

A GRAND HOME CINEMA—MUST BE WON! (SEE THE SIMPLE COMPETITION ON PAGE 17.)

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

The GEM

2^d



READ THIS YARN OF THE ADVENTURES OF TOM MERRY & CO.—

TOM MERRY & CO!



Redskins versus Palefaces was a favourite Scout game with Tom Merry & Co. in Old England—but now it's Redskins versus Palefaces with a vengeance, when Gussy and Skimpole fall into the hands of the Cheyennes in the Rockies!

CHAPTER I.

The Rocky Mountain Railway.

"**S**NOW again!" said Tom Merry. "By Jove, how it's coming down!"

"Bai Jove, you're wight!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and took a survey of the country through which the train was rushing.

Tom Merry & Co. were still upon their travels, for they were, as Jack Blake expressed it, on the last lap. For some time past the Rocky Mountains had been looming before them on the western horizon, and now the train was entering the rugged passes of the Rockies.

Beyond lay the West—the real West, where the grizzly bears climbed the rocky spurs, and the coyotes howled o'er nights on the prairie, and the Redskins still lived in skin wigwams. And the juniors of St. Jim's felt their hearts beat faster at the thought of treading that wild land of romance.

The railway line ran here along the bottom of a vast canyon. Infinitesimal the train looked, crawling along at the foot of the steep bluffs. Wild, rocky steeps, arroyos choked with snow, frozen pines rustling in the wind, surrounded the train, and met the gaze of the passengers on all sides.

"Awfully impressive, don't you know!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It makes you feel the—the kind of feelin' which you—er—which you feel undah these circumstances, you know. Don't you think so, Tom Mewwy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You've hit it exactly, Gussy!"

"I have nevah seen such huge wocks in my life. They are weally gwand!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! And there is somethin' witten on some of them," he went

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on, a little excitedly. "I have heard of wock inscriptions somewhere out here, near the dead cities of the Aztecs. I should like to stop and decipher some of them. What are you gwinntin' at, Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're about a thousand miles or so from the dead cities of the Aztecs!" yelled Blake. "And those inscriptions on the rocks are quite modern."

"Weally, I fail to see how the—"

"Look! There's one in big type," said Blake, as the train rushed past a huge face of rock that rose like the wall of a house for five hundred feet or more. "You can read that from the train, my pippin. Read it!"

D'Arcy turned his monocle upon the inscription on the great rock, and read:

"COBBLER'S MORNING NIPS!"

The swell of St. Jim's looked utterly bewildered.

He was prepared for all sorts of surprises in America, and his ideas had already been considerably enlarged since leaving St. Jim's and the shores of England. But a huge inscription in the Rocky Mountains on a flat surface, in letters five or six feet high, and painfully modern in design, flabbergasted him. And he hadn't the faintest idea what Cobbler's Morning Nips might be.

"Bai Jove! What does it mean, Tom Mewwy?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's an advertisement!"

"A what?"

"An advertisement. You'll find lots of them along the line. That's a chemist's ad. There's a soap one next."

A steep slope of rock rose near the railway track, with a roaring torrent at its base. From the summit sang the wild pines in the mountain wind. The scene was wild,

—IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS, ON THEIR WAY TO ARIZONA!

OUT WEST!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

impressive. The sight of a hunter in buckskin, or a Red Indian in full war-paint would not have been startling. But there was neither hunter nor Redskin to be seen. Across the great rock was a band of glaring white letters:

"PLUMSON'S SHAVING SOAP!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped his eyeglass to the end of its cord.

"I refuse to look at it," he said. "I regard it as disgusting. Fancy stick-in' beastly vulgar advertisements in such a romantic spot?"

"It isn't what you'd call the very best taste," Tom Merry remarked. "Still, they advertise along the railway lines in England, you know. This seems to me carrying it a bit too far. It recalls Chicago in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. There's a lot more of them."

On pretty nearly every available space advertisements were glaring forth from rock and pine.

The mountains were silent, save for the wind and the whir of the train. The canyon was vast, solitary. The passengers might have imagined themselves in a wilderness, untenanted by man, but for the advertisements. But the glaring inscriptions along the line reminded them at every turn that they were in modern America.

"Sweet are the uses of advertisement," grinned Jack Blake. "Hallo! There's one that looks familiar!"

It burst on their view as the train rounded a sharp bend.

"POTTS' CANNED BEEF CUPS THE STACK!"

"That reminds me of Chicago!" grinned Blake.

"Dinner's served, sah!" said a cheerful voice, as a little darky came out of the car and joined the juniors. "Dinner's served, Mas' Tom."

"Right you are, Pomp!"

And Tom Merry & Co. made their way to the dining-car.

CHAPTER 2.

Through the Snowdrift!

COLONEL STALKER was already at table, and he grinned a welcome to his young charges.

The colonel, who was a great friend of Tom Merry's uncle, Mr. Poinsett, had gone to Chicago to meet the boys on their journey west, and they were crossing the Rockies in his care.

But a change had come over the colonel since leaving Chicago. In the city of canned beef he had discarded his Western garb, and had appeared in "store clothes" and "plug" hat, an array in which he felt rather proud, but in which he was somewhat uneasy. On the journey west he had gradually changed. The plug hat had disappeared at St. Louis. Later on the coat went, and the colonel wore a loose and easy jacket in the place of it.

The "bi'led" shirt vanished, and a loose flannel one took its place, and the juniors suspected that the colonel's "suspenders," as he called his braces, had also been left behind somewhere between Chicago and the Rockies, as soon as they saw a big leather belt round his waist.

As soon as the Rockies appeared in sight, the city trousers had finally gone, and the boots. The colonel now wore cowboy breeches, tucked into huge boots that reached to his knees.

And in the homely garb of the West the colonel seemed to feel comfortable at last, and his kindly nature expanded.

A flare of red—the colour of the worthy colonel's shirt—attracted the juniors to his table, and they joined him.

"Thunder!" said the colonel. "It's snowing, and no mistake. Looks as if it might be a block on the line. Guess I hope we get out of this canyon first."

"Would it be dangerous here?" asked Tom Merry.

"I reckon. Farther on there's higher ground. Here we should be in the middle of a drift. But never mind the snow; here's dinner."

And they dined.

Skimpole, however, had one eye on the falling snow. He

was thinking of his book of travels, and what a splendid chapter he would be able to get out of a snowing-up in the Rockies.

Most of the passengers in the train were keeping an anxious eye on the snow. Nobody but Skimpole and perhaps Wally wanted to be snowed up.

The railway line now ran between two high bluffs, which even at midday cast a shadow over the track. There was snow thick on the line, and drifting by the track, and it was coming down heavily.

On the summit of the bluff, where the frozen pipes sagged to and fro, there were masses of snow, lodged in the trees, and seemingly suspended over the train as it rushed by.

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "it looks positively dangerous. I should like to have a photograph of that for my book of travels. Do you think you could take a photograph of it, Tom Merry? I remember Manners lent you his camera."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, a photograph at forty miles an hour, in the dusk, would not be a howling success, I should think," he remarked. "I don't think I'll try."

"It would be an alarming experience if that mass of snow could crash down on the train—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd have to put that in your last chapter, and write finis."

"Thunder! It's coming down!" said Colonel Stalker, emerging from the car.

Skimpole gave a start of affright.

"Goodness gracious! We are lost! Stop the train! Run for your lives!"

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

"Merry, it is no laughing matter. Your life is in danger."

"Rats!"

"Eh?" said the colonel. "What's the trouble?"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, blinking upward through his glasses. "It is not coming down. You were mistaken, my dear sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jack Blake. "The colonel was speaking of the snow, ass, not the drifts on top of the bluff, duffer!"

"By thunder, it's coming down!" repeated the colonel, looking at the thick falling flakes. "This means a block on the line, or you can call me a greaser!"

"What on earth's a greaser?" murmured Blake.

"Probably some curious animal that inhabits these Western wildernesses," said Skimpole. "I must ask the colonel for particulars, and if possible obtain a photograph of the creature. Colonel Stalker—"

But the colonel was not listening.

There was a buzz among the passengers as the speed of the train was observed to slacken, and in the gathering dusk of night anxious faces looked from the windows.

The gloom ahead in the pass was growing denser, and no one could see exactly what was the matter. But that something was wrong was clear enough.

"I guess it's the snow," said Colonel Stalker. "You can rely on old Stalky, my sons! It's a block of the snow."

The train came to a halt.

Immediately there was a rush of the passengers to alight, and to inquire what was the matter. The juniors of St. Jim's were among the first. Near the halted engine stood the engine-driver, the conductor, and several other men in earnest talk. A few words were sufficient to tell what the matter was. There was a drift of snow ahead on the line, and the train was stopped.

"Snowed up!" said Wally. "My hat!"

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I am very glad this has occurred!"

But every other face was serious.

"I guess it's a big drift," said the engineer. "But we can't stick here, I guess, unless we're forced. There's one chance of getting through."

"Take it!" said Colonel Stalker.

"I guess it's risky."

"I guess it's not so risky as being frozen-up in the pass."

"Correct. But—"

"But what's the chance?" asked a dozen voices.

"To charge the drift, and get through. There's clear ground beyond, and this is the end of the canyon."

A silence followed the engineer's words.

Trains beset by the snow sometimes cut their way through, but it is a risky proceeding, and in case of a very big drift it might easily mean total wreck and disaster.

It depended on the extent of the drift, and without more ado the engineer and conductor went ahead with lanterns to examine the ground.

The passengers waited in tense anxiety. If the train were snowed-up in the canyon the provisions on board would not last long, and it might be many days before help could arrive over the snow-drifted hills. It might mean death by starvation.

If there was a chance of getting through the drift, all were willing to take it, though fully conscious of the risk they were running.

"I guess we'll try it," said Colonel Stalker. "Neck or nothing, I guess!"

And that was the general opinion.

The juniors of St. Jim's felt their hearts beat hard. This was their first experience of the real West, and it thrilled them. There was real danger at last—danger that might become terrible.

They waited anxiously. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kept his eyeglass fixed upon the twinkling lights of the engineer and his companion ahead on the track. The swell of St. Jim's was as cool as anybody there.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "This will be wathah an expewience! Upon the whole, your baggage will come in useful at last, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry laughed, but less cheerfully than usual.

His old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, had packed his trunks with winter clothing for his journey to Arizona, fully convinced that Arizona was a cold country. As the swell of St. Jim's remarked, his flannels and furs might come in useful now.

Almost every passenger had turned out of the train now, and among them was a slim fellow with an aquiline nose, who seemed desirous of keeping as far away from the juniors of St. Jim's as possible.

But it happened that the engineer, coming back, turned the light of his lantern full upon the man's face, and Arthur Augustus caught a clear view of it. And the swell of St. Jim's uttered a startled exclamation.

"Puntah!"

It was Captain Punter, the rascal who had kidnapped him in New York, and who had dogged the chums to Chicago. Since then they had not seen him till this moment.

Tom Merry and Blake turned quickly round.

"Punter—where?"

"There! Ah, he is gone! It was the wascal!"

"Rats! How could he be here?"

"I pwesume that I can believe the evidence of my own eyes, Blake!"

"I don't know. Your window-pane may have deceived you!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gentlemen, we shall make the attempt," said the engineer. "Take your seats, please!"

The passengers re-entered the train.

The engine was set in motion again, backing the train, and the drift on the line vanished from sight. Arthur Augustus looked out of the window with a puzzled expression.

"Bai Jove! We are goin' back, Tom Mewwy!"

"That's only to gain room for getting up speed."

"Oh, I see! I nevah thought of that, you know."

The train backed away for a considerable distance. When the retrograde motion ceased the passengers drew deep breaths. The tug-of-war was coming! The train moved forward again—slowly at first, increasing in speed till it was tearing down at a rate which bade fair to make it fly from the metals.

"Bai Jove! We are goin' it now!"

"I guess we're doing it slick!" remarked Wally.

"Wally, I wefuse to allow you to use those beastlay Americanisms—"

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

"At a moment when we are all in pewil of our lives, I should be sowwy to have to give you a feahful thwashin', but undah the cires—"

"Peace!" said Tom Merry—"peace, my children! The crash may come any minute now, and if Gussy's talking we shan't hear it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Sit tight!" said Colonel Stalker.

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"Wight-ho, my deah sir!"

The juniors sat tight. Most of the passengers were pale, and one or two women passengers showed signs of hysterics. Pompey, the little darkey who had followed Tom Merry from Chicago, sat with chattering teeth close beside his master. Tom dropped a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"Not afraid, Pomp?"

"N-n-no!" stammered Pomp. "I'se not afraid, Mass' Tom—"

"I'se do as you tell me, Mass' Tom."

And poor Pomp tried to keep a stiff upper lip, but with very indifferent success.

The train seemed to be flying now. At any moment might come the terrible bump of the engine into the snow-drift. And what then?

That remained to be seen.

Faster, faster!

Bump!

There was a terrific shock, and nearly everyone in the train was flung down.

Bump!

CHAPTER 3.

Skimpole's Find!

"BAl Jove! Don't twead on my monocle!"

That was the first sound that was heard after the shock—the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy was sprawling, with Blake sprawling across him, and Skimpole sitting on Blake. Tom Merry was reclining on the knees of Colonel Stalker, and Wally was on the floor with his feet on a seat. Pompey was standing up, frightened out of his wits and gasping for breath. The passengers were lying or staggering about in all sorts of attitudes, and gasping, as they began to sort themselves out.

"Don't twead on my eyeglass! I drowped it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Tom Merry breathlessly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, this is no time for cacklin'—"

"Nor for inquiring after a giddy eyeglass, Gussy!"

"Wats! I have drowped it, and I am afraid some silly ass will twead on it! Pway get off my back, Blake, deah boy! I don't want to huwvy you, but you are a vewy heavy weight, you know, and I am feelin' wathah cwushed!"

"How can I get off till this ass Skimpole gets off me?" grunted Blake.

"Pray don't disturb me for a moment!" said Skimpole, groping for his notebook. "In a case like this I shall be glad to jot down my first impressions before stirring a limb. I shall not detain you long—"

"That you won't!" agreed Blake, rising, and jerking the genius of St. Jim's off and sending him sprawling. "You're quite right there!"

"Really, Blake—"

"There's your window-pane, Gussy! Now, the question is whether we've got through, or whether we've been killed?"

"Impossible, Blake!" said Skimpole, who was not blessed with a sense of humour. "A very little reflection should suffice to assure you that we are still in the land of the living. Consider—"

"We're going on, I guess!" said Colonel Stalker.

There was no doubt about it. The train was rushing on. And, looking from the windows, the passengers could see huge banks of white on either side.

The charge of the locomotive had cleared the drift. The train was still dashing on at a great speed, but gradually slackening. The danger was over, the tension was gone, the spirits of all rose. The passengers chatted over the incident as if it were an everyday one, as the train whirled between great banks of snow. The drift was passed, but the snow still lay thick on the line and in great masses on either side.

Skimpole sat in a corner and adjusted his spectacles, and started making notes. Tom Merry & Co. looked from the windows.

The night had quite fallen now, and through the darkness the flakes came steadily down, wrapping the Rockies in a winding-sheet.

The speed of the engine slackened more and more. The train was crossing higher ground now. Wally went to give Pongo his evening meal. Arthur Augustus was looking with great care at every passenger who passed up and down the car, in the hope of spotting Punter. The captain had kept out of sight, but D'Arcy was quite convinced that he had really seen him and that he was on the train.

Colonel Stalker shook his head when Tom mentioned the matter to him.

"I guess he wouldn't come," he said. "I gave him a

lamming in Chicager, and he wouldn't want another in the Rockies."

And all but D'Arcy was inclined to agree with him. He took a stroll down the length of the train presently to see for himself, but he did not succeed in finding Captain Punter. But some of the passengers were reading newspapers and some were asleep, and so the adventurer might easily have been there without the swell of St. Jim's discovering him. Arthur Augustus rejoined his friends, unsuccessful, but none the less convinced.

Meanwhile, Skimpole had started investigating. He was curious to know what a greaser was, in order to jot down the information in his notebook. He tapped the colonel on the arm.

"You were speaking of greasers some time back, sir," he said mildly. "I should like to know—"

"Was I?" said the colonel.

"Then I shall certainly go!"

And Skimpole made his way to the baggage-car. It was in charge of a Mexican, a quiet, dark-complexioned fellow, who was very civil—much more civil than the average American baggage-man. But his black eyes had a gleam in them that showed that his Spanish blood might be easily aroused, quiet as he was.

Skimpole found him busy with his register, and attracted his attention by jabbing a bony forefinger into his ribs. The Mexican turned round.

"Excuse me!" said Skimpole, blinking at him through his spectacles. "I hope I am not interrupting you?"

"It is nothing," said the Mexican. "What can I do for you, seniorito?"

"I hear that there is a greaser in this car," said Skimpole.

"I want very much to see the beast."

The Mexican began to glare.



"I hear that there is a greaser in this car," said Skimpole. "I want very much to see the beast!" The greaser arose and gave Skimpole a left-hander on the chin that sent him spinning. "Wh-wh-what—what—" stuttered Skimpole.

"Yes, sir. Are we likely to see any greasers?"

"I reckon! Arizona's full of them!"

"Dear me! That is very interesting! What are they like?"

"Yellow-skinned, ugly critters, mostly," said the colonel concisely. "You want to keep clear of them, I tell you!"

"Certainly, sir! Are they savage?"

"That depends. They're savage if they get riled, though they ain't usually got the pluck to stand up to a man."

"I suppose they are found in the prairie and the forest?" The colonel stared.

"Ye-es; but they mostly live in the towns."

"Dear me! That is very remarkable!"

"Durned if I see anything remarkable in it!" said Colonel Stalker. "Of course, there's lots of them on the ranches, and you can see them on most any train."

"Is it possible that there are any on this train?" asked Skimpole, with great interest.

"I guess so! I saw one in the baggage-car."

"Dear me! I shall certainly go and look at it. I suppose it will be quite safe for me to approach this greaser?"

"I suppose so," said the colonel.

"You want to see the greaser, seniorito?" he asked, in a dangerously quiet tone. "You want to see the beast?"

"Yes, certainly. I am making some notes in this book, and I want to observe the brute's habits, and— Ow!"

The Mexican rose and gave Skimpole a left-hander on the chin that sent him spinning. Skimpole sat down on the floor of the car, and blinked at the baggage-man in blank amazement.

"Wh-wh-what—what—" he stuttered.

"Have you completed your observations, seniorito," asked the Mexican politely, "or would you like to learn something more of the greaser?"

"I—I—I—"

Skimpole's remarks were not very lucid, and the Mexican cut them short by kicking him out of the car.

The junior bolted, and rejoined his friends in a rather dishevelled state.

"Bai Jove, Skimmy's been in the wars!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "Pway what's the beastly twouble, dear boy?"

Skimpole sank into a seat, gasping.

"I—I have had a dreadfully narrow escape from a dangerous maniac," he said. "I—I have been rudely and roughly assaulted by a person in the baggage-car. I went there to see the greaser, and I saw a dark-complexioned person, the baggage-man, and told him I had come to see the beast, and he assaulted me in the most brutal and unprovoked way!"

Colonel Stalker burst into a roar.

"Indeed, my dear sir," said Skimpole mildly, "it is not a laughing matter! The assault was so entirely unprovoked. This man—"

"But that was the greaser!" roared the colonel.

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are a tenderfoot, and no mistake! We call Mexicans greasers, you see. That Mexican baggage-man is the greaser I was speaking about."

"Oh dear!"

"It's not a complimentary name, and they don't like it, and I'm not surprised he went for you. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the colonel laughed till the tears ran down his bronzed cheeks. The chums of St. Jim's joined in. But Skimpole did not laugh. He was too sore; and he resolved to be a little more careful when he resumed investigations into the manners and customs of the West. But, as he said, how on earth was he to know that the greaser was a biped and a Mexican?

CHAPTER 4.

Stopped on the Line!

THE party from St. Jim's slept soundly enough that night, while the train rushed on through the blackness and falling snow. While they slept they swept on to the south-west, and by morning they were far from the scene of the evening's adventure. The train made few stops. Here the "depots" were few and far between.

After breakfast in the morning Tom Merry went out on the platform and watched the landscape as the train rushed on. The snow had ceased to fall at dawn, but everything was white.

Tom heard several of the passengers talking in low, anxious tones, and he caught the words "suspension bridge" several times. The colonel came out with a big cigar between his lips, and Tom joined him.

"Have we to pass a suspension bridge, sir?" he asked.

Colonel Stalker nodded.

"Yes, sonny; about twenty miles on."

"Anything wrong with it, sir?"

"I guess not."

"Some of the passengers seem anxious."

"I guess so," said the conductor, joining in the conversation in the manner peculiar to the Americans. "I guess there's reason, sir."

The colonel looked anxious, too.

"What's the matter with the bridge?" he asked.

"I kinder reckon the crick's rose."

The words meant nothing to the English lad, but they were evidently of great import to Colonel Stalker, whose brows became furrowed with thought.

"Thunder! The crick!"

"Yes, sir; I guess so."

"And the bridge—"

"I kinder guess it's half-way to Texas this time," said the conductor, grinning.

It was an American exaggeration, but Tom Merry understood that he feared that the bridge had been swept away.

"Where is the bridge, sir?" he asked the colonel.

"It's over the crick, sonny."

"But—but what is a crick?"

Colonel Stalker simply stared.

"Waal, carry me home to die!" he ejaculated. "You're been raised at a first-chop school, and they never taught you what a crick was?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"Yes, I'm afraid I haven't come across the word. Of course, I know what a crick in the neck is, but I suppose it's not that kind of crick?"

"No," laughed the colonel. "It's a crick—a river, you know."

"Oh, a creek!"

"Yes, that's it—a creek!"

Tom Merry could not help laughing. It was only a case of American pronunciation again. He knew what a creek was.

"It's Plum Crick," explained the colonel. "There's a suspension bridge over it, you see, and if the crick's rose, it ain't safe. You want to know."

"Is the creek very likely to have risen, then?"

"It always rises when there's a big fall of snow. It wouldn't be so bad if it was freezing now. But there's a thaw this morning."

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"And the creek—"

"It has been at high water for weeks past," said the colonel. "Another melt in the sierra, and it will lay over the Rio Grande for size. I kinder reckon the bridge will be busted—slick!"

"Then the train will have to stop?"

"I guess so."

"My hat! And we shall have to wade across, or swim?"

The colonel laughed.

"I guess not. You'll observe."

The juniors remained on the look-out for the bridge. There was a general exclaiming from the passengers an hour later.

Ahead on the track could be seen the supports of the suspension bridge. But the bridge was not to be seen. The railway track at this point crossed a deep and narrow canyon, at the bottom of which a stream crawled in the summer months, but which became a torrent in the winter. And when there was a melting of snow in the sierra, the waters of the divide came thundering down the course of the stream which, instead of being a few feet deep, was full to the brim, a depth of over a hundred. From the train the passengers could see the waters whirling past where the bridge had been, and flooding the railway track. The bridge was gone, having evidently been swept away in the night.

The juniors gazed ahead as the train stopped, a good half-mile from the canyon. It was useless to go on.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Here's a go!"

"Bai Jove, it is wathah wotten! We shall be stuck up here a feahfully long time!"

Skimpole's notebook came out at once.

"Dear me, I'm very glad this has occurred!" he murmured.

"You utter ass!" growled Blake.

The passengers crowded out on the track. The engineer was shrugging his shoulders hopelessly. It was a difficulty he could not surmount. The train could not be made to jump the chasm. The bridge was gone, and the engineer could do nothing but back the train away, and return to the last depot. No train could pass again until the bridge had been repaired.

"And how long will that be?" Tom Merry asked the engineer.

"Days, or weeks," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"My hat! I wonder when we shall get to my uncle's ranch?" Tom Merry uttered. "He will give up expecting us, I think."

And the juniors of St. Jim's looked at one another.

Various delays had occurred since they had landed on the American continent. In New York, and again in Chicago, there had been delay. But this promised to be the greatest of all. What was to be done? The line would be blocked for days, perhaps for weeks. And the chums recalled the aspect of the last station—the dreary sheds and corrugated iron buildings, the rough-looking men and dismal women, and shuddered at the thought of passing days or weeks there waiting.

Colonel Stalker was looking very thoughtful. He chewed his fat cigar, unlighted, and broke the silence at last.

"I guess it means hoofing it," he said.

The juniors brightened up.

"Is there any way of getting forward, sir?" asked Tom Merry hopefully.

The colonel laughed.

"There's the choice of several, sonny," he remarked. "We can go back to the depot in the train and get horses there, and get to the line farther east, and go on by way of Santa Fe. It will mean waste of time, and perhaps the trails are too thick with snow, and we may have to wait some days."

"Any other way?"

"Or we may hoof it up the sierra here, get across this crick in a safer spot, and strike the railway again on the other side."

"Good!"

"Mind, it will mean hard tramping, and at least a couple of days in the mountains before we strike the railway again," said the colonel warningly.

"Bai Jove, I think I should like to wuff it for a couple of days in the sierrwah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, rather!" said Wally, his eyes glistening. "I guess it will be ripping fun."

The colonel looked doubtfully at the boys.

"It means real roughing it," he said.

"We've come West to rough it," said Tom Merry brightly.

"It won't be all lavender on the Arivaca Ranch, will it, out in Arizona?"

"Waal, no," said the colonel, laughing. "It won't, I guess. If you reckon you can stand it, we'll try to work the rifle."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway back me up, deah boys! 1

wegard this as a gwand opportunity of showin' our wepected fwiend, the colonel, how Bwitish boys can wuff it."

"Right-ho! We're game, sir!"

"Good! Then we'll get what traps we want out of the train, and leave the rest of the baggage to be sent on."

"Good!"

"As for the coon, he's no good. He'd better stop in the train."

"I'se come wid Mass' Tom!" shrieked Pompey.

"Don't be a young burro!" said the colonel. "You can't stand the snow. You get back into the train."

"I'se come with Mass' Tom."

Tom Merry looked perplexed. He had done the little darkey a trifling favour in Chicago, but Pompey's gratitude

"May he come, sir?" he asked, turning to the colonel. The long-limbed rancher was laughing, too, good-humouredly.

"I guess so, if he likes," he said.

"Then you shall come, Pomp."

"I'se tank you, Mass' Tom. I'se come wid you to de end of de earth."

"Then come and help me get the traps ready," said the colonel.

"Good!" murmured Skimpole, as he followed the others upon the train. "Doubtless the colonel intends to use traps to catch wild animals for food. I shall be glad to note the exact way in which they are used for my book of travels. I am really very glad this has occurred."



There was a rustle and a grey figure suddenly leaped into view. It ran straight towards D'Arcy, who swiped at it with his clubbed revolver. "My hat, it's a wolf!" gasped Blake. "Bai Jove, it's a dog!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

had known no bounds. He had insisted upon following Tom Merry, and Tom had said nay in vain. Dismissed at Chicago, Pomp had turned up at St. Louis, and then Tom Merry had given in, and the coon had constituted himself the English lad's body-servant, and come West with him. His attachment touched the junior; but certainly a coon was out of place in the snows of the Rockies.

"Mass' Tom, you no send me back."

"But you can't stand the cold, Pomp," said Tom Merry kindly. "You've been shivering ever since we crossed the Mississippi."

And indeed the little darkey was shivering at that moment. He had found it cold in Chicago, but in the mountains of the West he found it colder.

"I'se not afraid of de cold, Mass' Tom."

"But you may get buried in a snowdrift."

"I'se come wid Mass' Tom."

"You may get chewed up by a grizzly bear."

"I'se rader be chewed up dan Mass' Tom chewed up."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. It was evidently of no use arguing with the devoted Pompey.

CHAPTER 5.

The Blazed Trail!

MOST of the passengers regarded the colonel's idea as reckless, but no one argued with him. It was a free country, and a free American could do as he liked.

The colonel knew what he was about. He had spent an eventful life in the sierra and the plain, and he could rely upon himself. He had all that he wanted among his baggage, and it did not take him long to sort it out. He advised the boys what to take, and the "traps" were soon piled beside the track. They were made up in convenient bundles, seven in all—one for each of the party.

"Well, good luck to you!" said the engineer, grinning, as he stepped aboard. "If you keep west for twenty miles and strike the crick again at Powder Gulch you'll maybe git across. Look out for Reds."

"Reds!" said the colonel. "You don't mean to say—"

"Oh, no, it's not a raid; but Reds have been seen down

there, that's all—and your baggage may be worth their while, colonel."

The colonel smiled grimly.

"I guess they won't trouble my baggage."

"Waal, so-long!"

"So-long, sonny!"

The train backed away. The passengers lined the windows and the platforms to look back at the group of adventurers standing by the track.

The engineer's words had gone to their hearts with a curious thrill. Hitherto they had caught one or two distant glimpses of Redskins, but they were "tame" Indians—as the Americans elegantly called them. The chance of falling in with the "wild" variety was distinctly exciting.

Redskins on the warpath in that part of the continent, at all events, was quite out of date; yet they had learned that the Indians sometimes broke out of the reserves on isolated raids, and then it was dangerous for small parties to meet them in the sierras.

Wally held on to Pongo's chain, and Pongo barked cheerily at the train as it glided away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knelt by his trunk and fumbled with the straps. It was a handy little leather trunk, not one of the large variety of which D'Arcy had brought about a dozen to America.

"What are you up to?" demanded Colonel Stalker. "You don't want to unfasten that trunk now, I reckon."

D'Arcy looked round.

"I am goin' to get my wevolvah," he explained.

"Your what?"

"My twusty wevolvah. I may need it if we meet Wedskins."

"You won't need it," said the colonel. "I've got a barker here that will scare off all the Reds in the Rockies—and I'm not going to have you shooting me in the back."

"Weally, you could not suspect me of intendin' to shoot you in the back, my deah sir," said D'Arcy.

"No, but I guess you'd do it without intending it."

"I am wathah a good shot with a gun, or with a wook wifle. It is true that I haven't used the wevolvah, but I could soon learn."

"You wait till you're quite alone before you start learning, my son," said Colonel Stalker. "Old Stalky doesn't want to be plugged, you bet. Not old Stalky."

"Oh, vewy well!" said the swell of St. Jim's resignedly. "I will leave my twusty wevolvah here for the time bein'."

"Take up your grips," said Colonel Stalker. "We've got to make a good paseo before we squat for lunch, sonnies."

"But where are the traps?" asked Skimpole. "I understood that we were to bring some traps with us."

"Here they are," said the colonel.

"But I cannot see them."

"He means the baggage, ass," said Blake.

"Oh! I understood—"

"Rats! Don't you start pretending that you ever understood anything. Take up your baggage and walk."

"Really, Blake—"

"Oh, cheese it—and come on!"

The adventurers lifted their baggage and started. Colonel Stalker had the heaviest load, having the folded tent in his possession, but his muscles were of iron and his sinews of steel. He marched ahead without a word, and the juniors marched after him, very eager and excited.

The way lay along the bank of the "creek," which was about a hundred feet deep now, and certainly deserved to be called a river.

Colonel Stalker evidently knew the way, for he turned from the creek and tramped by an apparently unmarked route into the pinewoods. The juniors followed, and the foaming torrent and the railway track vanished from sight.

There was very little snow round them now. The trees grew very thick, and there was a great deal of underbrush; but, although no path was visible, it was clear that some kind of a track wound through the wood, for the colonel followed it without a halt.

Over and around the boys loomed and gloomed the huge pines, and in the deep shadow of the wood a gloom fell upon the spirits of the boys. It was a kind of not unpleasant melancholy, the chat and banter with which they had started the march dying away in silence as they tramped on.

"Blessed if I know how the colonel's finding the way!" Tom Merry remarked presently. "There isn't the faintest trace of a path. Look at that snow! It hasn't been disturbed by a foot for ages, I should say."

"Yaas, wathah! It's vewy wemakable."

The colonel turned his head with a smile.

"The bark's blazed," he said briefly.

Skimpole looked interested.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "That must have been one of the terrible forest fires I have read about in the newspapers, you know. Where has the bark blazed, sir?"

Colonel Stalker grinned.

"The bark is blazed," he repeated—"blazed with an axe, you know. Look at the trunks as we pass them and you'll see the notches."

"Blazed means cut in American," explained Wally, proud of his knowledge of that difficult language.

"Oh!" said Skimpole.

Tom Merry & Co. examined the trunks as they passed, and they saw how the colonel was guided on his way. At intervals the bark of a tree had been gashed with an axe, and to a woodman there was no difficulty in following these slight indications. It was a "blazed" trail, in Western parlance.

After some observation the juniors got in the way of looking for the sign and noting it, and they could soon have followed the path without their guide.

They came out of the wood at last into a region of rock and raving, where there was very little snow, but where a cold wind swept from the sierra. There the colonel announced that they would halt for lunch, and a welcome halt it was to the juniors of St. Jim's. They gladly dumped down their baggage by the side of a clear mountain stream.

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy Lights the Fire!

TOM MERRY & CO. were tired with the tramp through the wood, but not too tired to carry out the colonel's directions in making the camp.

Had he been alone, as he explained, he would not have bothered about a fire, but it was just as well for them to have some practice, as a fire would be necessary at night.

The juniors were set to gathering sticks and pine cones, and they soon had a heap.

Arthur Augustus was given the task of lighting the fire, while Colonel Stalker went along the stream with his rifle to look for something for lunch. The idea of actually lunching off game fresh shot for the purpose was exciting in itself.

Tom Merry and Blake sat down on a spur of rock jutting into the stream to try for fish, and succeeded in landing several fat specimens. Skimpole, sitting near them with his notebook on his knee, made up his notes of the day's travel.

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at the pile of fuel, and looked at his hands, and thought a great deal.

Tom Merry looked round at him.

"Haven't you started the fire yet, Gussy?"

"Not yet, deah boy."

"Better buck up! I heard the colonel's gun a few minutes ago, and if he's got something he may be back any minute."

"I was thinkin' of my hands."

"What's the matter with your hands?"

"Nothin'; but if I light the fire——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was quite willin' to face any wisks and dangahs in the Wocky Mountains," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "but I did not foresee that in wuffin' it I should have to spoil my hands. Howevah, I suppose I must face even that!"

"You'd better, ass, or we'll come and warm you, duffer!"

"I wefuse to be called a duffah! Undah the circs——"

"Are you goin' to start that fire?" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, when I've got my gloves on! I have an

he felt more safe in the heart of the Rockies with his trusty revolver knocking against his chest whenever he moved.

Even when Arthur Augustus' white hands were safely protected by the gloves, the lighting of the fire took a long time. The wind was blowing keenly, and the fire went out about a dozen times till D'Arcy came to the end of his matches and patience. He left off blowing at the obstinate pine-cones and sticks, and sat down on a rock to rest and recover his breath.

"Upon the whole, deah boys," he remarked, "I wathah think that it is a little bit weak-kneed to have a fiah when-evah you camp! Don't you think that to weally wuff it you ought to do without a camp-fiah?"

"Light that fire!" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. It has stwuck me vewy forcibly that it would be wuffin' it much more in the



"What happened then?" asked Skimpole. "The Sioux rushed forward and the Hawk sprang upon him—thus!" said the Hawk. He made a sudden spring at Skimpole and grasped the spectacled junior round the neck, brandishing a knife before his eyes. "Help!" shrieked Skimpole.

old pair which will come in vewy useful to use as housemaid's gloves, deah boys, but they are in my twunk. Do you know why the colonel asked me to light the fire, instead of that niggah?"

"He's taken Pomp with him to carry the game, hasn't he, ass?"

"I decline to be called an ass! I would wathah have carryed the game than lighted a fiah—though, as a mattah of fact, it would have been bettah for me to shoot the game and the colonel to cawwy it. I cannot help suspectin' that in givin' me this task the colonel has been actuated by a howwid spwit of pwactical jokin'!"

"Never mind; go ahead!"

"I am goin' ahead, Tom Mewwy, when I have found my old gloves!"

It took Arthur Augustus some time to find his old gloves. He found them at last in the bottom of his trunk, and took the opportunity of taking out his revolver and putting it in the inner pocket of his coat. He had no cartridges for it, but

pwopah way if we camped without a beastlay camp-fiah!"

"Light that fire!"

"I decline to do so—undah the circs, I absolutely decline to do so. Besides, I have weached the end of my matches!"

"Use a flint and steel, then. There are plenty of rocks round you, and a knife will do for the steel."

"But I should wequiah some tindah—and, besides, I wegard a fiah as superfluous, as we are supposed to be wuffin' it."

"Here, you come and fish, and I'll light the fire!" said Tom Merry; and he threw down his rod. "I knew you wouldn't be any good at it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, if you look at in that light, I shall insist upon lightin' the beastlay fiah!"

"Well, I do look at it in that light."

"Then you may return to your fishin', and I will light the fiah," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wegard it as wathah weak-kneed of you chaps to want a fiah to camp by,"

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but walah the cires, I shall insist upon lightin' it. Wally, lend me a box of matches!"

"Here you are, old cock!"

"Ow! I didn't say throw them at my head, you young wascal!"

And Arthur Augustus started again. Nothing succeeds like patience. By the time Colonel Stalker reappeared, followed by Pomp carrying a couple of birds, the fire was roaring away, and casting a genial warmth over the camp.

CHAPTER 7.

A Rough March!

THE adventurers remained at the camp-fire for an hour or so, resting and eating their lunch.

The keen mountain air had given them an edge to their appetites, and they ate heartily of roasted bird and broiled fish, and washed down the repast with draughts of water from the stream. Colonel Stalker added something else to the water from a flask he carried at his belt, but the juniors were satisfied with water.

Colonel Stalker complimented D'Arcy upon the excellent fire he had lighted, and the swell of St. Jim's received his commendation with becoming modesty.

"As a mattah of fact," he explained, "I had some pwactice at camping-out when I was at St. Jim's—our school in Sussex, you know, deah sir. We used to play Wed Indians in Wylcombe Wood; though at the time I nevah weally thought I should evah be campin' out in the Wocky Mountains!"

"Times change, and we change with 'em," said Blake. "I could say that in Latin——"

"Pway don't twouble!"

"Temporara mutantur," said Blake obstinately, "nos et mutamur in illis."

"Wats!"

"Things have changed, and no mistake," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "At home at St. Jim's, now, they're going in to afternoon lessons——"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Skimpole, looking up.

"American——"

"My dear Skimmy, it is two-thirty——"

"American——"

"I dare say Manners is putting away his films, and Lowther is cracking some ancient chestnuts, and they're just going in to afternoon——"

"American time——"

"What are you buzzing about, Skimmy?"

"American time is behind English time. They have not had dinner yet at St. Jim's."

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, you know! Even a silly ass like Skimpole can give you a point at times."

"I wonder what old Dig's doing?" said Blake pensively. "And whether Herries is keeping his bulldog in the study?"

"Yaas, wathah! I weally hope Hewwies is takin' advantage of the opportunity to keep his beastlay bulldog in the study while we are away. I nevah can stand that bwute while I am there. He has not the slightest wespsect for a fellow's twousahs."

"And Figgins & Co.," grinned Blake. "I wonder if the House rows are going on as usual between the School House and the New House?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, we shall be back in a few weeks," said Tom Merry. "We're going to see my uncle on his ranch in Arizona, and going back by way of Wyoming to call on Blake's uncle there, then Eastward Ho for St. Jim's. Meanwhile, we're having a ripping time, and I wouldn't be anywhere but where I am for worlds!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The colonel looked at the sky.

"Time to be moving, I guess," he remarked.

And they moved.

The way was growing more rough now. The woods had been left behind, and Tom Merry & Co. tramped over rough rocks, slippery with half-melted snow. An hour after leaving camp they came upon a rough acclivity, up which the colonel tramped without a halt.

Arthur Augustus stopped and looked at it, and laid down his bundle.

"Bai Jove! I don't see how we are going to get ovah that!" he remarked.

"Well, we can't fly," said Jack Blake; "perhaps we had better walk."

"Pway don't be funny, Blake! I wegard it as impos to

get ovah that feafuhl ascent, and I weally think we ought to find some way wound!"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry. "We are relying on you to keep us up to the mark! If Gus fails us, where are we to look for encouragement?"

"Weally, if you put it like that, Tom Mewwy——"

"I do, my son. I put it exactly like that!" said Tom Merry solemnly.

"In that case," said the swell of St. Jim's heroically, "I will have a twy; though, weally, I find this sort of thing vewy exhaustin'!"

And he followed Tom Merry, clambering up the steep rock.

"Here," called out Blake, "you're leaving your baggage down here!"

"Bai Jove, so I am! I am sowwy to say that I cannot weturn for it now. Will one of you fellows bwing it up?"

"Yes, I don't think!"

"Pway don't be selfish, Blake! You can give your bundle to Wally, and cawwy my little twunk. It is not heavy!" And Arthur Augustus clambered on with Tom Merry.

Jack Blake looked after him speechlessly for some moments, and then he shouldered the little leather trunk and started. He found an easier place to ascend than the swell of St. Jim's, however.

"Bai Jove, we've done it!" gasped D'Arcy, when the stiffest part of the ascent was over. "I weally think I should have found it too exhaustin' but for the sake of encouwagin' your fellows!"

The colonel had tramped on without even looking back. The juniors hastened to overtake him. But the tall figure of Colonel Stalker had come to a halt at last, and he was standing still when they came up with him.

"I guess you'll have to be keerful hyer," said the colonel. The juniors thought so, too.

Right across the route extended a deep chasm, of an unknown depth. The verge was abrupt, and no one cared to go near enough to the edge to see how deep it was. Across the chasm, from side to side, extended the trunk of a tree, and by this dizzy bridge it was clear that the juniors would have to proceed.

The juniors looked at one another.

That a fall into the abyss meant certain death was plain enough—and the tree-trunk lodged across from rock to rock, appeared an exceedingly unreliable bridge. It was planted firmly enough, but it was narrow and rough, and offered a very insecure footing.

"Waal?" said the colonel, looking at them.

"Are we to cwowss that?" asked D'Arcy.

"I guess so—unless you can jump it, sonny!"

"It looks to me wathah dangewous."

"Yes, I reckon it is. I had forgot this when I made up my mind to come this way—you youngers wouldn't naturally have the nerve."

"Wats! Sowwy, but weally, my deah sir, we have quite enough nerve for anythin'! It isn't that, but it certainly looks wathah wisky."

"Yes, it is risky. A lad belonging to these parts would think nothing of it, but you——"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry quickly. "Where an American boy can go an English boy can follow. Here goes!"

"Hold on! I'm going first, I reckon!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Keep a steady nerve, and you're all right. You could walk along the trunk easily enough if it were lying on the ground here. It only wants nerve."

"That's all right!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should absolutely wefuse to halt at anythin' that was done by a native of this countwy!"

Colonel Stalker stepped on the trunk and strode across. His steps were firm and rapid, and he crossed quite safely. Tom Merry followed him, and found it less dangerous than it looked. Then went Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Wally followed, and Pongo, loosed from his chain, followed his master. Skimpole was busy jotting down notes of the scene in his pocket-book. Pompey, the darkey, came next, and then they shouted to Skimpole.

"Buck up, Skimmy!"

Skimpole started, and looked up.

"Dear me!" he said. "You are all across! Excuse me for a few minutes while I finish making my notes!"

"Ass! Come on!"

"I shall not detain you more than ten minutes."

"You won't detain us at all!" roared Tom Merry. "If you don't come on you will be left behind!"

"Really, Merry——"

"Come on at once, you utter ass!"

"Oh, very well!"

Skimpole tucked away his notebook, and walked up to

the trunk. He looked at the chasm, and he looked at the narrow bridge, and he looked across at his friends.

"It appears to me somewhat dangerous," he said.

"We've done it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, Skimpy!"

"Certainly; but I certainly regard it as foolhardy to walk across when there is a much safer method. Pray wait for me."

And Skimpole slid astride the trunk, and commenced to work his way across.

The juniors watched him wrathfully.

Skimpole preferred his own way of crossing the chasm, as being slow but sure, and the young travellers waited a good ten minutes while he worked his way across.

He reached the farther side at last, and Tom Merry gave him a helping hand to terra firma.

Skimpole blinked round triumphantly.

"I have done it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you ass, and a long time you've kept us waiting!"

"Slow and steady wins the race—"

"Wats! Come on!"

And they marched on.

CHAPTER 8.

D'Arcy Meets the Enemy!

AS the afternoon waned, the adventurers tramped steadily on, rising higher and higher on the rocky sierra.

The sun was setting in the west, gleaming red through the pine-trees. Tom Merry looked back at the path they had come by. Many a long mile lay between them and the chasm they had crossed by means of the tree-trunk. But in the clear mountain air Tom could see the spot, as he turned his field-glasses upon it. Through an opening of the woods he could follow the black line of the chasm, to the point where the trunk crossed it.

He uttered a sudden exclamation.

A man was in the act of crossing the tree-trunk from the other side of the chasm. He was too far off for Tom Merry to recognise him, but there seemed to be something familiar in his aspect.

He was only in sight for a moment; then he had crossed the trunk, and disappeared among the rocks.

"What is it?" asked Blake.

"Somebody crossing the chasm where we crossed it."

"Bai Jove, I didn't know there was anybody else near us in this solitary place!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Some hunter or Wed Indian, I presume?"

"He did not look either."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's suddenly.

"I know who it is!"

"Blessed if I can see how you can know!" grunted Blake.

"Who is it, then?"

"Captain Puntah!"

"Punter! Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake, I am afraid that I shall have no alternative but to administrah a fearful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass frigidly upon his chum. "I wegard it as extremely pwob that it is Puntah. The wascal followed us frowm New York to Chicago, and, as I told you, I saw him in the twain in the Wockies."

"And I told you you didn't!"

"I pwesume that I can cwedit the evidence of my own eyes?"

"As a matter of fact, there seemed something familiar about that chap I just saw," Tom Merry remarked thoughtfully. "It might have been Punter." "I only caught a glimpse of him. We'll keep a weather eye open, at all events."

Colonel Stalker smiled at the idea of the man being Punter, and still in pursuit of the juniors. But Arthur Augustus remained convinced that it really was the rascal. The adventurers tramped on, and the word to halt, when the colonel uttered it, was very welcome. The juniors were tired.

The camp was formed now more thoroughly than for the halt at noon. Colonel Stalker selected a spot by a rippling stream, sheltered by huge rocks from the mountain wind.

The tent was unpacked, and they erected it in the sheltered spot. Although there was no longer any sign of snow in the clear sky, the weather was cold, and there was no telling what weather might come with the night.

The march had fatigued the juniors, but they cheerfully set to work to prepare the camp. The tent was first raised, and the baggage unpacked in it. Wally gathered sticks and cones, and built the fire, and made a success of it at the first attempt.

Arthur Augustus looked at it with an approving eye.

"I am vewy glad you have pwofited so much by what I showed you to-day, Wally," he remarked.

D'Arcy minor sniffed.

"Rats," he replied, "and many of 'em! I could have built that fire in two minutes!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"You can't do things for toffee, Gus. You can fetch me some more pine cones if you like; that's about your mark!"

"I uttably wefuse to fetch you some more pine cones," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "And I wegard your wemarks as—"

But Wally was gone for fuel, and Arthur Augustus had no opportunity of explaining how he regarded his remarks.

The fire was soon roaring, fanned by the wind. Colonel Stalker took his rifle, and went along the valley looking for game in the falling light. Wally, with Pongo on a cord, followed his example. Arthur Augustus had a thoughtful expression on his face. The swell of St. Jim's rather fancied himself as a big game hunter; but though he had brought a splendid set of guns West, they were still among his baggage on the train. He opened his mind to his chums on the subject.

"I suppose you haven't any wevolver cartwidges, Tom Merry?" he remarked.

Tom Merry stared.

"No; I don't usually carry such things in my pockets, Gussy."

"I pwesume you haven't any, eithah, Blake?"

"Nix!"

"It is vewy unfortunate," said the swell of St. Jim's musingly. "I have my twusty wevolvah, but I haven't any cartwidges. I should like to go and look for some game."

Jack Blake looked puzzled.

"There can't be any game going on here. They don't play football in the Rocky Mountains."

"I was not wefewwin' to that sort of game."

"Do you mean chess, then—or cribbage?"

"I do not mean chess, or cwibbage, eithah. I mean game—big game. Gwizzly bears, for instance, Blake."

"Oh, if you're going to hunt grizzly bears with a revolver, don't ask me to come! Skimpole had better come with his notebook, so as to get the particulars of how a donkey looks when providing a supper for a grizzly bear."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Better stick to the camp, old son. There may really be bears about here, and you don't want to be cut off in the bloom of your youth."

"I should uttably wefuse—I mean, if I met a gwizzly bear I should wun like anything, of course. If I had my guns, it would be all wight. Undah the pwesent cires, I should wun like anythin'!"

"Better stick where you are."

"I decline to stick where I am. I feel called upon to pwovide somethin' towards suppah. I wish I had some cartwidges."

"Go and look for birds' eggs, then."

"Bai Jove, that's wathah a good ideah!"

And Arthur Augustus strolled away to look for birds' eggs. Tom Merry and Blake grinned at one another. The swell of St. Jim's was not likely to find many birds' eggs in the pine-trees in that wind-swept valley.

The swell of St. Jim's disappeared among the rocks, taking the direction opposite to that taken by the colonel. He had not much success with the birds' eggs—in fact, none at all. In the pines and the mesquite there was no trace of either bird or nest.

The junior was about half a mile from the camp along the stream, when he decided to give it up. It was getting very dusky, and in all probability the colonel had returned with game for supper by that time.

Arthur Augustus had halted, and was debating in his mind whether to turn back, and had just decided to do so, when the sound of a footstep in the thicket startled him.

He drew a quick breath.

Someone was passing through the mesquite within a couple of yards of him, but in the dusk had evidently not observed him.

D'Arcy glanced quickly in the direction of the footsteps. He caught a dusky glimpse of a man in town clothes, evidently neither a mountain-man nor an Indian. The man's face was in shadow; but as he passed on, it turned a little, and the swell of St. Jim's saw the features.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus involuntarily.

The footsteps ceased.

The man turned, and looked full at D'Arcy. There was a startled look upon his face, and he groped in his breast as if for a weapon. But as his eyes fell upon the swell of St. Jim's he drew a quick breath, and a glitter of triumph shot into his eyes.

"You!"

"Yaas," drawled D'Arcy, "wathah!"

And then, in silence, in the midst of the shadowy mesquite, the swell of St. Jim's and Captain Punter looked at one another.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy Gets the Drop!

CAPTAIN PUNTER was the first to break the silence. His eyes were glittering with triumph, and he came a step or two closer to the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus eyed him calmly.

"Fancy meeting you!" said the captain.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"An unexpected pleasure on both sides," grinned Punter. "You escaped me in New York, and robbed me of a thousand pounds—"

"I pwevented you frow wobbin' my governah of a thousand pounds, you wascall!"

"I followed you to Chicago—"

"And there you weived a horse-whipping frow my respected fwiend, Colonel Stalkah. And, weally, Puntah, if he had not administrahed that horse-whippin', I should have given you a feahful thwashin' myself."

The captain grinned.

"And now I have found you again!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah! I knew you were on the train, Puntah. I had a stwong suspish that you left the twain and followed us heah. I did not expect to wun acowss you so suddenly."

"Are you ready?"

"Weady! Weady for what?"

"For a little walk. You are coming with me, you know."

"Quite a mistake, deah boy! I am not coming with you!"

"Oh, yes, you are!" grinned the captain. "I haven't taken all this trouble for nothing. I hoped to catch you apart from the others, but I hardly expected this slice of luck. I have friends in this part of America who will be glad to take care of you for a dollar or two, on condition of receiving a share of the dollars. I fancy Lord Eastwood will shell out when he hears that his son is a prisoner among a gang of rustlers in the Rocky Mountains."

"He will nevah hear anythin' of the sort."

"You are coming with me! Come, don't be a fool, boy! You will not match your strength against mine, I suppose?" said the captain impatiently.

"I wegard it as pwoth that you are stwongah than I am," assented the swell of St. Jim's. "You have the advantage of weight and size; but, all the same, I absolutely wefuse to be seen in your company anywhere. I wegard you with contempt."

"Are you coming?"

"Wathah not!"

"Then I'll soon make you!"

The captain stepped forward. As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus, sturdy as he was, was no match physically for a full-grown man. He could not be, in the nature of things, and the captain naturally expected to have short work with him.

But D'Arcy's hand had slid into his breast, and as the captain stepped towards him it came out again with the revolver in it—the famous revolver that he had bought in London, which had crossed the Atlantic at the bottom of his trunk, and which he had with difficulty been dissuaded from carrying about in New York and Chicago.

The captain gave a jump.

A revolver was about the last thing he expected to see in D'Arcy's possession. His impression of the swell of St. Jim's was a very erroneous one, being that Arthur Augustus was the kind of fellow to be afraid of the mere sight of firearms.

D'Arcy levelled the revolver at the startled captain, and looked along the shining barrel through his eyeglass.

"Pway stand back, deah boy!" he said calmly.

"You—you—" gasped the captain. "Put that down!"

"I have not the slightest intention of puttin' it down. If you ventuah to approach me, I shall pull the twiggah."

"You—you—"

"As a mattah of fact I have the dwop on you," said Arthur Augustus. "That, I believe, is the cowwect expwession. I have the dwop on you, Puntah!"

"You—you—"

"Pway keep your distance! I shall certainly pull the twiggah if you approach."

"You dare not!" hissed the captain, but keeping his distance, all the same. "You know you dare not."

"Approach me and see, deah boy!"

But the captain did not accept the invitation. He stood glaring ferociously at the swell of St. Jim's, his hands clenching and unclenching, his breath coming in gasps.

"You—you whelp!" he snarled. "Put that pistol down. It might go off by accident."

"That is your wisk. You are not bound to wemain in fwont of it."

"Put it down!" roared the captain, hoping to frighten the boy by adopting a truculent tone. "Put that pistol down at once!"

"Wats!"

"You whelp! I'll—I'll—"

"Pway modewate your expwession. I wefuse to be called a whelp. I wegard you as a feahful blackguard, Puntah, and I am considewin' whethah to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Put that—"

"Oh, pway don't keep on wepeatin' yourself, Puntah! You are like a gwamophone with only one wecord."

The captain could only glare. He hardly believed that D'Arcy would fire and kill a human being, even to save himself from being kidnapped again. But in a struggle a revolver in the hands of a boy was extremely likely to go off, and the result might easily be fatal.

"I am waitin' for you to go, Puntah," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a wank outsidah, and I should certainly wefuse to accompany you anywhere. I shall be obliged if you will kindly twavel."

"I will not go. I will—"

"Wats! My fingah is on the twiggah, as you see, and when I have been holdin' my wevolah some time, it is vevy likely to pwess the twiggah. You will have to take the consequences yourself if you get your bwains blown out."

"Will you put that pistol down?"

"I wegard the wequest as unweasonable, and I wefuse to accede to it. As a mattah of fact, Puntah, I am bored with you, deah boy, and I insist upon your immediately cleawin' out. Pway go!"

The captain ground his teeth. He dared not come on, and he did not want to retreat. But the revolver looked deadly dangerous, and certainly the junior's finger was already beginning to tremble on the trigger. Captain Punter had handled revolvers in his time, and he knew how easily a trigger might be pressed by accident.

"Hang you!" he ground out at last. "Hang you! I—I'll make you smart for this when I catch you again."

D'Arcy smiled serenely.

"You will pwobably nevah have the chance, Puntah. As a mattah of fact, I am wathah inclined to take you

Potts, the Office Boy!



pwisonah, and march you up to the camp," said D'Arcy. "Yaas, wathah, I think I'll make you march before me." The captain gritted his teeth.

"I am going—"
"Yaas, you'd bettah. I wathah like the ideah of takin' you pwisonah. Pewwaps it would be bettah to call help and take you pwisonah." And Arthur Augustus raised his voice. "Help, deah boys! Wesene, St. Jim's!"
"Rescue, St. Jim's!" It was a curious call to go echoing through the mesquite thickets of a lonely valley in the Rocky Mountains.

But there were St. Jim's boys near to hear it. As D'Arcy had guessed might probably be the case, his chums had left the camp to look for him.

A shout rang from the distance.
"Hallo! Where are you?"
"Heah, deah boys! Come on!"

There was a crash in the thickets. Captain Punter gnawed his lip with rage. Before he could decide what to do, Tom Merry and Blake burst into view.

They uttered a simultaneous cry of amazement at the sight of the captain.
"Captain Punter!"

Arthur Augustus nodded languidly.
"Yaas, wathah! I was wight, aftah all. I have the dwop on the vascal. By the way, Puntah, put your hands up. That's the wproah thing to do when a chap has the dwop on you. Hands up!"

The captain glared at D'Arcy, and then at Tom Merry and Jack Blake. Then, making up his mind to the defeat, he turned and plunged quickly into the mesquite, and disappeared.

"He's gone!" said D'Arcy. "I was debatin' in my mind whethah to take him a pwisonah to the camp. I think I had the dwop on him beautifully, deah boys!"

"But the revolver isn't loaded!" shrieked Tom Merry.
"No; as a mattach of fact, the wevolvah is not loaded. But Captain Puntah was not aware of that, and as anothah matter of fact," added D'Arcy thoughtfully, "it's wathah lucky for me that he didn't know it wasn't loaded."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, I had the dwop on him. He had the feahful impertinence to wish to kidnap me again, you know, and to keep me with a gang of wustlahs while he obtained a wansom. Of course, I absolutely refused."

"And now you come back to the camp," grunted Blake, grasping the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulder. "We might never have seen you again if you hadn't frightened the rascal with an empty revolver."

"You will observe, Blake, that I was quite wight to take my twusty wevolvah about with me."
"Yes, and you'd be righter still to keep out of danger. Come along!"

"I would pwefer to return to the camp in a leisurly and dignified mannah, deah boys!" expostulated D'Arcy, as Blake dragged him along.

"No time for that, my son; the grub's ready. Take his other shoulder, Tom."

"Right you are!" said Tom Merry cheerily.
"I wefuse—I object—I absolutely decline—"
"Bring him along!"

With an iron grip on either shoulder, the swell of St. Jim's had to go. He was run back to the camp at top speed, and arrived there in a very flustered and breathless condition. He was inclined to drop the acquaintance of Blake

and Tom Merry on the spot, but the savoury smell of supper restored his good humour, and he was all smiles again by the time they sat down round the camp-fire to enjoy the meal.

CHAPTER 10.

A Rough Night!

COLONEL STALKER smoked a pipe by the camp-fire after supper, and told the boys yarns of ranch life and hunting in the plains of the West.

It is possible that the good colonel drew the long bow at times, but his stories of wild life were thrilling, and the juniors listened to him with eager attention, Skimpole making notes most of the time.

When the time came to turn in Pompey banked up the fire with logs, and they adjourned to the tent. It was a close fit for seven, but there was room with squeezing, and they turned in. The night was very cold, the wintry wind rising and blowing harder over the exposed uplands, and they were glad of the shelter of the tent.

"My hat, how it's blowing!" muttered Tom Merry, as he rolled himself up in his blanket. "Sounds like a regular gale!"

"Yaas, wathah! I say, deah boys, don't you think that one of you had bettah keep watch?"

"You can keep watch if you like, Gussy."

"I do not like."

"I guess there's no danger, sonny," said the colonel sleepily from his blanket. "Besides, there's the dorg. The dorg will bark if anyone comes near the fire."

"I wasn't thinkin' of the dangah, my deah sir. I was considewin' that if one of these boundahs kept watch, I should have woom to stretch my legs."

"Well, of all the cheek!" grunted Blake. "By the way, I want to stretch my legs."

And he did, and Arthur Augustus gave a howl.

"Careful, you feahful ass! You've jammed your boot undah my beastlay chin."

"I don't see why you wanted to have your beastly chin in the way of my boot."

"I wegard you as a wuff beast!"

"I want to stretch my legs, too," yawned Tom Merry. "Hallo! What's that in the way of my boot?"

"Ow! It's my leg, you wottah!"

"Is it, really? I wish you wouldn't distribute your legs all over the place. Did I kiek something just then?"

"Wow! That's my foot!"

"You oughtn't to have such big feet. If a chap has feet spreading all over the place, he oughtn't to try sleeping in a tent. I suggest that Gussy keeps watch outside."

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Then collect up some of your feet."

"There's something in my way, too," said Wally. "Who's that I'm knocking my knuckles against now?"

"Ow! Stop thumpin' my head, you young villain!"

"Is that your head, Gussy? It felt very hard."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, go to sleep!" said Blake. "I think it's unreasonable of Gussy to keep on talking when a lot of tired fellows want to go to sleep."

"Weally, Blake—"

"That's Gussy's way," said Tom Merry disparagingly. "Some fellows begin, and some leave off, but Gussy goes on for ever."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

A QUICK RISE!



"I vote that Gussy rings off."

"Seconded!"

"Thirded!"

"Passed nem con."

"I wefuse to wing off! I absolutely decline to— Ow! Wow!"

"Well, nobody wants you to ow, wow!"

"I uttached that ejaculation, Tom Mewwy, because some feahful beast pinched my beastlay leg!"

"Oh dear, more trouble! Did you pinch his leg, Blake?"

"No."

"Did you, Skimpole?"

"Certainly not!"

"Did you, Wally?"

"I guess not."

"There you are, Gussy! You see, you must have been mistaken."

"As a mattah of fact, I believe it was you who pinched me, Tom Mewwy."

"Now I come to think of it, very likely you're right," agreed Tom Merry. "I pinched somebody, and nobody else remarked upon it, so I dare say you're about right."

"I wegard the action as wuffianly."

"What's a fellow to do if he's not allowed to go to sleep?" demanded Tom Merry. "A fellow who's not allowed to go to sleep must do something. I move that if Gussy doesn't leave off talking, we'll sit on him."

"Seconded!"

"Thirded!"

"Passed nem con!"

"Weally, deah boys, I should absolutely wefuse to be sat upon! I considah—"

Snore!

"I considah, Wally—"

Snore!

"I believe you are only wottin', you wottahs! But as I am wathah fatigued, in fact, exhausted, I will say no more. If you will stop that wiculous snorwin', I will endeavah to take some wepose."

And there was peace at last, and the juniors of St. Jim's slept the sleep of the just.

They were tired enough to sleep soundly if artillery had been blazing away outside the tent, and so they did not wake, though the wind rose higher and swept round the camp with loud howls, and roared in the pine-trees and the mesquite thickets.

It was a wild, rough night, but they slept through the roar of the wind and the crash of falling branches.

But Arthur Augustus awoke at last. He felt a cold wind blowing on his face, and, as far as he remembered, there had been no wind blowing in the tent when he laid him down to repose in his blanket.

"Bai Jove!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "I wathah think some of the fastenings have come undone, or some-thin' of the sort. I say, Tom Mewwy!"

But Tom Merry did not reply. He was in the land of dreams. Arthur Augustus sat up. There was certainly a keen wind blowing into the tent, and the canvas was rocking. The roar of the wind outside and the crashing of the pines was deafening, now that D'Arcy was awake and listening to it.

He listened, deafened by the sound, and shivered in the wind. His blanket had fallen from round him, and the wind was tearing in under the canvas, where one of the picket-pins had been torn out.

He groped for Tom Merry, to wake him.

"Tom Mewwy; wake up! Pway wake up, deah boy!"

His groping hand came into contact with a face, and there was a grunt.

"Leggo!"

"Bai Jove, that's Wally! Wally, old boy, wake up! The beastlay tent's bein' blown ovah!"

"Groo!"

"Wake up!"

"Grooooh!"

"Tom Mewwy! Colonel Stalkah! I weally beg of you to wake up, or we shall all be blown to smithereens, deah boys!"

And D'Arcy groped again for Tom Merry. This time he got hold of Blake's hair, and pulled it vigorously to wake whomsoever it belonged to.

"Ow!" grunted Blake. "Leggo! Cheese it! Tain't rising-bell! Leggo!"

"The tent will be blown ovah—"

"Lemme alone! I— Grooooh!"

"Bai Jove, he's goin' to sleep again! I— Oh!"

The catastrophe had come.

A terrible gust caught the tent, and tore it fairly loose from its fastenings. There was a crashing and a flapping, and the adventurers woke in earnest, with the dismantled tent sprawling over them, and flapping wildly in the wind.

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CHAPTER 11.

A Night Alarm!

"O H!"

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, you know!"

The tent was fairly down. Legs and arms and heads were sticking out of it into the moonlight.

The camp was very light; the moon sailed in a pale grey sky high above the roaring wind that had swept the clouds away.

"Thunder!" gasped Colonel Stalker.

Pongo, by the dying camp-fire, was barking furiously. Amazed ejaculations proceeded from the unfortunate campers as they struggled with the flapping canvas.

Jack Blake was the first to draw himself free. He rolled out of the flapping wreck and nearly rolled into the camp-fire but he saved himself in time and jumped up.



"Bai Jove, I wegard this as howwid! I weally wish they co were already at it. They rushed at one another savagely wit

"Help, deah boys!" came a faint voice. "I am bein' oushed to death by some feahful ass who is wollin' on my beastlay legs!"

"Oh! Don't jam your hoofs at me, you dummy!" came the voice of Tom Merry from under the canvas.

"Gerroff my beastly legs, then!"

"Keep your beastly legs still, then!"

Blake seized Arthur Augustus by the shoulders and dragged him out. Tom Merry rolled out after him. D'Arcy sat on a log and gasped.

"Bai Jove! I have nevah had such a wotten expewience! I feel absolutely out of beweath! This would nevah have happened if you had woke up when I called you!"

"Oh, cackle, you blessed girl!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to allow that remark to pass, Blake. I take it as a gweat compliment to be compared to a membah of the gentlah sex!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I decline to wing off. I take it as an extremely great compliment to be compared with a membah of the gentlah sex, but I cannot help observin' that there was a dis-pawagin' tone in your remark. I call upon you to with-draw it."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. Unless you immed-ately withdwaw your dis-pawagin' remark concernin' gals, I shall have no alternative but to administrah a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, cheese it, old chap!"

"I wefuse to cheese it! I am in earnest on this subject."

"We've got to get the tent up—"

"That is not so important—"

"Pompey's suffocating under the tent," said Tom Merry, as a gasping voice was heard under the flopping canvas. "Lend a hand, all of you!"



restained," protested Arthur Augustus. But the Redskins, fling tomahawks, and there was a crash of meeting weapons.

"I shall be vewy sowwy if the niggah suffocates, but I wefuse to lend a hand until Blake has withdwawn his dis-pawagin' remark."

But Blake was grasping the canvas to help Tom Merry. D'Arcy grasped Blake, and Jack elbowed him on the chest, and the swell of St. Jim's sat down in the dying embers of the camp-fire.

He gracefully reposed there for about the millionth part of a second, and then he jumped up, with a terrific yell.

"Ow! Wow! I'm burnt!"

And clasping both hands to the place where he felt the pain, the swell of St. Jim's danced about as if for a wager.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Keep it up! Go it!"

"Ow! Wow! I am feahfully hurt! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They dragged away the canvas, and Pompey came into

view. He was gasping, and his eyes were quite round with fright.

"So suffocate!" he gasped. "Mass! Tom, sabe Pomp! I'se suffocate!"

"You're all right!" said Tom Merry, laughing. He dragged the little darkey to his feet. "You're not suffocated yet, Pompey! My hat! How the wind blows!"

"We shan't get that tent up again in a hurry, I guess," said Colonel Stalker ruefully. "It's a durned pity somebody didn't wake up in time to see it going!"

"I did wake, sir," said D'Arcy, ceasing his contortions as the pain subsided, and finding that he was not so very much hurt, after all. "I did wake in time, Colonel Stalkah, and I twiced to wake the othahs, but—"

"Why didn't you call us, then?" demanded Blake.

"I did twy to call you—"

"Then it was all Gussy's fault," said Tom Merry. "That being settled—"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort—"

"That being settled—"

"It is not settled! I wefuse to allow it to be settled! I woke up and twiced to call the west of you, and you—"

"It being settled that it is all Gussy's fault, the question is—what's to be done?" said Tom Merry calmly, ignoring D'Arcy's frantic expostulations. "As it is all Gussy's fault, it serves him right to have to stay in the open air. But what about us?"

"I wefuse to acknowledge—"

"We shall have to sleep round the fire," said Colonel Stalker, laughing. "Get your blankets out. It's no good trying to set the tent up again in the wind. It may drop later."

"Yaas, wathah! But wreally—"

"Get your blanket, Gus, old man, and don't jaw."

"But, undah the cires—"

"Lend a hand here!"

And Arthur Augustus had simply no chance to explain. The blankets were dragged out; the tent was left where it was, and the adventurers rolled themselves up in their blankets with their feet to the fire. The fire was replenished with logs; the high wind fanned it to a flame, and drove the smoke along in clouds over the pines in the moonlight.

In spite of the shock of the falling of the tent, and the continued shrieking and roaring of the wind in the pines, the boys slept again.

Half an hour after the falling of the tent the camp was again buried in slumber. Only Pongo was wakeful, gnawing a bone by the fire and growling at the noise of the pines. But Arthur Augustus was sleeping lightly; a louder growl than usual from the dog brought him out of the land of dreams.

"Bai Jove!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's drowsily. "The beastlay tent's comin' down again! No, it isn't! Bai Jove! What's that?"

He lifted his head from the blanket and looked round him. The wind had fallen somewhat, and there was a drift of cloud before the moon. The camp was plunged in gloom. In the red glimmer of the burning logs Arthur Augustus could see Pongo. The dog had raised his head from the bone and was staring into the blackness, growling.

A thrill ran through Arthur Augustus. It was evident that Pongo saw something. The swell of St. Jim's got up and groped for his revolver. It was still unloaded, but it had scared off a rascal once and might do so again. The idea in his mind was that Captain Punter might be lurking near at hand among the rocks.

D'Arcy reached out and grasped Blake by the hair and gave him a gentle jerk.

Jack Blake muttered something indistinctly.

"Wake up, deah boy!" whispered D'Arcy.

Jack Blake woke up.

"What is it, Gussy?"

"There's somebody lurkin' in the wocks! Look at Pongo!"

Jack Blake looked at him. The dog was growling again, his eyes gleaming as they were fastened upon the dark rock close by the bank of the stream. Blake thrilled, too, and rose cautiously to his knees.

"It may be a Redskin, Gussy!"

"More likely that wascal Puntah!"

"True. We may as well look."

The juniors cautiously rose. If it was a hostile Indian lurking there in the shadows, an arrow might come singing from the rocks, and that thought sent a strange quiver through the hearts of the juniors. It was not fear; it was a kind of breathless, suppressed excitement, which caused their hearts to beat so quickly that they felt suffocated.

Blake had grasped a stick, and D'Arcy had hold of his revolver. Before waking the other sleepers they determined

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to see what might be the cause of the dog's alarm. Blake made a sign to D'Arcy and went round a big rock at the side of the camp to make a detour. It would not be prudent to advance directly upon the spot at which the alarmed dog was glaring. They would have been exposed to the ruddy glow of the camp-fire while the enemy remained unseen.

The clouds were over the moon, and in the shadows of the rocks all was dark. Blake stepped on cautiously till he was near the spot, as he judged, where the concealed enemy was lurking; then he turned and nudged D'Arcy. Unfortunately, the swell of St. Jim's, who could not see his chum in the dark, and who was invisible to him, received the nudge on the nose, and took it for a blow from the enemy.

"Bai Jove! Hands up, you wottah!"

Blake felt a revolver thrust under his chin. He gave a jump, but he remembered that the revolver was not loaded.

"You ass—"

"Hands up, you wottah! I've got the dwop on him, Blake!"

"You dummy! Take that thing away!"

"Bai Jove! Is that you, Blake, deah boy?"

"Yes, object!"

"I refuse to be called an object! I—"

"Oh, shut up, and come on!"

"I refuse to shut up! Undah the circs—"

"You'll alarm the enemy."

"I should be vewy sowwy to alarm the enemy, but I cannot pass ovah your extremely oppwobwious remarks in silence! I considah—"

But Blake was gone. D'Arcy postponed his considerations for a future time, and followed him. Jack Blake had judged his route correctly, and he came out among the rocks at which Pongo was glaring; and, looking towards the fire, he could see the dog there in the same attitude.

The junior looked about him.

There was a rustle within a few feet of him, and his heart leaped into his mouth. A grey figure suddenly leaped into view, and darted away. It ran right towards D'Arcy, who swiped at it with his revolver, and it dodged, and ran back towards the fire. It came out into the ruddy light, and showed a lean, grey body and glistening eyes.

"My hat, it's a wolf!"

"Bai Jove, it's a dog!"

Colonel Stalker started up from slumber.

"Thunder, what's the row?"

Pongo, barking furiously, sprang upon the strange animal, and they rolled on the ground in combat. The colonel sprang up, and groped for his revolver. The strange intruder tore itself loose from the dog, and vanished in the shadows, and the colonel sent a revolver-shot after it in vain.

"What was it, sir?" asked Blake breathlessly.

"It was a dog!" said D'Arcy firmly.

"Rats! I believe it was a wolf!"

Colonel Stalker laughed.

"It was a coyote," he said; "something between a dog and a wolf, sonnies."

"Are they dangerous, sir?"

"Not much. He came nosing round after a bone, I s'pose."

And the colonel settled down to slumber again.

Jack Blake and D'Arcy looked a little sheepish. The alarm of the night had thrilled them to the core, and it wasn't exactly satisfactory to find that all their trouble had been taken over a kind of wild dog who had visited the camp in search of offal.

"Next time you wake me for nothing," remarked Blake, "you'll get a prize thick ear, that's a warning!"

"Wcally, Blake—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"It might have been a Wedskin!"

"Rats!"

And Blake returned to his blankets.

CHAPTER 12.

A Startling Meeting!

THE wind had fallen, but, following the cessation of the wind came a fall of rain. It was Tom Merry who first felt the rain, and he awoke with large drops running over his face. He sat up, and looked sleepily round. The rain was sputtering in the fire and running in little rivulets in the crevices of the rocks.

"Rain, by jingo!"

"My hat!" yawned Blake. "There's no rest for the wicked! We shall have to get the tent up again!"

He shook the colonel. The whole party were soon awake. It was evidently necessary to put up the tent, unless they were to be drenched, and as there was little wind now, the task was easy. The tent was up in quick time, and the adventurers bundled into it, and glad enough they were of the shelter.

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Outside the rain dashed down, and they heard the camp-fire sputter out and the trickling of the little channels full of water in the rocks.

"Bai Jove, it's a wotten night!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I don't think I shall be able to sleep again."

"Then perhaps you would not mind sitting up and holding a lantern while I write out my notes?" came the voice of Skimpole from the darkness. "I am sleepless myself, as I have a large quantity of water down my back, which renders me extremely uncomfortable. I am, however, very glad this has occurred, as it will make an excellent chapter in my book of travels. Will you sit up and hold the light, D'Arcy? I shall not keep you more than an hour or so!"

"Gwoooooo!"

"Dear me, he is asleep; and he said he wouldn't be able to sleep again! I shall have to leave my notes till the morning."

And Skimpole, in spite of the water down his back, was soon sleeping, too.

But the comfort of the night's rest was gone, and at the earliest streaks of dawn the campers were awake. Pomp turned out of the tent first to light the fire. The rain had ceased, and a gleam of sun was showing over the Rockies.

Colonel Stalker had carefully placed a quantity of fuel to start the fire in the morning, and so it was not difficult for Pomp to get it going. Once it was blazing up, he stacked wet logs and pine-cones round it to dry, ready for burning.

"Bai Jove, I feel weady for bwekkah!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "If you will lend me your gun, Colonel Stalkah, I shall have great pleasah in goin' out for some game!"

"Thank you!" said the colonel, with a grin. "I guess I'll take the gun, and you can look after the fire!" And the colonel, with the rifle in the hollow of his arm, went down the stream.

The sun, as it rose higher, gleamed cheerily on rock and mesquite, and the spirits of the juniors rose with it. Arthur Augustus, whose clothes were becoming somewhat damaged by the rough sojourn in the Rockies, sat down on a log to darn a hole in his trousers, while Tom Merry and Blake went to gather cones, and Wally followed Pongo, who had picked up the scent of some animal near the camp, and was bent on tracking down the stranger; Skimpole sat in the tent, making up his notes.

The fire blazed cheerily in the shelter of the great rock by which the camp was pitched. Arthur Augustus contentedly darned, and did not look up when he heard a footstep. He imagined that it was one of the others coming back to the camp, and went on with his darning.

The footsteps ceased, but D'Arcy did not look up.

"Ugh!"

It was an exclamation, or, rather, a grunt, and when it fell upon his ears the swell of St. Jim's looked up fast enough.

Then he sprang to his feet in utter dismay.

Before him stood a Redskin—an Indian in full array, with a coppery face and glittering black eyes, headdress of coloured feathers, and a red-and-yellow blanket draping his massive form.

He was staring over the rock at D'Arcy, and D'Arcy stared back, utterly staggered by the unexpected sight.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ugh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ugh!"

After this dialogue, they stared at each other in silence.

Arthur Augustus thought of groping for his revolver, but he remembered that it wasn't loaded, and the Redskin did not look likely to be scared by a useless weapon. Besides, the Indian's look was not hostile. Something of a grim smile seemed to be playing over his coppery face.

Arthur Augustus felt for his eyeglass instead. He put it up, and surveyed the Indian through it.

This proceeding excited the liveliest interest on the part of the stranger. His keen black eyes followed D'Arcy's movements, and he looked at the eyeglass with admiration and something like awe.

It was clear that the monocle was an unknown luxury among the tribe, whatever it was, to which the Indian belonged.

"Ugh!" he said again.

"Good-mornin'!" said D'Arcy, with a polite bow, recovering fully as he saw that the Redskin had no hostile intentions. "Good-mornin'! Can you speak English, deah boy?"

"The Hawk speaks in the tongue of the palefaces," said the Redskin, with dignity, and throwing his blanket across his chest with a gesture that greatly impressed Arthur Augustus. "The Hawk is the friend of the white chief with the glass eye."

"Ahem! I am vewy glad to see you, my fwiend!" said Arthur Augustus. He cudgelled his brains for the proper

expressions to use in addressing an Indian chief. "Will the great Red wawwah sit by the camp-fire of the pale-faces?"

"Ugh!"
"Bai Jove, I wish I knew what he meant by that grunt!" murmured D'Arcy.

"Ugh!"
"We are just goin' to have bwckkah," said D'Arcy. "We should be delighted if you would join us, deah boy! I mean, the honah would be gweat if the gweat Red chief would deign to sit by the fire and feed with his paleface bwothahs!"

"Ugh!"
The great Red chief accepted the invitation. He came over the rock, and sat on a log by the fire. D'Arcy could see now that his clothes were wet, and that he had evidently been unsheltered in the rain of the previous night. A slight steam rose from the Indian as he warmed himself, and his bronzed face was turned to the fire, and he did not speak another word.

Arthur Augustus addressed one or two remarks to him,

but the only reply he received was "Ugh!" And he gave it up, and resumed darning his trousers.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Takes Notes!

"MY hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.
"What's the row?"
"Look there!"

"Mon seul chapeau!" said Blake. "A Redskin!"

The juniors were coming back to the camp laden with fuel. The sight of the Indian sitting on the log by the fire was startling enough.

But he was evidently a friendly visitor, and Tom Merry and Blake came up without alarm, and deposited their fuel by the fire.

Arthur Augustus looked up.
"Pway allow me to pwsent my fwient!" he remarked.
"This is the Hawk, the gweat chief of the— Weally, I do not know of whom."

"Blackfeet," said the chief laconically.
He rose and bowed with dignified grace to the juniors, draped in his blanket.

"Glad to see you!" said Tom Merry.
"Right welcome!" said Blake.

"The Hawk is of the people of the Blackfeet," said the Indian gravely. "He has travelled far from the lodges of his fathers. The Hawk is on a journey to the south to visit a white ranch chief, who is his friend. He will meet the palefaces. I have spoken!"

And the Blackfoot sat down again.
"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I wathah like his style, you know. I wathah think that our fwient the Hawk is a gentleman, you know."

The Redskin maintained a dignified silence while the juniors prepared breakfast. Colonel Stalker came in with a small deer slung upon his gun, and he started at the sight of a Redskin, and dropped the carcass to bring his gun into a handier position. The Hawk did not even look up.

"It's all wight, Colonel Stalkah," said D'Arcy. "This Wed gentleman is our fwient. I thought the posish was goin' to be deucid awkward at first, you know; but it appeahs that he is on his twavels, and is quite disposed to be chummy. I have invited him to bwckkah."

The colonel laughed.
"Good! I think I have seen him before."

The Indian looked up at the sound of the colonel's voice. Then he rose to his feet.

"The Hawk is glad to see the white chief," he said gravely. "He remembers his last meeting with the chief with whiskers."

"I guess I'm real glad to see you!" said the colonel, grasping his hand. "What are you doing so far from the Blackfoot country?"

"The Hawk is on the trail to the south to visit his friend the ranch chief."

"We shall see you again."

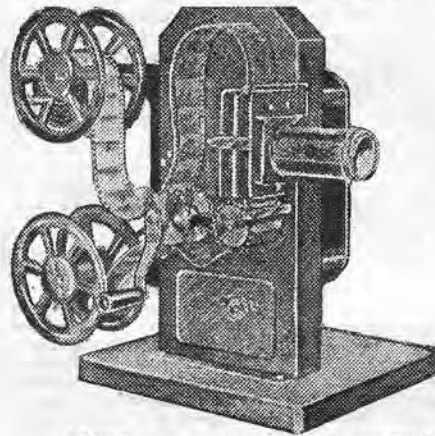
"It is good!"
"We are going to strike the railroad again, and go on to Sante Fe," explained the colonel. "Will you come with us?"

"The Hawk will travel with his white brothers as far as the railroad, but he will not come upon the wagons that go without horses," he replied. "The Hawk will travel to the southland as his fathers have travelled."

"As you like. Breakfast now."
The Indian drew a hunting-knife from his girdle. The juniors started, but the Blackfoot only intended to skin the deer.

(Continued on page 18.)
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,300.

FREE ONE-WEEK COMPETITION!



THIS GRAND HOME CINEMA

(with films)
is the First Prize.

100

"Rigby" Swallow
Model Planes as
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HERE is a simple one-week competition, in which every reader has the opportunity of winning this wonderful first prize. Enter now and try to win that Home Cinema yourself. It would provide you and your friends with hours of fun and entertainment.

HOW TO WIN!

ON the coupon here are twelve simple words, only one letter has been left out from each. You just have to fill in those missing letters with the help of the clue given for each word. The answer to Clue No. 1 is obviously PAPER. Put in the missing letter for that word, and so on with the other eleven. Fill in the coupon IN INK, and when complete, add your name and address. Then cut out the whole form, place it in a properly stamped envelope, and write your NAME, INITIALS, AND TOWN in block capital letters on the back of the envelope. You will be disqualified if you omit to do this. Then post to:

"Home Cinema" Prize,
6, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

so as to reach that address not later than Wednesday, January 18th.

Entries arriving after this closing date cannot be accepted.

SPECIAL NOTE.—KEEP A COPY OF YOUR ENTRY, because as soon as all entries are under seal, the CORRECT SOLUTION will appear in the "Gem" issue dated February 11th. All competitors must make sure they watch the "Gem," so that they can check their entries by this solution, and those whose attempts contain six errors or less will have to send in a claim for the prize. Full particulars for claiming will be given with the solution in the "Gem"—remember the date!

RULES (to be strictly adhered to) The Home Cinema will be awarded to the competitor whose solution is correct, or most nearly so; and the 100 Model Planes in order of merit. In the event of more ties, the value of the prizes may be divided.

All solutions must be written IN INK on the "Home Cinema" coupon. Entries mutilated, or which bear alterations or more than one letter in each space, will be disqualified. Responsibility cannot be taken for delay or loss in the post or otherwise. No correspondence will be allowed, and the decision of the Editor will be final and binding. Employees of the proprietors of this paper must not compete. The correct solution will appear in the "Gem," issue dated February 11th, 1933, and competitors must get it to check their entries. Failure to claim by the date stated will entail forfeiture of all interest in the competition.

"Home Cinema" Contest					
1	What you are reading now.	P	A	P	R
2	Footballers wear them.	S	H	R	T
3	A bright light.	F	L	A	E
4	Well-known animal.		A	T	
5	To keep.		E	T	A
6	A boy's name.		I	M	
7	Used in cricket.	B	A	L	
8	Something to sit on.	S	E	T	T
9	Fear.	R	E	N	
10	Chosen.		A	G	G
11	A length of wood.	P	L	E	
12	Another animal.	B	A	R	

I agree to accept the Editor's decision.

SIGNED _____

ADDRESS _____

JOTTINGS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! Have you had a shot at winning that Home Cinema? You'll find the competition on page 17 if you haven't seen it already. And here's news for you—next week's GEM contains another simple competition. This time it's a painting competition, and the first prize is A SHILLING A WEEK FOR A YEAR! And the second prize is SIXPENCE A WEEK FOR A YEAR! Just think of it—pocket money every week for a whole year, and the competition is easy as can be, and there is no entrance fee! In addition there are fifty other prizes of watches, model aeroplanes, torches, etc.

Next week Martin Clifford contributes, of course, another ripping story in the present series, entitled:

"GUSSY, THE BRONCHO BUSTER!"

This is a really first-class yarn, and I am sure that you will enjoy every word of it. There will also be another yarn of

LIGHTNING BRUCE BRADMAN,

and Potts, the office boy, will be up to some more of his antics. In fact, as you will have gathered, next Wednesday's GEM is grand value for money, so order your copy now!

CRICKET!

I dare say a lot of you fellows would like to be able to see the Test matches in Australia. But although you can't do that, if you go to the Circus at Olympia you will be able to see some very interesting cricket—played by elephants! I understand that some of their rules would probably not meet with the approval of the M.C.C., but nevertheless these cricketing "heavyweights" should be worth watching. When these cheery elephants are not playing cricket they are dancing, so you see they have quite a gay time.

A STRANGE HOME!

Many of you have probably read the old legend of how Romulus and Remus, who later built Rome, were brought up by the wolves. From America comes a modern equivalent of this. A seven-year-old boy named Harry Service lived for two weeks in a badger's den with a live badger, while the badger looked after him. At the end of his strange adventure, he was none the worse.

TURNED DOWN!

How many of you readers have read "Robinson Crusoe"? I expect most of you have, and **THE GEM LIBRARY**.—No. 1,300.

oughly enjoyed it, too. It is one of the most famous books in the world, and for two hundred and fifteen years "Robinson Crusoe" has been a best seller. But when Daniel Defoe wrote it, no less than twenty publishers turned it down!

LUXURY!

Recently the giant liner Aquitania was overhauled and certain alterations were made. A thousand men worked on her in Southampton Docks day and night. One of the biggest jobs was the fitting up of a super-cinema on the liner. Not only has this the latest cinema "talkie" apparatus, but it also has a large stage complete with machinery for scene-shifting, and a marvellous lighting installation. And so the Aquitania becomes once more one of the most modern liners afloat—a floating palace.

HEROISM!

The heroism of two men at Bickerstaffe Collieries recently saved the lives of a hundred men. A fire broke out and endangered the lives of the hundred men who were working in the colliery. The fire brigade arrived and got to work, but it was essential that the pressure in the boiler room should be maintained if the men were to be saved. Tom Gaskell and Harry Bradshaw stuck to their posts in the boiler room despite the fact that the roof was on fire!

THE WRONG MAN!

Bandits made an attack on a cinema manager in Leicester Square, London, the other day. The manager was going to the bank with five hundred pounds in box office takings. Just as he was passing Thurston's billiard hall, a two-seater car, driven by a man in chauffeur's uniform, drew up beside him. Two men jumped out and attacked the manager. One of the assailants struck him on the back of the head, but his bowler hat saved the manager, who butted the other man in the stomach. The manager then broke away, and seeing two men following him, he rushed into the billiard hall and flung the bag over the counter to the astonished attendant. Immediately the two pursuers closed with the manager and a fight ensued, during which a showcase was knocked over and the manager was cut on the hand. Eventually it turned out that the two pursuers were detectives, who thought that the manager was the thief! They had seen him run away, and followed. In the meantime, however, the real bandits had made good their getaway!

FROM £5 TO £5,000!

Twenty years ago Charlie Chaplin wrote a play. One day in Man-

chester he sold it to Mr. Lotinga for £5. Now Charlie wants that play back again, and he has offered £5,000 for it! Was his offer accepted? Well, no. You see, Mr. Lotinga says that owing to Charlie's fame the play is now worth £10,000! So if Charlie wants it that is what he will have to pay!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Bill: "Had any luck?"
Tom: "Yes; I've shot twenty ducks!"
Bill: "Were they wild?"
Tom: "No; but the man who owned them was!"

SNAIL'S PACE!

Not long ago the largest electrical transformer in the world had to be taken by road from Hersham to the new power station at Barking. The transformer weighed one hundred and ten tons and the only lorry that was strong enough to carry it weighed a hundred tons, so that it was rather a weighty matter! The job had to be done at night, and the police had to map out a special route for it. Then a snag occurred, for the weight was so great that it was impossible for the lorry to go over Canning Town bridge. So they took it to Surrey Docks, where the world's largest floating crane lifted it into a barge and it went by river to Victoria Docks, and then on by road to Barking. And its average speed was about three miles an hour!

AN AERIAL COMBAT!

Yes, it was an aerial combat all right, but the two competitors were a couple of young lions! The two lions, with two pumas and their trainer, were flying from Ostend to London for the Circus at Olympia. The lions were allowed out of the cage in the cabin and they suddenly started fighting. The keeper hastily bundled them back into their cage, what time the two pumas howled and shrieked to be let out to join in the fight!

STRANGE PETS!

Lord Tavistock keeps perhaps the strangest pets of any man, for he breeds spiders! He allows them the run of his large house, and makes friends with them all. He says that they are the most harmless of all the smaller creatures, and quite the most interesting pets. Well, every man to his choice, but I for one should hate to be awakened in the morning by even the most affectionate spider walking across my face!

A SPECIAL TRAIN FOR 7d.

How many of you have often thought what fun it would be to travel in a special train? I expect most of you have. Normally, it is a very expensive business, and only a few people ever do it. But there was a lucky fellow the other day who got a special train for sevenpence! How did he do it? Well, it was like this: He had been up to the North of England and was returning to Richmond, Surrey. He booked right through via Willesden Junction, but when he got to Willesden, half an hour late, he found that the last train to Richmond had gone. He consulted the railway officials, who decided immediately that a single electric coach must be procured for him. They found, however, that there was not one available, so they produced a perfectly good six-coach train and he went home in state. And all for sevenpence!

YOUR EDITOR.

TOM MERRY & CO. OUT WEST!

(Continued from page 17.)

Colonel Stalker relinquished the animal to him, and the Hawk skinned it with a celerity that showed long practice.

Tom Merry & Co. watched him with great interest. His movements were almost too quick to be followed, and in a very few minutes the animal was skinned and cut up for broiling.

A savoury smell of roasting meat soon pervaded the camp, and it was very welcome to the hungry juniors.

The Hawk ate with great dignity, using his fingers and a knife—the fork being a luxury apparently despised by the Blackfoot chief.

Skimpole was observing the Indian with keen interest.

The first sight of him had been startling to the genius of St. Jim's, but now he was only eager to get down details in his notebook. His book of travels, which was to be let loose upon a long-suffering public on his return to England, would not be complete without a chapter on the Red Indians. And here was an opportunity of getting his information first hand.

The breakfast finished, the travellers rose, and, while the juniors were making up the packs for the trail, Skimpole came over to the Blackfoot chief, notebook and pencil in hand. The Hawk eyed him curiously.

"Pray excuse me," said Skimpole, blinking at the Indian through his big spectacles. "I should like to have a few details, if possible. I am writing a book of travels, and I should like to put in some Indian manners and customs."

"Ugh!"

"As a Redskin yourself, of course you know all about it. Would you mind answering a few questions?"

"Ugh!"

"In the first place—"

"Ugh!"

Colonel Stalker looked round with a grin. He spoke a few words to the Indian in a language the boys did not understand, and a grin of comprehension for a moment flickered on the coppery face of the Blackfoot.

"I guess you can go ahead, sonny," said the colonel.

"Thank you, sir! You understand, Mr. Hawk—"

"The Red chief understands. The young white brave with the four eyes wishes to spread his fame to the white people who dwell in wigwams of stone far beyond the big sea water."

Skimpole blinked.

"Ye-es, that's it!"

"He wishes to tell of the fame of the Hawk and his great deeds in war, that the stories may be related to the papooses of the white people, to teach them to grow up into great warriors."

"Ye-es."

"He would hear the chief recount some of his great deeds on the warpath and on the trail of the bear and the bison."

"Exactly. In the first place—"

"It is well. The Hawk will speak."

"Thank you very much! You are—er—a Blackfoot, I believe?"

"The Hawk is the great chief of the Blackfeet."

"You—er—live in wigwams, I think?"

"The Blackfoot people dwell in wigwams of skins taken from buffalo, the elk, and the bear, and painted with the deeds of their warriors."

"Good! Do you ever go on the warpath now?"

"It is many moons since the Hawk has raised the scalps of his enemies."

Skimpole shuddered.

"Do you mean to say that you have scalped anybody, Mr. Hawk?"

"The Hawk is a great chief. The pole of his wigwam in the valley of the Rocky Mountains is adorned with the scalps of his enemies."

"Dear me! Have you any scalps about you at the present moment—besides your own, I mean, of course?"

"The Hawk does not carry the trophies of war on the trail of peace."

"Ah, yes, my mistake! Could you?"—Skimpole's eyes glistened—"could you describe to me one of these scenes when you have scalped somebody, so that I can put it in a more realistic way in my book?"

"The Hawk will tell the story of his fighting."

"Excellent! Go ahead!"

And Skimpole wetted the point of his pencil and stood ready to take down details.

The Blackfoot threw his blanket round him with a dignified movement, and raised his right hand and began to speak. As the picturesque words rolled out in a deep and musical voice, all the juniors ceased their occupations to listen to him.

"It was the time when the snow fell on the mountains, and the leaves of the trees were gone, and the branches were bare," said the Hawk. "In the lodges of the Blackfeet was a cruel guest. Famine sat at the door of the wigwam, and the braves were hungry, and the squaws wailed in the lodges, and the papooses cried for meat."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"The Hawk had hunted many a moon, and nothing fell to his arrow. The bears were hiding like cowards in the rocks, the deer were gone to the south, the birds no longer flew over the frozen woods. The bear, the panther, the elk, dared not face the arrow of the Hawk. He was a great chief."

"Dear me!"

"But the wailing of the squaws and the papooses sent the Hawk forth to hunt once more, and in the valley he found the tracks of the deer. He followed them. The Hawk is a great tracker. His eyes never fail, and so his people have named him the Hawk. He followed the track of the deer through the frozen mesquite, under the big trees, and through the pines that wailed in the wind, till he came upon the carcass of the deer, and there was an arrow in the side of the deer, and by the deer knelt a brave of the Sioux tribe, who had slain it."

The Hawk was growing excited now. In the keen recollection of that exciting adventure, the Blackfoot's gravity and reserve were gone. He spoke with the freedom of a brave relating an adventure in his own lodge, and the juniors watched him and listened almost spellbound.

"The Hawk could have struck his enemy to the ground ere he looked up, but the Hawk is a great warrior. He called to his enemy, and the Sioux was on his guard."

"I weguard that as ewicket."

"Then he drew his knife, and the Hawk drew his knife," said the Blackfoot, his eyes gleaming, and he brought a long knife out of his girdle with a flourish that made Skimpole jump, "and we closed in fight."

"Dear me!"

"He rushed forward, and the Hawk sprang upon him—thus!" The Blackfoot made a sudden spring at Skimpole, and grasped the spectacled junior round the neck and brandished the knife before his eyes with the right. "And the Hawk bent him back—thus, and thus, and raised his knife—and thus, and plunged it into the heart of his enemy—thus—"

"Help!" shrieked Skimpole.

Tom Merry and Blake dragged off the Indian. It really seemed that in his excitement he would carry the illustration too far, and Skimpole had already given himself up for lost.

"Draw it mild!" gasped Blake.

"Hold on!" shouted Tom Merry.

The Blackfoot straightened up. Skimpole gasped for breath, and put his spectacles straight.

"Dear me! I—I—"

"Ugh!"

The Indian shook himself loose, and draped his blanket round his powerful form. He sheathed the hunting-knife.

"Thus the Hawk slew his enemy and carried home the deer to the wigwams of the Blackfeet braves. I have spoken!"

And he swung away.

(Continued on next page.)

PIN-IT CONSTRUCTIONAL TOY. RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 2.

1st Prize £2-2-0 Guy Furness, "Ratho," Egerton Park, Birkenhead.
2nd Prize £1-1-0 Bryan Hollands, 107 Southwood Road, Ramsgate, Kent.

24 CONSOLATION PRIZES TO:

R. Hayward, Kitley, Swansea; Leslie Fitton, Queensway, Rochdale; W. Baxter, The Heath, Cardiff; Albert Kohler, Edinburgh, 4; Joseph Henshaw, Wilmslow, Manchester; Thomas Clapham, Westbourne, Otley; R. Devaney, Hayfield, Nr. Stockport; Robert Flemming, Downe, Kent; William F. Cole, Exeter; E. O. Westhorp, Gravesend, Kent; George O. Whyte, Newry, Co. Down, N. Ireland; S. Brand, Walker-Ville, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Cyril Phillips, Forest Hill, S.E.25; C. Killington, Iwerne Minster, Nr. Blandford, Dorset; David Phillips, Forest Fields, Nottingham; Arthur Hanbury, Ripley, Derbyshire; Geoffrey Charles Hay, Luton, Beds; Robert Spencer Cowley, Streatham, S.W.16; Alan Wilkins, Greenford, Middlesex; E. N. Pyman, Romford, Essex; G. Grimley, New Eltham, S.E.9; T. Lampard, Aldershot; William Jackson, Sutton, Surrey; O. F. Allen, Heston, Hounslow, Middlesex.

"Th-thank you very much!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I shall be delighted to put that in my book! Dear me, I feel quite bewildered."

CHAPTER 14.

Two in Trouble!

THE juniors shouldered their packs, and the march was resumed. Hawk, the Blackfoot, strode along with the travellers. The juniors had learned with great interest that the "ranch chief" whom he was going to visit in the south was Mr. Poinsett, Tom Merry's uncle in Arizona.

The Blackfoot, too, was surprised when he learned that Tom Merry was the nephew of the old comrade with whom he had hunted in the mountains of Colorado and Dakota. It was Colonel Stalker who gave him the information. When he received it, the Blackfoot halted and turned towards Tom Merry.

"The young chief is of the blood of the Hawk's old comrade," he said simply. "Many moons ago we hunted the bear together in the mountain passes. The young chief is the brother of the Hawk in life and death."

And he held out a bronze hand to the junior.

Tom Merry grasped it.

The Hawk said no more. He was evidently a man of few words. But he glanced at Tom Merry often during the morning's march, and many a time he gave the lad a helping hand in a difficult place.

It was nearly noon when the adventurers came in sight of the spot where they were to cross the river which, many miles back, had carried away the suspension bridge. Here, nearer its source, it was quieter and shallower, and ran in

a narrow channel, from which great rocks jutted up as if purposely formed by Nature to be stepping-stones.

Crossing was not likely to be an easy task, and the colonel decided to leave it till after lunch.

A sufficient quantity of the deer meat had been brought along for the meal, and a fire was lighted to cook it. The Hawk was cook on this occasion, and he did the work well. The travellers ate a hearty meal, and then they rested. But Skimpole, though not generally active, was not in the mood for resting. The next morning, at the latest, they expected to strike the railway again, and, meanwhile, he was anxious to take as many notes as possible of wild life in the Rockies.

While the others were resting, Skimpole rose and stretched himself. Round the camp rose the great rocks, with ever higher and higher peaks in the background, shadowed here and there by pines and thickets of sassafras.

Arthur Augustus glanced at the genius of St. Jim's.

"Where are you goin', Skimmay?"

"I am going to take a few notes," replied Skimpole. "I may be fortunate enough to meet with a grizzly bear, or some wild Indians, and be able to jot down details."

"You may probobly get into some dangah."

"A traveller who wishes to produce a really good book of travels cannot afford to think of dangers, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, but if you get eaten by a gwizzly beah, we shall have to waste a lot of time lookin' for you."

"Really, D'Arcy, that is rather a heartless way of putting it."

"Upon the whole, I had better come with you and see that you don't get into twouble," said Arthur Augustus.

"I shall be very glad to have you with me, D'Arcy. You will be able to carry any geological specimens I may collect."

The swell of St. Jim's sniffed.

"Yaas, wathah! I can see myself cawwyin' your wotten geological specimens!" he remarked.

And they left the camp.

The two juniors soon disappeared among the rocks, the others hardly noticing their departure. Skimpole blinked on all sides as they went on, jotting down notes, and here and there picking up some fragment of rock and dropping it into his pocket.

Arthur Augustus uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Look there!"

They were about half a mile from the camp. As they came out of a wood a sudden sight burst upon their eyes that was startling enough.

Ahead of them, close by the border of the wood, lay an Indian encampment.

There were tents, with the poles sticking out from the tops of the stretched skins, and the outsides were daubed with curious devices in red and yellow paint. A camp-fire roared near by the tents, and several copper-complexioned women were cooking there. Little paposes, nearly naked, in spite of the cold weather, were toddling about the wigwams, or snatching pieces of meat from the cooking pots.

"Bai Jove!"

"Dear me, this is a real Indian scene at last!" said Skimpole. "The Hawk is all very well, but he is a tame Indian, and there was no trace of blood upon him anywhere, so far as I could observe. These are evidently real savages."

"Better not go too close, deah boy. I weally have a swrong objection to bein' scalped."

"For the sake of getting accurate information for my book of travels—"

"I wefuse to be scalped for the sake of gettin' accuwate information for a book of twavels."

"Yes, but you see—"

"I wefuse to see anythin' of the sort."

"Very well, you can go back if you are nervous, D'Arcy; but I shall certainly not leave this spot till I have taken my notes. I—"

"If you insinuate that I am nervous, Skimmay, I shall have no alternative but to give you a fearful thwashin'!"

"Pray do not interrupt me when I am taking notes. I am, unfortunately, too short-sighted to see very clearly at this distance. I think I must go nearer."

"You uttah ass!"

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"I insist— Oh! Ow! My only hat!"

There was a sudden rush of feet from the trees, and a blood-curdling yell. A crowd of Redskins surrounded the two boys. Skimpole's notebook went flying one way, and his pencil another, and he was dragged by rough hands towards the Indian encampment. Arthur Augustus thrust his hand into his chest for his famous revolver, but recollected that he had taken it out to clean, and left it lying on a log at the camp. He was seized the next moment, and dragged after Skimpole.

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Colonel Stalker was on his feet now, gun in hand. Pongo was barking furiously. The Blackfoot emerged from the wood dragging a man by the collar—a man who writhed and struggled vainly. There was an ejaculation of amazement from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, it's that wascal Puntah!"

A dozen or more Red Indians had captured the boys, and they were yelling with excitement as they dragged them towards the encampment.

It was useless for the juniors to struggle against such odds, and they did not attempt it.

Arthur Augustus expostulated, but his expostulations passed unheeded.

"Pway don't be so wuff!" he gasped. "You are wumplin' my waistcoat cruelly, and my twousahs will be smothahed in mud. I pwotest! Pway don't be such cads, you know!" But they yelled and dragged him on.

Near the camp they released the prisoners, who went rolling on the ground. Skimpole sat up and adjusted his spectacles, and gasped for breath.

"Dear me, this is very annoying! Yet I am glad it has occurred. This is certainly wild life in the Rockies."

"You uttah duffah!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "We shall probably be murdahed, and my twousahs are ruined, in any case."

They staggered to their feet. They would have been glad of a chance to cut and run, but the savages were round them. The Redskins encircled the two scared juniors, with excited looks and yells. They were evidently greatly elated with their capture, though what their ultimate intentions were it was hard to tell.

Arthur Augustus was greatly alarmed, as was natural, but his pluck did not fail him. If the worst came to the worst, he was prepared to meet his fate like a D'Arcy and a Briton, as he would have expressed it.

The Redskins were not of the appearance of Hawk, the Blackfoot. They evidently belonged to another race, their features were more brutal, their colour darker, their clothing ragged and greasy.

They circled round the juniors in a wild dance of triumph, with wild yells and gestures, brandishing their tomahawks as they danced.

Every moment the boys feared that one of the weapons would come whirling towards them, but the catastrophe did not happen.

The perspiration bedewed the brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! I weally wish we had stayed in camp!" he murmured. "This is worse than meetin' that wascal Puntah! I wegard this posish as deucid awkward!"

There was a sudden shout from the wood, and the Hawk came in sight, with Colonel Stalker by his side, running swiftly towards the ring of dancing savages. And the wild dance suddenly stopped.

CHAPTER 15.

A Redskin Fight!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS drew a breath of relief. The Redskins ceased to dance, and drew together in a group round the boys, grasping their tomahawks, and casting lowering glances towards the newcomers.

Their leader, a man of massive form, dressed in buckskin leggings, with a blanket of brilliant hues, jabbered to the rest in some strange dialect the boys did not understand, and the Redskins responded to his words with a low growl.

The leader had a red deer daubed upon his brawny chest, and Arthur Augustus had read enough of the customs of Indians to know that it was his totem, and signified the name he went by in his tribe.

The Red Deer glared defiance at the newcomers, and stood with his tomahawk grasped in his hand, his braves behind him ready to back him up, at the same time keeping sharp eyes on their prisoners.

A curious thrill ran through the swell of St. Jim's. It looked as if there would be bloodshed, and D'Arcy realised what grim and savage warfare might be like in the lonely passes of the Rockies.

Colonel Stalker, as he came on, held his rifle ready for use, and the Blackfoot had his tomahawk in his hand.

They halted, and for some moments the two parties

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looked at one another. Then from the wood came the juniors of St. Jim's—Tom Merry and Blake and Wally, each with a weapon of some kind in his hand, and looking very startled and disquieted, but showing no trace of fear.

The yells of the savages had reached the camp by the river and alarmed the campers. They had come to the rescue, divining that something had happened to D'Arcy and Skimpole, and fearing something worse than the reality. "My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "This looks like—like—"

"Business," said Blake.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "I never expected anything like this when I left St. Jim's. But—but I don't care! We're in for it. What idiot said that Redskins don't go on the warpath now? I never saw a more savage-looking chap than that specimen with the red deer chalked on his chest."

Colonel Stalker looked the Red Deer full in the face, and made a significant motion with his rifle.

"You have our friends there," he said. "Let them go!"

The Red Deer made a gesture of negation.

"Red Deer take prisoner," he replied, in broken English. "Red Deer keep. The Red Deer is a great brave. I have spoken!"

"Ugh!" grunted Hawk. "The Red Deer is a squaw. He makes war on boys. The Red Deer had bold words on his tongue, and water in his veins."

The Indian flushed under his coppery skin. He made a savage gesture with his tomahawk, his black eyes glaring at the chief.

"My brother is a Blackfoot," he said sarcastically. "I know his tribe; they are great boasters. The Blackfeet fight the squaws, and run like papooses from the knives of the Cheyennes. Let the Blackfoot measure his tomahawk with the tomahawk of the Cheyenne."

"It is good!" And the Hawk sprang forward.

In a moment more the two Redskins, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, would have been dealing murderous blows; but Colonel Stalker thrust his rifle between.

"I guess you'll go slow," he drawled. "Keep your wool on, Hawk, my boy. As for you, you Cheyenne thief, remember that you're not far enough from Uncle Sam's pits to play a game like this. Give up my friends."

"Red Deer take prisoners; he keep." And the Cheyenne braves yelled approval.

Colonel Stalker was silent for a moment. The situation was a critical one, and he knew it. The Cheyennes were evidently a party seeking some new encampment, probably having left their old hunting-grounds in search of new quarters from famine. They were a ragged crew, and, as the engineer had warned him at parting, they might easily be tempted to some desperate deed by the prospect of plunder.

They were in the majority here, and there was no help at hand. If they chose to be obstinate, the rescue of the two juniors would not be accomplished without bloodshed. And if blood once was spilt, the odds were on the side of the Redskins, and the matter might easily end in a massacre.

Such things had occurred in the lonely valleys of the Rocky Mountains, even in the sober days of the twentieth century.

The Red Deer looked at the colonel with a sardonic grin on his face. In the white men's town he would have carried himself with becoming humility. In the pine forests and rocky canyons he was master.

"You must give up those boys," said the colonel at last. "Come, they are no use to you. I will give you tobacco for them."

The Red Deer's eyes sparkled.

"Fire-water, too?" he said.

Captain Stalker shook his head.

"I have no fire-water to give, and I guess I wouldn't give a Red liquor if I had it, and that's flat!"

"How much tobacco?" asked Red Deer, with a look of disappointment, which told plainly how much he would have been pleased with a gift of fire-water. Intoxicating liquor, the most fatal gift of the white man, is always tempting to the Redskin, in spite of the havoc it has caused.

The colonel drew a big leather pouch from his pocket.

"I will give you that, I reckon."

The Red Deer shook his head.

"Not enough."

"You can have that or nothing," said the colonel, throwing the pouch to the ground. "I guess I want to save trouble if I can. But you are going to give up those boys. Take that, or fight—as you choose! I don't care which!"

And Colonel Stalker lifted his rifle and put his finger to the trigger.

The Cheyenne hesitated. Although the force on his side made him confident and boastful, he did not wish to pre-

cipitate a conflict, in which he was pretty certain that he would get the colonel's first bullet through his own body.

He stooped and picked up the leather pouch, and weighed it in his hand.

"Red Deer take tobacco."

"Good!" said the colonel. "Send those young galoots over here."

Red Deer spoke to his companions, and they opened to allow D'Arcy and Skimpole to pass. Glad enough the two juniors hurried out of the greasy circle of savages, and joined their friends.

The colonel drew a breath of relief. It had looked like being very serious trouble, and he was glad it was over.

"I guess it's all serene," he said. "Let's get."

The Red Deer waved his hand towards the Hawk.

"Let the Blackfoot dog go in safety!" he said. "Let him beware of meeting the Cheyenne again, or he may not go safely away."

The Hawk's eyes glazed. He strode towards the Cheyenne.

"Let the Cheyenne chief make good his words!" he exclaimed.

"Ugh! It is good!"

"Hold on!" said the colonel. "We don't want trouble here, Hawk. Let's get!"

"You may go," said the Blackfoot proudly. "The Hawk stays here to punish the insolence of the Cheyenne dog!"

"But, I tell you—"

"The Hawk will not go!"

"Then I guess I'll stand by you and see fair play," said the colonel.

"Ugh! It is good!"

The Red Deer spoke to his companions in the dialect of the Dog Indians, and they drew back to allow room for the single combat. The two chiefs faced one another, grasping their tomahawks. The juniors, as they looked on, caught their breath. Their faces were very pale.

"Colonel, can't you stop them?" muttered Tom Merry.

Colonel Stalker shook his head.

"Let 'em rip!" he said tersely.

"But—but this is—murder!"

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"That's their funeral."

"Bai Jove, I regard this as howwid! I weally wish they could be westwained!"

But the Redskins were already fighting. They rushed at one another savagely, with whirling tomahawks, and there was a crash of meeting weapons. Then they went at it furiously, with movements so quick that the eye could scarcely follow them.

The juniors gazed on spellbound. They knew that at any moment they might see one of the combatants fall weltering in his blood, and the thought almost froze them with horror.

Suddenly the Blackfoot was seen to spring backward. There was a crash on the rocks, as his tomahawk flew away. He was disarmed, and a savage glare of triumph was in the coppery face of the Cheyenne.

He sprang forward, and his weapon whirled aloft. Tom Merry gave a cry. But the Blackfoot eluded the blow, and closed with the Cheyenne. The Red Deer's arm was twisted, and he dropped his tomahawk, and went backwards on the rocks with a crash.

They were down, weaponless, the Blackfoot on top!

There was a savage growl from the Cheyennes, and a forward movement; but Colonel Stalker's rifle was levelled, and his intention of shooting if necessary was so plain that the Redskins hung back from interfering.

And it all passed in a few seconds.

The Cheyenne was crushed on the rocks, and the Hawk groped for his knife, and drew it, and the clear steel glittered in the sun as he threw up his hand to strike.

Tom Merry sprang forward and grasped the descending knife. The knife clinked on the rocks, and jerked out of the hand of the Blackfoot. He turned a furious glance upon the boy, but, recognising Tom Merry, his expression changed.

"Ugh! Why does the little chief stop my hand?"

"Do not kill him!"

The Hawk rose to his feet. Red Deer scrambled up, his face dark with rage and mortification, yet evidently glad to escape with his life. He threw his cloak round him, and stood, with sullen dignity, silent.

The Blackfoot picked up his knife and returned it to his belt.

"Let him live," he said briefly. "Let him live, the dog, if the little chief wishes it." And he strode away.

The rest of the party followed him into the wood, glad enough to be well out of the adventure, and the Red Deer was left standing, with sullen brows, gazing after them.

CHAPTER 16.

The Hawk Keeps Watch!

THEY crossed the river by means of the great rocks jutting up in the channel, and took up the trail to the nearest railroad depot.

The Blackfoot chief marched with them, and carried his share of the baggage.

Tom Merry felt a little constrained with the Red chief. He knew that the Blackfoot must have a great regard for him on account of his relationship to Mr. Poinsett, or he would never have stayed his hand. And he felt that in interfering with the Hawk he had taken advantage of that. The horror of bloodshed had actuated him, yet he could not expect the Blackfoot to understand his feelings on the subject.

In his usual frank way, he spoke on the matter to the Hawk as soon as he had thought it out. He was walking beside the tall, silent Indian over the rough, rocky track.

"I hope you are not angry with me, Hawk," he said frankly. "It was like my cheek to interfere with you, I know, but I could not let you kill him."

"Yaas, watah! Undah the circe, Tom Mewwy, you certainly owe our Wed fwiennd an apology."

The Hawk looked at Tom Merry.

"Ugh! It is well! The Hawk's heart is glad that the little chief stayed his hand. The Hawk is a Christian."

"Bai Jove! Are you weally?"

"Ugh! Many moons ago the Hawk was taught the white man's religion by a great Bible chief," said the Blackfoot. "It is many moons since the Hawk has taken the scalps of his enemies. It is good! Ugh! I have spoken!"

And the Blackfoot stalked on in silence.

The adventurers camped that evening within ten miles of the railroad as the sun sank down to its bed in the far Pacific.

The Hawk built the fire, and brought in game for the supper, and, as the night was fine and still, the tent was not erected. The campers, rolled in their blankets, slept with their feet to the fire.

When Tom Merry nodded off he noticed that the Blackfoot was still sitting erect upon a log, his eyes watching the fire, and it struck him that the chief was keeping watch.

There was a possibility that the Cheyennes might have tracked the party, for plunder or revenge, and doubtless the Blackfoot's precaution was well taken, though Wally

would have backed Pongo against anybody for keeping watch. About midnight Tom Merry awoke. He could hardly tell what it was awoke him. Doubtless the Blackfoot had made some movement.

The Hawk was still sitting in the same posture, as if he had not moved. The fire was lower, burning redly in the blackness of the night.

The Blackfoot was sitting still, but Tom Merry, as his glance fell upon him, saw that his head was bent, as if he were listening intently.

A thrill ran through the boy. There was something in the attitude of the listening Indian that smote him with a vague sense of danger.

The Blackfoot suddenly moved. He rose to his feet and stood for a moment erect, still listening, his black shadow falling across Tom Merry from the fire.

Then, with stealthy and noiseless step, he left the camp and disappeared into the shadows of the night.

Tom Merry lay still, his heart throbbing. What did it mean? Why had the Blackfoot left the camp so cautiously, with such tense earnestness in his manner?

Was it danger?

The junior lay still and listened. There was no sound in the wood that shadowed the camp on one side, and shut off the light of the moon. It was into the wood that the Indian had disappeared. Where was he gone? Did he intend to return?

Tom Merry sat up, with beating heart, feeling that he could no longer endure the suspense. His movement woke up Blake, who looked at him in the ruddy glow of the fire with a sleepy yawn.

"Hallo! What are you sitting up for?"

"There's something up!"

"Yes; I can see you are. Anything else?"

"The Blackfoot has just left the camp, and he was looking as if he heard an enemy. I can hear nothing."

Jack Blake promptly rose to his feet. Tom Merry followed his example; and they strained their eyes after the Indian without making anything out in the shadows. On one side of the camp the moonlight lay, but on the other side, where the wood was, all was dark.

"I can hear nothing," whispered Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Neither can I."

"Hark!"

They were listening with all their ears. In the dim wood there was a sound of rustling and crackling, as if men were struggling there in the darkness. It looked as if the Blackfoot had found a foe.

Was it the Cheyennes, or another foe? In any case, the brave Blackfoot should not be left to encounter him alone. Tom Merry seized a billet of wood and rushed from the camp, and Blake was after him like a shot.

But their aid was not needed. The struggle in the wood ceased as abruptly as it had begun, and then there was a sound as of a body being dragged through the thicket. The sound was coming towards the camp.

Tom Merry and Blake stopped and looked at one another with sickly faces. The same thought was in both their minds—had a man been ~~done~~ to death there under the dark trees?

Colonel Stalker was on his feet now, gun in hand. Pongo was barking furiously. The Blackfoot emerged from the wood, dragging a man by the collar—a man who writhed and struggled vainly.

Tom Merry's heart gave a bound. The man was captured, whoever he was, but no blood had been spilt.

There was a grim smile on the Blackfoot's bronzed face. He flung his prisoner down in the camp in the ruddy glow of the fire.

There was an ejaculation of amazement from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy:

"Bai Jove, it's that wascal Puntah!"

CHAPTER 17.

Punter's Plight.

CAPTAIN PUNTER it was, and in a sorry plight. He had been pretty roughly handled by the Indian. But that was not the worst.

He had evidently been in the wars before he fell into the hands of the Hawk.

He was dressed in an ancient pair of Indian leggings and a ragged blanket and a tattered jacket. His head and feet were bare, and the latter muddy and stained with blood, where the rocks had wounded him.

He had no weapons, and the look on his face showed

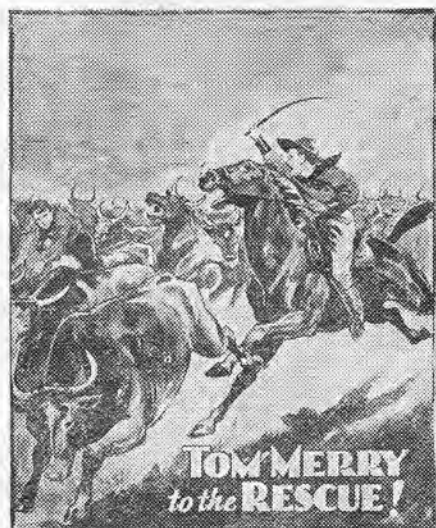
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CHAPTER I.

A Strange Meeting!

THE long red racing-car rolled wearily towards the river-bank, a cloud of steam hissing from her dented radiator cap. Her tail canted drunkenly down on to her nearside rear wheel, where a battered wing scraped the tyre heavily.

As she lumbered, with many a creak and groan, atop the low bank which overlooked the muddy, yellow surface of the wide stream, Bruce Bradman braked her abruptly, and leaned outwards, staring moodily at the slashed tread of the rear cover.

"Not so good, Cope, old man," he announced, with a shake of his head. "That tyre won't stand up for another mile. And we've done our spares in already. Confound that beastly spring!"

He jumped down, and, followed by Jimmy Cope, walked back to inspect the offending wheel. Thanks to a broken spring, the wing was right down on it.

Joe Anson, the ex-sailor mechanic, swung his squat, burly form out from the dickey in the bulbous back. And Hari, the stout, bespectacled Babu, who had been riding beside him, copied his example. Gloomily the four men stared down at damage which, in the circumstances, was irreparable.

For miles around a panorama of wild country stretched. Save for the winding course of the age-old Euphrates, and some scattered palm-trees along its banks, there was no sign of life. Even had there been, it was unlikely that the unskilled services of a few natives could have afforded much assistance.

Disgustedly Bruce strode up the sun-baked bank, and, shading his eyes, regarded a cluster of long, low buildings in the near distance. It was these which had brought him to the spot. From far away they had seemed some sort of village.

A close-up brought with it swift disillusionment. The structures were in a ruinous condition. Old Army huts, abandoned after the Great War, they leaned over at all angles. Their heat-warped, blistered roofs were caved in. Their glazeless windows yawned gauntly like the hollows of some grinning skull.

As Bruce walked towards them a mangy hyena slunk

away from their shade, and vanished amongst some rocks. This was further proof that the place was uninhabited.

"Don't look like there was no 'ousin' shortage round 'ere, cap'n," the sailor grunted, turning a quid of 'bacca over in his mahogany cheek. "Which same, seein' we ain't 'ouse 'untin', don't 'elp."

"I don't know—" Bruce's stalwart frame straightened as he paused, his eyes upon the hutments. "There are more ways of killing a cat than drowning it. I believe I see a way out of our present trouble."

"I'm dashed if I do!" Jimmy Cope commented, with a glance of inquiry at the speaker.

Bruce laughed, and pointed to the river.

"What's the matter with knocking up a stout raft out of this timber? We could float the old bus downstream on the current till we strike some town that sports a blacksmith. Eh, Joe?" And he glanced at the sailor.

The latter raised a hand to scratch the nape of his tanned neck.

"I seen crazier things done back in the War, skipper. I served on a blinkin' packet up this yer river. I don't know it couldn't be done."

"Get at it, then!" Bruce instructed; and they hurried back to the car for tools.

Sweating in the broiling heat, the four fell to upon the crazy structures. With nails knocked from the more rotten woodwork, they hammered walls and floors together in layers, and dragged them in sections to the water. Once afloat, these were tied together by cross-pieces, picked from odd joists.

At length a raft, the size of a large room floor, floated by the bank.

Near the stream a lonely palm-tree reared its leafy head. Bruce got a chain and tackle round its tough stem. And, by means of this, the car was lowered gradually down the steep bank to the water's edge. Then, with infinite care, the four men pushed her out on to the gently rocking raft, where they "choked" her in position.

Finally some large "sweeps" were hastily knocked together from long joists with boards nailed to one end to form the oar blade. This done, the hardy adventurers shoved off outstream with their precious freight.

Rocking and dipping on the muddy flood, the raft drifted slowly southwards with the current. Like four Robinson Crusoes sailing from a wreck, the travellers coaxed and guided their cumbrous craft with the crude sweeps Bruce

had devised. Now and again it would bury its blunt nose in the swell at some turn in the river—an event which invariably drew a squeal of alarm from the excitable Hari.

Joe grinned.

But there was no sign of living souls upon the low, monotonous sweep of river-banks, and the surface of the waters was unbroken by any craft.

Indeed, it was not till close on sunset that, rounding a bend, the voyagers sighted a meshuf—a low, narrow craft—whose crew were poling stolidly near in along the bank.

Cope looked down at his cut and blistered hands. The home-made sweeps were hard to handle.

"I vote we hail that beggar, Bruce. Maybe they'll tow us for some backsheesh. My paws 'ud make a manicurist throw six fits."

Bruce scanned the native craft in the failing light, found Cope's suggestion good, and bearing on his sweep, swung the raft round so she bore towards the meshuf.

From the latter's side some natives watched the raft draw in with idle curiosity. With stolid Oriental indifference, they kept on toiling at their long poles. Not till the raft ran in under the vessel's side did they pause in their labours.

"You're the linguist of the crowd, Hari. Dicker with 'em in their own lingo," Bruce told the Babu.

Hari broke out in a rapid fire in Arabic which brought a newcomer to the meshuf's bulwarks. A scowling, saturnine face peered down at the raft as Bruce and his friends held it to the vessel's side.

Through the semi-gloom Bruce recognised the leader of the Malays.

The gleaming orbs above met Bruce's in a glance of mutual recognition. With a swift oath the man leapt back, and gave a shout. An instant, and his friends would swarm along the side, and sweep the raft with a deadly fire from under cover of the meshuf's bulwarks.

The horror of the trap into which they had fallen flashed through Bruce's brain like lightning. To shove off and escape aboard the ungainly raft was out of the question. There remained but seconds in which to act.

Bruce did so. He whipped a steel wrench from the timbers at his feet, and, with a yell, sprang to the meshuf's side. Before its crew were aware of what was happening, Bruce Bradman was clambering over the rail.

"Board and bash 'em!" he shouted to his pals; and, twirling the wrench, charged at the gaping crew.

He went through them like brown paper. Scattered like chaff, they bolted up the narrow deck with screams of terror.

Bruce let them go. His eye was on the Malay, who, stooping by an open hatch, was shouting into it. The speed ace spun, and went for him baldheaded. He saw the man grab at his waist and straighten. A flash of flame cut the gloom. A bullet sized past Bradman's ear.

Bruce ducked and hurled his wrench. It took the Malay on the brow and sent him reeling. Bruce barged him as he stumbled up; then, as a knife flashed free, smashed a deadly right full in the fellow's face.

The Malay hit the deck and rolled a foot or so away. Bruce swung about and glimpsed the hatch vent fill. Another Selongese was scrambling through it, and behind him was yet another.

The first man thrust a pistol forward, but Bruce gave him no time to shoot; a running kick sent him crashing back into his companion. The pair vanished in a heap below. Bruce slammed the trap down on their heads and stood on it.

"Round those fellows up!" he bawled, as Joe and Cope tumbled aboard across the bulwarks.

The two whites dashed towards the natives gathering in the stern. Simultaneously Bruce felt the hatch-cover shudder beneath his feet. The imprisoned Malays were backing viciously at it to smash their way out.

Bruce felt at his hip and found his automatic missing. He remembered he had shed the holster since its presence impeded his handling of the tiller sweep. The fallen Malay's gun, however, lay on the deck a yard away. He snatched it up, and, straddling the heaving hatch, put a brace of bullets through the woodwork.

A scream of pain answered him. The hatch stopped pitching. He guessed that the foe had withdrawn to cover. But the position was still ticklish. There would be a dozen or more of the Selongese down below. If once they succeeded in breaking out, their very numbers would suffice to turn the tables.

He glanced anxiously outboard. The raft had fallen well astern—out of control, since the redoubtable Hari had dived for shelter of the car. Shorewards he saw a mass of mud which separated the water from the bank.

He yelled an order to his friends, whose levelled pistols cowed the Irak boatmen. Joe barked a fierce command, which sent the natives scuttling to the poles they had abandoned. They did not understand the seaman's words, but

his protruding jaw and ferocious gesture prompted their wits. They began poling frantically, while Cope steered head-on at the bank.

Gathering speed, the meshuf charged the mud. She struck it with a jolt that nearly hurled Bruce off his feet. The impact sent her prow deep into the slime, where she lay helpless, as though gripped in the jaws of some monstrous vice.

"'Ull take 'em all their time, to force free of that lot," Bruce grinned, and signed his pals to the side. "Dive for it, boys! I'll hold 'em down while you get clear!"

Cope and the sailor hesitated, but a sharp word from the racing man sent them diving outboard. Bruce waited till their heads were half-way to the raft, then he took a running jump at the bulwarks and plunged far out into the muddy water.

After a minute a scattered volley of shots followed him. The Malays had reached the deck. He dived and swam under water for some yards. When he came up the gloom of nightfall hid him. Only the raft—a dim shape against the grey—was visible. He struck out for and gained it.

"And that's that!" he grinned pleasantly, as, dripping, he dragged himself aboard the raft and rejoined his companions.

CHAPTER 2.

Slavery I

NEXT day the chums ran upon a small native town squatting upon the river bank. Here they drove the raft ashore, and, with the aid of Hari's Arabic, inquired for a smith.

A farrier of sorts, it seemed, plied his trade at the landward side of the town. Bruce went in search of the forge under guidance of a native porter, who carried the damaged spring upon his shoulder.

Picking their way through a network of narrow, twisting streets, the trio gained their objective. Set deeply in a recess between a mud wall and a ramshackle building, the forge lay beyond a range of dingy shops lining a street so narrow that the overhanging houses almost touched at roof level.

After some chaffering and discussion, the Arab smith took on the work. It would be ready by sunset, but not before, he said. So, returning later for the spring, Bruce set out to rejoin his friends.

No European, so the smith said, lived in Hil-el-Arab. It was, perhaps, for this reason that Bruce attracted so much attention. The crowd about him grew so thick that at times he had to thrust his way through the press.

His first thought was to retreat again into the smoky shed; then two thoughts struck him. An unknown quantity, he could not trust the smith. Cope and the rest, too, must be warned in case the Malays took them unawares. Steeling himself, Bruce strode out into the street, his spring slung on his shoulder.

For a few yards he trod cautiously; then a whistle shrilled; a rush of feet stirred the shadows at the wall base. He waited for no more, but dashed for the nearest turn, a band of men upon his heels.

He won the turn ahead of them and nipped around it. A long, straight alley faced him. Hampered by the heavy spring, he could not hope to reach its farther end in time.

What should he do?

His eye fell on an open shopfront—a carpet dealer's, judging from the gaudy mats suspended on its walls. He took a chance and a flying leap across a heap of rugs; he threw himself flat upon a pile of carpets and lay prone behind the higher stack of rugs which flanked the street.

He held his breath while a rush of feet swept past the shop outside, his ears strained to catch the sound of voices muttering in a room behind the shop itself. The carpet dealer was apparently engaged in haggling with some customer. Meanwhile, the feet out in the alley had halted. Obviously by now the foe realised that in some way their quarry had tricked them. After a moment he heard several walk back towards the shop.

All too well Bruce Bradman guessed the coming sequel. The Malays had marked the rugshop as a possible bolt-hole taken by the fugitive they sought. Again Bruce faced a crisis.

In the back room the haggling pair were getting to their feet. In an instant they would emerge; then the start they would inevitably give on seeing him must betray his presence to the men outside.

"This way, protector of the poor—"

As the dealer's voice came through the doorway Bruce seized the topmost carpet by its edge, and, spinning over and over, rolled himself up in it. Like a prone tree-trunk,

the carpet spun on till, the roll complete, it fetched up, Bruce inside, against the outer pile of rugs.

Motionless, Bruce Bradman lay lengthwise in his hiding-place. He was utterly helpless now, and at his enemies' mercy if the trick failed. He held his breath while the Malays filed in past him.

"Where is the gaiour who came into your shop just now?" one of them demanded truculently of the rug-maker.

"Fool, there was no gaiour—"

Bruce breathed more freely as he heard the dealer's denial.

"You huckstering cheat, you lie!" Achmet's voice retorted. "Where else can the man have hidden?" And Bruce heard him step forward.

"By the splendour of Allah! What have I to do with gaiours—or such scum as you?" A fresh voice spoke, and it had the bite of corroded brass. "Begone, you spawn of the rubber woods, lest I send you fettered into Turkestan!"

In his carpet-roll, Bruce sensed the air go tense. It was the customer who had spoken. He clapped his hands sharply, and on the signal came the patter of running feet.

"Whip me these dogs into the gutter!" the voice ordered, with a sneer. "Sight of them turns my stomach! Hasten, fools, for I would be gone!"

Cursing, the Malays retreated, as Bruce guessed, before some force they did not dare resist. As they retired the customer spoke anew.

"I have changed my mind, Sidi, my friend. I will buy this carpet, which, in anticipation of my wishes, I see you have rolled up."

"But, descendant of the Caliphs, I did not do so," the dealer began, starting forward. "Illustrious Abdul—"

"Tut! What does it matter, so the thing is really rolled? Hassan, let your fellows take the roll upon their shoulders, and I will follow."

Bruce felt the carpet, and himself with it, swung high in the air. He heard the bearers gasp under the weight of their burden. Also, he heard the unseen Abdul laugh softly.

"By the beard of the Prophet, I knew that was a good carpet, friend dealer. My men can hardly lift it. And now, forward!"

Bruce felt the men below step out, straining beneath their load. The long roll swung out into the street, where the Malays still hung about, waiting. He could hear their low muttering.

He dared not call out, since it would betray him to them. Still as death, he held himself stiffly in the folds of the great rug, as, panting under the strain, Abdul's servants staggered down the street.

Whither?

At last the men beneath him halted. The roll swung abruptly around. Then the bearers moved slowly forward. Through the soft swish of their shuffling footfalls, Bruce heard a heavy door swing shut behind him.

Its hollow note sent a shudder through him. It was like the closing of a trap. If trap it was, he did not even know its nature.

Meanwhile, the carriers plodded onwards. The roll tilted steeply to the descent of some steps. Then at last it was lowered to the ground, and the men who had borne it departed.

Left alone and in silence, Bruce tried to stir; but he could not move the roll. It had been deposited with its loose edge under it. The full weight both of itself and of the man inside it bore upon the outer end of the roll. He was firmly boxed.

For a while he struggled vainly. At length, realising the futility of further efforts to free himself, he lay still, awaiting the sequel to this strange adventure.

It came shortly when fresh footfalls warned him that they had returned. He felt hands take hold of the carpet at its either end.

"Spread it out, and let us see its beauties," Abdul's smooth voice ordered. "Zaida, my dove, I have something here which will surprise you!"

Spun over and over, Bruce went dizzy as the huge rug, propelled by deft hands, flew flat and open. As he stumbled to his feet, the speed ace heard the sharp cry of a woman.

Blinking owlishly in the lamplight, Bruce peered ahead of him. On a big divan squatted a man whose form was draped in silken robes. Bent forward beside him was a pale-faced girl, her big, black eyes wide with astonishment.

Bruce cast a fleeting glance at the pallid beauty of her almost European features. A Syrian, he guessed; then turned to regard her male companion.

A bearded Arab, his face where the iron-grey beard failed to hide it was hideous and pock-marked. His eyes, alert

as a bird's, and bright as points of polished steel, gleamed back in cynical mockery.

"Ah, you see, as usual I am proved a good judge of bargains," he purred, smiling. "That arrant thief, Sidi, thought to cheat me. But, by Allah, I have more than value for my money!"

Recovering himself, Bruce bowed.

"You are right, Mr. Abdul—if that's your name. You have, even if unwittingly, saved my life. My friends and I will see that the service does not go unrewarded. Meanwhile, I wish to thank you—"

Bruce spoke in such halting Arabic as he could muster, till Abdul checked him with a gesture.

"Do not be so sure, Englishman, that it was unwitting," he said, and gave another of his acid laughs. "I have a quick eye and a quicker ear. And I was in line with Sidi's doorway. Also, rugs do not roll themselves up of their own accord, except by magic, which is a thing gone out of fashion in Irak since the British came."

"Then I have double to thank you, sir," Bruce declared. "Since you saved my life, knowing full well the risk you ran."

"To be sure!" Abdul chuckled. "And, by the Seven Heavens of the Koran, the risk was worth it. You will fetch a good price when I send you with my slave train into Turkestan!"

CHAPTER 3.

Hairsbreadth!

BRUCE gave a jump of amazement.

"What?" he demanded. Abdul jerked a scarred hand carelessly. As it swung the glint of gems, caught by the lamplight, flashed like the passage of a shooting star.

"Certainly, I do not save men's lives for nothing. It is my business to secure slaves and to sell them. True, they are somewhat difficult to come by these days, since the accursed English got their grip on Irak, which makes you all the more valuable, my friend."

"Of little value if these same English get their grip on you, Abdul, as they surely will when my friends report my disappearance," Bruce warned sternly.

Abdul shrugged indifferently.

"The English think themselves very clever, but they are not so clever as they suppose. For years I have been carrying on my trade under their very noses. Let them search the town for you if they will. They will find nothing. I have my methods. Before police arrive you will be miles away across the Persian frontier."

Bruce bit his lip. He guessed the boast was well-founded. The girl's starry eyes were on him gravely. In their depths he sensed pity.

But the man who had defied the might of Spain, and the octopus tentacles of a revolutionary society, had little time for such weakness. Rather his gaze wandered to the doors. Set at either end of the long room, they were filled with armed men.

Unarmed as he was, there was no hope of bursting free. As for the slave, his divan filled a blank recess which likewise offered no chance of escape.

For the rest, the room itself was curiously empty. For the first time Bruce noticed this. But for the rug, a silver lamp swinging from the arabesque ceiling, and the divan in the alcove, it was unfurnished.

"Whoever you are, whatever you may have been, you are now a slave," Abdul began speaking again. "You will from now on obey orders. You may make a start by rolling up that rug."

He pointed to the carpet which had proved at once Bruce's downfall and salvation. The young man's reply was to draw himself up erect and fold his arms definitely across his chest.

"Did you hear, dog?" Abdul snapped.

"Sure! Your voice is loud enough, Abdul. I've heard pleasant sounds in Rochdale when the factory looters were blowing."

"So—!" The hollow scars on the slaver's face flushed a dull red against the sallowness of his swarthy skin. "So—!"

He rose. In his hand was gripped a whip. He stepped towards Bruce, his lips vivid.

"You filth! You dirt! Child of a million pigs, will you roll that rug?"

"I will not!" Bruce answered firmly, and met him in the eye.

"Then learn obedience, slave!" Abdul thundered, and swung his whip.

Its leather thong swooped shrieking through the air. It took the Englishman across the cheek, then rose and screamed anew, as, mad with fury, the Arab slashed at him.

A contemptuous smile forced to his lips, Bruce Bradman

stood up to the whistling lash. He knew his slightest move must bring a bullet from the armed men in the doorways. He would bide his time. Resistance was useless now.

Yet the girl forced things to an issue unexpectedly. She sprang suddenly from the divan, and, a silken tempest, flung herself on the slaver.

"You shan't—you shan't!" she screamed, and dragged on Abdul's arm.

With an oath the Arab spun round, and with a single sweep of his powerful arm sent her spinning back to the divan. As she sank on the floor beside it, he stepped towards her, and with the whip took a vicious cut at her.

Her scream jerked Bruce into life. He sprang at Abdul like a panther. As the slaver turned, he was on him. While Abdul hammered at him with the whipstock, he seized and shook him like the rat he was.

The alcove melted in a sea of seething fire that swept across the Britisher's indignant eyes. He went on flinging Abdul to and fro, careless of the whipstock smashing at his head. Then hands gripped him from behind. He was torn bodily off the Arab, and hauled, struggling vainly, back to the centre of the room.

Cursing, the slaver picked himself up. He paused to wipe the blood from his face. Then he barked an order.

looked down. Where the floor had been was now a chasm. And the lamplight, shining down into it, picked up a sea of slimy mud.

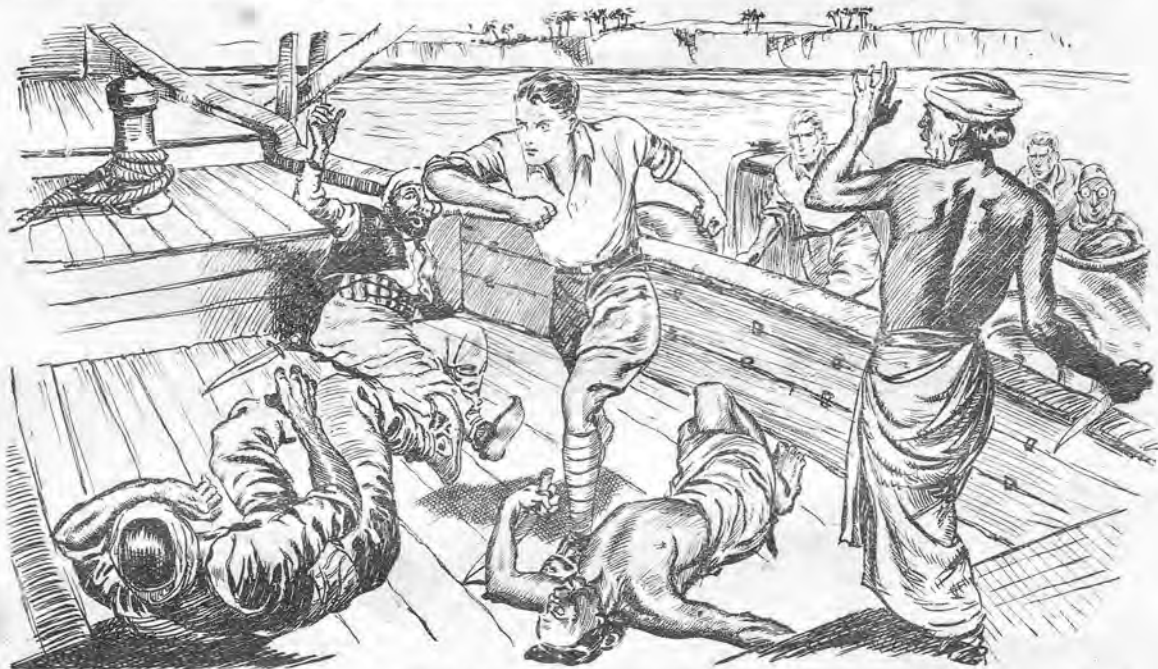
Abdul's sinister laugh came echoing through the chamber. "Fifteen feet of liquid mud—the mud in which pigs like you delight to wallow. Rest awhile and feast your eyes upon the sight, Englishman. Consider the luxury which awaits you while your aching fingers tire, and tire, till you can hold on no longer. Then, as you drop gently into that soft bed, where you will lie snug through all eternity, comfort yourself with the thought that perhaps the English fools will find you."

How long he clung there Bruce never knew. It seemed a week, a month, a year, then time that stretched on unchecked through endless aeons.

An idea occurred to him suddenly. His grasp tightening, he sent up a frightful screech; then screamed and screamed again till the echoes filled the black void of the chamber.

His shrieks grew fainter. They faded into a stifled gasping. He made a dull, squelching noise in the back of the throat. Then abruptly he went silent. Still hanging from his slowly failing finger-tips, he listened intently.

Would Abdul hear? Would he come in time?



Before its crew were aware of what was happening Bruce Bradman was clambering over the rail of the meshuf. "Board and bash 'em!" he shouted to his pals and charged at the gaping crew with whirling fists.

Two men rolled the carpet up, and dragged it through a side door. At another word from their master, Bruce's captors hurled him violently to the ground. As he picked himself up they darted to the doors and vanished through them.

Across the alcove a steel grille had slid. Through it the Arab's evil face leered fiendishly. At the room ends the doors had shut. The rasp of bolts shot home told that the men had barred them.

"For this you perish, pig!" the slaver snarled, and flung a stream of curses through the grille.

He touched something on the wall, and, at the same instant, Bruce felt the floor move under his feet. With it he was rushing towards the grille at an ever-gathering speed.

He swung about and saw the floor had parted in the middle. Its two halves were rolling away from one another. Between them an ever-widening gulf yawned.

The section he was on was sliding off of sight into the wall. The other section, too, was similarly vanishing. Now only a yard of floor remained.

Bruce pulled himself together, glimpsed a cornice high up on the wall, and sprang at it. His fingers touched and hooked upon a narrow surface. As his body crashed against the plaster work, he heard the last foot of flooring sweep out of sight below him.

Only an athlete such as Bruce could have made the jump. Only fingers strong as steel could have gripped the slender ledge and held it. His heart thudding against his ribs, he

Again a span of years seemed to pass. Then from the darkness came a hollow chuckling.

A pity I had to kill you, fool! You held on twice as long as any who have met the test. A lusty slave you would have made. Too lusty, perhaps, for your master's good. Well—"

A rumbling noise broke from the base. The draught lessened. Bruce's numbed fingers gave, and dropped—on to something that carried him out towards the centre of the room. The floor had slid in again.

He did not await the meeting of its halves, but rolled for the skirting.

He ran his hands stealthily around its walls, and located a door concealed there. To his delight it was unlocked. He opened it gently and peered out into the narrow passageway, where a dim light burned. Beyond he could descry steps rising.

He went up and up till he guessed himself at roof level. Here a sound checked him. He stopped, peering forward. Through the half-light came a woman's sobs.

A lattice barred his way. Vaguely behind it he could see someone whose small, white hands gripped the cross of the lattice. The girl, Zaida—

As he tiptoed towards her, she gave a stifled cry.

"So you have cheated him! And he said that you were dead!" she gasped.

"He believes it, anyway," Bruce whispered grimly.

"It is useless. His guards bar the only exit. And there are no windows in the outer walls."

"Wait!"

Bruce vanished down the stairs. He returned, staggering below the weight of the great roll of carpet.

Bruce raised the roll on to its end, and sent it falling outwards towards a roof across the way. It lay almost level, and spanning the gulf.

"Get across; I'll steady it," Bruce breathed.

And the slave girl scrambled out along the roll which

though it sagged beneath her, stood the test, thanks to its toughness.

Bruce followed, gained the farther roof, and hurried Zaida down some stairs.

"And now for the British Commissioner!" he panted, as they ran together for the wharf and safety.

But the slave girl did not hear. Her mind was on the twinkling stars that beckoned over Syria.

(There is another thrilling yarn of **Lightning Bruce Bradman** in next week's **GEM**! Don't miss it!)

TOM MERRY & CO. OUT WEST!

(Continued from page 23.)

that he was famished and desperate. He lay in the ruddy light of the camp-fire, blinking, and showing his teeth at his captor like a savage dog.

The Redskin stood erect, looking down upon him, ready to pin him immediately if he should attempt to escape.

"Punter!" exclaimed the colonel, in amazement. "That pesky scallawag again! Waa! carry me home to die!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. "Some chaps never know when they've had enough. I calculate!"

The captain muttered an oath.

"The Hawk hear him in wood," said the Blackfoot sententiously. "The Hawk look for him and find him. It is good!"

"Hang you!"

"How did you get in this state?" asked Colonel Stalker. Captain Punter snapped his teeth.

"I fell in with a gang of Redskins," he snarled—"gang of Cheyennes!"

"Bai Jove! Our friend Wed Decah!"

"They stripped and robbed me—hang them—and sent me adrift like this!" snarled the captain. "I'm famished!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Serve you jolly well right, too!"

"Hang you!"

"Here you are," said Tom Merry. He handed food to the rascal, who ate eagerly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brought him a can of water, and the colonel added a dash of whisky to it from his flask.

Punter ate and drank ravenously. The campers stood round him, watching him in silence. He was plainly in great want, and though he had brought it upon himself by his rascality, they were somewhat touched. The colonel groped in his baggage, and produced a pair of leather "crackers" and an old coat.

"I guess you can have them," he remarked.

"Thank you, sir!" said Punter. "I—I didn't expect that!"

"You're ten miles from the railroad," said the colonel. "There's enough to pay your fare back to the East—if you've sense enough to go."

Captain Punter pocketed the money. He finished the food and rose to go. He looked much better for his meal.

"I guess it'd pay you to run a straight course in the future, sonny," said the colonel. "If we see any more of you, you will get something you won't enjoy, and I promise you that down in Arizona we deal with toughs of your stamp in a way you would dislike. You had better light out while you've got the chance. Git!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Your pweesent state pwevents me from givin' you a faithful thvashin' as it would be beneath my dig to stwike a man who is down; but I warn you that if you twouble me again I shall lose my tempah, and you will get sewiously hurt!"

Captain Punter did not reply. Without a word he turned and plunged into the wood, and disappeared.

The campers returned to their blankets, and the remainder of the night passed undisturbed.

Whether Captain Punter had taken the colonel's advice and gone East they could not tell, but neither that night nor on the following morning did they see any trace of him.

In the morning they resumed the march, and reached the depot, where they bade farewell to the Blackfoot chief.

The Hawk was going on to the Poinsett ranch in Arizona, but he preferred to go his own way, as his fathers had travelled before him—on foot or on horseback through the seira passes.

Colonel Stalker and his proteges boarded their train, and were soon again speeding on to the south-westward. They were none the worse for their tramp in the Rockies, but they were glad to be once more speeding on the iron track and drawing every hour visibly nearer to their destination.

The scream of the engine rang through the lonely hills of New Mexico, and at last the colonel, pointing from the window of the cars, uttered the long-expected word:

"Arizona!"

Arizona at last!

THE END.

(Tom Merry & Co. have reached Arizona at last! Next week's ripping yarn in this series tells of their adventures on the Poinsett ranch!)

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