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TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



THERE'S ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR IN THIS RIPPING YARN—

TOM MERRY & Co



Roll up, Gemites! Roll up! Come round the jolly old fair with Tom Merry & Co.!
They're having the time of their lives in this ripping yarn of St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 1.

The Juniors Who Were Good!

"I WANT to speak to you youngsters seriously," said Jack Blake.

The chums of Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's received this remark characteristically. Herries grunted. Digby grinned, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his right eye, and surveyed Blake in a leisurely way from top to toe, and toe to top again.

"Weally, Blake—" he began.

"Now, don't you start, Gussy," said Blake, with a warning shake of his forefinger at the swell of St. Jim's. "We've got to go in to morning lessons in a few minutes, and I want to speak to you youngsters seriously—"

"In the first place, I object to the term youngsters. I wegard it as distinctly dewogatory to the dig of fellows as old as yourself, and—in one case, at least—vewy much wisah. In the second place—"

"Cheese it, I tell you! I suppose you fellows know that to-day—"

"In the second place, deah boy—"

"That to-day Wayland Fair opens, and as it is a Wednesday and a half-holiday, we can't do better than—"

"In the second place—"

"Than run over to Wayland immediately after dinner, and have a really ripping afternoon," said Jack Blake, ignoring Arthur Augustus. "Tom Merry suggested it to

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me, and he is going with Manners and Lowther, and thought it would be a good idea to make up a party. That's why I want to speak seriously to you."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up, Gussy, and let your uncle speak! I want to speak to you kids seriously. If any of you are detained this afternoon, the expedition will be a muck-up, as far as the detained person is concerned. Each of you, therefore, is to be good—as good as the prize little boy in the prize little book. Stop that cackling, Dig, when your uncle is speaking seriously to you. I suppose you want me to take you to the fair?" said Blake severely.

"I should uttally wufuse to be taken to the fair. I am quite willin' to go and look aftah you fellows."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Herries. "My bulldog would like a little run this afternoon."

"If you bring your bulldog to Wayland Fair he will die a sudden death," said Jack Blake. "I'm getting fed-up with your bulldog."

"Yaas, I quite agree with Blake there. The wotten bwute tore a gweat hole in my twousahs only a few weeks ago."

"I suppose you looked at him," grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Now, don't begin arguing," said Blake. "Listen while I'm talking seriously to you. You've all got to be good, so as not to be detained this afternoon. It was really Tom Merry's suggestion. He and Manners and Lowther are going to be very good. I don't want to leave any of you kids behind—"

—OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE, FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO.!

at the FAIR!

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

"I should wefuse to be left behind," said Digby.

"Hallo! There's the bell for classes," said Digby. "Come on!"

"Wait a tick! You understand that I'm speaking seriously, and that you've all got to be good, and—"

"I suppose you don't want to make a start by being late for class?" said Digby. "Come on, you duffer! Come on, Gussy!"

"Pway don't huvwyy like that, deah boys! I weally—"

But the chums of the Fourth did not stop to listen. Having resolved to be very good, so as to run no risk of being detained that afternoon, it was necessary to be in good time in the class-room. Blake, Herries, and Digby joined the stream of juniors who were pouring in. But Arthur Augustus, who regarded hurry as somewhat derogatory to his dignity, followed at a more leisurely pace, with the result that he was a couple of minutes behind time in the class.

Mr. Lathom, master of the Fourth at St. Jim's, blinked at him over his glasses. Mr. Lathom was the kindest-hearted of little men, and his Form took full advantage of that fact. But sometimes Mr. Lathom had a fit of energy, and resolved to show the Fourth that he was not to be trifled with. Then for about a couple of days he would become Mussolini-like in his severity, and the Fourth would be made to fairly "sit up," as Figgins of the New House termed it. And unfortunately for the juniors who had resolved to be good, Mr. Lathom was in one of his reforming moods that morning.

He blinked at the swell of St. Jim's with unusual severity. Arthur Augustus was taking his place, and smoothing out a crease in his fancy waistcoat when the master of the Fourth rapped out his name:

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, looking up.

"You are late!"

"I am extremely sowwy, Mr. Lathom!"

"That does not alter the fact that you are late, D'Arcy."

"Weally, sir, as one gentleman to anothah, I twust that an apology is sufficient to set the mattah wight," said D'Arcy.

The Fourth Form giggled, and Mr. Lathom frowned.

"Then you are quite mistaken, D'Arcy. I am resolved to keep order in the Form," said Mr. Lathom firmly; and then the Fourth groaned in spirit.

When Mr. Lathom said that he was resolved to keep order in the Form, it always meant the same thing—that he was on the reforming tack.

"You are two minutes late, D'Arcy. You will remain in the class-room for an hour this afternoon."

D'Arcy's face fell.

"Oh, weally, sir—"

"That is enough, D'Arcy. We will now proceed."

And the Fourth Form proceeded. Arthur Augustus looked dismayed. He had sometimes been as much as five minutes late, and the Form master had only warned him of what he would do next time.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This is howwibly unlucky! I wegard Mr. Lathom in the light of a beast!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked daggers at their unfortunate chum. They had made an effort, and arrived at the class-room punctually, and they felt that Arthur Augustus ought to have done the same. And during the second lesson Digby could not help expressing his feelings to D'Arcy on the subject.

"How many kinds of an ass do you call yourself?" he asked witheringly, when Mr. Lathom's back was turned.

"You—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"You ought to have got in in time—"

"You are talking, Digby," said Mr. Lathom, turning round suddenly. He seemed to be gifted that morning with a much keener sense of hearing than usual. "As you cannot keep silent in the class-room during lessons, you may remain in an hour this afternoon, and keep D'Arcy company."

"Oh, sir!" gasped the unlucky Digby.

"Silence in class!"

And Digby sat crushed. Jack Blake and Herries exchanged looks of hopelessness.

"Of all the giddy asses!" murmured Blake. "This is because I spoke to them seriously and warned them to be good. Both of them detained this afternoon! My hat!"

"Blessed duffers!" grunted Herries.

The third lesson was German, and Herr Schneider came in to conduct the Fourth Form on a more or less interesting excursion among German irregular verbs. In the German lesson Herries came to grief. Herries knew everything about dogs, but what he did not know about German would have filled a dictionary. And Herr Schneider, being a conscientious gentleman, devoted as much attention to the dull members of his class as to the bright ones—a conscientious discharge of duty for which Herries did not bless him.

"Das ist der ewige Gesang," said Herr Schneider. "Now try mit yourself, Herries, and do not gif up tat easy sentence. Mein Himmel! I tink tat tat poy will be te despair of me. I have instruct you a hundred times, and you do not understand, and you always forget, ain't it. Go on, Herries!"

"That is the—the—the—"

"Tat is right, so far. Das ist der ewige Gesang."

"That is the—"

"Go on, mein poy," said Herr Schneider encouragingly. "That is the—the earwig," said Herries, in a sudden brilliant burst. "That is the earwig singing."

Herr Schneider stood petrified for a moment. He had heard some queer German in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's in his time, but he had never heard "ewige" translated "earwig" before.

"Tat—tat is vat?" he said at last dazedly. "Repeat dem words mit yourself, poy."

"Das ist der ewige Gesang," said Herries boldly. "That is the earwig singing."

"Mein Gott!"

"You ass!" whispered Jack Blake. "It's eternal. It means eternal."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" said Herries. "Das ist der ewige Gesang—that is the eternal earwig singing."

The Fourth Form went off in a roar; they could not help it. It was long before Herries was allowed to forget the "eternal earwig."

Herr Schneider's grim face relaxed into something like a grin.

"Herries, I tink tat you vas te stupidest poy tat nefer vas pefore!" he said. "I tink tat I let you stay in te class-room an hour dis afternoon, and write out tat sentence and to English. 'Das ist der ewige Gesang' shall be rendered mit 'That is the eternal song'—and dere is noting about earwicks in tat line. Mein Gott! Earwicks! If I do not possess te patience of Shob, I care you mit pointer! You vill write tat out for an hour dis afternoon, Herries. Earwicks! Mein Gott!"

"Oh, lor'!" grunted Herries.

"And you, Blake"—Jack Blake jumped—"you vas tell Herries—"

"Oh, sir!"

"Do you deny tat you tell Herries yun vord?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Blake resignedly. "I told him one word, sir."

"Tat is vat I tink. You may stay in mit Herries, and write out te word you told him for an hour tis afternoon."

Blake gasped.

The lesson proceeded, but a cloud of glumness hung over the juniors who had resolved to be good.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Railton to the Rescue!

TOM MERRY came out of the Shell class-room with a decidedly cheerful countenance. The chums of the Shell, like Blake and his comrades, had resolved to be good. They had had more success in that line than the Fourth-Formers. Perhaps it was the change that agreed with them, as Monty Lowther suggested. At all events, virtue had brought its reward, and the Terrible

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Three came out without a single impot to detain them for any fraction of that fine winter afternoon.

"Considering that Linton was a little tantrummy this morning, I think we've scraped through pretty well," said Tom Merry. "I thought he was going for you once, Monty, when you told him Julius Caesar gave three parties in Gaul."

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"That was a slip," he said. "I forgot for the moment that we were being good, and that it wasn't permitted to pull the august leg of our Form master. But it turned out all right."

"It hasn't turned out so well for those Fourth Form kids, I think," remarked Manners. "They are looking as if they were going to a funeral."

The Fourth Form were coming out, and it was true that the chums of Study No. 6 were looking very dejected. Tom Merry looked at them inquiringly.

"How has it worked?" he asked. "Weren't you good?"

"Oh, good enough!" growled Blake. "Gussy started the ball rolling by coming in late—"

"Weally, Blake! I was only two minutes late, and on most occasions our wespected Form mastah doesn't jump on a fellow like that."

"He's got one of his periodical fits on!" growled Blake.

"D'Arcy was late, and Dig started jawing him—"

"I was only calling him an ass," said Digby.

"Well, I'm not disputing that you were quite right, as far as that goes, but you ought to have kept an eye on Lathom. Then Herries had to bungle the Deutsch—"

"I suppose you don't blame me for that," said Herries indignantly. "I was being awfully careful, and it was Schneider's fault."

"Blessed if I know how you make that out!"

"Why, hasn't he told us himself that lots of German words are just like their English equivalents—like Stuhl for stool, and Mann for man, and Hut for hat, and Grun for green, and Weiss for white, and so on? Well, when I can't get on to a word, I try to work it out on that system, phonetically. And I put it to you fellows—doesn't ewige sound as if it meant earwig?"

"Earwig!" yelled Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake grinned.

"The dummy construed 'Das ist der ewige Gesang' into 'That is the eternal earwig singing'—"

The Terrible Three shrieked.

"I didn't say 'eternal' till you told me," said Herries.

"Well, ass, I was trying to make you understand that it wasn't 'earwig.' The worst of it is that Schneider spotted me coaching him, and dropped on me, and I'm detained, too."

"That's hard cheese!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "The lot of you detained. This is what comes of trying to be good. I suppose it's no good starting these things too suddenly."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You ought to have been cuter," said Monty Lowther.

"Now, I was pulling Linton's leg in the Latin lesson a treat, and he never spotted it—"

"Indeed, Lowther," said Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, coming out of the class-room. "I had my suspicions, and I am glad to have them confirmed."

Monty Lowther turned crimson, and looked as if he wished the floor would open and swallow him up, as indeed he did.

"You will stay in this afternoon, Lowther, and write out a hundred lines in the class-room," Mr. Linton said grimly.

"Oh, sir—really—I—I—"

Mr. Linton passed on without listening. Tom Merry and Manners looked dismayed, but the Fourth-Former chuckled.

"You ought to have been cuter," said Jack Blake, parodying Lowther's remark. "You ought not to have been caught napping like that."

"Oh, don't rot!" said Lowther crossly. "How was I to know the villain was just coming out of the class-room? It's all the fault of you kids, keeping us jawing here."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah, you cannot say we wished you to jaw, you know. I have often pwotested against your jawin' so much. I appeal to ewevy gentleman pwesent."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "Lowther's in for it, and it's no good trying to reason with Linton. The afternoon's going to be mucked up. What is that New House waster grinning at?"

"Excuse my smiling," said Figgins. "You seem to be in a state of stew this time. I was thinking of taking you kids to the fair—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Still, we'll think of you while we're there," said Kerr, "and I'll bring you home a rattle or something, Lowther."

"Or a penny bun," said Fatty Wynn.

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"Oh, let's bundle these New House rotters out, anyway!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Their features worry me."

"Well, we're waiting to be bundled," said Figgins & Co. together.

The Terrible Three needed no further defiance. They rushed at the chums of the New House, and in a moment a wild and whirling combat was raging in the passage. Herries was rushing on to help, but Jack Blake pulled him back.

"Hold on!" he said. "It's three to three, and fair play's a jewel."

"They're New House rotters—"

"Never mind; let 'em fight it out."

"Yaas, wathah! It will be wathah amusin' to watch the wottahs fightin' it out, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, putting up his eyeglass.

It was unfortunate for the combatants that Knox, the prefect, came along just then. Knox always hailed a chance of being down on Tom Merry & Co., and he was not likely to miss this one.

"Stop that row, you young rotters!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear? Stop it! And each of you take a hundred lines, and do 'em after dinner before you go out."

And the prefect stalked along the passage.

The combat ceased, and the combatants glared at one another. Figgins wiped a trickle of "claret" from his nose, and grinned faintly.

"We're done in," he remarked.

"Looks like it!" growled Tom Merry. "All the fault of you New House rotters!"

"All the fault of you School House dummies, you mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake. "We're all in the same boat. Wayland Fair is all up for to-day."

"Yaas, wathah! I am vewy much disappointed, because I was thinkin' of takin' my young bwothah Wally. Bai Jove, there he is! Wally, deah boy—"

"Hallo!" grunted Wally, otherwise known as D'Arcy minor. He was looking very downcast.

"What is the mattah, Wally?"

"Matter enough!" growled Wally. "My Form master wants suffocating. I was going to Wayland Fair this afternoon, and now I'm detained because I stuck a pin into Gibson and made him jump in second lesson."

"Form masters seldom appreciate humour in lesson-time," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Especially that kind of humour."

"Oh, I'm not going to stick in! It's going to be a ripping afternoon, and the fair will be great fun. I'm going to cut!"

"Weally, Wally, I cannot appwove of your cuttin', as you call it. In fact, I forbid you to cut undah any cires," said Arthur Augustus impressively.

"Oh, don't you begin!" said Wally.

And he walked on, looking very much out of humour. Tom Merry & Co. went out into the quadrangle, looking less cheerful than usual. It was very hard to be detained that afternoon, of all afternoons. Wayland Fair seemed more attractive than ever now that they had no chance of getting to it.

They came in to dinner with serious faces. D'Arcy's suggestion that they should go to the masters in a deputation and request permission to go out, and leave the impositions till a later date, was frowned down.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, noticed their depressed looks during dinner. The Housemaster took an interest in Tom Merry & Co., and as they went out of the dining-hall, he tapped the hero of the Shell on the shoulder.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, Merry?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Tom Merry brightly. "Only—"

"Only what?" asked Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"Only we're detained for the afternoon, sir, and we wanted to make up a party to go to Wayland Fair," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton wrinkled his brows.

"All your friends detained, Merry?"

"Yes, sir. It's rather rough," went on Tom, encouraged, "because we were trying to be extra good this morning, and, somehow, it worked the other way."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Yes, in that case it is certainly hard, Merry. Perhaps the detention could be left till Saturday afternoon, if I were to speak to your master—"

"Oh, thank you, sir! But that wouldn't help Figgins & Co.—I mean, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. They're in the New House."

"H'm! They are detained by Mr. Ratcliff," said the Housemaster, who knew how little use it would be to speak to Mr. Ratcliff on the subject.

"Oh, no, sir; by Knox; the prefect. He caught 'em—us—fighting, and—"

"A School House prefect cannot detain New House boys."

"No, sir!" said Tom Merry ruefully. "But if Figgins objected, Knox would report the matter to Mr. Ratcliff, who would detain them fast enough."

"I see. I will speak to Knox!"

And Mr. Railton walked away looking very thoughtful.

"Isn't he a brick?" said Tom Merry. "He's been a boy himself, you know, and he knows these little things will happen. I believe he'd get us all off if he could!"

"Perhaps he can work the oracle," Blake remarked thoughtfully.

It seemed likely, for five minutes later Mr. Linton called

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Bai Jove, you know, I think we ought to go and thank Wailton!" said Arthur Augustus. "I only wish young Wally was fwee to come with us—Ow!"

He broke off with a gasp as he received a powerful dig in the ribs, and turned to behold his younger brother grinning at him cheerfully.

"Weally, Wally, you young wottah, I wefuse to have your wotten paws dug into my wibs like that!"

"It's all right, Gus! I'm let off for the afternoon. Hurrah!"

And Wally tossed his hat into the air, and in the exuberance of his spirits tossed up D'Arcy's silk hat also, and the swell of St. Jim's, with a howl of wrath, rushed off to chase it as it sailed away on the wind.



"Bai Jove! Help! Wescue!" Right at the elegant junior rushed the enraged turkey, and Arthur Augustus turned and fled, the bird in hot pursuit. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

Lowther into his study. His looks were severe, but his words were cheering.

"I understand that you have some excursion planned for this afternoon, Lowther," he said. "I do not wish to interfere with it, and your detention can be left over till Saturday, if you choose."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Monty Lowther.

And he rejoined his friends in great glee. A few minutes later Mr. Lathom extended the same grace to the Fourth-Formers, and, to crown all, Knox, the prefect, came along as the School House boys were telling the news to Figgins & Co. The prefect was scowling, and was evidently very much out of humour.

"You brats can go out this afternoon, if you like," he said amiably.

"Oh, thanks, Knox!" said the juniors in chorus. "It isn't so much your kindness, you know, as the nice pleasant way you put it."

Whereat Knox scowled more blackly than ever, and stalked off.

CHAPTER 3.

Off to the Fair!

TOM MERRY & CO., with light hearts, made their preparations for the excursion.

It was a cold but fine and clear afternoon, just the weather for a really ripping day out. The chums of the Shell were fortunately in funds—it was usually towards the end of the week that money was "tight" in the junior studies.

The Terrible Three, arrayed in coats and caps and thick boots, came along the passage, and bumped at the door of Study No. 6. They bumped it open and looked in.

"You fellows nearly ready?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm quite ready," said Jack Blake, who was busily engaged rattling a tin money-box, into the slit of which he had jammed a table-knife. "I shan't be a tick!"

"What on earth are you rattling that thing for?"

"Trying to get a bob out. It's all my pater's fault. He

sent me this beastly thing, and promised to add a tanner to every shilling I had saved up at the end of the term. Fathers don't understand. The thing's a swindle!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How much have you got in there?"

"Well, as D'Arcy was very flush with money last week, I thought I could put in a couple of bob, and I did. Then, of course, Gussy had to go and waste his money sending a postal order up to London for the latest thing in neckties!"

"I pwesume, Blake, that you would not request me to go about in an unfashionable necktie?"

"I request you to shut up when I'm talking. I've tried a dozen times to get those two bobs out, but they won't come out. It's rotten. They've been here a week, and so I'm entitled to a certain proportion of the two tanners I should have had at the end of the term; but it's no good explaining that to my pater. He wouldn't understand."

"Curious thing how these paters never do understand the clearest things in financial matters," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Of course, as soon as my capital was tied up, I had a lot of chances of investing it," said Blake. "I could have bought young Perkins' white mice for a bob, but the bob wouldn't come out, and Perkins couldn't wait. Then there was Handcock had a knife to sell for one-and-sixpence that was worth three bob. He agreed to take a bob on account if I could get it out, but I couldn't. I've lost more than half the amount of my capital already through having it tied up, but I'm blessed if I'm going to have it tied up any longer."

Clink, clink, clink! went the elusive shillings in the tin box. The juniors stood watching Blake's efforts with great interest. Blake was growing red and exasperated. By getting the coins to fall on the flat of the knife, it was possible to persuade them out of the slit of the box, but it was a task that required skill and patience, and Blake was not feeling patient just then.

"Go it!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "You are bound to get them out in time. Perhaps you will be an old, old man by then; but everything comes to him who waits."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I weally think Blake had better give it up! If he gets those coins out in the long run, it will prevent him from gettin' an old-age pension, as he will have othah means of support."

"I've got 'em!"

Clink, clink, clink!

"Oh dear, they've fallen back into the box again! Still, I'm going to have them out," said Blake determinedly.

"I'll do it for you, if you like," said Herries.

"Yes, of course, you could do it, when I can't!" snapped Blake. "You go and look after eternal earwigs, and let money-boxes alone."

"Still, I think I could do it."

"Oh, try, then, as you're so sure about it!"

Blake handed the box to Herries. He was red and perspiring. Herries put the box on the floor, and brought down his heel on it with a crash. The tin box split open, and two shillings rolled out on the carpet.

Jack Blake stared at his chum, seemingly petrified.

"There you are!" said Herries.

"You—utter ass! You've busted my money-box!"

"Of course, there was no other way to get them out. I've no time to waste fooling round with a knife."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "The box was worth about as much as the money in it. Still, you've got the bobbles out."

"Oh, let's start!" said Blake. "If I stay here I shall suffocate Herries, and I don't want to do that. Come on!"

"Well, I like that!" said Herries indignantly. "You might have spent many hours fooling about with that box, and never got the money out, and now I've got it out for you."

"What price the box, fathead?"

"Well, what was the good of the box if you weren't going to keep money in it?"

"Oh, don't start arguing! Let's start!"

And the juniors left the study. Arthur Augustus was looking ripping, as usual, in a beautifully fitting coat, a shining silk hat, elegant boots and spats, and turned-up trousers. They went out into the winter's sunshine in a merry party, and crossed over to look for Figgins & Co.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were ready. Fatty Wynn had a little bundle in his hand, looped over his finger by a string, and he seemed to give it a great deal of his attention. It might have contained banknotes by the care he took of it.

"Ready?" said Figgins, with a grin. "Ripping weather, isn't it? I suppose we are going to walk over to Wayland?"

"Yes. May as well save the fares, and it's not so long by the short cut."

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"Bai Jove, deah boys, I don't know how I can undah-take to walk it. I always find walkin' wathah exhaustin'. Besides, there are twaces of the last fall of snow on the gground, and I am afwaid we shall make our boots dirty."

"Then you'd better tell Taggles to whistle a cab," suggested Blake humorously. "Come on, kids! Where is that young brother of yours, Gussy?"

"I weally do not know, Blake. Bai Jove, there he is, waitin' at the gate, and, bai Jove, he's got that wotten mongwel of his with him!"

"He's not going to bring that poaching brute along."

"Wally, my friends insist upon your sendin' that howwid beast back to the kennels," said Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor. "Pongo's coming, of course."

"I wefuse to be seen out with such a feahfully wagged beast!"

"Pongo's not so particular about you, Gus, and he's got more reason, too. Don't be unreasonable."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Anyway, Pongo's coming."

And D'Arcy minor whistled shrilly to his shaggy pet, and started off down the road in his jaunty way.

The juniors looked after him expressively. D'Arcy's eyes glimmered behind his monocle.

"I no longah wegard that young wottah as a membah of the party," he said. "You will oblige me by taking no notice of him. Pway let us be off!"

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed a voice, as Skimpole of the Shell came hurrying up. "Do I understand that you fellows are going to spend the afternoon at Wayland Fair?"

"My dear Skimmy," said Tom Merry, "what's the good of asking us what you understand. I don't believe you understand anything as a matter of fact."

Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, blinked at Tom Merry through his big spectacles.

"Really, Tom Merry, you are quite mistaken. The huge grasp of my brain leads me to understand matters far removed from common knowledge. What fellow is there at St. Jim's who could talk for hours on the subject of Determinism?"

"I know jolly well there's no fellow who will listen," said Figgins. "Let's get off before he begins."

"Pray wait a minute! It is my intention to go to the fair at Wayland, although, of course, such an entertainment is below the grasp of my brain."

"Bai Jove, you know that makes me wathah wefect!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps goin' to the fair is a twifle below my dig."

"Pray do not interrupt me, D'Arcy! As I was saying, it is my intention to go to the fair, and I offered to accompany Gore and Sharp, not because I desired their company, but because they are in funds, and I have no money. My principles force me to part with my ready cash to all who are in need, and I am unfortunately stony at the present moment. Gore refused my offer with what I can only regard as utter rudeness and brutality."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall, therefore, be glad to come with you," said Skimpole. "D'Arcy can pay my expenses for the afternoon—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And in doing so he will have the knowledge that he is only assisting in a small degree to help on the redistribution of wealth which common justice requires, and that any acknowledgment on my part is quite uncalled for."

"Weally, Skimmy—"

"Put like that, I don't see how D'Arcy can refuse," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, come on, before we have any more duffers coming!" said Figgins.

And Tom Merry & Co. set out on the track already taken by Wally and Pongo.

CHAPTER 4.

A Close Shave for Wally.

"STOP!"

Wally stopped. He was a considerable distance ahead of the other juniors of St. Jim's, and was tramping cheerily under the big trees in the wood, taking a short cut to Wayland Town.

Round him the trees were stripped bare of leaves, and under foot in the ruts of the ground lingered traces of the last fall of snow. But the sun was shining through the bare branches, and the afternoon was fine and cheery. It was a lonely path, but Wally tramped along without thinking of that, with his dog at his heels. He was thinking of the fun of the fair, and unconsciously jingling several silver coins in his pocket as he walked.

"Stop, I tell yer!"

D'Arcy minor had no choice but to stop. Two men had leaped suddenly out of the crackling thickets, and planted themselves in his path, one of them with a stout black-thorn cudgel under his arm.

The boy halted and receded a pace.

"Well, what do you want?" he said calmly, though his heart was beating hard.

He knew very well what the two men wanted. They were evidently two rough characters attracted to Wayland by the chance of pickings in the crowd at the fair.

"I reckon—" began one of them; and then he suddenly broke off. "It's the young cockchafer himself, Rusty!"

"My honly 'at! And you're right, Dodger!" said Rusty.

Wally sprang back with a look of alarm. He knew the two ruffians now. Only the previous week he had seen them for the first time, and he had believed for the last. They had tried to scare the horse ridden by Arthur

Wally heard the whiz, and immediately ducked his head. It was well for him that he did so. The heavy missile whistled by and struck against a tree-trunk with a thud and fell to the ground. For a moment D'Arcy minor changed colour. If the heavy cudgel had struck him!

But he did not stop to think. He ran on at top speed, and the heavy patter of footsteps behind him urged him to greater efforts. He rounded a bend in the footpath and ran full tilt into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and there was a yell as the swell of St. Jim's went flying.

"Bai Jove!"

"You young villain!" exclaimed Blake. "What do you mean—"

"Look out!" gasped Wally. "Footpads!"

"By Jove! Line up, kids!"

The juniors could hear the pounding on the path now of the footpads' heavy boots. Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet, and picked up his hat. Tom Merry & Co. lined



There was a sudden whoop and Kerr came dashing up. Without stopping to speak, the Scottish partner of the New House Co. joined in the fray. He seized Sharp by the shoulders and, swinging him round, sent him spinning.

Augustus D'Arcy in a steeplechase, bribed to do so by one of the competitors, and Wally had been the means of baffling them, though Pongo had had something to do with it.

A very ugly look came over Dodger's face.

"So it's you!" he said in a low, savage tone. "I reckoned we'd 'ave your watch and tin, sonny. But now—now—" "Give 'im a lick over the 'ead, Dodger!" said Rusty.

Dodger grasped the blackthorn. The next moment a shaggy body shot through the air, and Pongo's teeth fastened in the ruffian's hand. Pongo might be a poacher, a chicken slayer, and a rabbit stealer; but anybody who threatened D'Arcy minor had to reckon with Pongo's teeth.

Dodger gave a howl of agony, and dropped the blackthorn. Rusty sprang to aid his comrade, and Wally thrust out a foot and tripped him up. The ruffian crashed in the grass, and Wally ran fleetly down the footpath, calling to Pongo. Pongo released Dodger and ran after his master, barking furiously. Back the way he had come went Wally at top speed. The grassy footpath might have been the cinder-path at St. Jim's by the way the Third Form junior covered it.

Dodger muttered a curse as he grasped his cudgel again. Whiz!

up across the path to meet the footpads as they might have met a charge on the footer field.

Rusty and Dodger came racing round the turning and ran right into the juniors. But the latter were ready to receive them.

Biff, biff, biff!

Right-handers and left-handers, fast and furious, rained on the two ruffians, and they reeled to and fro and crashed down in the grass.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "This is rather a surprise packet for them!"

"Yaas, wathah! Go it, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus did not "go it" himself. He was brushing his hat with his silk handkerchief, folded up in the form of a pad. There was enough of the party to deal with the footpads without his help, and his silk hat, naturally, claimed his first attention.

Dodger and Rusty lay in the grass, blinking and dazed, the juniors of St. Jim's standing in a circle round them, laughing. Never had two truculent ruffians been so quickly and completely "downed."

"My honly 'at!" said Rusty.

"Did they rob you, Wally?" asked Tom Merry.

"I didn't give them the chance," said Wally. "They would have, though, if I hadn't bolted, and if Pongo hadn't helped. They ought to be arrested."

"I disagree with you there, D'Arcy minor," said Skimpole. "It is true that they were prosecuting their aim by what may be termed methods of barbarism, but they were quite within their rights in attempting a redistribution of wealth—"

"Eh? They were going to steal my watch! The rotters ought to be run in!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "Look here, we can't waste the afternoon taking these blackguards to the lock-up—Ow!"

Dodger settled the question, as far as he was concerned, by suddenly springing up, dashing Blake aside, and darting into the wood.

Blake reeled against Herries, and the two of them went to the ground together.

"You clumsy ass!" gasped Herries.

"Why didn't you hold me, you duffer?"

"I can't hold every dummy who—"

"If you want a thick ear—"

"Look out!" yelled Figgins.

Rusty had taken advantage of the general attention being turned off him for the moment to squirm away into the thicket. Two or three of the juniors rushed excitedly in pursuit, but Rusty had vanished.

"Well, of all the asses," said Tom Merry, "to let them go like that!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you let them go as much as anybody else."

"Rats! They've gone now, anyway, so let's get on. I dare say they'll clear out now. This is what comes of being disrespectful to your elders, young Wally. Just you keep close to us now."

"Catch me," said D'Arcy minor. "I say, they were the two rotters who tried to scare Gussy's horse the other day, when he was riding in the steeplechase at Tytchley."

"My hat! Why didn't you say so before?"

"Yaas, wathah! I would have awwested them if I had known that, Wally. A man who would descend to foul play at a wace ought to be made an example of."

"Oh, we couldn't waste the afternoon on them, anyway!" said Monty Lowther. "They've had some hard knocks, which ought to show them the error of their ways. Come on!"

And the juniors went on their way. It was rather against the grain with some of them to let the ruffians off unpunished, but it could not be helped now, and they had the fair at Wayland to think of.

Wally, in spite of his careless reply to Tom Merry, did remain with the party until they emerged from Wayland Wood. In spite of his recklessness, he had seen that the two rascals nourished a bitter animosity towards him, and he knew they might still be lurking in the wood. By preventing their foul play at the steeplechase he had no doubt balked them of the price of villainy. But nothing more was seen of Rusty or Dodger, and the juniors arrived in due time at Wayland.

CHAPTER 5.

At Wayland Fair.

"ALL the fun of the fair, gentlemen! All the fun of the fair!"

Pom, pom!

"Walk up, gentlemen! This way to the world-renowned circus and menagerie—Joneski's world-renowned! Walk up, gentlemen!"

Pom, pom, pom!

Blare!

"Gentlemen, try your strength! Twopence a time, gentlemen! Show your friends how strong you are! Only tuppence a time!"

"Coconuts! Penny a shy! Real ripe 'uns!"

Pom, pom, pom!

There was a great crowd and a great noise in the market square at Wayland.

The annual fair always woke up the sleepy old town—sleepy, except on market days, when it was usually lively enough. The fair was a feature of Wayland, and it had been patronised by the boys of St. Jim's ever since it had started, and its commencement was lost in the mists of antiquity, as anybody at St. Jim's could have informed you. How they knew it had been patronised by the St. Jim's fellows from its commencement, when that commencement was lost in the mists of antiquity, was a question the Saints did not trouble to answer. They were sure of the fact, and that was enough for them.

At all events, it was certain that St. Jim's patronised the fair now. In fact, they were convinced that the thing could hardly be a success if they kept away. And, indeed, they did spend a great deal of money there—more than they could afford in many instances. But that, perhaps, was all for the good of the trade.

All sorts and conditions of people came to the fair—jugglers and strong men, fat ladies, menagerie-keepers, and proprietors of innumerable shows, dealers in every kind of ware, ornamental and useful, and frequently useless.

The babble of voices, the blare of cornets and concertinas, and the pom-poms of drums—big drums, side-drums, and all sorts of drums—made a din that the good folk of Wayland were accustomed to during the fair week, and which they grumbled at, but would have missed if the fair had been abolished.

To find one's way among the thronging crowds, the booths and stalls, and pitches and tents, was not easy.

The din of the fair was cheery enough to the juniors from St. Jim's, by no means averse to the noise, and always ready for excitement and fun.

"All the fun of the fair, gentlemen! Coconut shies, penny a time!"

"Walk up! Joneski's world-famous—"

"Ere you are! Round a dozen times for tuppence!"

The juniors stopped and looked at the merry-go-round. Early as the hour was for that amusement, it was already creaking round to the wheezy strains of the music. But a sudden terrific uproar drew their attention away.

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally. "That's Pongo!"

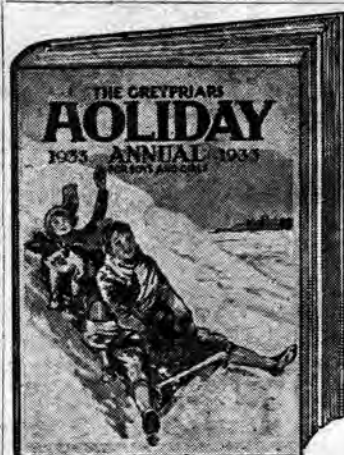
And he dashed off in the direction of the uproar.

It was, of course, Pongo. Two or three shaggy curs were quarrelling over a bone outside a tent, and, of course, Pongo felt it incumbent upon him to join in, and rob them of it.

Wally ran up, but Pongo was busy.

"Pongo—Pongo! Old Pongo!"

But Pongo paid no attention. Wally sometimes boasted of the way Pongo would obey his orders, but there were many fellows who declared that Pongo obeyed his master's



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voice when he was calling him to his meals. Then certainly the mongrel came promptly to the call.

"Good old Pongo!" chuckled Wally. "He never can see another dog without wanting to fight him. What a spirit that dog has!"

"Yaas, wathah! And what a feahful wow he makes!" said Arthur Augustus. "There's the ownah of some of those dogs comin', Wally, and he looks as if he's goin' to stwike your wotten mongwel with a stick!"

Wally's eyes gleamed.

"If he does I'll jolly soon hack his shins!" he exclaimed.

A gentleman in a shapeless hat and a figured neckerchief had come round out of the tent with a big stick in his hand. He had a couple of puppies in the loose pockets of

just then. The dog fancier's name—according to a daubed board outside the tent—was Joseph Tigg, and he dealt in every kind of member of the canine tribe. And, indeed, the inside of his ragged tent had the appearance of a dogs' home.

Wally, who was doggy to the core, looked round him with great interest. Mr. Tigg opened a portable kennel, with an air of mystery, and gave a sharp whistle.

A handsome collie came out at the call. Wally's eyes sparkled. The collie was small, but beautifully shaped, and had a coat like silk. His eyes were dark, and gleaming with intelligence. He laid his black muzzle in the hand of Mr. Tigg, with a movement that was fascinating to a lover of dogs.



"Pray do not push me!" gasped Skimpole. "Why not?" asked Wally. "I am afraid—Yooop!" Skimpole broke off with a yell. He slipped, made a grab at the horse, and the next moment he was flying through the air. Wally D'Arcy waved his free hand to the falling Skimpole, mockingly—"Good-bye, Skimmy!"

his coat, and a doggy smell all over him, and was evidently a dealer in canine specimens.

"Old yer row, you beasts!" he said; and was about to bring the stick into play when he caught sight of Wally and Arthur Augustus, and his manner changed.

Wally was trying to get Pongo off; but Pongo, like the famous smile, wouldn't come off. The junior got a grip on his collar at last, and the mongrel yapped and snapped.

"Fine dorg that, sir!" said the gentleman in the neckerchief. "You fond of dorgs, sir?"

"Yes, rather!" said Wally. "I'm sorry Pongo went for your dogs, sir; he's always fighting."

"Shows his sperrit!" said the other cordially. "If you'll step into my tent, sir, I'll show you something in the dog line you'll like to see."

"Thanks, awfully!" said Wally instantly. "Come on, Gus!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated, but he never liked saying no, and he followed his younger brother and the dog fancier into the tent. The other juniors were otherwise occupied

"What do you think of that dorg?" asked Mr. Tigg hoarsely.

"Ripping!" said Wally. "I suppose you're not giving him away?"

Mr. Tigg chuckled hoarsely, as if he considered the little joke a very good one.

Arthur Augustus, who did not care for dogs, on account of the way his trousers had suffered at the jaws of Herries' bulldog, was charmed with the collie. He looked too gentle a dog to attack anybody's nether garments.

"Yaas, wathah! That's a fine dog!" he said. "I wathah like him. What do you call him, my deah sir?"

"His name's Prince," said Mr. Tigg. "Named Prince because he's own son to a dorg belonging to the Crown Prince of Klein-Silberburg. I dessay you'd care to buy that dorg, young gent."

"I'd jolly well like to, but a chap isn't allowed to keep two dogs at St. Jim's," said Wally regretfully. "Besides, I can't afford it."

"Perhaps the other young gent—"
Arthur Augustus shook his head.
"I wathah like the dog," he remarked; "but I couldn't keep a dog. I'm keepin' white rabbits alweady, and I have to pay a kid in the Third to take care of them, and they cost me eighteenpence a week."

"I'd keep it for you, Gussy, if you wanted to buy it," suggested Wally.

"Weally, Wally, that would be a gweat deal like me buyin' you a dog."

"Remarkably cheap, too, young gents!" said Mr. Tigg. "The fact is I'm going out of the business arter this fair 'ere, and going to settle down. What I want is to find the dorg a home. You see, he's been my show dog, and he's been well treated. You can see that. I'm fond of him, and I want 'im to 'ave a good 'ome. I could see that you young gents was the sort to treat a dorg well. I'm practically giving him away to get 'im a good 'ome!"

"What do you want for him, Mr. Tigg?" asked Wally.

"Only seven-and sixpence, young gent," said Mr. Tigg; "it's giving him away!"

"My hat, it is, and no mistake! There's a chance for you Gus!" said Wally eagerly.

Mr. Tigg was certainly right. The dog was worth at least four or five pounds, and was certainly a bargain for anybody.

"But I don't want a dog, deah boy!"

"I'll look after him for you."

"Weally, Wally, I—"

"Oh, don't be mean, Gus! You can see what a ripping bargain it is! I'll tell you what," said Wally. "You buy the dog, and I'll look after him—and I'll look after your white rabbits for nothing as long as you keep the dog!"

"Very well, Wally," said Arthur Augustus, resigning himself to his fate, "I'll buy the bwute if you like. Pway make out the receipt, sir."

"Certainly," said Mr. Tigg. "I think you'll admit, young gents, that I've dealt fair with you, and you kin mention my name with confidence to your friends. The dog's simply being given away!"

And Arthur Augustus handed over seven-and-sixpence, and received a piece of paper and the collie dog, and the brothers left the tent.

Prince's collar went with Prince, and Mr. Tigg had attached a string to it for D'Arcy to lead the dog with.

"Not that it's necessary to lead 'im," he remarked; "he knows you already, sir, and he'd follow you anywhere! Bless you, sir, dorgs can tell! He knows you're a gentleman, sir, and will treat him well! You won't lose him in a hurry."

"Thank you vewy much!" said D'Arcy.

And the swell of St. Jim's walked off, leading Prince, who was certainly very docile, and not knowing whether to be pleased with his purchase or not. But there was no doubt that Wally was pleased.

Mr. Tigg, standing at the entrance of his tent, looked after the two juniors with a curious expression on his face, and winked one eye.

CHAPTER 6.

In the Swing-boats!

"WHERE'S Gussy got to?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking round. "We shall lose that young ass if—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, here you are!" said Tom Merry, turning round and discovering Arthur Augustus just behind him in the crowd. "What do you mean by wandering away and making your uncle anxious about you?"

"Pway don't be ridiculous, you know!"

"And what on earth are you carrying round that bit of string for?" demanded Tom Merry, staring at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I have purchased a dog," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"My hat! You—a dog! Somebody sold you a pup?"

"I have purchased this handsome collie for a wicidulously low figure—"

"What handsome collie?"

"This one I am leadin', deah boy!"

Tom Merry gave a roar, and Blake and Figgins joined in. "I never quite saw a handsome collie like that before," said Figgins. "It looks to me more like a dog's collar than a dog you are leading, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus, puzzled by the laughter of the juniors, looked round at the dog—or rather at the spot where the dog should have been. An empty collar trailed on the ground on the end of the string, but there was nothing to be seen of Prince.

"Bai Jove, he's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, where's the dog?" exclaimed Wally, pushing through the crowd. He had lost sight of his brother for a time in giving chase to Pongo, who wanted to try his teeth on some of the turkeys in the market-place. "Where's Prince, Gus?"

"He appeals to have gone!" said Arthur Augustus, staring blankly at the empty collar.

"You don't mean to say you've lost him?"

"Weally, Wally, I don't see how I could pwevent the bwute wandewin' away, when his collah came off!"

"Well, of all the duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Blake. "You had better wait till I'm with you before you buy a dog again, Gussy! How much did you pay for him?"

"Seven-and-sixpence."

"Might have stood a feed of these ripping baked potatoes all round for that!" said Fatty Wynn, looking at a stall where those comestibles were sold. "I say, Gussy, it was too bad of you!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Still, it's all right, if you stand a feed all the same!" said the New House junior. "I don't know how you fellows are, but I'm getting hungry! I do get hungry in this December weather!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Gussy shall stand a feed to the tune of seven-and-sixpence. That's only fair!"

"I weally do not see—"

"You want such a lot of explaining to," said Blake. "Tom Merry can see that it's all right—can't you, Merry?"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy stands a feed of baked potatoes, and that puts the matter on a proper footing."

"Exactly!"

Arthur Augustus looked somewhat puzzled. He did not quite see the connection between the loss of Prince and a feed of baked potatoes. But he was the most generous of youths, and he raised no objection.

"Wight you are, deah boys!" he remarked. "Pway go ahead! And we may as well have some of the gentleman's hot coffee, too!"

The gentleman in a striped jersey, who was retailing hot coffee, beamed upon the juniors. The whole party from St. Jim's gathered round the stall. The weather was cold, though fine, and the keen air made them hungry. Hot coffee and baked potatoes were very welcome. Fatty Wynn travelled through the baked potatoes at a rate that interested the man who was selling them. He watched Fatty as if it were a performance, and the juniors looked on, grinning.

"These spuds are ripping!"

That was all Fatty Wynn said, but his actions were eloquent. After the tenth potato he showed some signs of slackening down. The other juniors had already finished, and were moving off. As Arthur Augustus was doing the paying, he had to wait for Fatty Wynn to complete his laying-in of provisions. One by one the juniors strolled off, and Arthur Augustus was left alone with the Falstaff of the New House.

Fatty Wynn, eating more slowly now, started on his twelfth potato. Arthur Augustus looked at his watch.

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"Pway excuse me, Wynn," he remarked at last, "but life is wathah short, you know. Would you like the gentleman to follow us with his bawwow, instead of wemainin' heah so long?"

The gentleman with the barrow grinned.

"Shan't be a few more minutes, Gussy," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't suppose I can do more than a couple more."

"Bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn managed three more, and put three in his pocket, in case he should get hungry again. Then he walked off in search of Figgins and Kerr, and D'Arcy settled up with the potato merchant and the vendor of hot coffee.

The December afternoon was deepening to dusk now, but as day waned the fun of the fair grew faster and more furious. Arthur Augustus stopped and looked up at a row of swing-boats, adjusting his monocle to get a good view.

"Like to come on?" grinned Figgins.

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head.

"Yaas, Figgins, but I am afwaid I should find it wathah exhaustin'. I'll watch while you fellows go on."

The other juniors were not afraid of getting exhausted. They crowded into the swing-boats. Herries, Manners, Lowther, and Digby entered one, and Figgins & Co. the next one. Blake caught D'Arcy by the arm.

"Come on, Gussy, and we'll start same time as Figgins, and put him in the shade."

"Weally, Blake, I don't feel inclined for such extremely exhaustin' work—"

"Rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry, taking D'Arcy by the other arm. "Why, you're just cut out for this. Come on!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

But D'Arcy's protests were not listened to. Blake and Tom Merry ran him along to the swing-boats, and bundled him in. The swell of St. Jim's sat down and held on to his hat. His cane had fallen to the ground.

"Hold on!" shouted Tom Merry, as the man started the swing-boat, and he grasped a rope. "Hold on, kids!"

"Wait a minute, Tom Merry! I have drowped my cane!"

"It's all right. The man's picked it up, and he'll mind it for you. Besides, you shouldn't drop it. Hold on!"

"Pway wait a moment! My hat keeps comin' off!"

"Throw it out of the boat, then!"

D'Arcy's only reply was a withering stare. But Tom Merry and Blake had hold of the ropes now, and they were working the boat up. Arthur Augustus had either to hold on, or to be thrown out of the boat, and he left his hat to look after itself, and grasped the rope beside Jack Blake.

"Pull away!" shouted Tom Merry. "Blake! Gussy! All together! Figgy is going up like a rocket!"

Figgins & Co.'s boat was swinging high already. Figgins & Co. meant to go higher than the School House boat, and Tom Merry was determined that they shouldn't.

"Hurrah!" shouted Blake. "Pull for the School House! Go it!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up, and pull!"

The School House juniors pulled hard at the ropes. The boat went up high, and higher, and higher yet. Arthur Augustus began to get giddy. His silk hat sailed away, and landed on the ground near the posts; but the swell of St. Jim's hardly noticed it.

"Bai Jove, this is feahful!" he gasped. "Pway, go a little slowah, deah boys—"

"Pull, you beggars—pull!"

"Pway— Oh deah, I am gwowin' so giddy!"

"Put your beef into it, Blake!"

"Rather! Buck up, Gussy!"

"Weally, deah boys, I— Oh—I—"

"Pull—pull!"

The boat swung higher. It was really going to an almost dangerous height now, but it was not quite up to Figgins' level. Figgins & Co. were working away like demons. There was a sudden crash on the ground under their boat. It was one of Fatty Wynn's coconuts that had escaped from his coat. The swing-boat merchant gave a yell. The coconut had missed him by about a foot!

But Fatty Wynn cared little. He was working away with an energy that his plumpness gave little promise of. The boat went higher, till even Figgins thought it was time to stop.

"We're the highest of the lot!" he exclaimed. "Hold on! You'll break your necks if you take a tumble now!"

"Tom Merry's still going up!" said Kerr.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy clung to his rope. The boat was swinging higher, and the swell of St. Jim's was feeling qualmy inside.

"Go it!" roared Blake. "Those New House rotters are slackening!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Put your beef into it, you young ass!"

"I—I—I feel vewy queeah—"

"Never mind; you will be all right presently. Pull away!"

The swing-boat was going higher than Figgins & Co.'s now. Perhaps that was because the New House juniors were slackening down, however.

Tom Merry was satisfied at last, and he slackened his efforts.

"We've beaten the New House rotters!" he exclaimed gleefully. "Hallo, Gussy! You are looking rather queer about the gills!"

"I am feelin' wathah wotten, Tom Mewwy!" gurgled Gussy. "I have a peculiah all-ovewish sort of feelin' inside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy had a hand pressed to his waistcoat. The boat slackened and slackened, and the man dragged on it and stopped it at last.

Tom Merry and Blake jumped out, but Arthur Augustus did not move.

"Jump out, Gussy!"

"I—I—I weally feel too exhausted and disturbed to move, deah boys!" said the swell of St. Jim's feebly.

"By Jove, there's somebody just going to tread on your hat—"

D'Arcy jumped out of the boat as if moved by electricity. He picked up his hat from the foot of the post. It had been Tom Merry who was just going to tread on it, as a matter of fact. D'Arcy brushed it with his sleeve, and gave the hero of the Shell an indignant look.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wegard you as a wuff beast!" he said. "I shall wefuse to entah a swing-boat with you again!"

"Never mind!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "We've beaten Figgins & Co."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Figgins, as he jumped out of his boat. "Why, we went yards higher than you did!"

"Why, what rot!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "We beat you hollow. We went higher than you did before we stopped!"

"But we had gone higher, and we were slackening down when you came up!"

"Rats! Now, look here, Figgy—"

"Let's try again!" said Figgins excitedly. "We'll jolly soon show you!"

"Right you are! Come on, Gussy!"

"I uttaly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" said Arthur Augustus; and, having recovered hat and stick, he disappeared into the crowd.

CHAPTER 7.

The Pluck of Tom Merry!

"B AI Jove, Gore, where did you find that dog?"

Arthur Augustus stopped about a hundred yards from the swing-boats, where the juniors were trying over the contest again without him. D'Arcy had had enough of swing-boats.

The swell of St. Jim's had suddenly encountered Gore and Sharp of the Shell in the crowd, and his attention was at once attracted by the sight of a dog Gore was leading by a string attached to its collar.

There was no mistaking that animal, with its glossy coat, its well-shaped head, and intelligent eyes. It was Prince, the collie.

"Where did you find him?" exclaimed D'Arcy, greatly pleased. "It is awfully good of you to mind my dog for me like this, Gore, and I weally must confess that you are not such a wottah as I have always considahed you!"

George Gore stared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Off your rocker?" he asked pleasantly.

"Certainly not, Gore! Pway, give me my dog—"

"Your dog! By Jove, he's been drinking!"

"I have not been dwinkin'!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "I hurl back the wascally insinuation in your teeth, Gore!"

You have found my dog—"

Gore grinned at Sharp, and tapped his forehead.

"Clear off!" was his only comment.

And Sharp nodded assent.

Arthur Augustus began to grow excited.

"Look here, Gore, if you pwetend that that is not my dog—"

"Why, you ass, I've only just bought him!" said Gore, with a sneer. "You must be off your chump! Have you been buying a dog?"

"Yaas, wathah! And I bought that dog, and lost him in the cwowd. His collah came off while I was leadin' him! His name is Pwince!"

"Rats!" said Gore. "This dog's name is Fido, and he's mine! I've just bought him of a chap in a striped neckerchief!"

"Bai Jove, that must be Mr. Tigg!"
 "Blessed if I know what his name was! He sold me the collie cheap because he's giving up the business and wants to get the dog a good master!"
 "How—how much did you pay him, Gore?"
 "Seven-and-sixpence, and the dog's dirt cheap at the price of a licence!"

"Bai Jove, that's what I paid him!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "The—tho' wotten vascal must have caught him again, and sold him to you, Gore!"

Gore shrugged his shoulders.
 "No good telling me any cock-and-bull story!" he remarked. "This is my dog, and I'm going to keep him! Come on, Fido!"

"But, weally, Gore—"
 Arthur Augustus was suddenly interrupted. From the street leading out of the market-square on the west side came a sudden terrible uproar.

"Run—run!"
 "Mad bull!"
 "My hat!" said Gore, turning pale. "Run for it, Sharpy!"

And he scudded off.
 Arthur Augustus looked round him in alarm. The crowd was melting away as if by magic. From the end of the street came a bellow, and a terrible animal came into view—a huge bull, with lashing tail and clattering hoofs and steaming nostrils.

"Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy, almost paralysed.
 "Look out!" shouted Tom Merry from the direction of the swing-boats. "Look out, D'Arcy!"

Bellow, bellow!
 "Bai Jove!"
 Behind the maddened bull appeared a crowd of excited people in hot pursuit, drovers, townspeople, and yelling boys, adding by their clamour to the frantic excitement of the animal.

Jack Blake turned white as a sheet.
 "Gussy will be killed! Gussy! Run for it!"
 He dashed towards the spot. D'Arcy, recovering himself, ran. The bull, bellowing furiously, was dashing in the same direction.

Blake rushed forward, but Tom Merry was nearer.
 Tom's face was white and hard. He had his coat on his arm, which he had taken off in the swing-boat. He gathered it up in his hands as he dashed towards the bull. The beast had caught sight of the running figure of D'Arcy near him, and he was charging down upon the fleeing junior.

Blake stopped, his heart almost ceasing to beat. He could not reach his chum in time; could not have helped him if he did. All depended upon the brave-hearted junior, who was rushing between the bull and his victim.

Tom Merry's face was white, but his nerve was firm. He knew what he was about. He dashed intrepidly into the path of the maddened animal, and flung the coat with a sure hand. It spread over the lowered head, catching on the horns, as he intended, and the junior sprang swiftly back.

The bull stopped short in his career, bellowing furiously, and endeavouring to get his head loose; but the coat, clinging on his horns, was not easily got rid of. The frantic animal whirled round in a circle, bellowing, and Tom Merry dashed out of its way.

The pursuing crowd were now on the spot. Two or three stalwart drovers threw themselves upon the bull, and its neck and legs were shackled with strong ropes.

The coat, sadly torn and trampled, was jerked off, and the

savage eyes of the bull glared round upon its captors. But with the ropes dragging on its limbs it was helpless now, and could only bellow with impotent rage.

"Hang me, sir!" said one of the drovers, as he handed Tom Merry his torn coat. "But you are a good-plucked 'un, sir!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.
 "I was lucky," he said.

"You was, sir, and no mistake. You might have got gored to death. There was mighty few would have cared to tackle a bull like that."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, joining Tom Merry, and panting for breath, as the drovers dragged the bull away, still furiously bellowing. "I wathah think the bwute was wunnin' aftah me, you know, when you blindfolded him!"

"I rather think he was," grinned Blake. "His horns were about a yard behind the tail of your jacket, my son!"
 Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"Bai Jove! Then I have had a feahfully nawwow escape."

"All's well that ends well," said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah! But, weally, I am vewy gwateful, you know, and I excuse you for your wotten wudeness to me in the swing-boat, Tom Mewwy!"

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, but I am speakin' quite sewiously, you know. Bai Jove, that wotten bwute has thown me into quite a fluttah!"
 Tom Merry looked at his coat rather ruefully. It was torn in four or five places, and not much use for wearing.

D'Arcy's glance followed him sympathetically.

"Yaas, it's wathah wuff on your coat," he remarked.
 "I can show you a place where you can get it stitched up, if you like, Tom Mewwy, and the chap will do it while you wait—a vewy decent tailah-man."

Tom Merry slapped him on the shoulder.
 "Then lead the way, Macduff!"

"Yaas, wathah, but pway do not be so vewy wuff!"
 And Arthur Augustus led the way to the shop of the "decent tailah-man," who stitched up Tom Merry's coat in a workman-like way, and kept him waiting only half an hour while he did it. It was quite dark when the juniors left the place; Arthur Augustus having remained with Tom Merry, looking over patterns—an occupation of inexhaustible interest to the swell of St. Jim's.

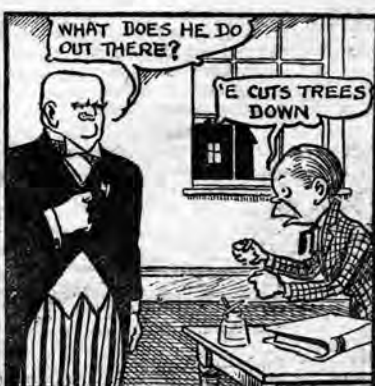
The market-place was a blaze of light from the naphtha lamps of the various shows, and the more-or-less sweet strains of music were proceeding from various directions. There was a dancing-booth, from which came the strains of the latest waltz, and the tramping of feet. A hurdy-gurdy was grinding out the latest popular song, and a roundabout was adding another tune to the general discord. A prosperous looking merchant was attending to a gramophone, from which came the well-known tune of "A Bungalow, a Piccolo, and You," and selling sixpenny copies of the music to the passers-by. Several drums and cornets were also at work, so it may be imagined that the air was filled with a "concord of sweet sounds."

"Lively, isn't it?" said Tom Merry. "Hallo, Gore! What are you looking like a funeral mute about? Lost a threepenny-bit?"

"I've lost my dog," said Gore. "I was running off from that beastly bull. Fido's collar seems to have been too big for him, and when I stopped running I found it dangling on the end of the string. Have you seen anything of the dog, D'Arcy? You know him by sight."

The swell of St. Jim's chuckled.

Potts, the Office Boy!



"No, Gore, I have not; but I am beginnin' to think that that dog merchant takes the trouble especially to give that dog a large collar, you know. I wonder how many people have bought him and lost him again?"

"Oh, rot!" said Gore; and he passed on, still looking for Fido.

CHAPTER 8. Figgins' Fight!

FATTY WYNN was standing with a rapt expression upon his face when Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

Wynn turned his head slowly.

"Hallo! Is that you, Merry?" he said absently.

"I think so," grinned Tom Merry. "A penny for your thoughts, Fatty. Are you composing a poem for the 'Weekly,' or are you thinking of supper at St. Jim's?"

"I'm thinking of those turkeys," said Fatty Wynn, whose gaze was directed towards some fine specimens of those birds, alive and very lively, for sale in the market. "Look at that big fat one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall dream about that turkey to-night," said Fatty Wynn; and, with a sigh that expressed the depths of his feelings on the subject, the fat Fourth-Former thrust his hands deep into his pockets and walked away.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther was pointing that same big turkey out to Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy was very interested by the information he received from the joker of the Shell upon the subject.

"Bai Jove, it looks alive!" he remarked, sucking the end of his cane, and staring at the turkey, which stared at him in return.

Monty Lowther laughed.

"My dear chap, that's the way it's made. These automatic turkeys are a triumph of modern invention, and are very popular as Christmas toys. When you look at it closely you can see that the colouring is a little too vivid to be real."

"Yaas; now you mention it, Lowthah, I can notice it."

"And the way it moves its head isn't quite lifelike, either."

"No, pewwaps not."

"Still, they're wonderfully well made," said Monty Lowther seriously. "At a casual glance, you would take that for a real turkey."

"Yaas, and a wathah ill-tempahed-lookin' one, too," remarked the swell of the School House. "It is weally wemarkably lifelike in ewerythin' except the colourin' which certainly is laid on a little too thick."

Tom Merry laughed, and Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon him.

"You did not take it for a weal turkey, Tom Mewwy?" he remarked.

"Well, yes, I think I did," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps I was mistaken."

"Oh, yaas! You see, the colourin' is laid on a gweat deal too thick. I will stir him up with my stick, and you will see."

"Hold on, Gussy—"

But Arthur Augustus was already stirring the turkey up with his stick. The result was surprising—to the swell of St. Jim's, at least.

The turkey flapped and gobbled, and rushed right at the incautious Arthur Augustus, and the junior gasped in amazement.

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, it's alive!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Help! Wesque!"

Right at the elegant junior dashed the enraged turkey, and Arthur Augustus turned and fled for his life, and after him dashed the furious bird, in hot pursuit.

Monty Lowther fell on Tom Merry's neck and gurgled.

Arthur Augustus dashed on at top speed. It was not till he was nearly at the other end of the square that he ventured to slacken pace and look round, and then he gave a gulp of relief. The turkey had disappeared, and the pursuit was over.

"Bai Jove!" muttered the swell of St. Jim's, pushing back his silk hat and mopping his perspiring brow with a cambric handkerchief. "Bai Jove, that wottah, Lowthah, was only wottin' all the time! I wegard him as a beast!"

"Hallo, Gussy! Practising for a foot race?" asked Figgins, coming along, leading a collie dog on a string.

"You look fagged!"

"I am fagged, Figgins," said D'Arcy. "In fact, I am utterly exhausted. I have been chased by a howwible turkey!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I saw it all. He only followed you about a dozen yards, and then he was grabbed."

Arthur Augustus turned pink.

"Bai Jove! I thought he was on the twack all the time, you know. But, I say, Figgins, where did you get that dog, you know?"

"Bought him," said Figgins. "Ripping collie, isn't he?"

"Ya-a-as, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, adjusting his eyeglass and looking curiously at his old acquaintance, Prince, alias Fido. "Did you buy him of a man named Tigg?"

"Blessed if I know his name. He was a decent chap. He's going out of business, and he's selling the dog cheap because he wants to get him a good home," exclaimed Figgins. "What the deuce are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see the joke," said Figgins, looking puzzled. "You can't say I've been done. I know how to buy a dog, Gussy. I only gave seven-and-sixpence for Tray."

"Bai Jove! Is his name Tway now?"

"What do you mean? I suppose his name always was Tray. What rot have you got in your fat head, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to be chawacterised as a fathead!"

"Well, don't be an ass, then!"

"I wegard that expession as wude. I can only caution you, Figgins, not to lose that dog," said D'Arcy, with a warning shake of the head.

Figgins snorted.

"I'm not likely to lose him, duffer!"

"I wefuse to be called a duffah!"

"Don't be one, then. Blessed if I understand you, Gussy. What have you got in your noddle? What are you sniggering at?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I wathah think you will lose that dog."

"Oh, rats!"

And Figgins marched off with his prize, leaving Arthur Augustus still laughing. Figgins was considerably puzzled, but he was quite satisfied with his prize, and, indeed, Tray, alias Fido, alias Prince, was a dog to be proud of. He was certainly ridiculously cheap at seven-and-sixpence.

"There he is!"

It was a sudden shout, and Gore rushed up to Figgins, with Sharp at his heels. Figgins stopped and stared at

The Ups and Downs of Life!



them. Gore and Sharp belonged to the School House, and it looked like a House row. They were both very excited.

"Yes, here I am!" said Figgins genially. "Are you looking for trouble?"

"I wasn't speaking of you," said Gore. "I was speaking of that dog. That's my dog. Did you find him?"

"Your dog?"

"Yes, mine! Where did you find him?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Figgins. "I've just bought this dog. I'm going to take him to St. Jim's and give my dog Spot to Kerr to mind for me, as we can only keep one animal each. What do you mean by saying he's your dog?"

"He is mine!" yelled Gore. "Don't tell me any yarns about buying him, Figgins. That's my dog Fido!"

"Bosh! He's my dog Tray!"

"Sharp, isn't he my dog? You saw me buy him!"

"I saw you pay seven-and-sixpence for him, Gore," said Sharp.

"Oh, don't be funny! I gave seven-and-six for him," said Figgins. "If this is a joke, I'm blessed if I can see where the fun comes in!"

"It's not a joke, you New House waster, unless you think dog-stealing is a joke!" snarled Gore. "Give me my dog!"

"He's not your dog. He's mine!"

"It's a lie!"

Figgins flushed red.

"If you say that again, Gore, I'll wipe up the ground with you!" he exclaimed.

"It's a lie, then!" yelled Gore. "That's my dog! Come on, Sharp!"

And he rushed at Figgins without wasting more time in words. Sharp backed him up, and the New House junior soon had his hands full.

Figgins was angry, too—angry at having his word doubted and at being attacked without cause, as far as he could see.

He put his hands up willingly enough and met the attack of Gore and Sharp. But, of course, he had to release the string he was leading Tray by.

A crowd quickly gathered round, cheering on Figgins and hissing Gore and Sharp, as being two to one.

But the two ends of the School House did not care. They attacked Figgins hammer and tongs. But Figgins was a tough nut to crack, even at two to one. His left came under Gore's chin like a hammer, and Gore sat down with a separate ache in every tooth in his head.

Then the New House junior closed with Sharp, and the two went staggering to and fro blindly in furious combat.

Gore sprang to his feet and rushed at Figgins from behind.

"Shame!" yelled a dozen voices.

But Gore did not care. He threw his arm round Figgins' neck, and got hold of him under the chin and dragged him back so that Sharp could pommel him.

Figgins struggled fiercely, but he was at a disadvantage.

But just then there was a sudden whoop, and Kerr came dashing up. Without stopping to speak, the Scottish partner in the New House Co. joined in the fray. He seized Sharp by the shoulders, and, swinging him round, sent that worthy spinning, and then he clawed Gore off and flung him across Sharp.

"Thanks, old chap!" gasped Figgins.

"What's the row?" asked Kerr.

"The rotters wanted to take my dog away."

"Your dog? I thought you left him at the school!"

"Oh, I don't mean Spot. I've just bought a collie dog. He's here somewhere? Why, where is he? Bless my boots, he's gone!"

The collie had disappeared.

CHAPTER 9.

Skimpole Falls Off!

WITH the fall of night and the lighting of naphtha lamps, the fair seemed to awake to new life and jollity.

The crowd was thicker than ever. Stout farmers and farmers' men, brawny drovers and cattle-dealers elbowed their way among the crowds of townspeople and the schoolboys and urchins from miles around. The various shows were better patronised as evening drew on and the stars came out in the clear winter sky.

Tom Merry & Co. had gathered together again, and they stopped to look at the merry-go-round. Arthur Augustus was a little afraid that it was beneath his dig to venture on the whirling wooden horses, but he allowed himself to be convinced.

"Of course, if you're nervous you can stick where you are," Blake remarked.

"Weally, Blake, a chap who has widden in a cwoos-countwy steeplechase is not likely to be nervous of a wide on a wooden horse," said D'Arcy.

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"Then what are you hanging back for?"

"I am not exactly hanging back, but I'm thinking of my dig, you know."

"Then don't," said Blake. "Come on, and don't be a duffer. I suppose, as a matter of fact, you're nervous?"

"Come on!" exclaimed Figgins. "Where is Fatty? Where are you, Fatty Wynn?"

"Shan't be a tick!" exclaimed Fatty, who was stuffing roast chestnuts at a barrow near at hand. "I shall be finished in a minute."

"Catch us waiting for you, you porpoise!"

"Oh, I'm coming!"

Fatty Wynn bolted some chestnuts, and jammed a handful into his pocket, and rushed over to join Figgins. The



"Gussy will be killed! Gussy, run for it!" The bull, bellowing was white, but his nerve was firm. He rushed intrepidly into the

juniors of St. Jim's occupied a considerable portion of the roundabout when they mounted the wooden steeds.

"Wait for me, please," came a breathless voice. "I wish to go round, you know. Will you kindly pay for me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Skimmay, deah boy! Jump on!"

"Pray wait a minute. I am quite out of breath. Yes, my good man?" said Skimpole, stopping with one foot on the edge of the revolving platform which supported the wooden horses in a circle. "What are you poking me for?"

"Get hon, please!"

"Yes, I am getting on. Have you any idea why this rough-looking person is so impatient, Tom Merry?"

"Perhaps he wants to get his machine started," grinned Tom Merry. "You see, he's here to make money, not to look on while you jabber."

"Get hon, sir, please!"

"It is very sad to see how this sordid desire to make

money penetrates into every class of society," said the freak of the Shell, with a shake of the head.

"Will you get hon, or will you get hof?"

"I will get on if you will allow me a moment to recover my breath. I regard this entertainment as a very youthful one, and should not mount one of these wooden steeds, my friends, but for the purpose of establishing certain scientific principles."

"Oh, buck up, Skimpy!"

"Pray do not be impatient, Blake! The principles I wish to establish are, whether—"

"Hare you going to get hon, or hare you going to get hof?" roared the proprietor of the roundabout.

"I am going to get on."



usily, was dashing after the swell of St. Jim's. Tom Merry's face of the maddened animal and flung his coat over its horns!

"Start it, my deah sir," said D'Arcy. "The silly ass will nevah leave off talkin', othahwise."

"Really, D'Arcy— Dear me, the thing is going round!"

Skimpole scrambled astride the wooden horse, with his cap on the back of his head, and his spectacles sliding down his nose, and held on as if he were on the back of a fiery steeplechaser.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "I—I feel quite insecure."

"Hold on!" yelled Wally, coming on the scene with Pongo at his heels.

"I am holding on," replied Skimpole, who thought the words were addressed to him. "Indeed, I think I should fall to the ground, otherwise."

"Hold on!"

Skimpole was whirled away with the rest as the machine increased its speed, grinding out a strain of music that might have made a Philistine weep. But the ears of the juniors were growing hardened to discordant sounds.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wally indignantly. "Why didn't you wait for me?"

"Full up this time, sir!"

"I could have pulled that spectacled ass off!"

The man grinned.

"Better wait your turn, sir."

Wally sniffed.

"Catch me waiting while those duffers are going round!"

He stood and watched for Skimpole to come round again. Skimpole was on the horse just in front of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who, with his silk hat in his hand, and his eyeglass jammed in his eye, was sitting his wooden steed with his usual grace.

As Skimpole came round opposite Wally, the junior made a nimble spring upon the wooden platform of the roundabout.

In a twinkling he was up on Skimpole's horse, much to the amazement of the freak of the Shell.

"Really, young D'Arcy," gasped Skimpole, "I—I— There is no room for two of us on one horse, you know."

"Get off, then!" said Wally.

"But I have paid—or, rather, D'Arcy has paid, which comes to the same thing."

"Well, if you pay, and I ride, that's an equal division of labour."

"Really, Wally—"

"I don't mind your sticking on the horse if you keep quiet," said Wally magnanimously. "But don't jaw."

"I—I—I— Pray do not push me!"

"Why not?"

"I am afraid that I may fall off. I am not used to these entertainments. I have mounted this machine simply in order to establish some scientific principles—"

Skimpole broke off with a yell. He slipped, and made a grab at the horse, and the next moment—he didn't know how—he was flying through the air.

Wally, sitting with one arm round the supporting-pole, waved the other hand at the falling Skimpole.

"Good-bye, Skimpy!"

"Dear—dear me—"

Skimpole bumped on the ground. He sat up, blinking at the wooden horses as they circled past again and again, while the juniors of St. Jim's grinned at him from their perches.

"You young wascal, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus. "I weally—"

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

"Weally, Wally, I considah—"

Wally began to whistle, and Arthur Augustus gave him a glare of indignation, and ceased to remonstrate.

The wooden horses finished their journey, and the juniors scrambled off, and found Skimpole standing rubbing his bones where they had come into violent contact with the ground.

"Hurt?" said Wally cheerfully. "Why the dickens didn't you stick on, Skimpy?"

"Really, young D'Arcy—"

"Have you established your scientific principles?" demanded Digby.

Skimpole shook his head.

"No, Digby, I have not. Owing to the—"

"Have anothah wun wound, then," said D'Arcy. "It will be a gweat pleasuah for me to stand tweek, Skimpy, deah boy."

Skimpole made a grimace.

"I thank you very much, D'Arcy, but I do not think I will mount that very dangerous contrivance again. You must not think that I am in the least nervous, of course, but, upon the whole, I regard it as injudicious to risk such a shock to the system a second time."

"But what pwice the pwinciples you were goin' to establish?"

"I shall have to establish them another time. After all, I have plenty to do," said Skimpole. "There is my speech yet."

"Your which?" demanded half a dozen voices.

"My speech. I am going to take advantage of the great crowd collected on this spot to attempt to disseminate some of the principles of Determinism," explained Skimpole. "Do you not think it is a splendid opportunity?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no reason for this ribald laughter. As so many people are met together here from various parts of the country, I think the time has come for a little effective propaganda work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A true Determinist is never turned from his purpose by the mockery of fools and idiots," said Skimpole loftily. "Eh—what? Where are the fools and idiots?" asked Jack Blake politely, taking hold of Herbert Skimpole by one of his large ears.

The Determinist of St. Jim's blinked at him.

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"Of course, I was speaking figuratively. What I mean is—"

"You can wait while he explains what he means, Blake," said Digby. "I'm off!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thanks! I don't think I'll wait," said Blake. "Never mind what you mean, Skimpy. But I advise you as a friend to give up that speech."

"As a sincere Determinist—"

"Oh, rats! I'm off!" And Blake ran.

The others ran, too.

Skimpole looked after them, and shook his head in a solemn and serious manner.

"Amazing!" he murmured. "Amazing that even intelligent youths should take absolutely no interest in the higher ethics and the ideals of the—the—the—in short, in the ideals. But I shall keep on; I shall not abandon my task in despair. I will try the effects of a really eloquent and excellent speech upon these persons at the fair."

And Skimpole looked about him for a suitable spot to address a meeting.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Boxing Tent!

"PETE PIPER, the Bethnal Green Chicken!" said Tom Merry, reading from a flaring poster on the outside of a large tent. "'Boxing; face any comer.' H'm! Perhaps this is worth seeing, kids!"

There was a pimply looking gentleman in a neckerchief at the entrance to the tent. From within came a buzz that showed it was already pretty full. The pimply gentleman was announcing the show in a raucous voice, hoarse with exertion and the stimulant he had taken.

"Pete Piper, gents! The Bethnal Green Chicken, gents! Unequaled boxer, and champion bantam-weight of Hengland!"

"Rats!" murmured Figgins, who knew very well that such was not the case.

The pimply looking gentleman overheard the remark, and without the slightest change of countenance went on:

"Champion boxer, champion bantam-weight of Middlesex! Walk in, gents, and see the one and honly Pete Piper!"

Tom Merry looked at his chums.

"What do you say, kids? A good boxing show is always worth seeing. You can pick up points from it, you know!"

"Yaas, wathah, unless it is a bwatal show, you know; and in that case it would be below our dig to patwonise it!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we shan't see that till we're inside, and then we can come out if we like. If we consider the show too brutal, we'll come out, and Gussy can refund us the price of entrance!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That's only fair!" said Figgins. "I confess I'd like to see this show. I suppose the chap knows how to use his hands, or he wouldn't be giving a show here!"

"But where does he come from, deah boys?"

"Didn't you hear what the man said—Bethnal Green?"

"Is that a weal place?"

"Ass! It's a famous place! Everybody in the British Empire has heard of Bethnal Green!" said Figgins scornfully.

"Bai Jove, I must make a note of that, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, with great interest. "Is it in England?"

"Yes, duffer, in London!"

"I wefuse to be called a duffah, Figgins! Bai Jove, fancy Bethnal Gween bein' a weal place, yo! know! I shall go there next time I go to London. Yaas, wathah, let's go in and see this chap from Bethnal Gween!"

"Tanner a time!" said the pimply gentleman, as the juniors presented themselves at the entrance of the tent.

"What does he mean by that, Tom Mewwy? Is that the way they talk in Bethnal Gween, do you think, or is he a foweignah?"

"You cheerful chump, he means that it's sixpence each!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Come on, you kids, I'm paying the tanners a time, Gussy to refund the money if we come out without seeing the show."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Can't take that dorg in!" said the guardian at the door, as Wally followed on with Pongo.

"Oh, hold him for me, then!" said Wally.

"I'll tie 'im up 'ere for yer, if you like, sir!"

"Right you are!"

And Wally followed the rest into the tent. Arthur Augustus gave him a glance of approval as they made their way to the crowded seats.

"It was vewy wight of you to leave the dog outside, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,294.

Wally," he said. "I am vewy glad you are gwowin' more polite and reasonable in these mattahs!"

"Scat!" said D'Arcy minor. "I know jolly well Pongo won't remain outside many minutes, Gus, old son!"

And Wally was right!

The juniors had scarcely taken their seats when Pongo came snuggling up to Wally's knees. He had got loose and crawled in under the canvas of the tent, as the hero of the Third knew he would.

Wally patted his favourite's shaggy head.

"Good old Pongo!"

The juniors grinned, with the exception of Arthur Augustus. He drew a little farther away from the shaggy mongrel.

"Pway, keep that howwid beast away from my twousahs, Wally," he said plaintively. "You know how I dislike havin' doggy hairs on my beastlay clothes!"

"Oh, don't be fussy, old chap!"

"Weally, Wally, you young vascal—"

"Dry up," said Tom Merry, "the show's going to begin!"

"I wefuse to dwy up. I was sayin'—"

"Hallo, what's that chap got to say? Silence, all!" exclaimed Blake.

A sanded space was set aside for the Bethnal Green Chicken, the seats converging upon it in a crescent. The seats were merely boards laid on trestles, and Arthur Augustus was most uncomfortable. The glare of several naphtha lamps lighted up the Bethnal Green Chicken as he lounged forward and faced the audience.

He looked like a bantam-weight a little run to seed. He was a young man, with a head like a bullet and a face hard and determined. His figure was light and agile, and there was a springiness in his tread that Tom Merry noted at once. Tom Merry was given to boxing in an amateur way, and he had an eye for a boxing man's points.

The pimply looking man at the door had closed the entrance and come in now. The tent was pretty full, and the audience was growing impatient. He came forward to speak, and the crowd in the tent listened with attention.

"Gentlemen, this is the Bethnal Green Chicken, the champion bantam-weight of—of Middlesex. He's open to box any gentleman who cares to come forward, anything within a couple of stone of his own weight. The Bethnal Green Chicken has never refused a challenge, and he never will!"

There was a murmur of applause.

"Any gentleman coming forward?" asked Mr. Piper's backer genially. "It ain't possible 'ere to box for money, of course; but there's a purse lying on the seat there. It's a present for the man who can lick the Bethnal Green Chicken, and there's a pound note in it."

There was a pause, and then a burly young drover rose up in his place.

"I reckon I'll try for that pound, Mr. Harker," he said.

Mr. Harker grinned and nodded.

"Come out 'ere, then," he said.

The young drover, colouring a good deal as the general gaze was bent upon him, advanced into the glare of the naphtha lights.

Figgins gave a low whistle as he watched him.

"I rather think he's more'n two stone better than Piper," he murmured; "but I think Piper will walk over him."

"A good middle-weight," said Monty Lowther; "but he won't have much chance against Piper. That chap isn't in form for a sporting club show, but he's all right to walk over a countryman!"

The Bethnal Green Chicken seemed to be of the same opinion, for there was a grin on his face as he prepared for the contest.

The young drover stripped, and Mr. Harker took out his watch to keep time. A number of encouraging voices were heard from the audience, addressed to the bold aspirant for fistical honours.

"Go it, Willyum!"

"You'll fix him!"

"We're a-watchin' you, Willyum!"

William blinked and grinned at his friends. Then he put on the gloves, with Mr. Harker's assistance, and faced his adversary in the ten-foot ring.

Burly as the young drover was, and almost as strong as a horse, he had no chance from the first against the Bethnal Green Chicken.

The Chicken, however, did not want to end the show at a blow, and he gave William plenty of rope, and for a time the drover imagined that he was getting the best of the encounter.

The Chicken received a tap now and then, but he took care not to get any hard ones, and in return he tapped William in various places, on the nose and chin, and chest and neck, rather to his bewilderment.

William did not seem quite to know where the blows were coming from, but the Chicken did not hurt him much, and

at the end of the first round William was not much damaged, save that his wind was gone.

He sat on a stool in the corner of the ring to recover himself, and was ministered to by his second, another drover.

Mr. Harker was grinning and looking at his watch.

"Time!" he called.

The Chicken stepped up to time as fresh as a daisy, and William rose somewhat heavily from his stool.

"Go it, Willyum!" whispered his second encouragingly.

"You're 'eavier and stronger than he is, and you'll fix him."

William grinned rather breathlessly.

"I'm going to try," he said.

"That's it! Give him the upper-cut you knocked out young Josh Perkins with at Elderberry Hollow," said the second.

"That I will, George!"

And William stepped up for the second round. But in the second round it was plain to even William's friends that the Bethnal Green Chicken was only playing with him. He forced William round the ring, tapping him here and there, and avoiding his wild drives with perfect ease.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I rather think Willyum is a goner," he remarked.

"Yes, rather; he won't try another round."

"Yaas, wathah! Do you know, deah boys, I should feel inclined to tackle the boxah myself if it were not so beastlay exhaustin', you know."

"Yes, you'd knock the Chicken out in no time—I don't think!" Monty Lowther remarked.

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle upon Lowther.

"Hallo, there goes Willyum!"

William had sat down suddenly in the ring. He did not know why, but he had a pain in his nose. Mr. Harker began to count.

But William was up at eight, continuing the fight. He had plenty of pluck, though not much knowledge of the manly art of self-defence. The upper-cut with which he had knocked out young Josh Perkins at Elderberry Hollow wasn't of much use against the Chicken from Bethnal Green.

"He's a plucked 'un, but no good," said Figgins. "What are you revolving in that mighty brain of yours, Merry? Wherefore that wrinkled brow? Are you thinking of tackling the Bantam?"

Tom Merry nodded coolly.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, that's just what I was thinking of."

Figgins whistled.

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry warmly. "I'm just about his weight, and I'm as big as he is, or very nearly; and I can box, as you ought to know, Figgie, from the number of times I've dotted you on the nose!"

"Well, I don't know," said Figgins thoughtfully. "I could lick you, but I don't know that I should care to tackle that chap. So what chance will you have if you tackle him?"

"Oh, don't be funny, Figgins! I am going to take it on, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah! But, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Don't you think I could keep my end up, Gussy?"

"I wasn't thinkin' of that, deah boy. The only question to my mind is whethah it is pewwaps below your dig."

"Well, I think I could risk that," said Tom Merry. "It will be fun, anyway, and he seems a decent chap; nothing of the bully about him. It's all moonshine about his being a champion bantam-weight, but he's a good boxer, all the same, and looks as if he's had some experience in the ring. I'll tackle him."

"Good!" said Lowther. "It will be fun, anyway, and if you're knocked into little pieces, I'll plant a bunch of celery over your grave, with the inscription, 'Died of too much nerve!'"

"I wish I had brought my camera!" said Manners, with a sigh.

"Oh, that Miss Priscilla were here to see her darling boy!" murmured Digby.

Tom Merry turned red. The chipping of his comrades only made him the more determined. There was a sudden exclamation from Herries, who was watching the contest in the glare of the naphtha lights with deep and thrilling interest.

"He's done!"

William was indeed done!

The end of the second round left him sitting in the sand, and at the call of time he declined to come up to the scratch.

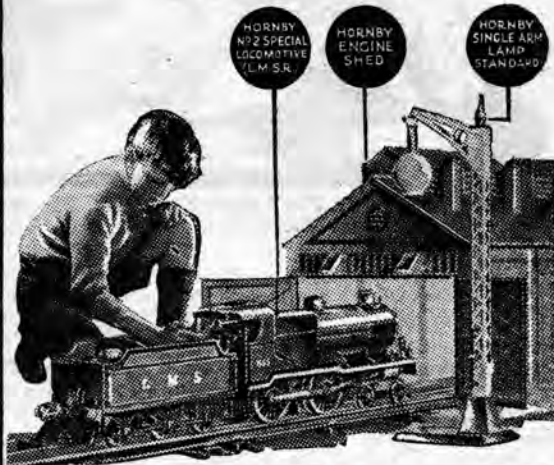
"Go on another round, Willyum!" urged his friend.

William shook his head decidedly.

"But you haven't tried him with that upper-cut which

(Continued from page 19.)

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HALLO, chums! What do you think about this week's yarn? Top-notch, isn't it? Tom Merry & Co. certainly do know how to enjoy themselves! Next week's yarn is packed with fun and thrills! It is called

"THE RIVAL SCOUTS!"

The School House and New House have another little dust up, which I know you will thoroughly enjoy.

There will be more big thrills from

"THE LOST LEGION"

and Potts, the inimitable office boy, will be on duty once again, so you will be assured of a good laugh. Another page from my notebook will also make its appearance—in fact, next week's number of the GEM is well up to standard—and that's saying something!

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT DE LUXE.

Christmas will soon be here—no, that isn't meant to be news, it's just a reminder!—and you will be wondering what to ask uncle or aunt to give you for a present. How about a "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"? This ripping book is packed with grand stories of all sorts. In it you will find Tom Merry & Co., Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, besides many other yarns of great adventure the world over. All this for six shillings! Well, I ask you, what more could you want?

THE FISHING MAYORS!

A few weeks ago a somewhat weird trio might have been seen fishing off Ramsgate. They wore oilskins, like other fishermen, but they also had large gold chains round their necks! These chains were their chains of office, for they were none other than the Mayors of Ramsgate and Margate, and the Chairman of the Broadstairs Council. The little expedition was the result of a challenge from Broadstairs. And Broadstairs it was who won the competition. Councillor Bing, the Chairman, caught 12 lb. 8 oz. of fish, the Mayor of Margate caught 1 lb. 12 oz., while the Mayor of Ramsgate did not even get a bite. It seems particularly hard for him, seeing that they were fishing off Ramsgate. I am afraid the fish were rather traitorous, and did not support their champion!

THE TREASURE BURGLARS.

One of the strangest efforts by burglars in recent years took place at Richmond. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,294.

Palace. Burglars don't usually break into places in search of alleged buried treasure! Some weeks ago the Palace, which is empty, was broken into during the night, and a secret door was discovered. A ton of earth was removed, and then the entrance to an underground tunnel was found. It was obvious that whoever had broken in was after the treasure of Henry VII which is said to be buried somewhere in the Palace, but which most people believe is no longer in existence.

For two nights a watch was kept over the Palace, but nothing happened. However, as soon as the watch was removed the Palace was again broken into, and further efforts were made to find the treasure. So far, however, the burglars have been unlucky.

OUR SWEET BILL!

I don't know how many sweets the readers of the GEM eat in a week, but I can tell you how much is spent on sweets in this country in one week. Hold your breath—one million pounds! Think of that! Wouldn't Fatty Wynn like to have that amount to spend on sweets? But I doubt if even the New House cormorant could get through that lot in so short a time!

WHERE DO SPRATS GO?

You have probably heard that old problem "Where do flies go in the winter-time?" but here is a new one for you. Where do sprats go in the winter-time? There is a big demand for sprats, but unfortunately this little fellow only spends three months of the year in British waters. From November till February he is to be found, caught and eaten, but after that he just disappears until the next November arrives, and then back he comes as large as life (not very big!). The Government have spent a lot of money in trying to find the answer to the above problem, because there is a fortune waiting for the fellow who can find out where you can catch sprats from February to October!

THE MODERN CRUSOE.

The French windjammer Tolosa called at the Island of Rinca, about a hundred miles north of the Magellan Straits. They sent a boat ashore to find water, and to their surprise the crew found a man dressed in goat skins, roasting meat. He was unable to speak, but made weird guttural noises at the sailors. When, however, they made him understand that they wanted water, he immediately led them to a spring.

Later they tried to ask him if he wanted to be taken off, but he fled into the woods.

It is thought that he is a shipwrecked sailor, who has lost the power of speech through not having had anyone to speak to for many years.

THE BRONCHO BUSTER!

Riding bareback at any time is only a job for an expert, but when it comes to riding bareback in a steeplechase, the feat becomes something of a wonder. The steeplechase course at Aintree is known to be just about the stiffest in the world. The other day W. Speck, the famous cross country jockey, was riding in a race over the course when his saddle slipped. This happened a mile and a half from the finish, and the jockey had to carry on with his saddle slipping all over the place. Then the horse stumbled and Speck lost the saddle altogether, for it slipped right back and hung round the horse's legs! Eventually Speck finished the race riding bareback, and which is more—he won!

THE SUBMARINE TANK!

A workman named Ruiz has invented a tank which can either move on land or on the sea-bed. When it is under the water the oxygen for the crew is provided for by electrolysis of water—the breaking up of water into hydrogen and oxygen. Recently a trial was made of this new tank, and after it had crawled round the shore of the Lake of Casa de Campo, it entered the water, and crawled about on the bottom of the lake. It remained there for an hour and a half before it sent a message asking to be hauled up, as water was entering. It is considered, however, that the first trials were very satisfactory.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Tommy's aunt had come to tea one day and Tommy arrived at the tea-table with a very dirty face.

"Tommy," said his mother, "auntie won't kiss you with a face like that."

"No," said Tommy, "that's just what I thought!"

KING OF JAZZ!

Mr. Jack Hylton, the famous dance band leader, has just had a new and unusual honour conferred upon him. He has been appointed Honorary Musical Director to the Court of Annam. Hitherto there have been only native orchestras at the court, but now the emperor, Bao Dai, has decided to go in for jazz! Mr. Hylton's instructions will be by letter and through agents, and this is believed to be the first instance of an emperor taking a correspondence course in music!

ANSWERS.

"Regular Reader" wants to know one or two things about St. Jim's. The St. Jim's colours are red and white. Both the football jerseys and cricket blazers are striped in these colours.

The chapel at St. Jim's is reached by a covered way from the quad. This way is flanked on either side by beautiful lawns, which are in turn bordered by perfectly-kept flower beds.

St. Jim's is situated in Sussex, the nearest village being Rylecombe and the nearest town Wayland.

YOUR EDITOR.

TOM MERRY & CO. AT THE FAIR!

(Continued from page 17.)

settled young Josh Perkins at Elderberry Hollow," urged George.

"I ain't going on!" said William.

And he resumed his upper garments with the assistance of Mr. Harker, and returned to his place among the audience. Mr. Harker winked at the Bethnal Green Chicken, and fixed his eyes on the audience.

"Any other gent care to meet the Chicken?" he asked.

"Yes!"

It was a clear, boyish voice, as Tom Merry rose in his place.

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry—Boxer!

TOM MERRY calmly met the astonished gaze Mr. Harker turned on him. He coloured a little as he saw the wink exchanged between Mr. Harker and the Chicken.

"Did you speak, young sir?" said Mr. Harker, in a tone of elaborate politeness, and most of the audience turned grinning faces towards Tom Merry.

"Yes, I did," said Tom quietly. "I accept Mr. Piper's challenge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am speaking seriously. I think somebody in this part of the country ought to stand up against a giddy Londoner, anyway," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to try."

"My friend, Mr. Piper, didn't issue his challenge to children, you know," said Mr. Harker, amid laughter. "You had better go back to the nursery, young man."

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Mr. Harkah, if that is your name, I wergard that wemark as insultin' to my fwient Mewwy! Leave off pullin' my jacket, Blake!"

"Sit down, then, duffer!"

"I wufuse to sit down! Mr. Harkah, I think that, as a gentleman, you ought to withdraw that wemark, and I for one insist upon Mr. Pipah meetin' my fwient Tom Mewwy, or else handin' ovah that purse without a fight!"

The Chicken chuckled, and Mr. Harker frowned.

"Mr. Piper ain't goin' to meet a boy!" he said.

"Then hand ovah the purse!"

"Stuff! I tell you—Get back there!"

Tom Merry was walking towards the sanded ring. Arthur Augustus, in his excitement, followed him, putting up his eyeglass. Lowther and Manners hurried after their chum. They meant to back him up, anyway.

"Fair play!" said Tom Merry. "I appeal to the folks of Wayland," he went on, looking at the audience. "If Mr. Piper won't back up his challenge, he hands over the purse."

Mr. Piper whispered to his manager.

The latter turned to Tom Merry with a grin on his face.

"Very well," he said. "Mr. Piper agrees to knock this confounded cheeky kid into the middle of next week, and 'opes he will like it!"

"Hear, hear!" said the audience.

"Yaas, wathah! I think it extwemely pwob that Tom Mewwy will be knocked into the middle of next week, deah boys, but he has a wight to be knocked into the middle of next week if he likes!"

"Cheese it!" said Lowther. "We're your seconds, Tom—"

"I wufuse to cheese it—"

"Get your jacket off. What price the gloves? Are they small enough?"

"We've got plenty 'ere," said Mr. Harker. "The young gentleman can choose. Chicken, you've got to put your best foot forward this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the Chicken.

Tom Merry stripped off jacket and vest, and rolled back his sleeves, and tied his braces round his waist. Then he slipped on the gloves and was ready.

"Go it, St. Jim's!" rose in a roar from the tent.

There were plenty of St. Jim's fellows there, as well as Tom Merry & Co., and they were all backing up their schoolfellow. And a great many of them had very strong faith in the powers of the champion junior athlete of the School House.

Tom Merry was very quiet and confident, though there

was not a trace of boastfulness in his manner. He had accepted the challenge of Mr. Piper in a sporting spirit to stand up for St. Jim's against a boastful stranger, and he was quite prepared for a licking if the Chicken proved a better man. At the same time, he believed that he had it within him to lick Mr. Piper.

The Chicken had made rings round the burly young drover, but Tom Merry was a scientific boxer, as hard as nails, and in the pink of condition. As a matter of fact, Tom would have made a very respectable bantam-weight for the sporting ring.

"Time!" grinned Mr. Harker.

Tom Merry stepped into the centre of the ring to meet the Chicken, and shook hands with him in his frank way. The Chicken grinned at him genially as he shook hands.

"I like pluck," he remarked. "I'll let you down easy."

Tom Merry smiled quietly.

He did not want to be let down easily. He wanted to win, and if he could not win he was ready to take his gruel.

The Chicken led off with the amusing tactics he had found successful against William, the drover, and the audience looked on with glee, prepared for a laugh.

But the occasion for the laugh did not arise.

Mr. Piper found that his gentle taps were all stopped, and instead of driving Tom Merry backwards round the ring, he found the junior standing like a rock, and stopping him every time.

Mr. Piper looked surprised, and he began to take the combat seriously. He feinted cleverly and let out his right with full force, enough to sweep Tom Merry off his feet. But the feint was watched by his young adversary, and his right was knocked swinging up and Tom Merry's right came home upon his nose with a thump.

The Chicken staggered back, more amazed than hurt.

"My 'at!" roared Mr. Harker. "Look out!"

There was a roar from a score of youthful throats in the crowded tent.

"Bravo, St. Jim's!"

"Buck up, Merry!"

The Chicken was looking a little annoyed. His little, round eyes were glittering now. He sparred up to Tom Merry, and the junior received several taps he could not guard. Then the Chicken pressed him close, and some sharp in-fighting followed, which Tom Merry stopped by a sudden heavy body blow, for which the Chicken was not prepared, and which felled him up like a pocket-knife.

The Bethnal Green Chicken gasped like air escaping from a pair of bellows, and sat down abruptly on the sand.

There was a roar from the audience.

"The Chicken's down!"

"Bravo!"

Mr. Harker stared at his friend in such blank astonishment that he forgot to count. Had he counted ten before the Chicken rose to his feet, the fight must have been awarded to Tom Merry. But at seven the Bethnal Green champion jumped up actively enough.

He was looking astonished. He was a little dazed, too. The gloves were thin enough, and every blow told. Tom Merry was looking rather red and glowing, but he was hardly touched yet.

"My word!" ejaculated the Chicken. "My word!" And he renewed the combat with great spirit.

This time Tom Merry was forced to give ground, and perhaps the call of time came well for him. The first round was over. Tom Merry sat down, and Monty Lowther sponged his heated face.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, this is wippin'!" said D'Arcy. "I weally am beginnin' to think that you will pull it off, you know!"

Some such thought was evidently in Mr. Harker's mind, for he was whispering earnestly to the Bethnal Green Chicken.

Mr. Piper shook his head impatiently.

"It's all right," he growled. "Do you think I'm going to let a schoolboy walk over me, Jim Harker?"

"The fact is, Pete, he looks like a young champion himself," said Mr. Harker. "Look at his arms! Look at his action! Good condition there, my boy!"

"I'm going to lick him!"

"I hope you will. Time!"

The second round commenced. The Chicken looked rather ill-tempered; doubtless his friend's remarks had annoyed him. He pushed Tom Merry hard, and rather incautiously, and Tom was not an opponent with whom risks could be taken. In the middle of the round Mr. Piper found himself lying in the sand, without quite knowing how he got there.

There was a cheer from the audience. The Chicken was plainly groggy for the rest of the round, and glad of the next rest.

"My word!" said Digby. "I never saw Tom Merry shape

like this before. He's in jolly good form, kids, and I fancy he will pull it off!"

"Looks like it," said Fatty Wynn. "I hope he will. I suppose he will stand a feed with the pound?"

"Trust you to think of that," grunted Figgins.

"Well, you know, Figgins, we've been in here some time, and I've finished the chestnuts I had in my pocket and I'm getting hungry. I do get jolly hungry at this time of the year, and I admit it. There's a stall outside where they're selling hot sausages."

"Go out and have some, then," growled Blake, "and don't bother."

"Oh, I'm going to stay for the finish," said Fatty, with the air of one who knew he was making a great sacrifice.

The third round was commencing in the flare of the naphtha-lamps. The Chicken was looking a little uncertain now. As a matter of fact, he was not in the best of form. In the work of a travelling boxer at fairs, he seldom found an opponent tough enough to put him on his mettle, and he had allowed habits of drinking and smoking to put him quite off his form. His schoolboy adversary was younger, slighter, but "clean all through," and as hard as nails. The Chicken began to realise that he had taken a big task on his hands, and heartily wished he was out of it. He was looking for cash, not for tough fights, at Wayland Fair.

But it was impossible to back down, and he was too plucky to want to do that. He went into the third round tooth and nail.

Tom Merry, in spite of his splendid defence, was driven twice round the ring and received several hard taps on the face and chest. But towards the close of the round his turn came.

The Chicken, thinking he saw a good chance, rushed in to close quarters, hitting out with left and right, only to have Tom Merry's right come swinging round into his upper ribs with a force that sent him staggering back, and Tom's left

followed him up as he staggered, catching him under the chin with an upper-cut that brought a yell of delight from the audience.

"Bravo!"

The Chicken went down with a crash, looking dazed, and Mr. Harker again forgot to count, in his blank amazement. Lowther jerked at his arm, and he lifted his watch and mumbled out the numbers.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—"

There was a buzz from the audience. The Bethnal Green Chicken had not moved.

"Eight, nine, out!"

The Chicken made an effort, and sat down again. Mr. Harker, looking rather dazed, snapped his watch shut and returned it to his pocket.

"The kid wins!" he said in a tone of amazement and disgust.

There was a roar that shook the tent.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Mr. Harker helped the Chicken to his feet. Tom Merry was putting on his upper garments with the aid of his jubilant chums. Pete Piper looked at the victor in an extremely uncertain way.

"Well, you've done me," he said. "I own up. The Bethnal Green Chicken ain't afraid to own up to a fair licking. The pound's yours."

Tom Merry laughed, and shook his head.

"Not a bit of it," he said cheerily. "I boxed you for the fun of it, not for money. I shouldn't think of taking it."

"You're a gentleman, you are," said Mr. Harker with emphasis.

"Thank you," said Tom Merry, laughing. He finished donning collar and necktie, and then stepped up to the Chicken and held out his hand in the frank way that few could resist. "Shake, Mr. Piper. It was a jolly good fight."

And Mr. Piper grinned and shook hands. He was a sportsman, too.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole is Interrupted!

TOM MERRY & Co. crowded out of the tent with the rest of the audience.

Mr. Piper's defeat ended his show for that evening, and he was not sorry for it. Tom was the recipient of slaps on the back from all his chums, till every ounce of breath was knocked out of his body, and he began to hit out in return. Then his delighted chums moderated their transports a little.

"It was ripping," said Figgins, "really ripping, and I must admit that a School House chap has kept our end up nobly for once."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Tom Mewwy as havin' deserved well of St. Jim's, deah boys. I could not have done bettah myself."

"Go hon, Gussy! Hallo, it's snowing!" said Monty Lowther, turning up his coat collar. "Beastly of it to spow before we were ready to go home!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wondah whothah I could buy an umbwellah here. I nevah thought of bwingin' one, you know, and I am afwaid my hat will be spoiled."

"Have you seen Fatty?" asked Figgins anxiously. "Where has that porpoise got to? He slipped out of the tent just before we got up."

"Look for him in the nearest grub-shop!" grunted Herries.

"Bai Jove! There he is, deah boy! You were wight, Hewwies."

Fatty Wynn could be seen at a short distance. He had hurried out of the tent and made a bee-line for the stall where the hot sausages were sold. A stout old lady, who looked as if she were her own best customer, presided at the stall, with a large umbrella up against the snow. Fatty Wynn wasn't thinking of the snow. It is doubtful if he knew that it was snowing.

He was standing at the stall, with a sausage on a fork, and a grin of delightful anticipation on his face.

"Fatty! Coo-oo, Fatty!"

But Fatty Wynn did not turn his head. He blew on the sausage to cool it, and started munching.

"We can't do better than follow his example," grinned Tom Merry. "Come on! A few sausages will do us all right, while we're looking for a place to have a solid meal."

"I am afwaid it would be wathah below our dig to feed on hot sausages at a stall in the sweet, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, you needn't have any, you know."

The juniors hurried over to the stall. Figgins gave Fatty a slap on the shoulder that made him drop the fork and half the sausage into the snow.

Fatty Wynn turned round with a howl.

"You silly ass! Oh, is it you, Figgins? What the dickens do you startle a chap for? That sausage is done in, now!"

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Tom caught the Chicken with an upper-cut that brought a roar of delight from the crowd. "Bravo!" The Chicken went down with a crash, and was counted out. "The kid wins!" said Mr. Harker, in a tone of amazement and disgust.

"Never mind," grinned Figgins, "there's plenty more. Hand 'em over, mother!"

The old lady handed out the sausages, and the juniors did them full justice. The weather had become extremely cold, and the cold made the juniors hungry. The old lady was beaming when they left the stall. She hadn't had so many, and so good, customers for some time past.

The falling of the snow was rough on many of the enter-tainers of the fair. Most of the crowd were driven to shelter, and the shows under cover were the only ones to be patronised. Tom Merry & Co. congratulated themselves that they had had most of the fun before the snow came on.

"Must expect it this time of the year," said Tom Merry philosophically. "It wouldn't be seasonable without snow, you know."

"The pressing business of the present moment is to find a place where we can have a square meal," said Fatty anxiously.

"My only hat!" said Blake. "He was munching chestnuts till we came out of the tent, and since then he's eaten fifteen sausages."

"Only eleven, Blake."

"And now he wants a square meal! Where will you put it, Fatty?"

"Oh, don't be funny! It's a serious matter. I get so hungry in this weather, and I've had practically nothing to eat all day. Hallo! There's a jolly big crowd under that tree," said Fatty Wynn. "I wonder if they're selling any hot drinks or grub there?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's Skimpy!"

"Bai Jove, so it is!"

The huge tree at the end of the market square, although almost leafless, was thick enough to afford shelter from the lightly falling flakes of snow. Under the tree, on an upturned tub, Herbert Skimpole stood, with about twenty curious people gathered round him, staring, and the juniors from St. Jim's hastened to join the crowd.

Skimpole, who was fairly mounted on his hobby-horse, had no eyes for them. He was embarked on the subject of Determinism.

"Determinism, my friends," he said, waving both his arms in the air, "is—ow!"

The Determinist of St. Jim's broke off suddenly as a

cabbage-stump hurled by someone smote him on the chest, and he disappeared off the tub.

There was a yell of laughter from the ribald crowd.

"Exit Skimpole!" grinned Figgins.

But Skimpole was not done yet. He was up again and on the tub in a twinkling, looking somewhat muddy, but quite resolute.

"As a sincere Determinist, I deprecate violence in any shape or form," he said. "But I forgive the uninformed, stupid, brutal, densely ignorant savage who hurled that cabbage-stump, and shall not even say a word against him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nor will this ribald laughter affect me. I appeal to your brains. Do I blame you for your ignorance, your brutality? Certainly not! I—Oh—"

It was a snowball this time, and it squelched under Skimpole's chin. The crowd swayed and roared. Skimpole brushed as much of the snow out of his neck as he could.

"Really, gentlemen, I protest against this violence. I—ow!—I—Ooooooh!"

A shower of snowballs fairly knocked Skimpole off the tub, and the volley was followed up by a rush of the crowd.

Skimpole was bumped down in a sitting posture, and the tub was bonneted over his head, and so he was left. It was Tom Merry who generously lifted the tub off, and Skimpole blinked up at him dazedly.

"Wh-wh-what is it, Merry? What has happened? I trust it was not an earthquake?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It was only an argument, I suppose?" said Tom Merry. "Somehow, they don't seem to like your speeches. You might be a little more tactful."

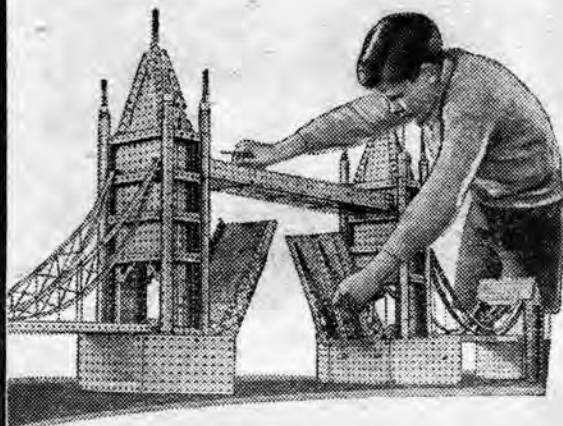
"As a sincere Determinist, I am bound to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Then you are booked for a high old time, I think," said Tom Merry, as he dragged the amateur Determinist to his feet. "There is such a thing as gliding gently over unpleasant facts, you know."

"It would be against my conscience—"

"For instance, how would you like anybody to tell you you were a shrieking maniac, a howling idiot, a dangerous lunatic, a frightful bore, and a fearful fathead?" asked Tom Merry. "Yet it would be only true."

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"Really, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, ring off, and come and have a feed!"

Skimpole blinked as he rubbed his bruises.

"I think I had better, Merry. I do not feel quite fit for carrying on further propaganda work at present, and even a Determinist must attend to the sordid wants of the body. I am very hungry."

Ere long, Tom Merry & Co. were sitting down in a warm restaurant to a meal that even Fatty Wynn pronounced sufficiently plentiful.

CHAPTER 13.

The End of a Jolly Day!

TOM MERRY turned up the collar of his coat as he looked out into the snowy market square. The snow was coming down more thickly, and it was evidently going to be a snowy and windy night.

But little the juniors cared for that. They had had the fun of the fair that eventful day, and they did not mind a walk home of a few miles in the snow and wind, cold as it was. There was nothing "soft" about Tom Merry & Co.

"Jolly cold," said Wally, with a sniff. "I say, would one of you fellows mind tucking Pongo under your coat? Mine isn't big enough."

Tom Merry & Co. looked at the hero of the Third Form with glances that ought to have felled him to the ground.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I think I can see myself stuffin' a haiwy and dirtay mongwel inside my coat. Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I don't like the idea of his walking," said Wally. "I don't mind carrying him to the vet's for you," suggested Monty Lowther. "I'd willingly spend a bob on having him painlessly extracted!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I think I would, too!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Wally. "I suppose I must carry the brute myself. Come on, Pongo! Good old Pongo! Come on!"

But Pongo refused to come. He preferred his freedom. He skipped round the juniors as they left the restaurant.

Fatty Wynn had been the last to leave the dining-table, and he had stuffed all the dessert that was not eaten into his pockets. He did not mean to suffer from hunger on the way home to St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus glanced up and down the street with a somewhat anxious expression. Blake asked him if he had lost anything.

"No, deah boy, I haven't lost anything. I was lookin' for an umbrellah shop. I am afwaid my hat will be spoiled in this snow."

"Why don't you carry it in your hand, then?"

"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boy!"

"Try your strength, sir!"

The juniors stopped and looked at the speaker. He was a man in a striped jersey, with a pipe and a stubbly chin. He lifted up a huge hammer and extended it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Try your strength, sir! You takes the 'ammer in your 'ands, you know, and brings it down as 'ard as you can, and that flies up the indicator, sir, and you—"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"I weally do not feel inclined just now for feats of stwength," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Thank you vewy much, my good man, but I won't twouble to bowwow your hammah."

"Better 'ave a try, sir! It's a good exercise, and I ain't done much trade to-day, sir; the snow 'as spoiled it all. Only twopence a time, sir!"

"Oh, in that case I shall be vewy pleased to have a twy!" said Arthur Augustus, who had a keen enough sympathy with anybody who was down on his luck. "Pway, hand me the hammah!"

"Ere you are, sir!"

"Pway stand back, deah boys! Will you hold my hat, Digby, and without dwoppin' it in the snow, please? Pway take my cane, Blake! Stand back, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" took care enough to stand back. They knew that Arthur Augustus might be dangerous when he started swinging that hammer.

D'Arcy went at it in a businesslike manner. He grasped the long handle of the hammer in both hands and swung it round, and there was a fiendish yell from the man in the striped jersey.

"Oh, ow! You young villain!"

"Deah me! I am extremewly sowwy I stwuck your leg with the beastlay hammah, you know, and I twust I did not hurt you?"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Pway stand farthah back!"

And Arthur Augustus swung up the hammer and brought it down. This time he hit the mark, and the indicator registered a very fair blow.

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as wathah good, you know!"
 "Rippin' good, sir!" said the hammer merchant blandly.
 "Try again, sir!"
 "No, I don't think I'll twy again, deah boy, as I find it wathah exhaustin', but these fellows had bettah have a twy all wound. Pway have a twy all wound, deah boys, as our fwiend has not done much twade to-day."
 The juniors of St. Jim's had a try all round. The spirit of emulation entered into the matter, and they tried and tried again. The highest number was scored by Jack Blake, as it happened, though Tom Merry and Figgins and Kerr were only just a little lower. The cash for the repeated tries ran up to quite a figure, but the required sum was made up, and the hammer merchant was satisfied. Then the juniors resumed their tramp towards St. Jim's.
 As they entered the shadowy path through the Wayland Wood two dim figures loomed up in the shadows.
 "Look out!" muttered Tom Merry, recognising a familiar hooked nose.

"It's all right, young gents," said the voice of Rusty and Dodger together. And Dodger went on: "We wasn't laying for you, sir. We wouldn't arter the way you treated us."
 "I suppose you were laying for somebody, as you call it!" said Tom Merry.

"We 'ad a 'ard day," said Dodger, without answering the question. "A policeman reckernised us, and we 'ad to bunk. We're busted!"

"If we could honly git our fare back to London!" sighed Rusty.

Tom Merry hesitated for a moment. The men were a pair of ruffians, and had doubtless broken the law many a time. But it was terrible to be destitute in that bitter weather, without a shelter while the snow was falling and the bitter December wind wailing in the trees.

"How much can you get home on?" he asked abruptly.

Dodger gave a start.

"We could do it on five bob, sir!"

"What do you fellows say?"

"Yaas, wathah! Let us waise the sum for the unfortunate wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus. "On condish that they give us their word of honah to go away at once, and not wob anybody in this neighbourhood."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I certainly approve of helping these victims," said Skimpole. "If I had any money I would gladly contribute it. As I have not—"

"As you have not, ring off, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "Now, then, you fellows, shell out!"

The fellows shelled out. Arthur Augustus had to owe his share, and so did Digby. Fatty Wynn was broke also. But the others made up the five shillings, which was handed to Dodger. He received them half incredulously.

"Thanky, you young gents," he said in a sober voice. "I hain't often come across the likes of you, or maybe I wouldn't be just as I am now. You've done us a good turn,

and we ain't often 'ad one done us, neither! Good-night, gentlemen, and good luck to yer!"

"Good luck to yer!" repeated Rusty through his chattering teeth.

And the two tramps disappeared. Tom Merry & Co. walked on.

"Do you think they will go?" asked Figgins, after a pause.

"I think so," said Tom Merry; "and they would pretty certainly have robbed some of the fellows coming home to-night, otherwise!"

"Yaas, wathah! They are on their honah now, deah boys, and I am quite certain that they will cleah out!"

And, as it happened, Arthur Augustus was quite right.

The juniors trumped on, and within sight of the gates of St. Jim's overtook Reilly and Kerruish, who were also walking home. Reilly was leading a dog by a string.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus! "That's my dog Prince!"

Figgins gave a yell.

"It's my dog Tray!"

"Faith, and it's joking ye are," said Reilly, looking round. "Sure, this is our dog; we bought it between us, didn't we, Kerruish?"

"That we did!" said Kerruish.

"A very decent chap sold us this dog," said Reilly. "He was giving up the business, and he sold Hector cheap because he wanted to find him a good home, and he knew we should treat him well. Kerruish and I clubbed up to buy him. We gave seven-and-sixpence for him, and he's worth four times that money!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I gave seven-and-six for him, and his name was Prince then!"

"And I gave seven-and-six for him," shouted Figgins; "and his name was Tray!"

"And when Gore bought him his name was Fido, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Tom Merry. "The dog merchant made a jolly good thing out of that collie before he parted with him for good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Holy Moses!" said Reilly. "It's mistaken ye are! Anyway, this is our dog now, isn't it, Kerruish?"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerruish.

And they tramped on to the gates of St. Jim's. But at the gates Reilly's generous Irish nature prompted him, and he turned to Figgins.

"Faith, Figgins, if ye paid for the dog, ye shall have a share in him, if you like, and if Kerruish is agreeable!"

"All right!" said Kerruish. "It's only fair; and Gussy, too."

"Well, it's only fair!" said Figgins. "But I tell you what. I'll pay you two fellows what you gave the rascal for the dog, and he can belong to me. I bought him first, you know."

"Well, that's fair, but—"

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "But where's the dog?"

There was a howl from the various owners of the collie as they became aware that Reilly was dragging an empty dog's collar through the snow.

"He's gone!" yelled Figgins.

He was indeed gone. Prince, alias Fido, alias Tray, alias Hector, and alias probably a score of other names, had vanished.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors who did not own the dog of many names. And even the others could not help joining in the laughter.

It was the last that was seen of the collie. And so ended the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at the fair.

THE END.



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THE LOST LEGION!

By
DON ENGLISH.



Jim Nelson and Phil Harris set out with their guardian, Colonel K, and his secretary, Rex Bruce, on a flight round the world. Engine trouble forces them down in Central Asia, where to their amazement they find a city called "Rome the Second." They become friendly with the Romans, and decide to help them fight against Dolabella, a Roman rebel, who has joined up with the Albani, another strange people who inhabit the town of Iolensis nearby. Preparations for the battle are made, and the enemy start to attack the first wall of the Roman defences.

The Battle Rages!

BUT the Romans were not idle while the Albani attacked the wall. The slingers, under cover of the breastwork, had been pouring a hail of leaden bullets into the working-parties, and more than one of the deadly missiles found its mark. Alban after Alban let fall his load and dropped in a heap, killed instantly by a crashing blow on the temple.

Now, too, the catapults on the heights of the second wall were in action, firing as fast as they could reload. Great masses of stone, capable of crushing a man, followed flights of arrows into the enemy ranks, and wrought further havoc in them.

But, in spite of it all, the Albani still came on, pressing forward relentlessly across the now almost useless ditch. Actual fighters were beginning to take the place of the engineers, whose task was practically completed, and a sharp order was rapped out by the officer in command of the Roman defenders.

When the foremost Albani were a bare five yards from the breastwork, the slingers sent a shower of short throwing-spears whistling into them, then gave way to their heavily armed comrades in the rear. Half a dozen Albani made a leap at the earthen wall, only to be flung back instantly among their fellows, two or three of them with mortal wounds. Then the entire line charged as one man, gaining a precarious foothold on the breastwork, and a second later the first hand-to-hand fighting of that memorable battle was in progress.

Breathless with excitement, the flyers up on the wall watched the encounter tensely. The Roman cohorts down there were all picked troops, and at first their superiority told. The Albani were toppled back like so many ninepins, but for every one who fell it seemed that two sprang up to take his place. For a time the Roman line held firm, repulsing all efforts to carry the breastwork, but with the enemy coming up in ever-increasing numbers it became evident that the position would have to be evacuated.

"Valerius Martius is going to withdraw from the ditch,"
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Colonel K told Jim, Rex, and Lewellyn, who did not understand Latin. "Look! He's preparing to cover the retreat!"

Near by, directly above the great gateway, an enormous cauldron of boiling liquid was being hoisted into position behind the screening curtain-wall. Glancing down, the boys saw the Romans begin to retire in good order from the breastwork, converging towards the gate, and hotly pursued by the yelling Albani. Squad after squad reached safety through the huge open doors, but the enemy were pressing hard in an attempt to cut off the rest and make a dash before the massive leaves could be closed.

It was a thrilling moment. If the Albani broke the Roman line now, the second wall would be in their hands, for they could pour through the captured gateway in their hundreds. And on the second wall at the time were all the chief officers of the Roman Army and the crew of the Albatross.

But the picked cohorts below withstood the terrific assault. Retreating step by step, and doggedly returning cut for thrust, they attained the shelter of the arch. And as they made a stand there, determined that the foe should penetrate no farther, there came a sudden hoarse shout of command from above. The legionnaires leaped back without hesitation, just as a shower of boiling oil spattered down on the hapless Albani from the giant cauldron on the wall. And as they fell, the gates closed with a dull boom.

"My hat!" said Phil, with a sigh of relief. "We'd have a pretty thin time if those johnnies had taken the gate!"

Colonel K nodded a silent assent. With the aid of a powerful pair of field-glasses, he was endeavouring to get some idea of the course of the battle along the rest of the wall. All seemed well to the south; the raiders had been able to get no hold with their scaling-ladders, and had been easily kept at bay. But a mile or so away to the north a fierce combat appeared to be raging on the heights, and the colonel pointed it out to Valerius Martius.

"I believe that the enemy have succeeded in establishing themselves there!" he said crisply in Latin. "More men had better be drafted to the spot immediately, unless we want them to get round and take us from the rear!"

"It shall be as you say, O Colonnus," agreed the Imperator, issuing swift orders to some of his aides.

But the colonel shook his head gravely as he turned back to his companions.

"I don't quite like the look of that," he said quietly in English. "If the Albani manage to break through on the flank in force, we shall be in a very nasty position, to say the least of it. What a blessing a field-telephone would have been!"

A cry of amazement from Jim brought their attention back to the situation in the pass. The Albani, doubtless instructed by the traitorous Dolabella and his men, had made themselves siege-engines after the Roman pattern. And now a full dozen queer machines were trundling across the filled-in ditch to a gap which had been hastily made in the earthen breastwork.

Some of them were wooden towers, already crowded with archers, others were obviously cranes for lifting men on to the wall. And last, but certainly not least, were two huge battering-rams, each constructed of a beam over a hundred feet long, and equipped with formidable iron heads. They all moved jerkily towards the wall, pushed and dragged by soldiers, who protected themselves as much as possible with their big shields.

Over The Wall!

As they advanced closer and closer, the Alban archers began to let fly volley after volley at the Romans, a fire which was returned with interest by the catapult crews. But several shafts flew dangerously near to the flyers, and Valerius Martius touched the colonel on the shoulder.

"Come, O Colonnus!" he said. "If you and the other lords would remain exposed here, it were better that you don armour. I myself will see you equipped."

He strode to the staircase-trap, and the five followed him, keeping well down behind the curtain-wall. Ten minutes later they emerged again, each in the glory of full Roman military costume, complete with sword and shield. Colonel K was a splendid figure, but little Llewelyn, in a curiass two or three sizes too large for him, was nothing short of comical, and acutely unhappy about it.

"Indeed to goodness, it's all dressed-up like a waxwork I am, look you!" he told Rex miserably.

During their brief absence much had happened. The towers were now quite close to the wall, and from the top of the nearest a slender bridge had been flung across. As they watched, an Alban sprang on to the swaying perch, and made a dash along it, yelling and waving his sword.

But just as he reached the curtain-wall, a legionnaire leaped up before him, and for a few seconds the pair were engaged in furious hand-to-hand combat. Then abruptly the Alban lost his precarious foothold and went plunging down to death. And at the same moment another Roman, jumping up beside the first, hurled a jagged mass of stone, which tore the flimsy structure of the bridge to rags, and sent it crashing after him.

From farther along the line came an excited cheer. One of the ballistae, or stone-throwing engines, had been used to fling a potful of pitch over another of the towers. The soldiers had followed this up with blazing brands, and the thin wood had taken fire readily. Now the whole affair was in flames, burning fiercely and swiftly, and the crew were leaping from it in all directions. It was clear that, in a matter of minutes, it would be reduced to ashes.

The rest of the towers had so far met with as little success, but the flyers saw with alarm that the two terrible rams had been got into position despite all the defenders could do. They were now directly in front of the gate, and one was already swung back in preparation for its first smashing stroke.

An instant later it was released, and came sweeping forward with apparently irresistible force. The massive iron head crashed against the doors with a thud that made the very wall tremble, and Colonel K looked grim.

"I thought so!" he said in English. "With both of those rams going that gate won't last an hour. We shall be falling back on the third wall before noon, or I'm a double Dutchman!"

Every catapult and ballista within range was now concentrating on the battering-rams, and a perfect hail of stones and arrows showered down about their labouring crews. Men fell never to rise again, but there were always plenty more to fill the empty places. The second ram delivered its blow, then the first, then the second again, at intervals of a minute or two, and the huge doors quivered under the series of concussions. But they had been built to withstand just such a pounding, and they were still very far from giving way.

Suddenly there came a fresh danger at the northern end of the wall. One of the towers, taller than the rest, had managed to avoid the peril of the flaming pitch, and her archers and spearmen, able to see over the curtain-wall, were wreaking dreadful havoc among the defenders. And one of

the cranes, taking advantage of this, had already hoisted a score of men to the summit.

Before they could be cut off, they had fallen upon the crew of the nearest ballista, slain them to the last man, and overthrown the engine with howls of delight. But their triumph was short-lived. The initial surprise over, the Romans were swift to rally, and dozens of legionnaires assailed the raiders. Fully half of them were thrown to destruction over the curtain-wall, and a moment later a lucky shot from another ballista struck the tower. The weak fabric crumpled as the stone sheared through it with a rending crash, and the whole top collapsed in ruins amid Roman cheers.

The next half-hour was more like a nightmare to the English boys than anything else. Time after time a handful of Albani would succeed in reaching the top of the wall, and perhaps hold their own for a few moments, but the end was always the same. Either they died fighting, or they were hurled bodily over the parapet by their opponents. Not one escaped. The Romans knew how much hung on their ability to keep the wall, and they were battling like demons, urged on and encouraged by Valerius Martius, the Imperator, who was constantly passing to and fro among them.

The catapults and the ballistae were working ceaselessly; the feeders could hardly supply the ammunition fast enough to the labouring crews. Now and then a cauldron of boiling oil or pitch was brought up and emptied over the attackers below, and once another of the towers was fired. But through it all the rams continued their relentless hammering at the gate. And the gate was beginning to yield.

Colonel K, however, appeared to have little interest in the situation close at hand. He was scanning the wall to the north again through the glasses, and from the grim look on his face it seemed that he did not like what he saw.

"Indeed to goodness, there must be trouble up there!" said Llewelyn shrewdly, and the colonel nodded.

"You're right, Llewelyn! There is trouble—serious trouble!" he replied. "The Albani are over the wall!"

"Over the wall!" echoed Phil and Jim, with a gasp. "Great Scott, sir, what's going to happen now?"

"If they're over in great numbers, and we can't stop them, it means that this position is utterly useless," said their guardian. "I must see Valerius Martius at once."

He strode off to join the Imperator, who was directing the fire of several ballistae at the rams. He drew him aside and began to talk, indicating the danger-point on the northern wall, and showing him how to use the glasses so as to get a closer view. At the end of fifteen anxious minutes he returned to his companions.

"Come along," he said. "We're going to take the air and make a reconnoitre. Let's get rid of all this bronze paraphernalia and start."

But man proposes, Fate disposes; and she chose to intervene just then.

"My aunt!" exclaimed Phil a few moments later. "Look at that!"

They were passing the gate on their way to divest themselves of their uniforms, and it was now a startling sight. One of the huge panels was shivered from top to bottom, and only held together by the reinforcing beams that crossed it. The other was partly torn from one hinge, and leaning farther and farther in at every stroke. It was very obvious that the fall of the gate was imminent.

Such was evidently the opinion of the Roman commander, for already cauldron after cauldron of boiling liquid was being hoisted on to the wall to help repel the enemy charge, and several cohorts were taking up their stand in front of the archway. Any troops attempting to force their way through would be accorded a warm reception.

And then, as the flyers paused an instant to allow a squad of legionnaires to march past, the crisis came. The two great rams, which had been still for a full minute, were suddenly released together instead of alternately. And the terrific double shock proved too much for the shattered doors. They went down before the iron heads with a thunderous crash, filling the arch with splintered wood, and a triumphant yell rose from the Albani.

Before a single cauldron could be emptied over the parapet above, fully fifty of them had leaped into the breach, and were at grips with the defenders beyond. The unexpectedness of it all took Colonel K and his companions, who were very close to the gate, entirely by surprise. And ere they had time to beat a retreat they found themselves attacked by the enemy. There was nothing for it but to fight with the others, and fight they did.

Colonel K, dissatisfied with his short sword, flung it away after a few blows and bounded swiftly upon the nearest Alban, who was armed with a terrible iron mace. A single lightning twist, and he had wrenched the formidable weapon from its owner's grasp; a second, and he had felled him with it. Then he was surrounded by foes, and, with a booming

laugh, cast his shield after his sword. He laid about him in all directions with the mace, killing almost every time he struck, and those on the wall above who had leisure to watch the struggle howled their appreciation of his courage.

Hand to Hand!

PHIL and Jim, too, were in the thick of it, standing back to back and wielding their unaccustomed swords as best they might. They were hotly beset by half a dozen Albani, and time after time they fended off deadly thrusts by what seemed a miracle. But at last Phil's chief aggressor, a tall man who appeared to be a leader, gathered himself together for a supreme effort, and aimed a crushing blow at the boy's head.

Phil saw it coming, and ducked aside, lifting his shield, and managed to rob it of some of its force. But such was the power behind the stroke that the very impact of it on his shield was sufficient to beat him to his knees, and the Alban sprang forward, with a shout, to finish him. Then, as he raised his sword, a sound like the crack of a whip cut across the uproar all about, and he pitched silently to the ground stone dead.

At the same moment a Roman charge swept away the rest of the Albani round the pair, and Jim swung about to help the dazed Phil to his feet. Llewelyn, his big helmet cocked ludicrously over one bright eye, came running over to them, a smoking automatic in his hand.

"Indeed to goodness, are ye hurt, young masters?" he demanded anxiously. "Look you, I see a great barbarian cutting at ye with his sword, so I shoot him as dead as mutton, yes, indeed, whatever."

"Thanks, Llewelyn, we're all right," replied Phil, smiling.

The boys looked about them. The sharp encounter was over. Of the fifty Albani who had dared the assault of the breach not one remained. Someone had fired the fragments of the gate, and the archway was filled with flame and smoke; it would be some while before the passage was clear again. A few yards away stood their guardian, breathing heavily as he leaned on the mace which had served him so well. His brazen cuirass and helmet were all battered with the blows he had received, and blood was trickling from a sword-cut on one arm.

"Hallo, my lads!" he boomed, as he caught sight of them. "That was something we didn't bargain for, eh? Here comes Valerius Martius to see whether we've survived!"

"Thou art wounded, O Colonnus!" was the Emperor's first exclamation, as he hastened up, deeply concerned for the safety of his guests.

"A small matter," returned the colonel in Latin. "But the gate has fallen; will you not withdraw your men to the third wall?"

"Even so," assented Valerius Martius. "The order has already been given. Decius Canidus Philario will command the pass during my absence. I have decided to fly with you in the bird-chariot."

The whole Roman force was now in retreat from the doomed second wall and busy re-installing itself on the last line of defence. When finally the Albani broke through they would find themselves confronted by another wall even more formidable than the first, and protected additionally by a deep staked moat at the foot. A wall which incidentally they had never, at any period of their history, been able to take.

But it seemed now rather as though they would be saved the trouble of storming it. For when presently the Albatross took off from the plain behind, and raced away northwards on her errand, it soon became clear that the right wing of the enemy was over the wall in deadly earnest.

They had gained a foothold at the head of a little gully, and there, with the aid of boring-machines, had made a breach in the wall. Now, while picked troops manned the summit on either side to repel Roman attacks, the forces behind were pouring through the breach in a steady stream. Already there were many thousands of them drawn up on the plain, evidently waiting until their numbers were great enough before marching on the pass. Valerius Martius regarded them with a sort of grim calm.

"There is treachery in the ranks to-day, O Colonnus!" he said in Latin. "I should have been informed of this long since. We cannot hope now to drive them back. They have brought the war into our country."

"And look!" cried Phil in the same language, as the monoplane circled about. "They've broken through south of the pass as well!"

"What?" shouted the colonel, leaping to the window.

It was only too true. There was a second breach some three miles from the first, and the invaders were rushing into Roman territory like water through a cracked dam. This time there could be no stemming the flood. The Albani were over the wall with a vengeance!

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Valerius Martius rapidly summed up the desperate situation.

"There is only one thing to be done," he said, as the Albatross swooped back to the pass, "and that is to withdraw every man from the wall simultaneously. Then we can concentrate on the plain between here and Roma Secunda, and risk a pitched battle. It is our only chance of saving the city."

Ten minutes later scores of mounted messengers had left the pass in all directions at full gallop, and the Roman trumpets were sounding the retreat. The ringing notes were taken up and passed from trumpeter to trumpeter, till they reached the farthest limits of the wall, and half an hour after the decision to abandon the useless barrier, the great withdrawal had commenced.

The crew of the Albatross, which had once more taken the air, were naturally able to get a comprehensive view of the manoeuvres. All along the line they could see little bands of legionnaires leaving the ridge for the plain, and joining up to form cohorts which marched swiftly towards Roma Secunda.

Hard on their heels came the attacking Albani, using their light scaling-ladders to reach the summit now that there was no resistance. Plainly, however, they had orders not to pursue, for they contented themselves with crossing the wall and moving to link up with the huge forces still pouring through the breaches.

Fascinated, the flyers watched the growth of the two armies, and every moment one thing became clearer. Save for the two thousand reserves at the pass, the Roman troops were scattered across the whole width of the valley, and for them all to reassemble at a given point was a lengthy matter. But the Albani, thanks to the breaches, had already been massing on the level for almost an hour before the retreat was sounded, and they were practically ready to advance.

And the Alban commander-in-chief was no fool. By the time he had 25,000 men at his back, he could see that Valerius Martius, stationed on the direct road to Roma Secunda, about five miles away, had not more than 12,000, though more were approaching rapidly. He realised that this was his chance, a golden opportunity not to be missed. To delay longer would be to give the enemy time to concentrate; now was the instant to strike. Without waiting for the rest of his forces to come up, he advanced upon the Romans.

The result of that battle was a foregone conclusion. Out-numbered as they were by two to one, the Romans knew that they were bound to lose. But they fought with desperate courage, egged on by their intrepid general, who was conspicuous on his white horse wherever the press was thickest. For far longer than might have been expected they withstood the repeated onslaughts of the Albani. And then suddenly they lost their leader.

Valerius Martius was heading a counter-charge against the enemy when all at once his horse, struck by an arrow, reared and then toppled heavily. His men rushed to form a bodyguard as he sprang clear, and at the same moment the Albani surged forward to the attack, yelling fiercely. So swift was their advance that they had cut off the retreat of the little circle in a flash, and for a minute or two there was a terrific tussle about it.

Then, overwhelmed by the weight of numbers, the ring broke, and the horror-stricken Romans saw their gallant comrades go down to death with their Emperor. It was the last straw. Already partly demoralised by the fall of the wall, as they were, this final catastrophe proved too much for them. The front ranks swung about, turning blindly to flee from the triumphant foe, and those behind caught the panic from them. In less time than it takes to tell the whole defence had become a rout. The Roman army was in full flight across the plain to its mother city.

In the air above, the crew of the Albatross looked at each other with utter consternation in their eyes. The Albani were over the wall, the Romans totally defeated, and the Emperor, if not dead, at least terribly wounded. What was there now to stop Dolabella and his allies wreaking their vengeance upon the defenceless Roma Secunda and her people?

Colonel K Takes Command!

UNDER the pale sunlight of early morning the city of Roma Secunda lay silent and deserted. In her market-place, at this hour usually thronged with chattering folk, nothing stirred. Her great houses seemed devoid of life; her once-busy streets were empty and still. It might have been a city of the dead.

Yet only two days ago she had been flourishing enough. Her people had passed to and fro in her crowded thoroughfares or stopped at the corners to gossip about the war, speculating idly how long it would be before the Albani gave

up their futile attacks on the impregnable wall which cut off their valley from Roma Secunda. And then, like a thunderclap, had come the incredible news.

The sentries on the flanking towers of the Southern Gate saw a mounted man racing madly towards them along the road that led to the wall. It was a messenger from the scene of the fighting. Right under the huge archway he flung his lathered horse back on its hanches, and shouted his tidings for all the world to hear.

The people listened, at first unbelieving, then uneasy. And finally the word began to spread with the speed of wildfire.

"The Albani are over the wall! The Albani are over the wall!"

The dread cry had gone echoing through the streets, sowing panic wherever it went. And then had commenced the great exodus. Terror-stricken, the inhabitants had collected their belongings and their household goods in desperate haste and fled the doomed town, making for the poor sanctuary of the surrounding hills.

Further reports had only served to quicken their departure. There had been a pitched battle on the plain, the Romans were utterly defeated, the Emperor was killed, and the Albani were advancing upon Roma Secunda. The defenceless townspeople waited to hear no more. The Albani were their hereditary enemies; in their wake would come nothing but death and destruction. Within thirty-six hours, almost before the first survivors of the beaten army had straggled in, the city was emptied of its population.

Now the great Alban host lay encamped before her closed gates and unguarded walls, while their general bargained with the Roman rebel, Gaius Procellus Dolabella. The general wanted to raze the city to the ground and wipe it out for ever. But Dolabella desired to make himself King of Roma Secunda, and finally he succeeded in ransoming the town for a terrific sum and the promise of allegiance to the Albani.

"Set me on the throne, and I will always remain faithful to you," he said.

"Very well," agreed the Alban, rising to show that the interview was at an end. "We will search the town for treasure, and then storm the Lake Palace where the old king lives. It should not be difficult to take."

He began to issue the necessary orders to his adjutants.

In the city itself a keen observer might have noticed that all was not as still as it had at first appeared. Now and then a faint clash of metal betrayed the presence of armed men lurking in shadowed doorways, and from time to time an officer passed among them on silent feet. Behind the low parapets which encircled the flat roofs soldiers lay at full length, tensely waiting. Someone had planned a surprise for the Albani when they entered Roma Secunda. The seemingly deserted place was alive with determined legionnaires.

In the atrium of the magnificent House of the Donati, home of the dead Emperor Valerius Martius, a council was being held.

"Since you wished it, I have assumed temporary command of the army in place of Valerius Martius," said the colonel. "My plan of campaign is very simple. When the Albani walk into our trap, as they will, we must destroy as many of them as possible. If it becomes necessary to retreat, fall back towards the Lake Palace. We must hold that at all costs, in order to protect the king."

The officers nodded agreement. But before any of them could speak a messenger had slipped softly into the atrium. He saluted Colonel K.

"Hail, lord!" he said. "I came from the Southern Gate! The enemy camp is struck, and when I left they were preparing to send scaling parties over the walls to throw open the portal. By now they will be entering the city, for plainly they suspect no ambush."

The colonel swung about with a delighted chuckle. "Good!" he boomed. "The time for action has come! We will give them the surprise or their lives! Only remember—no one is to show himself until they are well into the town. Give the vanguard time to reach the forum before we fall upon them. A single shot from this fire-tube will be the signal to attack."

He pointed to the automatic in his belt, and after a swift exchange of salutes the council broke up. The Romans hastened away to their appointed stations, and Colonel K turned to his companions.

"Come along!" he said in English. "We're going to the Senate by the underground passage. I think we'd better take Camillus with us. Where is he?"

"In the peristyle, sir," replied Phil. "I'll fetch him." He hurried out to the great open court at the back of the atrium, and returned a few moments later with a boy of about his own age. It was Camillus Donatus, younger brother of the dead Emperor.

"Hail, O Colonnus!" he said wearily. "You wish me to accompany you?"

"Even so," replied the colonel in Latin. "If the Albani take the city and Dolabella finds you here, your life will not be worth an instant's purchase. Come! We will show you a line of escape whose existence you have never suspected!"

He led the way into the dusky little ante-chamber with the mosaic floor, and lifted the squares covering the lever which opened the trapdoor entrance to the tunnel. Valerius Martius had once brought them from the Senate by this passage, and taught them how to work the simple controls. But since the secret was revealed only to the senators, it was the first time Camillus had ever heard of it, and he stared in amazement at the steps leading down into darkness.

"By Jupiter, this is a strange thing!" he said. "Whither does it lead, O Colonnus?"

"There are three other entrances," the colonel told him. "One in the Senate, one in the king's Lake Palace, and the last in the House of the Canidi. We go now to the Senate."

Switching on his powerful torch, he began to descend the stairs, and the others followed, Rex bringing up the rear and closing the trap. The little procession marched swiftly along the narrow corridor towards its goal.

The Counter Attack!

A FEW minutes later the beam of his torch showed another stairway ahead, and it was not long before the five of them were climbing out through a second trap. They were in a tiny chamber similar to the one they had left. Beyond it lay the great amphitheatre of the Senate, silent and ghostly now with its rising tiers of empty white benches.

But the halls behind the huge colonnade which formed the facade of the building were filled with legionnaires, waiting like everyone else in the town for the signal to strike. The colonel took up a position in the shelter of a pillar where he could command a good view of the forum below, and the other four followed suit. The minutes dragged by.

Then all at once they became aware that the silence which brooded over the city was less intense than it had been. Faintly in the distance, towards the Southern Gate in particular, could be heard shouts and snatches of song. And at last came the sound for which they had all been listening—the regular tramp, tramp of marching men, growing steadily louder and louder.

"They're coming!" breathed Jim Nelson, in his chum's ear, as they crouched down farther into the shadow of their column.

"Watch that avenue straight ahead!" returned Phil, in the same tone. "That's the way they're advancing!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth he was proved right. Into the forum swung the first of the Albani, resplendent in their golden-winged helmets and mail. Straight across towards the Senate they came, while the cohorts behind spread out to right and left.

And then Colonel K chose to give the signal.

A single leap took him out of the shelter of the pillar, and on to the broad pedestal of a statue at the top of the stairway which led down to the square. A mighty yell arose as he was seen, and the nearest soldiers started a rush up the steps towards him. With superb coolness the explorer drew his automatic, raised it at armslength above his head, and pulled the trigger—once.

The shot cut across the morning air like a whip-crack. Startled, the Albani paused, and for a few seconds there was dead silence. Then, like pent-up waters abruptly let loose, the Romans burst upon them from every doorway.

The men who were making for the colonel never finished their charge. Down the steps swept an irresistible flood of legionnaires, and they were driven back among their comrades almost before they had time to bring their weapons into play. Every temple was giving up its stream of vengeful Romans; missiles of all descriptions rained down into the forum from the surrounding roofs.

Taken utterly aback by this assault, that came, as it were, out of the blue, the Albani at first offered scarcely any resistance. Literally hundreds of them were slain in the first minute of the attack. And all over the town it was the same; the surprise was complete. Penned up in the narrow streets between blank-walled houses, with merciless foes assailing them on either side, the invaders found themselves trapped. There could be no escape in flight; it was kill or be killed.

Up on the Senate steps, high above the turmoil in the forum, Colonel K and his companions watched the struggle with anxious eyes. On the success of this ambush depended

the whole fate of Roma Secunda, and, so far, everything had gone well. But the explorer's face clouded as he saw a fresh column of Albani forcing their way slowly along the avenue from the Southern Gate towards the square below.

"That's a nuisance," he said softly to Rex Bruce, his young secretary. "I hoped we'd be able to wipe out every man of the looting parties before they had time to bring up any help. These reinforcements will change the course of the fight, I'm afraid."

He was right. A few minutes later the advancing troops fell upon the rear of the legionnaires in the forum, and the latter were forced to turn to combat this new peril. The looters, who had been driven to form a compact square in the centre, took fresh heart as they saw the attention of their adversaries distracted, and redoubled their efforts. In a moment the whole tide of battle had turned against the Romans. They were caught between two fires, just

as the Albani had been previously, and they were outnumbered.

A house on the far side of the forum had fallen into the hands of the enemy, who were swarming up on to the roof. A flight of arrows whistled towards the flters over the heads of the struggling mob in the square below, but fell short, and dropped harmlessly on the marble stairway.

The Albani in the forum itself, incited by the officer, were pushing swiftly nearer and nearer to the Senate. The Romans, formed now into a line from side to side, were returning blow for blow, and doing great damage in the opposing ranks. Yet for every man they slew another sprang into his place, and the line was being forced steadily back. Step by step the Romans gave way until they reached the foot of the Senate stairs, and there for a minute they stood firm.

(Colonel K and his wards are in danger of capture! Look out for super-thrills in next week's instalment!)

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