machine, that being the quickest way of taking you on board. Now cut along, young man, swallow some hot coffee, and get into dry kit."

"What about Jim?" demanded Rex, who at the moment was not a bit interested in physical comforts.

"He's bringing his machine down a couple of miles farther out. We're too close to a lee shore for safety, but with another two miles margin we shall be able to collect him and his crew without much difficulty. Off you go now for that coffee."

"But, sir—"

The commander's eyes were twinkling as he interrupted, but his voice allowed for no further argument.

"At once!" he said. "I didn't pull you down out of the water for the fun of subsequently pulling you through pneumonia."

Reluctantly, though knowing well enough that the order was wise, Rex obeyed.

When he returned to the ward-room, dry and warmed, he found that the rescue of the freighter had already been carried out. Jim was there, dripping and weary, but as resolute as ever; Sweetly also, frightened and very sheepish, and Pirelli, huge, stubborn, and sullenly silent.

The brothers exchanged a friendly nod, for Commander Sherwell was speaking.

"This cylinder," he said, "appears to be the key to the enemy's power plant. Fortunately, we know exactly where it is, for Sweetly reports that the submarine was actually resting on the cylinder when he and this man Pirelli blundered into us. I rather fancy, therefore, a deep sea mine will settle the World Wreckers once and for all."

That the commander had hit upon the truth Pirelli then proved beyond all shadow of doubt by the raving curses that poured torrentially from his livid lips.

"So the end is in sight," murmured Jim when the screaming, struggling mania had been removed.

The commander nodded gravely.

"Just in time," he agreed. "Another week of rain and thaw, and—" He broke off expressively. "From here to the outer fringe of the Barrier," he continued, "the ice is breaking up. There's no doubt that Torcor and this hulking Italian brute had conceived a winning plan—that of flooding the southern hemisphere into submission. Our hope must be that the destruction of the cylinder will restore the frost."

To Rex the two hours that followed were the most tense in all their long fight against the forces of the World Wreckers.

Silent with excitement, he watched the officers and men of the submarine as, with unerring accuracy, they navigated to the precise spot and laid a deadly cargo of high explosives round about the site of the cylinder. Half a mile away then they cruised before making the electrical contact that would unleash all the devilish power in the mines.

Commander Sherwell's lantern jaws were set as he pressed the switch key.

Not a man moved as they waited. Only the ticking of a chronometer broke the stillness.

From a great distance then there came a thud and a muffled boom. The submarine shuddered. Silence!

Again a shudder and a pause.

When the shock came it seized upon the great craft as though she were an empty tin, hurling, rolling, turning, and lifting. Men were thrown like skittles against bulkheads. Every lamp was shattered. Strained plates shrieked, and broken bearings groaned.

Like a dead whale then Q47 rose to the surface, stripped of her screws, bent and battered, but still gallantly buoyant.

On her buckled deck an awestricken group assembled.

Gone were the clouds and rain, gone also the mountain which once had brooded over the World Wreckers and all their scientific wonders. In its stead lay a far-flung, crumpled mass of ice, snow, and rock.

"It is cold again," said Jim soberly. "We have won!"

Commander Sherwell smiled as he looked up at the Antarctic sky, where once more the familiar clouds of ice were forming.

"Many scores of miles away, on the fringe of the Barrier, our old friend Bruce is waiting for us," he said. "When the sea has frozen again we shall make our way to him on foot, and the brigantine will take us home. It is a long tramp, and a hard one; but it will seem like nothing, for our job is done."

THE END.

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NEXT WEEK, THE "GEM" WILL CONTAIN THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF THIS GRIPPING NEW YARN

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,287.



Below, appear two extracts from TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY.

Someone suggested to Tom Merry that boxing should be banned. So he sent the star reporter of the "Weekly" to interview two well-known members of St. Jim's, and here is what they said—

JACK BLAKE:

Ban boxing, indeed! Who dares to make such an asinine suggestion? Only a hopeless killjoy would ever dream of banning boxing, which is one of the most manly of our sports and pastimes. To my mind boxing is as necessary as swimming.

A fellow never knows when he is going to find himself in a tight corner. Supposing he is waylaid on a lonely country road after dusk? A knowledge of self-defence would prove jolly useful in such a crisis. I'm willing to wager that no killjoy ever succeeds in banning boxing at St. Jim's!

HERBERT SKIMPOLE:

Boxing should certainly be banned! It is a brutal, blood-shedding business! Personally, I like to spend my days in peace and quietness, and it grieves me to see my schoolfellows indulging in fistieuffs. I have known the most dreadful things happen in the boxing ring. One boy had his nasal organ permanently flattened! Another lost the sight of his eye for a whole week! It is high time that this barbarous

business of boxing was banned by the authorities.

MY DREAM.

I dreamt last night that I was made
The king of an island fair,
And every conceivable kind of food
Was laid before me there.
Enormous steak and kidney pies,
Jam tarts and sausage rolls,
And thousands of bunches of luscious fruits
Suspended from bamboo poles.
Gigantic hams and cream eclairs,
And oceans of ginger pop—
(And it went on like that for a hundred lines,
But I think it's time to stop!—Ed.)

FATTY WYNN.

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Printed and published every Wednesday by the proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, October 15th, 1932.

