AMAZING ADVENTURES OF "TOM MERRY & CO. IN NEW YORK!"

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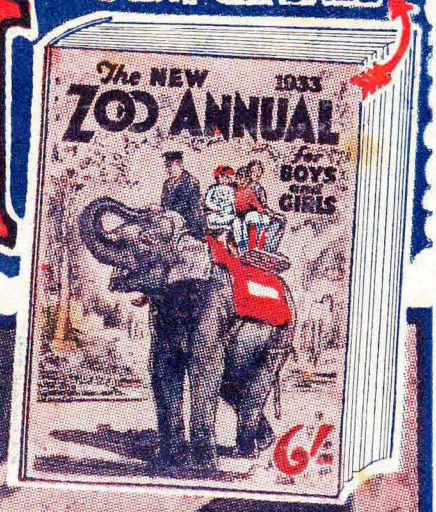
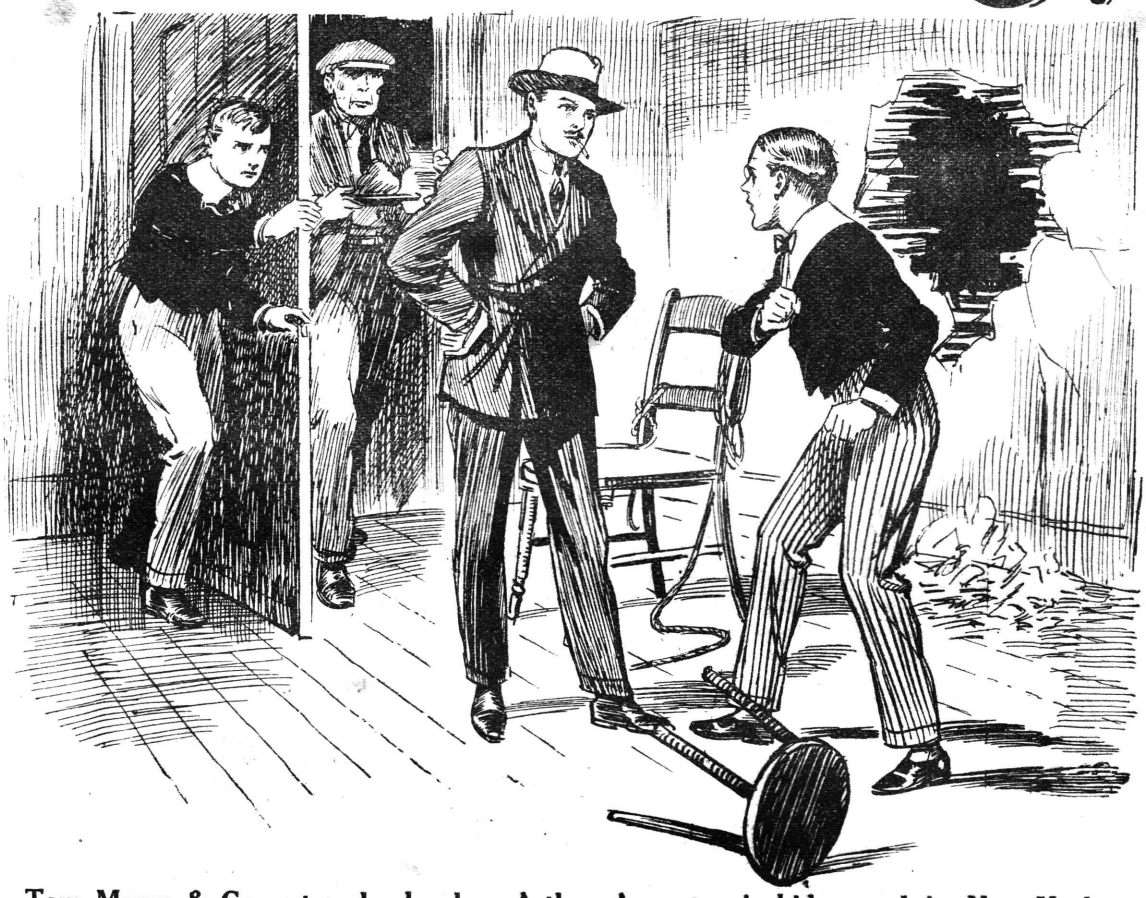


No. 1,293. Vol. XLII. EVERY WEDNESDAY. Week Ending December 31st, 1932.

HERE IS A RIPPING YARN OF THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S—

TOM MERRY AND CO.



Tom Merry & Co. get a shock when Arthur Augustus is kidnapped in New York, but Gussy gets an even bigger shock when he is rescued in a most unexpected manner!

CHAPTER 1.
A New World!

"TOM MEWWY!"

There was a buzz of voices and a clatter of footsteps on the deck of the liner Olympia, as the huge vessel steamed on slowly towards New York Harbour.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, now on his first voyage to America, came up the companion staircase and looked round anxiously as he made his way through the crowded passengers.

"Tom Mewwy!"

But there was no reply from Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus looked round and walked fore and aft, and his eyeglass was turned in every direction, while the anxiety upon his aristocratic countenance increased.

"Tom Mewwy! Wally! Skimpole! Bai Jove, they will get lost!" murmured D'Arcy. "If I don't keep them in sight when we land I may nevah find them again in New York. I wegard them as bein' undah my pwotection; at least, until we meet Mrs. Stuyvesant. Tom Mewwy! Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

There was a mist on the waters, and the land was wrapped in dimness. Through the mist ghostly trees loomed up to view on the port side.

"That's Staten Island," said somebody.

"Tom Mewwy!"

"Hallo, Gus, so you're here!"

Arthur Augustus staggered under a sounding slap on the shoulder. His eyeglass jerked off, and he gave a gasp as he swung round and looked at Tom Merry.

Tom Merry's merry face was happy and smiling.

"Here we are at last!" he exclaimed. "New York's just ahead. That's Staten Island yonder, only you can't see it. Long Island's on the other side. Keep near me, old chap. I don't want to lose you."

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and gave Tom Merry a withering glance.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You see, I've been lookin' for you already I missed you on deck."

"I went downstairs to change into a new toppah. I was afwaid you were lost in the cwowd. Pway keep near me, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard myself as bein' wesponsible for you until we meet Miss Fawcett's fwiend, Mrs. Stuyvesant. I have been feelin' quite nervous about you. Where are Wally and young Skimpole?"

"There they are, looking for the Statue of Liberty. They can't see it."

"Bai Jove, so they are! Wally, pway keep neah me!"

"Rats!" said Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor of the Third Form at St. Jim's—without turning his head.

"Wally, I insist upon your keepin' neah me. I am wesponsible for you, and the matah particulahly wequested me to take care of you. I considah——"

"I can't see the blessed statue!" said Wally, interrupting his elder brother without ceremony. "We ought to be able

IN NEW YORK!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

to see Liberty enlightening the world now, but the blessed thing has done a bunk!"

"What an extwemely vulgah expwession, Wally!"

"Oh, rats! Is this New York, Tom Merry?"

Wally cast a disparaging glance towards the huge buildings that were beginning to loom out of the mist. New York in that weather was not cheerful to look upon.

"That's New York, my son," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, Skimpole! What are you doing, deah boy?"

Skimpole, the genius of St. Jim's, was trying to rest a notebook on D'Arcy's shoulder while he jotted down something with a pencil. Arthur Augustus, who was afraid of having his coat rumpled, promptly moved, and Herbert Skimpole's notebook went to the deck.

"Dear me! That was very careless of you, D'Arcy."

"Weally, Skimpole——"

"I wish to make a few notes of my first impressions of New York. I am going to keep an exhaustive diary during our American travels, and write a book on the subject when I get home," explained Skimpole. "Everybody who visits America writes a book about it. It is an almost universal custom. I think my book will be something out of the common, however."

"Yaas, but pway don't use my shouldah for a bookwest!" said D'Arcy. "I like a fellow to have some wespect for a fellow's clothes. What are you gwopin' down there for, Skimmy?"

"I am trying to find my notebook."

"There it is, undah your nose, you duffer!"

"Dear me, so it is!"

And the short-sighted junior picked up his book. He adjusted his spectacles and recommenced his notes. The Olympia was gliding along to the wharf.

"New York—first impressions," murmured Skimpole. "Very misty—but this doubtless due to the weather. Buildings seen from the ship very high, probably on account of their extensive size. Huge crowd on deck——"

"Probably due to the great number of passengers," said Tom Merry gravely.

"Really, Merry——"

"Bai Jove! I think we are stoppin', deah boys!"

"Looks like it."

The four juniors of St. Jim's looked about them with great interest as the steamer glided up to the wharf. It seemed marvellous to see the huge ship settle so easily to her berth. The buzz on deck increased in volume, the gangway was run out, and the passengers poured ashore.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round anxiously for his companions. He was afraid they would get out of his sight when his attention was taken off them.

"Pway keep close to me, deah boys!"

"It's all right, Gussy, I've got my eye on you."

"You misunderstand me, Tom Mewwy."

"I won't lose you; don't be nervous!"

"You are labouwin' undah a misappwehension——" Arthur Augustus broke off as someone shoved against him in the crush. "Bai Jove, I weally wish you would be a little more careful, sir! Ah, it is that wascal Puntah!"

It was Captain Punter, of the Poppleywallah Fusiliers—the sharper who had attempted to get the boys into his clutches during the run across the Atlantic, and who had been bitterly exasperated by his failure. He gave Arthur Augustus a very unamiable look as he heard his words.

Captain Punter had spent a good deal of time and trouble on the boys, and it had all ended in nothing, for they were not to be taken in. And Captain Punter would have been very glad of an opportunity of getting his own back.

"Pway keep your distance, Puntah," said D'Arcy, with a wave of the hand. "I wegard you as a gamblin' wascal, Puntah!"

The Indian captain passed on without replying. But there was a curious glint in his eyes that the boys remembered afterwards.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone coming to meet us," Arthur Augustus remarked, as the crowd began to clear.

Tom Merry shook his head. It had been arranged that a friend of his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, should meet the boys in New York, and accompany them on their journey westward as far as Chicago. But there was no sign of Mrs. Stuyvesant, and, as a matter of fact, Tom Merry & Co. had a preference for entering New York on their own. Tom Merry would quite willingly have undertaken the journey to his uncle's ranch in the Far West without any protector at all, but Miss Fawcett's anxiety for his safety would not allow that.

"The Olympia is a couple of hours late," Tom Merry remarked. "It is on account of the mist. Mrs. Stuyvesant is no doubt waiting at the Asdorf Hotel till she hears it is in—and we can get there as soon as a messenger."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's no good coming to the land of hustle to stand still," remarked Wally. "I'll get Pongo from the steward, and we'll go ashore."

"What about the luggage?"

"You mean the baggage," said Wally.

"Weally, Wally, I fail to see any gweat distinction between luggage and baggage," said Arthur Augustus.

The younger scion of the house of D'Arcy chuckled. He had chummed up with several Americans during the voyage, and had learned—as he proudly announced—to talk the American language.

"That's where you miss your guess, Gus."

"Where he whats his which?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Misses his guess. That's what Americans say. You ought to study the language of a country you're going to travel in," said Wally, with a smile of conscious superiority. "As for luggage, it's never heard of on this side of the Atlantic. It's baggage over here."

"But there is weally no diffewence."

"There's no difference between a railway and a chemin-de-fer," said Wally. "But when you're in France you say chemin-de-fer, don't you? When you're in America you say baggage. And you don't get into a train or take a train, either—you go aboard it, as if it were a ship."

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll give Wally a job as interpreter," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Go and get your mongrel, my boy."

"And you don't say my boy in America—you say sonny!"

"Oh, cut off, then!"

"You don't say cut—you just get—or absquatulate."

"Then go and get your mongrel, and let's get—or absquatulate."

And Wally grinned and went in search of the steward, who had had charge of Pongo during the voyage. The three other juniors stood looking on at the crowd going over the gangway, Skimpole busily taking notes. There was rather a wistful look upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face for a moment.

"Bai Jove, I wish Blake were here!" he remarked. "I should awfully like old Jack Blake to be along with us, you know. He would help me to look aftah you youngstahs——"

"Bow-wow-wow-wow!"

"Keep that wotten mongwel away fwom my twousahs, Wally!"

"You keep your trousers away from my dog!"

"Oh, let's get ashore!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "The crowd is thinning down. Mind that dog, Wally. I don't know whether a brute is allowed one free bite in America the same as in England; better keep on the safe side."

Wally had obtained the necessary certificate of health from a vet in Huckleberry Heath, so there would be no trouble in getting Pongo through.

"What about the Custom House, Tom Mewwy? We shall have to take our luggage——"

"Baggage," said Wally.

"Luggage——"

"Baggage——"

"Oh, that's all right! It can be sent ashore, and sent up to the hotel afterwards. I believe it takes a fearfully long time to get through the Custom House."

"If you think it will be safe——"

"Oh, come on!"

"I shall decline to take the wesponsibility——"

"Come on!"

"Vewy well, Tom Mewwy, but under the circs——"

"Come on!"

And they passed over the gangway and went ashore—and curious enough it was to the juniors of St. Jim's to feel their feet upon American soil—to know that the new world was under their tread.

CHAPTER 2.
Adventures in New York!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his eyeglass into his eye and looked round with a comprehensive stare as the four juniors left the wharf.

He seemed to be utterly unconscious of the amused attention of which he was the centre. Arthur Augustus' attire was so very elegant, and his manners were so very dignified, that he could hardly fail to attract some attention. He had been the darling of the saloon passengers on board the Olympia, but to the youthful Americans, now staring at him, he probably seemed a very curious product of a foreign clime.

"Bai Jove! I must say I don't think vewy much of Americah so fah," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

"You can't see very much of it yet!" grinned Tom Merry. "Give the continent a chance, you know."

"Pway call a cab, somebody!"

"Rats! Cabs are too expensive in New York, and there are trams——"

"Street cars, you mean," said Wally.

"Yes, street cars if you like. They are cheaper, as the luggage——"

"The baggage!"

"As the baggage is being sent on afterwards. This way, and we'll get a tram——"

"A car!"

"A car, easily enough."

And the four juniors moved off, Skimpole stopping in a couple of minutes to drag out a big notebook and wet his pencil.

Tom Merry jerked him by the arm.

"Come on, Skimmy!"

"Wait a minute, Merry, please. I wish to make a note upon the——"

"You can make a note upon the car, old man. You can't stand here like the statue of a howling ass to ornament the thoroughfare, you know. Come along!"

And Skimpole was hurried on. But he was hungry for notes, with his book of travels looming in his mind's eye. On the car he made polite inquiries of the conductor—a gentleman with a strong Tipperary accent.

"Excuse me," said Skimpole, tapping the conductor on the waistcoat, much to his amazement. "Can you give me a rough estimate of the number of people who use these cars during the year?"

The conductor gave him a pitying look, and retreated to his platform.

Skimpole looked after him in astonishment.

"Dear me, is this American politeness to strangers?" he murmured.

"Bai Jove! I wegard you as an uttah ass, Skimpole."

"I was asking a very ordinary question——"

"The conductor's all right," said Wally. "He's letting Pongo stand there beside him. What the dickens do you care about the number of passengers who use these cars during the year, you duffer?"

"I wish to make notes for my book of travels."

"Can I help you?" asked a passenger who was sitting beside Skimpole in the car. He was a tall young man with thin limbs and a thin face, and light grey eyes with a curious gleam in them. "I'm always willing to oblige a Britisher, I guess."

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "You are very kind, but how did you guess I was not an American?"

The young man seemed about to choke for a moment, but he restrained himself.

"I guess I can enlighten you," he said. "The cars in this end of New York carry exactly two millions three thousand four and a half passengers every day. Multiply that by three hundred and sixty-five, and there you are, I guess."

"Dear me!"

"If you would like any particulars as to the average number of accidents——"

"Certainly, my dear sir."

"There are fifty people killed every morning, and a hundred every evening. We don't take much stock in accidents here. The dead bodies are usually piled on the side-walk till the dust-cart comes round."

"Dear me! Is not that rather brutal?"

"I guess we get accustomed to it, you know. Why, we live too rapidly to think about trifles like that. The accidents are specially heavy some mornings. Then the rails are so slippery with blood that the cars run backward at times—fact!"

"Dear me!"

The young man had to leave the car at this point, or Skimpole would have received some more surprising information as to the barbarous manners and customs of New York. He was eagerly jotting it all down in his notebook while his companions were laughing. But Skimpole was used to having people laugh when he brought his notebook out.

The juniors alighted from the car, and Tom Merry looked around him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sucked the gold head of his cane.

"I weally think we had bettah get a cab, Tom Mewwy!"

"Rats! I've got the directions all right—we want a cross-town car from here."

"Hold on! Where's Pongo?" exclaimed Wally.

"Haven't you got the brute on a chain?"

"Well, he was so quiet that I let him off. Hold on a minute while I find him. If he were to get lost in New York we should have to stay here till he was found, and we have only allowed two days for New York."

"Yes—catch us waiting."

"Well, I should wait," said Wally. "Can't you help a fellow look instead of jawing? He must be here somewhere. Pongo—Pongo! Doggie!"

But no answering voice came from Pongo. The street corner was crowded with people changing cars, but Wally did not allow a crowd to incommode him. He ran hither and thither in search of Pongo. A sudden terrific yelping came to his ears, and he burst through a crowd into the roadway, just in time to see Pongo elevated upon the boot of a big, rough-featured policeman. Pongo had evidently got in his way, and the policeman was "booting" him out of it.

Wally's eyes blazed as he ran forward to the rescue of his favourite.

"You brute!" he shouted.

The policeman stared at him in blank amazement. New York policemen are monarchs of all they survey, and Wally came as a surprise to this particular member of the force.

Wally snatched up Pongo by the collar, and a dark scowl came over the face of the policeman. He saw his authority defied, and he promptly avenged it. His heavy hand descended upon the collar of the junior.

Wally struggled in his grip.

"Let me go, confound you!"

The policeman smiled grimly.

"Yes, I'll let you go, I guess, when you're in a stone cell!" he snapped, and he dragged the boy forcibly along the pavement.

Wally, too angry to be alarmed, struggled harder.

"Will you come quietly," shouted the policeman, "or do you want me to club you?"

"Let me go, confound your cheek!"

Tom Merry ran up breathlessly.

"What are you doing with my friend?" he asked, somewhat anxiously. "Let him go!"

"Stand outer the way!"

"Let him go!"

"I guess you want me to take you, too!"

Tom Merry set his teeth. He had heard something of police methods in New York, but he had not expected to come across anything of this sort so soon. A helpless feeling came over him. This brute was backed up by all the forces of the law. If he chose to arrest Wally and Tom, too, there was nothing to stop him. The policeman dragged Wally along, his boots clinking on the sidewalk, and Tom Merry stood for the moment irresolute.

Someone tapped him on the shoulder.

"A couple of dollars would fix it, you young fool!"

Tom Merry started. The advice was not politely put, but it was well meant. The boy plunged his hand into his pocket. He had changed a considerable portion of his money into American currency on board the steamer, and he was well supplied with "greenbacks." He ran after the policeman, a new idea in his mind. The thought of bribery was repugnant enough to him, but anything was better than signalising the arrival of the party in New York by the arrest of one of their number. And, almost impossible as it seemed, the policeman was in earnest. Wally was arrested.

"Please," panted Tom Merry, catching at the policeman's hand—"please let him go! He did not mean any harm."

The man was about to shake off Tom Merry's hand roughly, when he felt a couple of greenbacks squeezed into

his palm. The notes disappeared instantly—where and how Tom Merry did not see. A genial grin replaced the frown on the face of the policeman.

"I guess he's a cheeky young cub," he said.

"He—did not mean——"

"Well, get!"

Tom Merry knew enough of the American language to know that this meant that he was to go. He caught Wally by the arm and dragged him away. The hero of the Third Form at St. Jim's was furious. He wanted to stay where he was and slang the policeman, and treat him to some of the most expressive epithets current at St. Jim's. But Tom Merry dragged him away quickly.

"Don't be a young ass!" he exclaimed. "Do you want to be locked up?"

"Rats!" said Wally. "He was only bluffing!"

"You're a young ass! Come on!"

Wally snatched up Pongo by the collar, and a dark scowl came over the face of the policeman. He saw his authority being defied and he promptly avenged it. His heavy hand descended on the collar of the junior and Wally struggled in his grip. "Let go, confound you!" he cried.

"Well, if he wasn't bluffing, why did he let me go?"

"Because I shoved a couple of bills into his hand, fathead!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"You weren't worth it," said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake keep out of mischief, kid, and do remember that this isn't London."

They rejoined D'Arcy and Skimpole, who were anxious and excited. Wally kept a tight grip on Pongo now. Skimpole wanted to know the details of the affair for putting down in his notebook; but Tom Merry rushed the party off, and they did not linger by the way again.

CHAPTER 3.
To Tip or Not to Tip!

TOM MERRY pushed at the great revolving door, and the juniors entered the hotel. It was something new in hotels to the boys from the Old Country.

It towered into the sky till the juniors, straining their necks to see the top, had fancied that the topmost story must soar into the clouds. How many stories there were to the hotel they did not even try to count, but there were certainly more than fifteen. The gigantic building was a hive of life.

Skimpole jerked a rule out of his pocket, and wanted to take the exact measurements of the vestibule, but Tom Merry kept hold of his arm.

The clerk in the bureau, to whom Tom Merry found his way, proved to be a somewhat supercilious young man, who did not regard the juniors with an approving eye.

Tom Merry explained that they had just landed from the Olympia, and expected to find Mrs. Stuyvesant at the hotel.

"And I am wathah weady for lunch, too," Arthur Augustus remarked. "Pway huwwy up and tell us where Mrs. Stuyvesant is, my deah fellow!"

The hotel clerk turned away, and did not look at the boys again for a couple of minutes, and Tom was beginning to think that he had forgotten their existence. But he was only consulting a list, and he turned back presently with a drawling air.

"Fifteen, nine," he said.

"Eh?"

"Fifteen, nine." And the clerk turned away to talk to a gentleman who had just come up to the desk.

Tom Merry glanced at the man. It was Captain Punter again.

Punter avoided the boy's glance, and, in fact, did not appear to see him.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's that wascal Puntah again!"

"Will you tell me where to find Mrs. Stuyvesant, please?" said Tom Merry.

The clerk did not appear to hear until Tom Merry had repeated his question. Then he looked round, with an irritated air.

"Fifteen, nine."

"What do you mean?"

"Fifteen, nine. That's the elevator."

"I am afraid I don't understand," said Tom Merry, colouring. "What do you mean by fifteen, nine?"

The clerk muttered something under his breath.

"Fifteen, nine," he said. "Ask the elevator man." And he pointed with his pencil, and then turned away and began to talk with Captain Punter.

Tom Merry looked annoyed.

"What the dickens does he mean by an elevator man?" he said. "By Jove, I'll make him answer, or——"

Wally chuckled irrepressibly.

"It's all right, sonny," he said. "A lift is an elevator in New York. Come over here."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

They crossed to the lift. There were several other people entering it, but the boys found ample room. The lift, or elevator, whizzed upwards, and stopped at floor after floor, taking in and discharging passengers.

Tom Merry & Co. began to look amazed as they passed ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth floor.

"My only hat!" murmured Tom. "This looks like going up into the clouds. I suppose we shall reach the summit some time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole had his notebook out. He was making a frantic attempt to jot down each floor as it passed, but the elevator was too quick for him, and he was soon hopelessly confused.

"Which floor, sir?" asked the elevator attendant, looking at Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Do you know what fifteen, nine means?"

The man grinned.

"Number fifteen on the ninth floor, sir."

"Oh, I see. Then we've passed it."

"Put you out going down, I guess."

"Very good," said Skimpole. "I shall be glad to complete the journey to the top in order to make my notes. I suppose there is a top?"

The lift whizzed on. It stopped finally at the sixteenth floor, but even this was not the top. But its business was concluded at that story, and it descended again.

Tom Merry looked out for the ninth story as he came down. Tom was feeling a little puzzled as to whether to offer the liftman a gratuity. He had been told that in America the republican institutions had developed an independence of character which scorned the "tip." Tom would have been very sorry to offer a tip to any man whose republican independence would have been offended thereby; but, at the same time, he could not help thinking that there was an agreeable obligingness about that elevator man which hinted of expectation.

He put his hand in his pocket. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, foreseeing his intention, tapped him on the arm.

"Pway don't, Tom Mewwy!"

"But we don't want to be mean," murmured Tom.

"Yaas, but you wemembah we are in a wepublic now, and——"

"Oh, very well!"

"I guess this is nine!" remarked the liftman.

They stopped, and walked out upon the ninth floor of the hotel.

"Thank you," said Tom Merry.

The liftman looked at him curiously. The lift descended, and the attendant's face was not so agreeable as he disappeared from view.

"He ought to have had a tip," said Wally. "You are a soft mark, Tom Merry."

"I'm a what?"

"A soft mark—that's a mug!"

"Weally, Wally, you must wemembah that we are in a wepublic now, where centuwies of fweedom have developed a wugged independence of chawactah," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I have been told so by sevewal Amewicans, and I suppose Amewicans ought to know somethin' of the mannahs and customs of their own countwy."

"All the same, that chap wanted a tip."

"I wegard it as impwob."

"Well, it's too late now," said Tom Merry. "We've got on mine, so let's look for fifteen. That overdressed ass downstairs said fifteen, nine."

"Let's get, by all means," said Wally.

They moved along a wide corridor, and an hotel attendant came round a corner and nearly ran into them. He stopped and looked at Pongo.

"I guess that animal ain't allowed up hyer, gentlemen," he said.

If they had been in England Tom Merry would have been sure at once that another tip was wanted, but, being in a free republic, he had his doubts, as before.

Wally promptly gathered up Pongo into his arms.

"I guess I'm freezing on to Pongo," he said.

The man grinned. He could see, of course, that the quintet were fresh from the Old Country, and Wally's Americanisms seemed to amuse him.

"I'm afraid, sir——"

"Can you tell us where No. 15 is?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, sir; it's Mrs. Stuyvesant's suite. Can I show you the way?"

"Thank you, please do!"

Leaving Pongo alone, the man showed the way, and the juniors were soon at Mrs. Stuyvesant's door. Then the attendant lingered.

"This is the suite, I guess, sir."

"Thank you," said Tom Merry.

He knocked at the door.

"I guess you might have been a long time finding it, gentlemen," said the man.

"Yaas; I wegard that as pwob," said D'Arcy. "We are extwemely obliged to you."

The man looked at him, and then walked away.

"Well, of all the mugs!" chuckled Wally.

"Weally, Wally, I wish you wouldn't use those vulgah expwessions! I suppose you think that person wanted a gwatuity, too?"

"Of course he did!"

"Wats! His mannah was simplay the extweme obligingness of a citizen of a fwee wepublic. What do you think, Tom Mewwy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I rather think I agree with Wally," he replied.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I cannot give you my permish to insult the susceptibilities of fwee Amewican citizens by humiliating offers of a gwatuity!"

"The free American citizens will jolly soon insult our susceptibilities, then!" grinned Wally.

Tom Merry knocked at the door again. A voice bade him enter, and the juniors walked into a sumptuously appointed apartment, where an elderly stout lady was sitting at a table with a pen in her hand.

CHAPTER 4.

In Comfortable Quarters!

MRS. STUYVESANT—for the juniors knew that this must be she—was a lady of the amplest proportions and very richly dressed. She did not turn her head as the boys came in, being very busy at her writing-table.

"Pray excuse me a few minutes," she said, without looking round. "I must really complete this note."

The juniors waited, a little astonished at their reception. They glanced round the room. It was elegantly and splendidly furnished, and might have been a drawing-room in a large mansion. It was difficult for the juniors to believe that they were on the ninth floor of an hotel

There were several papers scattered near the stout lady, who was evidently very busy. She was murmuring aloud as she wrote, and the boys caught some of her words.

"Fido—a warm bath at nine—milk and water, and his dear hair combed—George Washington to be painlessly asphyxiated immediately."

Tom Merry looked amazed. George Washington, according to his knowledge of American history, had been dead some time already; but, in any case, why should the father of his country be painlessly asphyxiated?

Mrs. Stuyvesant finished her note at last, and rose and looked at the boys.

"Dear, dear!" she exclaimed. "I thought it was some attendant. Pray excuse me! Is it possible that you are——"

"Yaas, wathah, my deah madam," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway allow me the honah of intwoducin' myself and these youngstahs. This is Tom Merry of the Shell at St. Jim's, and this is Skimpole. I am Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and this is my younger bwothah, Walter Adolphus".

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "I am much surprised!" She fanned herself. "I have already sent Louis twice to see if the steamer were in. How could you possibly find your way from the steamer?"

"We managed to do so, ma'am," said Tom Merry.

"Dear, dear! Wonderful! And you are Tommy, the dear little boy of whom Miss Fawcett has told me so much in her letters!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "You may kiss me, Tommy."

Tom Merry kissed the stout lady on her plump cheek. Mrs. Stuyvesant shook hands with the others and bade them be seated. She asked them pleasantly enough about their voyage, and about their baggage, which she said Louis would attend to. The juniors wondered whom Louis might be, but did not ask.

Mrs. Stuyvesant suddenly caught sight of the black muzzle of Pongo peeping from under Wally's jacket, and uttered an exclamation.

"Dear, dear! Let me see the creature!"

"He's a jolly little bounder, ma'am," said Wally, letting Pongo go. "He'll gnaw up anything in the room, but——"

"Ah! As soon as Louis comes I will send him to Professor Styx's. I will add a postscript to my note—— What is the dog's name, please?"

"Pongo, ma'am!"

"Very good. 'Pongo to be painlessly asphyxiated——'"

"Eh?" cried Wally.

"I am giving instructions for the unfortunate creature to be painlessly asphyxiated," said the stout lady, beaming. "You may not know that I am president of the Association for Asphyxiating Superfluous Dogs. Stray animals are taken charge of and put out of their misery in the most painless way possible. This dear creature will be asphyxiated in one second by Professor Styx's new process."

"Oui, madame," said Louis, spreading out the palms of his hands and shrugging his shoulders. "Oui, madame, I look for zem, and I ask ze captain—Monsieur la capitaine—but zey are gone."

"They have arrived, Louis, and they are here now. Pray show them to their rooms, and make every arrangement for the comfort of my guests, Louis."

"Oui, madame."

"And then take this note to Professor Styx."

"Oui, madame."

"I wish you to see particularly that Fido has his warm bath and his milk-and-water, and that George Washington is painlessly asphyxiated."

"Oui, madame."

"That is all, Louis."

"Oui, madame."

"Hang you!" snarled the captain. Thwack! The cane came down with all the force of Tom Merry's arm and the captain writhed and gave a terrific yell. "Stuff your handkerchief in his mouth, Wally!" said Tom.

"Will he?" said Wally. "If I catch Professor Styx asphyxiating Pongo, I'll——"

"Pway be quiet, Wally! If our wespected fwiend wishes to asphyxiate Pongo I suppose you would not be wude enough to wefuse."

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

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Perhaps I am under a misapprehension. Perhaps you did not bring the dog in to be painlessly asphyxiated."

"He's my dog, ma'am."

"I regarded him as a waif and stray."

"I've brought him from England," said Wally, suppressing his wrath. "You've only got to look at him, ma'am, to see that he's got some breed in him."

"In that case I will cancel this postscript," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Pongo shall certainly not be asphyxiated if he is your own dog. I was under a misapprehension. I frequently have animals brought to me to be subjected to Professor Styx's new painless process. Ah, here is Louis!"

Louis proved to be a young Frenchman, with a waxed moustache and a complexion like a doll; a confidential servant of Mrs. Stuyvesant's, and, as Tom Merry soon discovered, her right-hand man in carrying on the humane work of the Asphyxiating Association.

"Ah, Louis, here you are!"

"You will follow Louis, please, my dear little friends," said the stout lady. "He will show you to your rooms, and then you will join me at lunch. We shall lunch downstairs, and you will descend in the elevator. I hope you will be quite comfortable while you remain in my charge. I shall do my best. We start to-morrow for Chicago, and I shall see you on your way as far as that city, where I also have business to do in connection with the Association for the Asphyxiation of Superfluous Dogs. Louis, you will attend in every way to the comfort of the young gentlemen."

"Oui, madame."

And the juniors followed Louis. They had heard from Miss Fawcett that Mrs. Stuyvesant was a very rich woman, and her quarters in the palatial hotel quite bore it out. Preparations had evidently been made for the arrival of the party from England.

In a large room four beds were arranged, looking very cosy and inviting, and the appointments of the room were all that even the fastidious Arthur Augustus could desire.

The polite and obliging Louis showed them every consideration, and when he left them the boys proceeded to make their toilet after their journey with much satisfaction.

"Bai Jove, this is weally like home!" said Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy. "I am gettin' weady for lunch, you know. I——"

"I say, where's Pongo?"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "Louis has taken Pongo."

D'Arcy minor looked alarmed.

"If he begins asphyxiating my dog——"

"He's taken him away to feed him. You can't look after Pongo here as you did at St. Jim's, and you can't feed a horrid mongrel with dog-biscuits in a lady's drawing-room," said Tom Merry severely. "Buck up, there, and let's get down to lunch! I'm jolly hungry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Still, I don't like this asphyxiating business!" growled D'Arcy minor. "It's all very well to associate for the purpose of asphyxiating superfluous dogs; but Pongo isn't superfluous."

"I have often wegarded him as distinctly superfluous, Wally."

"Yes; but you're an ass, you know."

"I object to bein' addwessed as an ass!"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry. "Aren't you ready, Skimmy?"

"Certainly, Merry; but I am making a few notes as to the dimensions of this hotel. I shall not keep you more than a quarter of an hour."

"You will not keep me more than a quarter of a minute," said Tom Merry, taking Skimpole's notebook away and stuffing it into his pocket. "Come on! You can have this rubbish back after lunch."

"Really, Merry, it is not rubbish. I——"

"Are you coming?"

They went out in search of the lift. A touch of the electric button was sufficient, and the lift glided to the ninth floor. The attendant did not look so obliging as before. The lads stepped into the lift, and the man set it in motion.

"Ground floor," said Tom Merry.

The attendant grunted.

"And if you will accept——"

Tom Merry pressed a dollar into the willing hand of the free American citizen.

D'Arcy waited for the catastrophe.

But the liftman did not arise in the wrath of a free republican and crush the daring youth under the scorn of a high-souled freeman.

He slipped the coin into his pocket and simply said:

"Thank you, sir."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wegard the Amewican Wepublic as a swindle!"

And the juniors stepped out on the ground floor and made their way to the luncheon-room.

CHAPTER 5.
A Night in New York!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed that lunch. It was a ripping one—ripping in both quality and quantity.

Mrs. Stuyvesant, who had forgotten the superfluous dogs for the moment, was very kind and hospitable. The room was a very extensive one, with almost endless tables laid for lunch, and the waiters moved about on noiseless feet.

Tom Merry thought of Fatty Wynn at home at St. Jim's, and how he would have enjoyed that lunch. Arthur Augustus was also thinking of his chums at home.

"Bai Jove! I wish Blake had been able to come!" he said. "It would be much more wippin' with Blake along with us. Of course, it would be anothah youngstah for me to look aftah, and I have my hands pwetty full at pwesent."

"Rats!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Pway be silent, Wally, if you must use those vulgah expwessions. You know, deah boys, Blake has an uncle in Wyoming, and I advised him to cable to the old gentleman and get an invitation out here. And he did."

Tom Merry laughed.

"And what was his uncle's reply?"

"He hadn't weceived it when we left. But if it was a favouwable one, Blake intended to come by the next steamah."

"My hat! Then he'd be here to-morrow!"

"Yaas. Wouldn't that be wippin'?"

"It would my son; but I hardly expect to see Blake."

Mrs. Stuyvesant asked Tom about his journey, and expressed great interest in his uncle in Arizona, who had sent for him so suddenly. Tom told her about St. Jim's and the life there, and the lunch passed very pleasantly. After lunch Mrs. Stuyvesant ordered her car and took the boys for a drive in Central Park.

The juniors, as a matter of fact, would have preferred to plunge into the crowds of New York and see the city for themselves, but they appreciated the good lady's kindness, and they really enjoyed the drive.

After Central Park, which occupies the centre of Manhattan Island, upon which New York stands, Mrs. Stuyvesant drove to the house of an acquaintance on Fifth Avenue, and took the boys with her, and they obtained their first glimpse of that magnificent thoroughfare. And even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was impressed, and admitted that it was "wippin'." Skimpole wished to take out his rule and measure the width of the avenue, but was restrained in time.

The boys returned to the hotel hungry enough, and they had tea with Mrs. Stuyvesant in her own room. Wally inquired anxiously of Louis as to the welfare of Pongo, and Louis assured him with many gestures that the "chien" was quite well and happy.

After tea Mrs. Stuyvesant informed the boys that she had a meeting of the association to attend while she was in New York, and so would have to leave them till dinner, but she had arranged for Louis to take them out and show them some of the sights of New York.

"You are very kind, madam," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps, though, we're taking up too much of Louis' time? I think we could manage——"

The stout lady shook her head decidedly.

"My dear boy, you do not know the dangers of New York," she said. "Besides, you will need a guide, Louis will show you everything, and will relieve my mind of anxiety by taking every care of you."

"Very well, ma'am!"

"Louis will take you to the various sights of the city," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "I do not know them myself; but Louis will get a guide-book and show you everything. I hope you will enjoy yourselves, dear boys."

"Oh, we shall do that, ma'am!"

And Tom Merry & Co. sallied out with the invaluable Louis.

The Frenchman, with imperturbable Gallic politeness, took on the task with cheerful alacrity, and his manner to the juniors was very polite and respectful. He showed them a great many places—the Metropolitan Museum, the great Riverside Drive on the Hudson, and then southwards they went into the giant stream of Broadway. This street, extending from Central Park to the Battery, at the southern end of the island, is the great artery of New York, and the boys, who had, of course, heard much about it, gazed about them with great interest; and Skimpole made rapid notes.

When, after looking at the City Hall, Louis pointed out the street leading to the famous "Bowery," the juniors all looked eager. They had heard so much of the Bowery, and they wanted to see it. But Louis rolled his eyes and shrugged his shoulders at the idea.

They proceeded farther south to see the huge Brooklyn Suspension Bridge, which united New York with her sister city on the opposite side of the East River, and then it was time to turn homewards. They had done a great deal of sightseeing in a short space of time—sightseeing on the American plan, as was proper, Tom Merry remarked, in America. How much money Louis had spent it was impossible to guess; but they guessed that Mrs. Stuyvesant gave him carte blanche.

"Well, Louis is awfully obligin', you know," Arthur Augustus remarked, as the patient Frenchman piloted them back to the hotel. "But weally I think this evenin' we will slip out and have a look at the place for ourselves."

Tom Merry grinned.

"That's just what I was thinking."

"I have wead that Bwoadway is a wippin' sight of an evenin', and I weally want to see New York at its best. As for any dangah in goin' out alone, I wegard that as wot. I shall be lookin' aftah you youngstahs all the time."

"And I can take Pongo?" Wally remarked.

"Wats! The beast will get us into twouble again!"

"He will be useful if we get down into the Bowery," said Wally. "Suppose we get into a row with the toughs——"

"You mean the wuffs."

"No, I don't! I mean the toughs—they call them toughs here, not roughs. I guess I can talk the language some."

"Oh, hang Pongo!" said Tom Merry. "You ought to keep him chained up till we get to Arizona. There will be room for him to have a run there. I say, we haven't much time left to dress for dinner!"

"Bai Jove, we must make ourselves look decent, deah boys!"

They hurried to their quarters, and quickly changed into their best clothes. Mrs. Stuyvesant greeted them with a smile as they joined her. The juniors dined in great style—either the air of New York or the exercise they had had giving them a keen edge to their appetites.

After dinner the question was how to escape the kindly attentions of Mrs. Stuyvesant and her faithful Louis. The boys naturally desired to have a run "on their own," but it was no use taking the good lady into their confidence on the subject. It would have needlessly alarmed her; yet, at the same time, they did not wish to appear neglectful.

Fortunately, the difficulty was settled for them. Mrs. Stuyvesant, who had only come to New York to meet the boys, found many things to attend to while she was there in connection with the Asphyxiating Association, and she wished to devote that evening to the business; and so Louis was deputed to take the boys to a theatre.

Seats had been taken at the Lyceum—a name that had a pleasant sound of home to the boys' ears—and after dinner they drove there, and the faithful Louis left the four juniors safe—as he thought—in a box. Then he left them, to come again when the play was over, and fetch them home.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you are an ass, Skimmy! The fellow was only wottin'."

"I hardly think so, D'Arcy. He naturally wished to give information to one in search of it, and I regarded his action as merely polite."

"Well, Skimmy can stay here and make up his notes," grinned Tom Merry. "We will go for a trot. If we should lose each other——"

"Oh, that's all wight! I'm goin' to keep an eye on you, deah boy!"

"Ass! If we——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"If we should lose one another," bawled Tom Merry, "we're to come back here singly; but we must keep together if possible."

"Yaas, wathah! But you need not be afwaid——"

A few more crashes with the stool and the hole was big enough for a head to pass through. "Hallo, are you there?" said a cheerful voice. "Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!" A match glimmered out, held up beside the face that was looking through. "Bai Jove, Jack Blake!" exclaimed Gussy.

Doubtless the good Louis went to repose and solace himself with a cigar after his arduous labours as a walking Baedeker.

But as soon as the boys found themselves alone, their spirits rose.

"Bai Jove, now's the time!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally do not wish to see this play to the beastlay finish, Tom Mewwy."

"Nor I," laughed Tom. "I'd rather see New York."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Same here," said Wally. "I wish I had foreseen this, and I would have brought Pongo with me."

"Oh, hang Pongo! Let's go for a trot! We can have a look at New York and get back here in time to go home with Louis when he comes with the car."

"I will stay here, I think," said Skimpole, blinking at them through his spectacles. "I shall be very busy during the next hour."

"All right, you can see the play——"

"I am not going to look at the play. I have my notebook to make up. Can you remember how many people are killed on the cars every morning, Tom Merry?"

"How the deuce should I know?"

"Surely you remember that obliging gentleman in the car telling us?"

"I'm afraid you will play the giddy ox some way."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, come on! Put on your coat! It's cold!"

Tom Merry, D'Arcy, and Wally donned their coats over their clothes, and left the box. D'Arcy gave a start as he caught sight of a gentleman in conversation with an attendant near the door of the box.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy——"

"What's the matter?"

"It's that wascal Puntah again."

"My hat! So it is. Don't take any notice of the rotter. We don't want a row here."

"Quite wight. I shall tweat him with contempt."

The boys walked on. Arthur Augustus held his nose well up in the air, and they passed the captain, who did not turn his head. He did not seem to see the boys, but his eyes glinted as they passed. It was curious how the adventurer seemed to haunt their footsteps. They had not expected to see the baffled sharper again after leaving the steamer, but he seemed to turn up everywhere.

"Blessed if I know why he's sticking to us," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "He can't expect to make anything out of us now. But it can't be by accident that we keep on running against that fellow."

"Pewwaps he intends to wob us if he gets the chance, deah boys."

"Huh! Well, we know he is a sharper."

Tom Merry hurried on. The juniors were soon in the broad glare of Broadway, with an exhilarating sense of freedom at being out on their own responsibility.

"I weally wish I had foreseen this," muttered Arthur Augustus. "I should have felt much safah about you fellows if I had bwought my twusty wevolvah with me."

"Jolly good thing you haven't, ass! You would get into some trouble with it."

"I object to bein' called an ass, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, we've had trouble enough over Wally's mongrel without having you carrying a revolver. The safest place to keep a revolver is at the bottom of a trunk, and the trunk locked."

"But I want to go and have a look at the Bowewy, and it is not safe to go into the Bowewy without a twusty wevolvah."

"I think we'd better keep out of the Bowery," said Tom Merry seriously. "I don't know anything about that part of New York, except that it's a good place to keep out of if you're a stranger."

"But with me lookin' aftah you——"

"Oh, ring off!"

The juniors employed a pleasant hour sauntering down Broadway. The street, and the cross streets for the most part, seemed alive with light and motion and colour. The evening was a fine one after the mist of the morning, and everybody seemed to be out of doors. The sky was dark and serene, with stars ablaze in it; and Tom Merry, as he glanced at it, remembered that New York, for all its Anglo-Saxon aspect, was many degrees south of London in latitude.

The boys sauntered down town. New York, being sprawled over a long and narrow island running north and south, is naturally divided into two portions—down and up town. The elevated railroads, running over the avenues, convey a vast concourse of business people down town in the morning, and up town in the evening. Then the elevated trains are packed as full as they can hold; so full that the London Metropolitan at its worst seems a joke to them.

Unacquainted with the city, and anxious only to see the sights, the juniors naturally wandered far, and presently they found themselves near the gigantic suspension bridge over the East River. Then they walked on, finding themselves in less cheerful surroundings, and when Tom Merry wished to return to the lights of Broadway, he did not find the task easy.

"Weally, I twust you fellows haven't lost yourselves," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been leavin' it to you, Tom Mewwy, you know."

Tom Merry looked round him. Warehouses were on one hand, and mean houses and sheds on the other. Now that he recalled it, Tom Merry remembered that he had heard many stories of the East River region in New York. Like many great cities, New York has its worst side to the river front, and the aspect of the people he passed did not encourage Tom Merry to ask them for information.

There was sudden raucous roar of voices, and a crowd of men, some of them in sailor garb, came pouring out of a brilliantly lighted eating-house.

"Get back!" shouted Tom Merry.

The three juniors crowded back to the wall as the rough crowd came past, shouting some wild song.

But the crowd filled up the narrow, ill-set sidewalk, and in a moment the boys were being whirled away in the midst of them.

Tom Merry struggled out of the press, and caught Wally by the arm and dragged him away from a burly Norwegian sailor with whom he was disputing. Wally had trodden on the man's foot, and the rough fellow had retorted with a buffet that made the junior reel, and Wally was going for him hotly when Tom Merry dragged him off.

"Lemme go!" growled Wally. "I'm going to dot him on the boko."

"You're not. Come away!"

"Hallo! What's up?"

"Tom Mewwy! Help!"

It was a faint cry from the distance, and it was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry started.

"Gussy! D'Arcy! Where are you?"

There was no reply.

The crowd had cleared from the streets now, and the sidewalk round the juniors was clear. Tom Merry looked round anxiously for Arthur Augustus. But the swell of St. Jim's was not to be seen.

"D'Arcy! D'Arcy!"

But no voice replied to Tom Merry's calling. Arthur Augustus had disappeared!

CHAPTER 6.

The Disappearance of D'Arcy.

TOM MERRY stood in the dimly lighted street, with the waters of the East River glimmering near on the right, almost dazed for the next few minutes.

Where was D'Arcy? The rough crowd had passed on, but it was absurd to suppose that they had borne D'Arcy along with them. They had crowded into another lighted saloon a hundred yards down the street, and the roar of a brutal chorus came from the open door.

But where was D'Arcy?"

There were many byways and nooks into which he could have gone. But why should he have left the spot?

What meant his cry for help, except that he had been hurried away forcibly? But how? By whom? Why?

Tom Merry pressed his hand to his head. He felt dazed, amazed, bewildered. What had happened to Arthur Augustus? Where was he?

Wally looked pale and scared. Much as he chipped his elder brother, the thought that something had happened to him cut the lad to the heart.

"What's become of Gus, Tom?" he muttered.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Heaven knows! Gus! Gus! Gus!"

The street echoed to Tom Merry's shouting, but there came no reply from the missing junior.

Up and down the road they went, looking for him.

Wally uttered a sudden sharp exclamation.

"Look here!"

It was D'Arcy's glove. Tom Merry knew the glove at once—a delicate one in lavender kid. No one else was likely to have dropped such a glove in such a place.

The glove lay at the entrance of an alley, branching off from the street behind a rambling building. Had D'Arcy gone down that utterly black opening, where not even a lamp glimmered?

If so, why—how? Who could have forcibly dragged the unfortunate boy away, and why had it been done?

Tom Merry and Wally looked at one another.

"He's been kidnapped!" said Wally in a low, awed tone.

"But how—why—by whom?"

Tom Merry felt helpless. He realised only too clearly that he was in a strange land among strange people. In London he would have dashed off to Scotland Yard at once, with every confidence. But here! His first experience of New York police methods that very morning had not given him confidence.

"What is to be done?" muttered Wally.

"I'm going after him!" said Tom Merry resolutely.

"Then I'm coming with you?"

Tom hesitated. The alley looked black and threatening. It seemed of little use to go. And yet how could he abandon a chum to his fate?"

"Come on, then, old chap," he said. "We'll sink or swim together."

The juniors plunged into the blackness of the alley.

They had not taken a dozen steps when invisible hands clutched them in the darkness. They attempted to struggle, but they could hardly move a limb. Hands went through their clothes quietly and thoroughly, removing every article of value from their pockets, until they were denuded of the last cent. Watches, tie-pins, chains—everything went, and the boys were unable to move a finger in the defence of their property. All the time they caught not one glimpse of their assailants. The blackness was complete.

It was a strange, eerie feeling that came over them. It seemed as if they had descended like Dante into the blackness of the Inferno, and there had been seized by the shadowy dwellers of the infernal regions.

They were stripped of everything of any value, and then they felt themselves dragged along and suddenly hurled away with great force.

They clattered down upon the road at the spot where they had entered the alley. The sound of a faint chuckle floated through the darkness.

Tom Merry sat up.

He was aching from the fall, and his wrist was bleeding where it had struck the hard stone. Wally was jamming his handkerchief to his nose.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

He staggered to his feet.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, picking himself up. "I guess we're not quite up to the toughs of New York!"

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"Hang them! We must see the police about it, though goodness knows whether it will be of use."

A policeman was standing a little way up the road. The two juniors approached him, and he eyed them very suspiciously. Tom Merry stated that they had been robbed, and that their companion had been taken away.

"More fools you for coming here," said the policeman.

Tom Merry's heart sank.

"Can't you help us?" he said.

The policeman looked at him searchingly.

"Is this straight goods you're giving me?" he demanded.

Tom Merry turned red.

"I'm telling you the truth," he said. "My friend has disappeared, and when we tried to follow we were seized and robbed."

"You'd better come to my captain, I guess."

The policeman tapped on the pavement with his club. Tom Merry watched this proceeding with surprise. The tap, tap rang clearly through the night. The juniors learned afterwards that this is the method by which a New York policeman summons a comrade, as a London policeman uses the whistle.

Tap, tap!

A minute more and a second policeman came into view. The two policemen spoke together in low tones, looking often at the boys, and then the second man told them to follow him. The juniors followed him in silence, with heavy hearts. The unknown fate of Arthur Augustus was weighing heavily upon their minds, and the confidence they had in the power of the New York police to find him was nil. But there was nothing else to be done!

CHAPTER 7.
Kidnapped!

MEANWHILE, what of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy? The swell of St. Jim's had been separated from his chums by the crowd of toughs, and he had been looking round for them when a pair of arms suddenly clasped him round the neck from behind.

Utterly amazed by the attack, D'Arcy struggled frantically, and the next thing he remembered—and the last—was that a heavy hand smote him behind the ear.

He came to himself with an aching head and a curious sensation of tightness and discomfort to his limbs.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, stirring uneasily. "What has happened?"

He remembered in a few minutes the mishap in Water Street, and the blow he had received. From that moment all was blank.

Where was he now?

He tried to rise, and then the tightness in his limbs was explained. He was bound hand and foot.

"Bai Jove!" gasped the junior, in utter dismay. "I am a pwisonah!"

There was no doubt about it. The swell of St. Jim's was a bound prisoner—where, he could not guess.

He looked round him with startled eyes.

Darkness enshrouded him, but after a time he could make out the form of a window, closed with a shutter. Here and there a pale gleam came in, but it was not the gleam of daylight. However long he had been insensible, it was still the night.

The swell of St. Jim's was utterly puzzled.

He could have understood it if he had been robbed, but why anybody in New York should want to make him a prisoner passed his comprehension.

He stirred again, and tried to rise to a sitting posture, but in vain. His ankles were tied together, and his wrists fastened behind his back, and his head was still swimming from the blow he had received.

He could only wait till his captors should choose to visit him and explain. It was weary waiting there; but, as it happened, it was not for long.

A gleam of light penetrated the darkness.

Arthur Augustus started and looked round him. The gleam came in a flat line on the floor, and evidently from under a door. Someone was coming to the room.

The junior's heart beat a little faster.

There was the sound of a key scraping in the lock, and the door swung open.

A man entered the room with a lantern in his hand. Arthur Augustus looked at him, and his heart sank.

Never had the junior seen a personage so hideous and forbidding.

The man had a squat figure, and a face tinted to the hue of copper. His eyes were deeply sunken, and had a hawkish glitter in them, and his hair was dirty and frowsy.

A coloured neckerchief was twisted round his neck in a knot. His clothes were filthy.

He looked at the bound junior, and an evil grin flickered over his copper visage.

"He's awake, captain!"

The man's voice was harsh and rasping, and in keeping with his brutal visage.

Another man looked in at the door, and D'Arcy could not restrain the cry of amazement that rose to his lips.

"Puntah! You wascal!"

It was Captain Punter.

The steamer crook looked coolly at D'Arcy, and signed to the coppery visaged rascal to stand down the lantern so that the light fell on the boy.

"You can get, Mick," he said.

Mick grinned.

"If ye're wanting me, captain, I'm not far away," he said.

"That's all right."

Mick went and closed the door. Captain Punter advanced into the room. D'Arcy was watching him with glowering eyes.

"I pwesume," said Arthur Augustus, with as much dignity as was compatible with his extremely uncomfortable position—"I pwesume, Puntah, that I owe all this to you, you feahful wascal!"

The captain nodded with a smile.

"Yes, I think you can safely presume that," he assented.

"You—you wascally wuffian!"

Captain Punter laughed. He seemed to find something very amusing in the situation. He pulled a stool out from the wall and sat down and opened his cigarette-case.

"I should be vewy much obliged," said D'Arcy, "if you would have the extweme kindness to welease me fwom these wotten wopes."

"Not just yet."

"My posish is extwemely uncomfy."

"Yes, I suppose that cannot be called the last thing in comfort," assented the captain. "If you remain here, I think I can release you from the ropes, though it depends upon yourself whether you are released from this place."

"I demand to be weleased immediately!"

Captain Punter laughed again. He selected a cigarette from his case and lighted it with great care.

"I wish my hands were fwee," said Arthur Augustus. "I should certainly give you a feahful thwashin'. Pway what is your purpose in bwingin' me here? I shall have you locked up when I get fwee, you wascal!"

"No, you won't!"

"Why not, you extwemely beastlay wottah?"

"Because that will be part of the agreement," said Captain Punter coolly. "I haven't brought you here for a joke, my boy. You will go out on my conditions, not yours. You had the better of me on board the Olympia——"

"I knew you were a gweat wascal."

"Exactly. You had the better of me there, but it soon occurred to me that if I could not make anything out of you in one way I could in another."

"I weally do not compwehend."

"Before you landed in New York I had laid my plans," resumed the captain. "Captain Mainwaring warned you against me on the steamer, but I thought my chance would come ashore. I have not lost sight of you since you landed. This foolhardy expedition of yours to see New York without a protector has placed you in my hands more readily than I could have expected."

"I wish I had bwought my wevolvah."

"Ha, ha, ha! A revolver would not have helped you much. That disturbance in Water Street gave me my chance. Mick and I were ready, and we whisked you off as easily as we could have wished."

D'Arcy gritted his teeth. The swell of St. Jim's did not often lose his temper, but he was very angry now. He realised at last that the sharper had been coolly watching the party all day, waiting for his opportunity to come, and that they had unwittingly given it him themselves.

"Bai Jove! I would give somethin' to give you a feahful thwashin', you wascal!" he muttered wrathfully.

Captain Punter blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Now, I suppose you don't want to stay here," he remarked. "We may as well discuss terms at once, and then I'll leave you to your night's rest."

"Are you goin' to keep me here all night?"

"I am—that is imperative. You see, we have to cable to England before you can be released."

Arthur Augustus opened his eyes wide in amazement.

"Cable! To England!"

"Certainly. I suppose you don't think I've brought you here simply for the purpose of holding a conversation with you? You want your liberty. You will have to pay for it!"

"You—you wascal! You think you are goin' to hold me to wansom!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in blank astonishment.

"If you think that is a new thing here, you don't know much of New York," grinned the captain. "That is certainly my intention. I am going to have a thousand pounds for your freedom, or you will never see the outside of

this room again—till you are thrown into the East River with a sack over your head."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"You—you would nevah dare!" he gasped.

"You don't know New York," said the captain, with a smile. "There are worse things than that done in this part of the city. You are in the toughest house in the toughest part of the Bowery, and you have only one chance of getting out alive—by paying over one thousand pounds!"

"Wats! I haven't a fiftieth part as much money with me."

"That is why I am going to cable to your father."

"My—my father!"

"Yes. You are the son of Lord Eastwood, as I learned on the steamer. I know that Lord Eastwood is rich; he would willingly, I should think, pay a thousand pounds rather than say good-bye to any chance of seeing his son again."

Arthur Augustus could only stare at the rascal in horror and dismay. The captain spoke so calmly, in such a matter-of-fact way, that it was hard to realise that he was in earnest. But D'Arcy felt the bonds cramping his limbs, and he looked round at the shuttered window and at the filthy walls of his prison, and it was borne in upon him that all this was in deadly earnest.

Captain Punter puffed out little blue clouds of smoke and watched the startled face of his victim with a cool smile.

"Now you understand," he remarked. "You are a prisoner in Bowery Mick's shebang until your pater shells out to the tune of a thousand pounds."

"He will do nothin' of the sort."

"Then you will never see him again."

"I will wisk that. I will wisk anythin' wathah than allow my governah to be plundered by a feahful wascal like you!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"I will give you until I have finished this cigarette to think it over," said the captain calmly.

"You need give me nothin' of the sort! I despise you too feahfully to have any dealings with you! I would wathah go to a watewy gwave in the East Wivah," said the swell of St. Jim's. "You can do your worst, you wottah!"

The captain calmly smoked his cigarette.

"If I had the cash in my pocket now I would wefuse to hand it to you as a wansom," went on D'Arcy. "I will not cable to my governah, and I will not wite any lettahs, and I will not consent to be wansomed even if anybody wishes to wansom me! I uttahly wefuse to be wansomed undah any circs!"

"You will write a letter to Mrs. Stuyvesant, and she will cable for the money!"

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

Captain Punter threw away the stump of his cigarette.

"I expected this at our first interview," he said, rising. "You will change your mind. I think, by to-morrow morning."

"I shall uttahly wefuse to change my mind!"

"Mick! Mick!"

The ruffian re-entered, and Punter pointed to D'Arcy. Mick cut the cords that bound the swell of St. Jim's; but the boy's limbs were too cramped by the confinement for him to move at the moment. The captain took up the lantern and left the room without giving him another glance. Mick followed, but as he left the room he looked round with a leer that sent a chill to D'Arcy's heart.

The door closed, and the boy was left alone in the darkness.

CHAPTER 8.
In Search of D'Arcy!

TOM MERRY'S first evening in New York was one of the most miserable that he could remember. The disappearance of Arthur Augustus weighed upon his mind; and Wally, usually in the highest spirits, was nervous and depressed.

That D'Arcy had been kidnapped admitted of no doubt now; but how, and by whom, remained a mystery. And Tom felt, with a sickening sense of helplessness, that the police could not help him. He had done all that he could in that direction. The boys had been taken to the police headquarters in Mulberry Street, where they had related all they knew, and had been told that the matter would be looked into at once.

From Mulberry Street the boys returned to the theatre, in the faintest of faint hopes that D'Arcy might have returned there, Tom remembering the arrangement that he had made with his comrades before leaving the place.

The last act of the play was drawing to a conclusion when Tom Merry re-entered the box, and Skimpole was sitting there, still busy with his notebook. He looked as if he had not shifted his position since Tom Merry left him last.

Tom looked eagerly round, but there was no sign of D'Arcy. His heart sank, the faint hope died quickly away. He tapped Skimpole on the shoulder, and the genius of St. Jim's looked up with a start.

"Dear me! Is that you, Merry?"

"Have you seen D'Arcy?"

"D'Arcy! What an absurd question, Merry! He was here with you only a short time ago."

"Dummy! Has he been back since I left?"

"I really have not noticed. I have been very busy with my notes. I really think my book of travels will be a success when we get back to England. I shall mention you all by name, and make you as famous as myself."

"You are sure you haven't seen D'Arcy?"

"Yes, of course. Merry, I have almost completed my first chapter——"

"Oh, ring off!"

Even Skimpole noticed that something was wrong at last. He asked what was the matter, and Tom briefly told him.

Skimpole's big forehead was wrinkled in thought.

"Perhaps he has been sandbagged?" he suggested.

"Eh—what?"

"You probably know that it is a common custom with New York roughs to sandbag people," said Skimpole. "They hurl the sandbag from behind, you know, and it knocks you over, and perhaps kills you."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

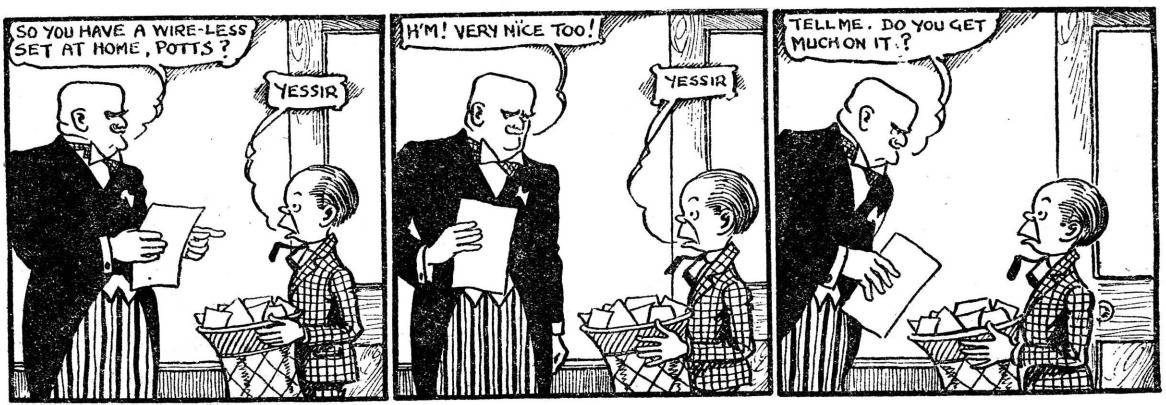
"I think it highly probable that D'Arcy has been sandbagged. It is probable, too, that he has been robbed and thrown into the East River!"

Tom Merry took the cheerful genius by the throat and banged his head forcibly on the wall.

"Now shut up!" he said.

Skimpole rubbed his head ruefully and looked at Tom

Potts, the Office Boy!



Merry as if he wondered whether Tom was demented. He could see no harm in his cheerful suggestion. The waxed moustache of Louis appeared in the door. The curtain had fallen, unnoticed by the juniors in their preoccupation.

"Ze car is ready, messieurs," said Louis.

He looked round the box and rolled his eyes. The muddy and dishevelled state of the two juniors caught his eye, as well as the absence of Arthur Augustus.

"Is it zat ze accident have happened?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly. "Let's get home!"

"But Monsieur D'Arcy——"

"He is not here."

"But——" Louis spread out the palms of his hands, and excitedly shrugged his shoulders up to his ears. "Mais, monsieur, but——"

"He is lost!"

"Lost! Mon Dieu!"

"Let's get back," said Wally. "Mrs. Stuyvesant will have to know."

Tom Merry groaned. He instinctively felt that there would be a painful scene with the stout old lady as soon as she learned that Arthur Augustus had disappeared in a low quarter of New York. But there was nothing else for it. Mrs. Stuyvesant would have to know. Bitterly enough Tom now regretted that little excursion down town "on their own." Yet it had not been possible for them to foresee the disaster.

There was nothing for it but to return to the hotel and inform Mrs. Stuyvesant. They entered the car, and drove home gloomily enough. The muddy state of Tom Merry and Wally attracted a good deal of attention in the hotel, crowded at that hour of the evening. But the boys hardly noticed it. They ascended in the elevator to the ninth story, and stepped out, Louis following them with long face and despairing gesture.

Mrs. Stuyvesant was just dismissing two visitors—young men in black, who were probably connected in some official way with the Asphyxiating Association—and Tom Merry waited till she turned to him.

The stout lady looked at the juniors with a beaming smile upon her plump face.

"Dear, dear! I hope you have been amused at the theatre, my dear children," she said. Then the state of the juniors caught her attention. "What has happened?"

Tom Merry unwillingly explained. Mrs. Stuyvesant's face grew grave and pale as she listened. Tom Merry had expected a scene, but he was agreeably disappointed. Mrs. Stuyvesant had some curious ways, but she was an American business woman, after all. Her manner grew decisive.

"This is very unfortunate," she said. And she did not reproach the boys with word or look for having gone upon that unlucky excursion. "You have no idea, then, what has become of Arthur?"

"None, ma'am. I am very sorry we——"

"Of course, you could not foresee that anything would happen," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "D'Arcy has evidently been taken away for some purpose, and it is impossible to suppose that it was by a chance ruffian in Water Street. Someone who intended to do this must have been watching his opportunity, and you unfortunately gave it to him by going to that low locality."

Tom Merry started. He had not thought of that himself, and he had certainly not looked for such a display of American cuteness on the part of the lady president of the Asphyxiating Association.

"But—but whom?"

"It is probably some attempt to extort money," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Such things have happened many times in New York. I am very sorry it should have occurred while you were in my charge."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Stuyvesant," exclaimed Tom Merry remorsefully, "it was all our own fault! We——"

"Never mind; we will not apportion the blame at present," said Mrs. Stuyvesant, with a smile. "You have acquainted the police with the matter?"

"Yes, we have been to the headquarters."

"Very good! I will ring them up, and tell them to send me a detective here at once. Louis, ring up police headquarters! And now, my boys, you had better go to bed, and I hope I shall have some good news for you in the morning."

Tom Merry would gladly have stayed up, for he felt that he could not sleep; but he went to his room without a word. The juniors did not feel much in the humour for talk there, either, and they went to bed. It was long before slumber visited their eyelids, however. Even Skimpole, who seldom came down out of the clouds, was silent and worried. When he fully realised that D'Arcy had disappeared, and that he might be in danger, he felt it as keenly as the others.

The detective came promptly enough at the call of Mrs. Stuyvesant. A quarter of an hour after the telephone bell rang he was bowing to the stout lady, hat in hand. The name and wealth of the president of the Asyphxiating Association was well known in New York, and in that great city the mere reputation of dollars works wonders.

Mrs. Stuyvesant was very crisp and businesslike with the detective. As an American she knew the only possible way to go to work. A hundred dollars in hand, and a promise of five hundred more as soon as the boy was found, put Mr. Bright on his mettle, and he assured the lady that the missing boy should be found, if he had to personally hunt through every "dive" in the Bowery.

Mrs. Stuyvesant felt assured that he would earn the five hundred dollars if he could, and she hoped for the best.

Tom Merry & Co. were up at an early hour. They had slept little, and they rose feeling despondent. That day they were to have taken the train on the Erie Railway westward for Chicago, en route to Tom Merry's uncle's ranch in the Far West. But while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's fate remained in doubt, it was, of course, impossible for Tom Merry to leave New York. He would rather have sacrificed his uncle's promised millions than have taken this step before D'Arcy was rescued.

Tom Merry and Wally hardly spoke. And Skimpole's face was very gloomy as he made an early morning note in his notebook.

They breakfasted with Mrs. Stuyvesant, and the good lady's face as they joined her warned them that there was no news yet.

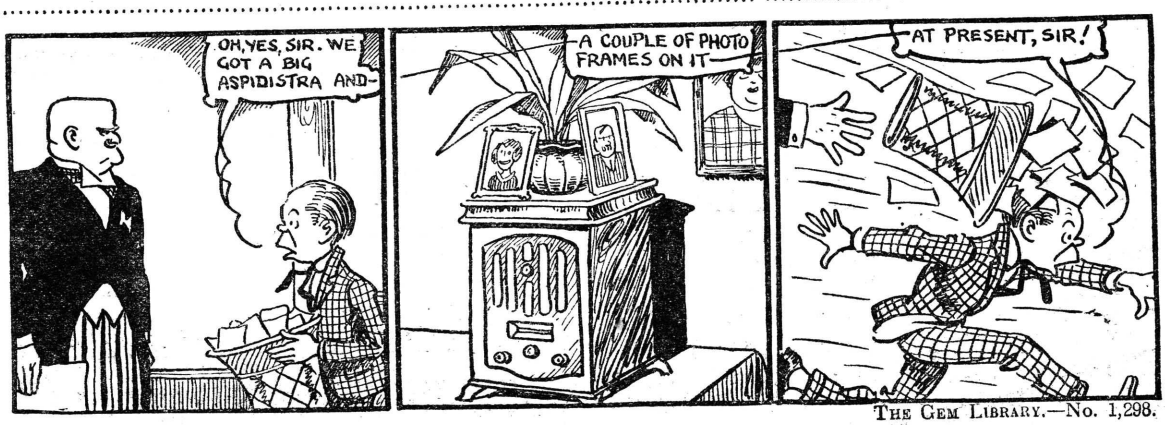
"I am sorry I have nothing to tell you, my dears," said Mrs. Stuyvesant gently. "I have had no news yet. But I am employing one of the best detectives in New York, and he is doing his best to earn the reward I am offering him. I have every hope that poor Arthur will be found to-day."

And with that crumb of comfort the juniors were compelled to be content.

They made a very poor breakfast, and Wally even forgot to ask Louis how Pongo was getting on. Breakfast was no sooner over than a card was brought in to Mrs. Stuyvesant. She glanced at it, and looked puzzled.

"Dear, dear! I do not know the name, but it may be

USEFUL!



news of poor Arthur. You may show the gentleman in, Louis."

"Oui, madame!"

And Louis showed the gentleman in, and Tom Merry started up as he saw the "gentleman."

For it was Captain Punter!

CHAPTER 9.
Captain Punter Makes Terms!

CAPTAIN PUNTER bowed to Mrs. Stuyvesant over his silk hat, and cast a glance out of the corner of his eye at Tom Merry.

"Good-morning, madam! I have called on important business."

"In connection with the Asphyxiating Association?" asked Mrs. Stuyvesant.

The captain coughed.

"'Hem! No. In connection with the disappearance of a boy, I believe to have been in your charge—of the name of D'Arcy."

Tom Merry could hardly restrain a cry

In an instant it flashed into his mind that Punter had had a hand in the disappearance of Arthur Augustus. He stepped quickly forward.

"You—you!" he exclaimed. "You know what has become of him."

"Tom!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant, in surprise.

Tom Merry turned to her excitedly.

"You don't know this man, ma'am, but I do. He was on the steamer we came to New York in. The captain of the steamer warned us against him. He is a sharper, and he tried to make us gamble and smoke on the steamer. He has done something with D'Arcy out of revenge. It was Gussy who first found out his true character."

Captain Punter smiled agreeably.

"When our young friend is finished, we will talk business," he said.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Kindly explain how you know that Master D'Arcy has disappeared, Captain Punter?"

The captain grinned.

"All New York knows it by this time, madam," he said. "Look at this."

He opened a copy of the early morning edition of the "New York Tabard," and showed a glaring headline that made the English boys stare in surprise. Mrs. Stuyvesant, who knew the little ways of the newspaper men of her native land, was not surprised. The leaded head ran as follows:

"STARTLING DISAPPEARANCE IN NEW YORK!

ENGLISH EARL'S SON VANISHES IN BROAD DAYLIGHT!

MURDER, SUICIDE, OR KIDNAPPING?"

The rest was in smaller print, and filled the column. The inaccuracies of the news equalled the startling appearance of the headlines. D'Arcy had not disappeared in broad daylight, but after dark. But the more sensational words appealed more keenly to the imagination of a New York reporter.

Tom Merry could only stare at the paper.

The detective employed by Mrs. Stuyvesant, or else another at police headquarters, had imparted the information to a newspaperman for a consideration, and the "Tabard" was the first paper to announce the disappearance of Arthur Augustus. But during the day it was certain to glare forth in every New York paper, and would probably be telegraphed to London before noon.

What news for Lord Eastwood and for D'Arcy's mother! Tom Merry had not thought of them before, secure in the feeling that a wide ocean lay between New York and home. He had forgotten the newspapers and the telegraph.

"I have gained all my knowledge of the case from this announcement," said the captain blandly. "But I think, from my knowledge of New York, I can be of use to you, madam."

"I quite understand you, sir," said Mrs. Stuyvesant. "Tom, please go to your room for a little while, while I speak with this—gentleman."

"Yes, madam."

The three juniors quietly left the room, the captain's bland glance following them out. Then Mrs. Stuyvesant pointed to a chair.

"Please sit down, and speak out," she said. "We are quite alone here; there are no witnesses, and we can be frank. What do you want?"

It was American business with a vengeance! Captain Punter only smiled.

"I thought I would look into the matter when I saw the news," he said. "I have been singularly favoured. I have learned that this lad has been kidnapped by a certain party, who intends to hold him to ransom."

"Quite so. And now——"

"I am quite willing to help you recover the lad, but I must be paid for my time and trouble. I would gladly serve so charming a lady for nothing, but this is a hard world, and as a business woman you will, of course, look at the case from a business point of view."

"Exactly. You have kidnapped D'Arcy, and the only question now is, how much do you want to restore him?"

"You put it rather crudely, madam, and I'm afraid you wish to entrap me into making dangerous admissions," smiled the captain. "I prefer to state the case in my own way. I have learned that a certain character is holding the boy a prisoner. He intends to cable to England, to Lord Eastwood, asking a thousand pounds for his release."

The next moment D'Arcy and Blake were overtaken by Punter and a b struggle, the hapless fugitives were crushed under the weight of their a figures ran forward

"Preposterous!"

"Yes," the captain agreed readily, "the whole thing is preposterous; but such is his intention, which he will carry out, preposterous or not. Now, instead of troubling Lord Eastwood, and alarming Lady Eastwood as to the safety of her son, I have thought that you would rather employ me to rescue the boy. I ask nothing if I fail."

"I quite believe that you know where to put your hand on him!" said Mrs. Stuyvesant scornfully. "How much do you want?"

"Ah, now we are coming to business! Naturally, I shall expect as much as the character I was speaking of expects from Lord Eastwood."

"I will give you five hundred dollars."

"You are joking, I presume? I shall be happy to rescue Master D'Arcy, and restore him to your arms for one thousand pounds."

"Absurd!"

"That is the sum the kidnapper intends to demand from the English nobleman, and I have no doubt Lord Eastwood would refund the money to you, madam."

"I shall not pay anything like that sum!"

"Then you will doubtless cable to Lord Eastwood for the money."

"Certainly not!"

"Am I to understand that you refuse to deal with me?" said the captain, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes.

"On those terms, yes!"

burly tough, and they were borne to the ground. Too breathless to assailants. "Help!" gasped D'Arcy faintly. Two rough-coated joined in the tussle.

"Then may I ask what you offer?"

"Five hundred dollars, when the boy is returned safely to this hotel."

The captain rose.

"It is useless for us to prolong this discussion, madam," he said. "Perhaps you will change your mind later—doubtless, you wish to give the New York police a chance to recover the boy. I may warn you, however, that the character I have spoken of is hand-in-glove with influential persons in the police department, and that his house is not likely to be searched. They may search the houses on either side of his place, but I shall be greatly surprised if they enter his house—even if they discover that the boy is there. You understand me, madam? You must know something of the New York police and their methods."

"We shall see."

"Certainly. Take your time, by all means," said the captain gracefully. "I have not the least objection, and I am in no hurry. I will ring you up on the telephone this evening to ask whether you have changed your mind, and decided to employ me."

Mrs. Stuyvesant hesitated for a moment.

She knew that the captain's statement was probably correct; she was aware that many lawless dens in New York were run by paying a regular rent to the police who came in contact with them for protection. If the kidnappers of Arthur Augustus were in such a secure position, it was indeed hopeless to think of recovering him through the efforts of detectives. But it was quite possible that the adventurer was simply "bluffing." He might be "solid" with the police; but, on the other hand, he might not have paid one dollar for their protection. It was worth while to give Mr. Bright a chance.

The captain waited, hat in hand, for a few moments; but Mrs. Stuyvesant did not speak, and he turned to the door.

"Good-morning, madam!" he said. "My next pleasant conversation with you will be over the telephone wires."

And he left the room.

There was a smile on Captain Punter's face as he walked lightly along towards the elevator. It was the smile of a man who felt himself secure, and certain of gaining his point.

The smile vanished, and he rapped out a startled oath, as there was a sudden rush of feet, and he was seized from behind by two pairs of hands.

Before he could struggle he was bumped on the back of his knees, and dragged over—and, as he sprawled down, he was dragged rapidly along, whisked into a room, and a door was slammed, and the key turned.

Dazed and bewildered, the captain struggled furiously, but a knee was on his chest and he was pinned to the floor. He looked upward into the face bent over him, and gasped:

"Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 10.

Catching the Captain!

TOM MERRY it was. His knee was planted on Punter's chest, and his weight held the rascal down, and his grip was on the collar of Captain Punter.

Wally was grasping his wrists and pulling his arms above his head, so that he was completely helpless.

The captain would probably have fared badly in any case in a struggle with the two sturdy and determined juniors; but, taken at a disadvantage, as he was, he had no chance at all.

Skimpole was standing by with a heavy metal vase in his hand, holding it ready to smite if the adventurer got loose.

As a blow from the heavy metal would probably have brained him on the spot, Captain Punter kept a wary and uneasy eye on Herbert Skimpole.

"Now, you scoundrel!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth.

"Shall I stun him, Tom Merry?" asked Skimpole, poising the heavy vase over Captain Punter's head with both hands.

"No, no! Hold on!"

"Perhaps it would be safer to stun him."

"Keep him off!" panted the captain. "You dangerous idiot! Take it away!"

"I should prefer to stun you," said Skimpole. "If, however, Tom Merry does not wish it, I will let you off, but I shall certainly stun you if you attempt to escape. As a Determinist, I am opposed to violence, but under the circumstances, I shall have no hesitation in striking you with sufficient violence to stun you."

"Keep him off!"

"Hold on, Skimmy, till I give you the word. Now, Captain Punter, we've got you."

"You'd better let me go," said the captain threateningly. "I will shout for help!"

"In that case I shall certainly stun you," said Skimpole.

"You had better keep your tongue between your teeth, I think, you scoundrel!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We aren't playing with you. You have kidnapped our chum."

"How are you going to prove that?"

"I am not talking of proving it. We know you have done it. I knew it the moment I set eyes on you this morning. That is why you were dogging our steps all over New York yesterday. We gave you a chance by going to that place, but you would probably have managed it somehow, anyway."

"Are you going to let me up?" said Captain Punter, who had now quite recovered his coolness. "You ought to be aware that this assault is illegal."

"Not yet. Where is D'Arcy?"

"I really do not know."

"Do you deny that you have kidnapped him?"

"I have nothing whatever to say on the subject."

"Shall I stun him, Tom Merry?"

"Hold on! You have kidnapped D'Arcy, you scoundrel, and we are going to find him. Search him while I hold him, Wally, and we may find a clue."

The captain smiled blandly.

He had come to the hotel that morning prepared for all eventualities, and he had been careful to carry nothing on his person that could be of the least use if he came to grief.

"Good!" said Wally. "I'll jolly soon go through him! Hold the rotter!"

And Wally searched the captain as thoroughly as any detective could have done.

But nothing in the nature of a clue rewarded him. There was nothing about the captain that was not of the most harmless and innocent description.

"Are you finished?" asked Punter, with a yawn.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

He had hoped to discover something by searching his adventurer, but he saw now that even in this Punter had been too clever for him.

"You had better let me go now," remarked Punter. "I dare say you know that I could give you into custody for assault and robbery."

"Oh, don't try that with us!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "You dare not do anything of the kind, even if you could. You don't want to have too much to do with the law—I know that. But if I was going to be arrested the next minute, I should still make you tell me what you have done with D'Arcy."

"Indeed! And how are you going to make me?" asked Captain Punter agreeably.

"I am going to thrash you,"

The captain started.

Tom Merry spoke so coldly and quietly that it was impossible to doubt that he meant what he said.

The junior took a cane from the corner. It was a cane that belonged to D'Arcy, one of his extensive variety. It was thick and flexible.

Tom Merry grasped it with a grasp that meant business.

The captain eyed him nervously. What Tom Merry was going to do could not be called exactly a lawful method of persuasion, and, like many rascals who live by habitually breaking the law, Captain Punter had a great respect for the law when he required it for his own protection.

He eyed the junior very nervously.

"You—you dare not!" he panted. "If you touch me——"

"Are you going to tell me where D'Arcy is?"

"I don't know."

"Liar! Will you tell me?"

The captain set his teeth hard, and began to struggle. Skimpole pointed the vase at his head, and was about to bring it down with tremendous force when Tom Merry caught his arm and stopped him.

"Better let me stun him, Merry," said Skimpole, blinking at Tom. "It will be safer to stun the scoundrel."

"Sit on his legs instead."

"Oh, very well!"

Captain Punter was rolled over on his face, and Skimpole sat on his legs and Wally on his head.

Tom Merry planted a knee on his back.

The captain struggled, but in vain.

The cane sang through the air.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry, between his teeth, "are you going to tell me where D'Arcy is, you wretch?"

"Hang you!"

Thwack!

The cane came down with all the force of Tom Merry's arm, and the captain writhed and gave a terrific yell.

"Stuff your handkerchief into his mouth, Wally."

The captain was fighting like a wild cat now. But the three juniors were too strong for him. He tried to shout, but Wally stuffed the handkerchief into his mouth with his fist behind it.

But the captain's first yell had been heard, and a hand tried the door which Tom Merry had locked.

"Vat eez it zat ees ze matter?" asked the voice of Louis through the keyhole.

"It's all right!" called out Tom Merry. "Buzz off!"

"Buzz off!"

Louis' steps were heard going along the passage. There was another door to the large room farther along, and unfortunately it was not locked.

It opened, and Louis' startled face looked in.

"Messieurs——"

Louis broke off, and his eyes nearly started from his head as he saw the captain wriggling in the grasp of the juniors.

"Messieurs, vat is it—a burglar?"

"Something of the sort. Get!"

"I vill cry for help! I vill shriek!"

"Don't!" yelled Tom Merry. "It's all right. Don't make a sound!"

But the excitable Frenchman had already rushed into the corridor, and was shrieking.

Captain Punter made a desperate effort and wrenched himself loose, and sprang to his feet. Tom and Wally sprang at him, but the rascal eluded them, and dashed into the corridor.

"After him!"

Captain Punter ran into Louis and bowled him over. The Frenchman rolled on to the floor and lay gasping. Punter did not attempt to escape. He had no mind to run from the hotel with a crowd of messengers yelling "Stop thief!" on his track.

He ran quickly along the corridor, and entered the room where he had interviewed Mrs. Stuyvesant.

The good lady looked up in surprise, her surprise increasing as she noted the captain's dishevelled appearance.

"What do you want?" she said coolly.

"Nothing, madam," said the captain, in his old airy manner.

The rascal's coolness was wonderful.

"I should like you to request your charming boys to allow me to pass without hindrance, that is all. Tom Merry seems to have the idea that I am in some way responsible for the disappearance of his friend, and he has assaulted me. I presume you are not a party to it?"

"Tom, you should not have done this. Let Captain Punter go. You must not lay a finger on him."

And Captain Punter, having adjusted his collar and dusted his trousers, walked airily away to the lift, the juniors raising no hand to stop him.

Mrs. Stuyvesant looked grieved and surprised, and Tom hastened to explain.

A twinkle came into the lady's eyes, and a slight smile hovered upon her plump face as she learned of the drastic methods Tom had used to make the kidnapper speak.

"You must not do anything of the sort again, Tom," she said gently. "I understand your feelings, but I am afraid that this is not exactly the way to go to work. You must remember that you are not at St. Jim's now."

"Yes, ma'am," said Tom Merry, hanging his head.

All the same, Tom Merry felt that his method, irregular

as it might have been, would have turned up trumps if Louis hadn't come in and spoiled everything.

"You should really have let me stun him," said Skimpole, as they went back to their room. "If I had stunned him he could not have yelled like that."

This was indubitably the case, and Tom did not argue the point.

To remain within doors, awaiting the slow movements of the police, was impossible to Tom, stretched as he was upon the rack of anxiety.

Leaving Skimpole making up his notebook, Tom and Wally left the hotel to tramp New York in search of the missing junior, though with only the slightest hope of finding a trace of him.

Mrs. Stuyvesant raised no objection, as she saw that the boys were fretting themselves into a fever with anxiety, and she had no doubt that they would be careful this time.

Careful enough they were, and through the long hours of the day they went up and down and to and fro in New York, but never finding a trace of their missing chum.

CHAPTER 11.
Rough Quarters!

"BAI Jove! I nevah felt more inclined to give somebody a feahful thwashin' in all my life!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy addressed that remark to space. He was pacing up and down the narrow garret in the unknown building in the Bowery of New York, in which he was confined.

In spite of his situation, D'Arcy had slept pretty soundly through the night, and he had been awakened in the morning by the man Mick, who brought him a bowl of porridge for his breakfast.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was hungry, having had nothing to eat since dinner the previous evening; but there were more important things than hunger in the estimation of Arthur Augustus.

"Pway, where am I to bathe?" he asked, jamming his monocle into his eye, and turning an inquiring glance upon Bowery Mick.

The man stared at him without replying. Perhaps he was too much surprised to reply.

"Did you hear me addwess you?" said D'Arcy, raising his voice a little. "I uttahly object to bein' kept in this wascally place, but if I am to wemain here, I pwesume that you do not wish me to wemain in a state of personal uncleanliness. I must insist upon havin' a bath."

"Waal, carry me home to die!" said Mick—that apparently being an ejaculation expressive of extreme astonishment.

"If it is imposs for me to have hot watah, I am quite willin' to take my bath in cold watah," said D'Arcy, with the idea of meeting the situation in the most conceding spirit possible.

"Waal, burn my body and boots!" said Mick.

"Do you mean by that vulgah wemark to imply that it is imposs for me to take my usual bath?" asked D'Arcy.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"In that case I am willin' to wash myself in a hand-basin if you will kindly bwing me one," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Pway take particulah care to bwing me a clean towel. I could stand anythin' but a dirty towel."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Pway let me have my watah and towel as soon as poss."

"Haw, haw, haw!" said Mick again, as he left the room, and locked the door on the outside.

As he clumped down the creaky stairs D'Arcy heard his hoarse chuckling die away in the distance.

"Weally, I wegard that wottah as an uttah bwute," said D'Arcy. "I suppose I shall not be able to clean my teeth, even if I get a wash. And there was something in that man's mannah that stwuck me with a howwid forebodin' that I shall not be allowed to wash at all."

D'Arcy's foreboding was realised. No one entered his room again that morning, and he was driven by hunger to eat his porridge without having either washed or cleaned his teeth.

Arthur Augustus felt extremely uncomfortable.

"The wottahs!" murmured D'Arcy, again and again. "The uttah wottahs!"

During the morning the imprisoned junior examined his room with the faint hope of discovering some means of escape.

It was a small garret, furnished with the barest necessaries for habitation. The bed consisted of a bundle of rags and old coats on the floor in a corner. There was a stool and a bench and a washstand; but the washstand was minus a jug and any washing materials.

D'Arcy had slept in his clothes from necessity, and this also gave him an extreme sense of discomfort.

Noon came, but D'Arcy had not discovered any way out of his prison, neither had he received any further visit from his gaoler.

There was only one door to the garret, which was locked on the outside, and only one window, which was secured by a shutter, barred and padlocked. Arthur Augustus attempted to pick the padlock to get the bar away, when the shutter would have come open; but the attempt was a hopeless failure. The only light that came into the room was a glimmer round the shutter, and he could not see into the street.

Through a crack he caught a glimpse of a smoky chimney a short distance away, and his view of New York was confined to that.

The swell of St. Jim's paced the room with angry strides. It was very cold there without a fire, and it was only by keeping in motion that he could keep warm.

On the bare floor D'Arcy's footsteps rang as he walked to and fro, expressing his feelings in a frequently ejaculated desire to "thwash" somebody.

The dreadful monotony made him welcome the sound of footsteps at last on the creaking stairs, though it should only be Captain Punter or Bowery Mick who was coming.

The key clicked in the lock and Captain Punter appeared. Mick followed him with a tin platter in his hand, upon which was a chunk of bread and another of cheese. Arthur Augustus was hungry, and he welcomed the sight of food.

The captain gave him a cheery nod.

"Here's your lunch!" he remarked.

"Wascal!" said Arthur Augustus scornfully. "I have a gweat mind to give you a feahful thwashin' on the spot."

Captain Punter laughed.

"You ought to be glad to get a lunch, sonny. It is my humanitarianism. Mick here would keep you without a bite till the ransom was paid."

"I guess so," said Mick.

"I wegard you as a pair of wascals!" said D'Arcy. "I have been wobbed as well as kidnapped. My tickah is gone, and it was one my governah gave me for a birthday pwesent. I twust I shall soon see you both awwested."

"Your ticker is safe. After your ransom is paid and you are released, it will be returned to you at a reasonable figure."

"You scoundwel!"

Mick set down the platter on the bench and turned to the door. He whispered something to the captain as he went, and Punter smiled.

"Yes, the next room will do," D'Arcy heard him say in low tones, which he did not know reached the boy's quick ears. "Mind there is no fuss."

"I reckon."

And the ruffian left the room.

Captain Punter looked at D'Arcy, who was beginning on the bread and cheese.

"I suppose you have found these quarters pretty uncomfortable after what you have been used to?" the captain remarked pleasantly.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard the whole place with howwah. I feel extwemely dirtay, and I weally think I could forgive you if you could give me watah and soap, and let me have a decent wash."

"Ha, ha, ha! You will not find any of those conveniences in a slum in New York!" grinned the captain. "I fear that you will not wash again until your ransom is paid."

"You—you uttah wascal!"

"Are you inclined yet to write to Mrs. Stuyvesant, asking her to cable to your father?"

"Wathah not!"

"Your obstinacy will cause your parents a great deal of anxiety."

"Wats! They cannot know anythin' about it!"

"My dear fellow, look here!"

D'Arcy glanced at the paper the captain held out, a midday edition of a well-known New York daily. The swell of St. Jim's read the glaring headlines in amazement.

"NO NEWS YET OF THE VANISHED VISITOR. RUMOURED DISCOVERY OF BODY IN THE HUDSON RIVER!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You see, all New York knows about it!" laughed the captain. "The news was cabled to England this morning, and will be in the first editions of the evening papers. All London knows by this time that you have been kidnapped in the Bowery of New York."

"Bai Jove!"

(*Continued on page* 19.)

HERE IS A PAGE FROM—

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

HALLO, chums! As this is the last week of the year 1932, here's wishing you all, readers at home and abroad, a Merry, Prosperous New Year. The GEM during 1933 will certainly assist in making it merry, for I have some tip-top surprises up my sleeve. As a kick-off to the New Year, Martin Clifford supplies a first-rate long story of St. Jim's, which is entitled :

" GUSSY ' DISCOVERS ' AMERICA!"

Oh, yes, I know Columbus was the first fellow to discover it, but there were lots of things he left for Gussy of St. Jim's to discover. You'll laugh loud and long over this grand story, so don't miss it. Neither must you miss the next story in the excellent series featuring

LIGHTNING BRUCE BRADMAN!

He's a great lad, is Bruce—speed-mad, adventure-crazy! If you are making resolutions for the New Year, let one of them be to give your newsagent a standing order for the GEM. It's a worth-while precaution, as during 1933 there is certain to be a record run on the GEM. That's advance information—so I pass it on to you all.

THE £100 RUN!

At the end of this week our Test cricketers will be starting their second tussle with the Australians. But will the result be like that of the first Test? We in Britain hope so, for English cricket can do with a leg up. But whatever the result, it will be a long time before we forget the farcical situation that arose on the last day of the first Test. You will doubtless remember that England in one innings had knocked up a score of 524 runs. Australia managed only to equal this score with one wicket in hand on their second innings. Then came the close of play for that day. The following morning, Nagel and O'Reilly, the last two Australian batsmen, walked with all due solemnity to the wickets. With equal solemnity, Allen, of England, bowled the first over of the day—a maiden—to Nagel. Seventy-five spectators, who had been admitted free, cheered or jeered according to their fancy, whilst eighty newspaper men and cameramen did their jobs. Then Voce got O'Reilly's wicket with his third ball and the Australian second innings was closed with the score still as it was overnight. Followed the customary interval before England's opening THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,298.

batsmen came out to knock up the one solitary run which would give us victory. Sutcliffe " sneaked " a single from the first ball and the match was over. The " day's " play cost the Australian authorities £100 in allowances to players, umpires, scorers, etc. What a farce! £100 for one run! If this isn't a record, I'm almost prepared to eat my hat!

MIDGET WRITING!

That's what Fred Blowers, of London, calls his handwriting, for he declares that on an ordinary postcard he can squeeze in as many words as two thousand—all readable. But Fred will have to improve mightily if he's thinking of going out for records. Perhaps he doesn't know that in April of this year a Lancashire man exhibited a postcard on which he had managed to write 30,000 words. True, the person with average sight couldn't read them without the aid of a magnifying-glass, but they were readable, all the same, with this " outside " help. What is more wonderful, however, is the fact that the writer used an ordinary pen and got his 30,000 words down on that postcard without using a magnifying-glass himself!

THE BANTAM PLANE!

" Good heavens! Is that a model aeroplane, or what? " Visitors to Sussex, New Jersey, might well have voiced those words upon seeing a weird-shaped object, something like a miniature biplane, sailing about in the sky. But when that object touched earth, their surprise would have been greater still, for they would have seen a very-much-alive bantam cock with FOUR WINGS!

THIRSTY!

For twelve days two luckless calves were kept on enclosed land without water. But they made up for it when released, shifting between them over eighteen gallons, and, like Oliver Twist, they wanted still more. Some thirst!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Fatty : " Coo! There are thirteen of us at the table."

Host : " But surely you are not superstitious? "

Fatty : " Oh, no ; but there's only just enough grub for twelve! "

CHRISTMAS HUNGER!

You wouldn't think that the common or garden rat likes to tuck into an extra special feed at Christmas, would you? But thousands of rats from an Alpine village thought they would celebrate the festive occasion this time last year. They descended in swarms on a garage, found a way in, and devoured everything eatable on a motor-car. True, they left the metal framework—but that was all.

BEWARE OF THIS MAN!

He looks thoroughly respectable when he knocks at your door and tells you that your father, or your brother, has met with an accident and is now at the hospital. Next, he tells you not to worry as there is no serious injury—the victim will be able to leave the hospital and come home straight away if he is given a suit of clothes. In the accident, apparently, his clothes got badly damaged, etc. You can imagine with what haste the average person would dig out another suit of clothes and give it to the stranger. But that's the last he would see of the clothes—or the stranger. For time would prove the whole story to be a cruel confidence trick.

A RECORD AIR MAIL!

How many letters make a ton? If you had been at Croydon recently, when the air mail for India was about to leave, a delighted official would have answered " more than eighty thousand letters." That's the little lot for the folk abroad this Christmas—a record air mail which beats last year's figures by a quarter of a ton.

HUSTLE!

An Olympic Games runner who holds the British record for the mile and is an " Oxford Blue " as well, is a chap who naturally gets a move on. But Mr. J. E. Lovelock unconsciously set up another record quite recently. He sat down to tackle an examination task at eight o'clock in the morning, finished it by eleven o'clock, and then flew by plane to Cambridge, sixty-five miles away, by eleven-forty. Followed a hasty lunch before he took his place in the relay race between teams from Oxford and Cambridge. But he still had enough speed left to win the last lap of the four miles race by sixty yards.

WHAT A NECK!

He had to take a long-necked giraffe by road from London to Liverpool, and he was worried about it, for the giraffe's head was twenty feet above the ground, so to speak, which meant that it would not pass under all the bridges. It was no good telling the giraffe to duck his napper when a low bridge was encountered. What should he do? But a wise head at the London Automobile Association soon put him right. He picked out a safe route where all the bridges were high enough to allow of the safe passage even of the long-necked giraffe.

THE OVER-ANXIOUS MOTHER.

This is the story of a mother bear, who was too anxious for the safety of one of her cubs. The cub got caught in a scrap-iron dump in the Russian mountains and was unable to get loose. For ten days the mother bear stayed by it, licked it when it cried in pain, and sent her other cub to fetch food for it. Gamekeepers heard the cub's cries and tried to go to its assistance, but the over-anxious mother would not allow them to get within a hundred yards of it. At length the cub died, but it was not until the mother and her other cub had buried the young bear that they left the spot.

YOUR EDITOR.

TOM MERRY & CO. IN NEW YORK!

(*Continued from page 17.*)

"Lord Eastwood at this very moment is probably wondering what has become of you, and cabling here for information," pursued Captain Punter. "Don't you think it would be cheap at a thousand pounds to relieve his mind?"

"You uttah wottah!"

"Will you write the letter to Mrs. Stuyvesant?"

D'Arcy's lip set resolutely.

"No!"

Captain Punter shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well; I shall see you again this evening! I am in no hurry!"

He left the room and locked the door. Arthur Augustus finished his bread and cheese meditatively. The captain's information had made him aware of what he had not before suspected. His disappearance was known in England, and he could guess the state of distracted anxiety into which it would throw his mother, and doubtless his father, too.

Might it not be worth while to write the letter the captain demanded? Yet if the ransom were paid, what guarantee had he that the villain would keep faith with him? D'Arcy shook his head resolutely.

"Tom Mewwy will be lookin' for me," he muttered. "The police will be huntin' for me, too. I won't pay the wascal anythin'!"

It was weary waiting in the garret in the faint hope of rescue. Arthur Augustus paced the room while the afternoon light waned.

No one came to him, and he was too high up for any noise to reach him from the street. Faint sounds came from below in the house, and once he heard raucous voices raised in savage quarrel. That died away, but soon after dark there was a tramping on the creaking stairs. D'Arcy heard the tramping feet enter the next room to his and then go downstairs again. Then silence!

Darkness set in black and impenetrable. Only a faint glimmer came in round the shutter from the broken window. No gleam came under the door, no sound from below. The prisoner could not see his hand before his face.

He sat down or walked about with growing restlessness and misery.

This was the second night in New York. What were his friends doing? What were they thinking of his disappearance?

He knew how keen their anxiety must be, how keen that of his parents. Perhaps it would be better to take steps to get the ransom paid! If only he could be sure that the kidnapper would keep faith. Perhaps the scoundrel had some guarantee to give him. He could hardly expect to be trusted.

The monotony, the throng of painful thoughts, grew unendurable. The swell of St. Jim's longed to hear the footsteps of the kidnapper on the stairs. But he heard nothing.

Captain Punter doubtless knew exactly what was certain to pass in the mind of the kidnapped boy, and he was leaving D'Arcy to get into a mood to agree to anything for his liberty.

D'Arcy could stand it no longer. If the captain did not come of his own accord, he must be brought somehow, that terms might be discussed. The boy hammered on the door with his fist. The thuds rang with a hollow sound through the garret.

Thump, thump, thump!

But there came no reply to the thumping. Perhaps it was not even heard below. The silence of the place was broken now by noises downstairs, and D'Arcy distinguished the sound of music and a thud, thud that could only be made by clumsily dancing feet.

The Bowery dive was waking up to the life of the night. No reply came, no sound of footsteps on the stairs.

Arthur Augustus desisted at last, gnawing his lip. In the silence that fell in the garret he heard a sudden and unexpected sound.

Rap, rap, rap!

Arthur Augustus started. The rapping, which seemed as if it were made with bare knuckles, sounded on the wall of the room, the wall separating him from the next room which he had heard the heavy footsteps enter a short time before.

Rap, rap, rap!

"Bai Jove! Who can that be?"

D'Arcy's thoughts worked rapidly. It could hardly be anybody belonging to the house who was rapping on the wall. Bowery Mick, or any of his gang, would have come to the door. Was it possible that the den held another prisoner like himself?

D'Arcy crossed to the wall and tapped in reply. Promptly enough came the answer from the other side.

Rap, rap, rap!

CHAPTER 12.
A False Alarm!

TOM MERRY and Wally saw much of New York that day, but they were in no humour for seeing the sights of the strange city.

Up and down and round about, but never a sign of Arthur Augustus. If Tom had fallen in with Captain Punter again he would have been greatly inclined to try over again the drastic measures of the morning; but the adventurer was not to be seen.

As they walked the streets, or rode in the cars of the huge city, the juniors realised the hopelessness of their task; but they could not return to the hotel and rest. So long as D'Arcy remained undiscovered they must search for him, if only to fill up the hours of suspense.

In the evening they returned at last to the hotel, fearing that their kind friend would be anxious about them. They took the elevated railway up-town. It was their first experience of the elevated lines of New York, and in spite of their troubled minds they were interested.

In New York, as in London, there is a morning rush to the business centres of the city and an evening rush outward. Tom and Wally had entered the elevated station on Sixth Avenue in the midst of the homeward rush, and it amazed them.

Passengers in the trains were as thick as bees, and not only was every seat taken, but the standing-room was closely packed, and the platforms between the cars where the conductors stood were so crammed that accidents seemed inevitable. Yet the expected accidents did not happen. The New Yorkers seemed to be accustomed to this extreme of strap-hanging methods of travelling, and the overcrowding, which was greater than anything ever seen in London, was taken with remarkably good humour.

It was curious to the juniors to be wedged into a thick, perspiring throng of humanity, hardly able to move a limb; while the trains thundered along the overhead lines far above the streets of the great metropolis. The overhead railway was a novelty to the boys, and the experience was somewhat exciting.

How to get out of the station was a puzzle; it seemed impossible to fight their way through the passengers crowded as thick as sardines in a tin. Yet, here again the accustomedness, so to speak, of the New Yorkers stood them in good stead. People who wanted to get off were somehow squeezed through by general effort, and popped out of the trains.

Tom Merry and Wally, a good deal rumpled and flustered, escaped from the elevated railway with an inward determination not to use it again at that time of the day. They returned to the hotel, and dined there with Mrs. Stuyvesant, who had no news for them. Mr. Bright, the detective, had sent in a report that he was doing his best, and hoped to have news shortly; but the boys, as well as Mrs. Stuyvesant, knew what that meant.

Nothing had been heard of D'Arcy save through the medium of Captain Punter, and Mrs. Stuyvesant was already turning over in her mind the advisability of yielding to the rascal's demand.

After dinner Tom wished to go out again. Mrs. Stuyvesant was a little uneasy; but the boy pleaded hard, and she let him go. After what had happened to D'Arcy, Tom felt that he could not go without full permission; but he felt, too, that if he remained indoors the suspense would worry him into distraction.

Mrs. Stuyvesant saw that it would be better to let him go, and he went.

Wally, of course, went with him. He had recovered Pongo from the care of Louis, and he led the dog with him on a chain.

Tom Merry looked askance at the mongrel, but Wally, as he caught his glance, assumed an obstinate expression.

"How do you know Pongo won't help us to find Gus?" he said. "He's a jolly cute dog, and he can scent out anything."

Tom Merry smiled faintly. Wally's words recalled Herries and his bulldog at St. Jim's, and Towser's boasted powers of tracking But Pongo could do no harm if he did no good, so he raised no objection.

"Come on, then," he said.

They walked down Broadway with no definite object in view. A newsboy rushed past them, crying his papers.

"'Speshul! Disappearance of English lord! Mutilated remains 'scovered in East River! 'Speshul!"

Tom Merry felt an icy hand grip his heart. His eyes

met Wally's, and the two boys stopped in utter horror and dismay. Was it possible? Could it be possible?"

Tom called after the newsboy, but he was gone. But another was coming along, and Tom bought a paper from him, throwing him a quarter in exchange. The boy stared at the coin and grinned as he walked away.

Tom drew aside from the crowd, and glanced anxiously into the paper. The glaring headlines, which he had already learned to be a feature of the Yellow Press of New York, caught his eye with stunning force:

"LORD D'ARCY STILL MISSING!

MUTILATED BODY FOUND IN EAST RIVER!

IS IT THE BODY OF D'ARCY?"

"Oh, heavens!" muttered Tom Merry.

"It—it can't be!" stammered Wally, white to the lips. "Old Gus—— It can't be! It's a lie! It can't be true!"

Tom Merry felt hot drops burning his eyelids. If it should be true—if Arthur Augustus had gone to his death that night in New York, if the boys were no longer to see in life the chum they had so often chipped, but who was very dear to them, all the same! Was it possible?

Tom Merry looked hastily down the column under the startling headlines.

It seemed to be true that a body had been found in the East River, but, so far as Tom could gather from the paper, there was not a particle of any kind of evidence to connect it with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He drew a deep, almost sobbing breath of relief as he realised that the connection between the mutilated body and the vanished junior existed only in the fertile imagination of a sensational American journalist.

"It's a lie, isn't it?" said Wally, between his teeth.

"It's New York journalism!" said Tom Merry bitterly. "I suppose bodies are found in East River in New York every day, just as they are found in the Thames in London. There is no reason whatever given to suppose that it was Gussy; this is only shoved in for the sake of the headline."

Wally clenched his fists.

"My only Aunt Jane! I'd like to get near the chap who put that in, though!" he muttered.

Tom Merry crushed the paper in his hand and hurled it away.

"It's all lies!" he said. "There's no news of Gussy. But no news is good news, old chap." And the two juniors went on their way.

It was an hour later that they found themselves in Water Street again, near the spot where Arthur Augustus had disappeared the previous night. They had not set out with the especial intention of going there, but a kind of fascination seemed to draw their footsteps thither. If D'Arcy was to be found, it was in that quarter of the city. It was almost certain that he was kept near the spot where he had been kidnapped.

Tom Merry looked into the dark and noisome alley into which the juniors had entered with such ill results the previous evening. It was not likely to be guarded by the kidnappers now. Was it worth while to make another attempt?

A hand fell heavily upon Tom Merry's shoulder. He started and swung round with clenched fists, half-expecting to have to tackle some Bowery tough. But it was a man in a check suit of clothes and a soft Homburg hat who was beside him, and Tom recognised Mr. Bright, the detective.

"Oh, it is you, sir!" he said, in relief

"Yes. What are you boys doing here?"

"We were looking round."

The New York detective smiled a little.

"Water Street is not a safe place for you," he said. "Do you know that that alley leads into a quarter where even the police only go three at a time? You had better go back to your hotel, I guess."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We can't stay indoors, sir—it's too horrible. I suppose we can't do much good looking for D'Arcy, but it's something to do."

"I should advise you to keep to the lighted streets, I guess," said Mr. Bright. And, with a shake of the hand, he left them.

Tom Merry and Wally stood irresolute. After all, the detective was right; it was madness for a well-dressed boy to venture into the district to which D'Arcy had certainly been taken. Yet—— Tom Merry stared with a sudden thought as his eyes fell upon a low slop-seller's shop a dozen doors from the saloon whence the rowdy crowd had issued the previous evening.

It was a place where cheap, ready-made clothing was sold to sailors and emigrants, and the cut of the coats hung up on view would have made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shudder. But these coats, hideous as they were, had suggested an idea to the hero of St. Jim's.

"Come along, Wally."

Wally followed, though he did not yet understand. A boy was minding the shop outside, and he looked curiously at the two English lads. He was a typical New York gamin, with a face older than his years, and insouciant manner, and eyes like gimlets. He closed one eye as the English boys came up, and grinned at them impudently. Evidently he did not expect visitors so decently dressed to prove customers.

"I want some coats," said Tom Merry.

The boy winked.

"Come off!" he remarked, that apparently being the New York equivalent for "get out!" "Don't you bluff your uncle!"

Tom Merry could not help smiling.

"But I really want a couple of overcoats," he said. "Come in, Wally."

"Oh, if it's straight goods," said the boy, "come in! I guess dat we can suit you hyer, genelman. Dis is the cheapest shop for de money on de east side. Walk in. I guess Moses is at hum."

Mr. Moses proved to be at home. He was as surprised as his youthful assistant had been, but he willingly sold the boys two large overcoats of a rough, coarse material, large enough to be worn over the natty coats they were then wearing. He also supplied them with two caps of a true Bowery cut. They donned them, putting their own caps into the pockets of the coats.

Mr. Moses surveyed them with great admiration.

"It is lufly!" he said. "Der caps suit your complexion, ain't it, and der coats fit you like de paper on de wall."

"Thank you," said Tom Merry.

And he paid the price charged for the clothes, and the juniors left the shop.

The boy outside winked at them as they came out.

"I guess dat you satisfied," he said. "Cheapest shop in dis line on de east side."

"Quite satisfied," said Tom, laughing. "Thank you."

"You mind where you go," said the boy. "De Bowery ain't a safe place for you dudes, I guess, even with a spoof overcoat on."

Tom Merry walked on without replying. The boy had guessed his intention of penetrating into the purlieus of New York slumdom, and of covering up his decent attire for the purpose.

Wally understood without explanation.

"It's a good idea," he said.

Tom Merry nodded with some satisfaction.

"Yes, I rather think it is," he said. "These coats cover us nearly down to the ankles, and it's cold enough to have the collars turned up. Nobody can see that we are decently dressed. I fancy we can walk about anywhere in safety now."

"Right-ho! Come on, Pongo!"

And the two juniors, assuming as careless an air as possible, under the circumstances, were soon walking through low, filthy streets, ill-paved, ill-lighted, wherefrom the rickety tenements garbage was thrown into the foul gutters, and the faces that looked out were dirty and rough and suspicious, and where frequently rang the hoarse tones of quarrelling men and the screams of shrewish women. The two boys walked on with hearts that grew heavier with every step.

CHAPTER 13.
An Amazing Meeting!

RAP, rap, rap!

Arthur Augustus rapped again, and again the rapping came back from the other side of the wall. The heart of the junior beat hard.

He had little doubt now that the sound was a signal from some other prisoner in the den of the kidnappers, and hope sprang up in his breast. Escape dawned into his mind as a possibility again; what one could not effect might be possible for two.

Rap, rap, rap!

Arthur Augustus put his lips close to the wall and called out:

"Are you there?"

There was no reply. The stranger did not hear. D'Arcy strained his ears, and he caught a faint "Hallo!" through the wall.

"Hallo!" he called back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Rap, rap, rap!

"Can you hear me?" called out D'Arcy, more loudly this time.

"Yes," came back a voice, faint and muffled by the intervening walls, yet with a tone in it strangely familiar to the ears of the swell of St. Jim's. "I can hear you. Are you a prisoner here, too?"

"Yaas, I have been a pwisonah since last evenin'."

"My hat!"

The voice went on, but D'Arcy lost the rest of the words. There was a renewed rapping on the wall, and D'Arcy heard the sound of falling plaster. He guessed what the other prisoner was doing, and he set to work to help him.

Taking up the stool, he banged hard on the wall.

The blows made a great deal of noise, but D'Arcy's previous efforts to attract attention from below had been in vain, and he had no fear of being interrupted. If the kidnappers had not taken notice of his terrific thumping on the wall they were not likely to heed the present noise.

Crash, crash, crash!

Arthur Augustus, in spite of his dandified ways, had muscles and limbs well developed by exercise on the football field and in the gymnasium at St. Jim's, and his blows were doughty ones.

Crash, crash, crash!

Plaster flew from under the crashing stool, and the bare laths were revealed.

Arthur Augustus paused for breath.

"By Jove, this is warm work!" he murmured. "Hallo, deah boy, are you there?"

"Yes, rather!" came back the voice, less muffled than before, but still somewhat indistinct. "I am here right enough. Are you knocking that plaster down?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I'm getting on on this side. We'll have a hole made jolly soon. Are you game for a try to get out of this den?"

"I should wathah say so. I have been a pwisonah all day, and have not even been allowed to wash!"

"Rotten! I've been here for a few hours, I think. Blessed if I quite know, as I was knocked on the head."

"Bai Jove! Are you hurt?"

"Not very much; there's no bruise. I think the scoundrels must have used a sandbag. I was stunned."

"Are you an Amewican?"

"Not much. I landed in New York this afternoon from the liner Egyptia from Southampton. You belong to England, too, don't you?"

"Yaas, wathah! I am quite a stwangah in New York, weally. I have been kidnapped and held to wansom by a wascal named Puntah."

While Blake grappled with Captain Punter, D'Arcy grasped the heavy wooden stool with both hands and swung it into the air. Bowery Mick whirled round the next moment, on his guard at once, but Arthur Augustus was springing at him.

"I was brought here by some toughs," said the voice of the unseen individual on the other side of the wall. "I had just got off the steamer, when a chap came up and said he was sent up by my friends to meet me. I expected to find some friends in New York, you know, but I didn't know they knew I was coming, and I was awfully pleased. The chap was an Englishman, and spoke well, and it never occurred to me that he was gammoning. But he led me through a quiet street, and then I was sandbagged. Rotten, wasn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! But I must say you were wathah simple, deah boy. I shouldn't have been taken in quite so easily as that.

"Do you want a thick ear, Mr. Whoever-you-are?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then you had better speak a little more respectfully when we've finished making this hole, or you'll get one!"

"I should uttahly wefuse to get anythin' of the sort!"

There was a moment's silence, and then the muffled voice from the next room went on in a somewhat changed tone:

"I say—it's impossible, I suppose—but it seems to me as if I know your voice. I believe I have heard it before."

"Bai Jove, I was just thinkin' the same myself!"

"Curious. Will you tell me whom you are?"

"Yaas, wathah! My name is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. I belong to St. Jim's, in Sussex."

"My only hat!"

"Who are you, pway?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard laughter undah the circs as widiculous and wathah wude," said D'Arcy. "I myself cannot see anything at all to laugh at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know——"

"How did you get here, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to be addwessed as Gussy by a fellow I don't know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cacklin' at, you howwid duffah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, growing exasperated. "I am gwowin' gweatly inclined to administah a feahful thwashin' to you when I see you!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How did you get here?"

"I was kidnapped by Puntah. We took the wisk by walkin' in a dangerous quartah of this wotten city, and I was woped in by Captain Puntah."

"I must say that you are rather simple," came back the voice. "I shouldn't have been taken in like that, you know."

"I wefuse to have my remarks pawodied in this widiculous mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha! Get to work, old son, and let's make a hole through."

"You have not told me who you are."

"You'll see soon, Gussy, my son!"

"Your voice sounds vewy familiah, and I must say that your mode of addwess is extwemely familiah."

"Ha, ha, ha! Get on with the washing!"

"Bai Jove, I'm certain I've heard that voice before!" murmured D'Arcy. "I wish I could hear it more clearly now. It seems to wemind me of the old school, somehow."

Thud, thud, thud! sounded from the other side of the wall.

Arthur Augustus took up the stool again, and resumed his work.

Crash, crash, crash!

The laths crashed through, and a hole appeared at last. A few more crashes, and the hole was large enough for a head to pass through.

Arthur Augustus put down the stool. A pair of eyes glimmered at him through the opening, but in the darkness he could not possibly make out anything of the face.

"Hallo! Are you there?" said a cheerful voice.

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

A match glimmered out, and was held up beside the face that was looking through.

The amazed swell of St. Jim's stared at the face in blank astonishment.

"Bai Jove, Jack Blake!"

CHAPTER 14.
A Fight for Liberty!

JACK BLAKE chuckled.

The match went out, but Arthur Augustus still stared in blank amazement at the two glistening eyes in the opening in the wall.

"Jack!" he repeated amazedly. "Jack Blake!"

A hand came groping through the shattered opening in the wall.

"Give us your fist, Gussy, old son!"

The chums shook hands, and glad enough were they both to feel the grip of friendship.

Blake chuckled again.

"You didn't expect to see me, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"I had a cable all right from my uncle, and I followed you in the next steamer," said Blake. "I intended to meet you in New York, but I didn't expect the meeting to be in such a palatial dwelling as this!"

"Bai Jove!"

"But I'm jolly glad to see your old chivvy again!" said Blake cheerfully. "The Fourth Form at St. Jim's sends you its kindest regards, and hopes that you are showing the New Yorkers how to dress with real elegance and taste."

"Weally, Blake——"

"And, instead of that, you're kidnapped and poked away in a corner, and not allowed even to wash," grinned Blake. "How have you survived it?"

"It is no jokin' mattah, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not for you; but I can see something comic in it, you know. But, I say, I'm jolly glad we've met! I don't quite know what I'm here for. I've been robbed, of course, but I think they have something more to make. I dare say they want to extort money from my friends, or else to get rid of me quietly, so that there won't be any inquiry after what they've stolen. But now we're together——"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll look aftah you, deah boy."

"Rats! I'm going to get you out of this scrape."

"I shall insist——"

"More rats! Look here, do the beasts ever come to see you?"

"Yaas. That wascal Puntah will be up soonah or latah to pwopose his wascally terms."

"Good! That's our chance."

"How do you mean, deah boy?"

"I've examined my room, and there's no earthly chance of getting out of it. This is the only lath wall. It's just a partition. The other walls are brick, and we couldn't make any impression upon them, and we couldn't jump into the street if we could get through. I suppose your room is the same?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"When this Punter man comes we shall have a chance. We must make this hole big enough for me to get through. When he comes in I'll get behind the door, and he's bound not to see me, and you can hold his attention while I garotte him."

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't you think it's a good wheeze?"

"Yaas, wathah! But what is wanted for a job like that is a fellow of tact and judgment, you know. I weally think you had bettah hold his attention while I gawwotte him."

"Ass! If he sees me in your room it will spoil the whole show and give the alarm at once."

"Bai Jove! You know, I nevah thought of that."

"Make the hole bigger, and don't jaw, old chap."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, get a move on! The rotter may come any minute."

D'Arcy obeyed. The hole was easily enlarged, and Jack Blake, with some assistance from Arthur Augustus, forced his way through. He dropped into D'Arcy's room, and gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"That's all right."

"Yaas, wathah! I wish the wascal would come."

"Oh, he'll come some time. And when he does——" Jack Blake snapped his teeth and clenched his fists in a very expressive way.

"Bai Jove, you know, I forgot to mention that he usually has a big wuffian with him when he comes! A vewy big and wuff-lookin' wascal."

"Just like you, Gussy——"

"Weally, Blake he is not in the least like me, and I must waise an objection to any compawison bein' instituted."

"Ass! I mean it was just you to forget a point like that. Never mind, we must tackle the pair of them. You have the stool ready to bash the ruffian while I tackle the other chap."

"Vewy good."

And now the juniors waited anxiously for the sound of footsteps. They talked in low tones of St. Jim's, of the boys, and of the adventures in New York. They had much to tell one another, and the time did not hang heavily.

But the sound of footsteps on the stairs was very welcome to their ears.

Jack Blake broke off suddenly, and held up his hands in the darkness.

"Hush! I can hear them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake crept on tiptoe to his place. The opening of the door would completely conceal him from the sight of anyone who entered, and unless the newcomer noticed the gash in the wall, his suspicions were not likely to be aroused until Blake had had time to spring upon him. And he was hardly likely to notice it until he was fairly in the room.

The stairs creaked, and then the bare boards of the landing, and then a light glimmered under the door. The key turned in the lock, and the door opened.

Bowery Mick appeared, with a lantern in his hand. He carried a plate of bread and cheese in the other, and a jug of cold water was on the plate. That was to be Arthur Augustus' frugal supper. Behind the squat figure of the Bowery tough loomed Captain Punter, well-dressed and agreeable, as usual.

"Dat's your supper," grunted Mick, exhaling a strong scent of rum with the words. "And mighty lucky you are to get dat, you mug!"

Arthur Augustus was trembling with excitement, but not with fear.

Captain Punter stepped into the room, and the next moment Blake sprang upon him from behind, like a tiger.

"Oh!"

The captain was taken utterly by surprise.

Blake's strong arm was round his neck behind, his knee was on his back, and the adventurer went over with a crash that shook the floorboards.

The crash on the planks dazed him, and ere he could struggle Blake's knee was grinding on his chest, and the junior's grip was on his throat, choking back his attempt to cry out.

"Go it, Gussy!"

Bowery Mick had swung round at the fall of the captain in blank amazement, and the plate and the jug had fallen to the ground and shattered into a hundred pieces.

The ruffian had inadvertently turned his back to the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy did not lose his opportunity.

He grasped the heavy wooden stool with both hands, and swung it into the air.

Bowery Mick whirled back the next moment, on his guard at once; but Arthur Augustus was springing at him.

Mick sprang away, feeling for a weapon—the natural weapon of a ruffian, the knife. But D'Arcy was too quick for him.

The heavy stool descended and crashed on the side of the tough's head, and Mick gave a low groan and pitched to the floor.

He stirred for a moment and then lay quite still, with a thin streak of blood running from under his hair over the stubbly cheek.

Arthur Augustus gasped for breath.

Captain Punter was making desperate efforts to rise, and Blake had all his work cut out to hold him down.

"Buck up, Blake," panted D'Arcy. "I'll brain him!"

He rushed forward excitedly, with the heavy stool brandished in the air. The swell of St. Jim's was so excited that it was probable that he would really have brained the rascal. But Blake pushed him back.

"Don't be an ass! Do you want to kill him?"

"Bai Jove, no!"

"Is that other scoundrel safe?"

"Yaas, wathah! He's stunned."

"Then fasten this rotter up somehow while I hold him."

Captain Punter struggled furiously. But a knee was on his chest, and two strong hands gripped his throat mercilessly.

"Keep quiet, you cur!"

Captain Punter had no choice about keeping quiet. D'Arcy, who was fluttering with excitement, carried out Blake's directions, hardly knowing what he was doing. He took off Bowery Mick's belt and bound the captain's arms with it, and then he tied the captain's ankles together with his necktie. Jack Blake jammed a lump of plaster into the rascal's mouth to keep him quiet. Then he rose, gasping, to his feet.

Almost miraculously, as it seemed, the two chums had gained the victory by luck and pluck. The first round, at all events, was theirs. They still had to escape. But the first blow had been successfully struck.

CHAPTER 15.
Friends in Need!

JACK BLAKE breathed hard for a minute. The struggle had been an exhausting one.

Bowery Mick stirred and moaned faintly, somewhat to the relief of D'Arcy, who had begun to fear that he had struck too hard.

"All right so far," muttered Blake. "Nobody seems to have noticed the row. They're making row enough downstairs."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'd better cut off without losing a second. Come on!"

"Wait a moment, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus stooped over Bowery Mick, and began to go through his pockets.

Jack Blake watched him impatiently.

"What the deuce are you doing?" he asked.

"This wascal, I believe, has my gold tickah. It was a pwesent fwom my governah, and I should be sowwy to leave this place without it."

"Oh, buck up, then!"

"Bai Jove, this looks like it."

D'Arcy jerked a little buckskin bag from the ruffian's inside pocket, and poured the contents out on the floor. A quantity of coins, several watches, and some rings glistened in the lantern-light. Among the watches was D'Arcy's twenty-five guinea "ticker," the famous present from his "governor."

The swell of St. Jim's put it back into his waistcoat pocket.

"Now I am weady, Blake."

"Come on, then, duffer!"

"I object to bein' called a duffah! I should be sowwy to have to pause at this ewitical moment to give you a thwashin', Blake, but weally——"

"Will you come?"

Blake blew out the lantern and left the room. D'Arcy promptly followed him. He felt for Blake's arm in the dark, and kept close to him. From the room they had left came a faint moan from Bowery Mick, and a curious gurgle from Captain Punter, who was trying to chew away the plaster gag.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "It is wisky goin' downstairs unarmed. I wish I had my twusty wevolvah!"

"Don't jaw, come on!"

Blake gripped D'Arcy's arm, and they went down the creaking stairs with cautious footsteps. From below came the sounds of wheezy fiddles and dancing feet and raucous laughter, and the clinking of glasses.

At the bottom of the stairs was a narrow passage leading into the street, and a door was open upon it, letting out the glare and noise of the dancing-room. To reach the door the juniors had to pass a couple of men who were lounging, smoking pipes—a couple of the toughest characters D'Arcy had yet seen.

The juniors paused in the shadows, and waited a minute or so. They hoped that the men would move, but they did not. They were talking in a slang which made their remarks utterly unintelligible to the juniors.

"It's no good," muttered Blake. "We must make a run for it. I can hear somebody moving upstairs; if that beast comes to before we're clear of the house we're done in."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on."

They ran down the passage.

The two men in the doorway of the lighted room turned their heads to look at them, but they had no time to do more. The juniors reached the street door and found it ajar. To tear it open and rush into the street was the work of a moment.

There was a shout behind them.

"Stop, dere!"

They ran on breathlessly. They found themselves in a street lighted only by the glare from the "speakeasy," which they had quitted by a side door. Without a pause they ran on, the shouts from the house showing that the alarm was given.

"Wun!" panted D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin'!"

Blake gave a groan.

"Stop! Look there!"

It was a blank wall of a house, stopping up the street! They had reached the blind end of a cul-de-sac! For a moment they stood gasping; then they raced back the way they had come; it was the only thing to be done, but it took them into the full glare from Bowery Mick's dive again.

There was a yell.

"Quick, Gussy, for Heaven's sake!"

"Ya-a-as!" gasped D'Arcy. "Yaas, wathah!"

They dashed on. Captain Punter sprang from the circle of light and clutched at them; he had evidently somehow contrived to get free, or Mick had recovered and released him. Blake tripped up the captain, and he reeled, and the juniors dashed on.

On into shadow and darkness, tumbling over rough stones, they knew not where, guided by chance.

There was a roar behind them. Captain Punter was running like a deer, and half a dozen toughs were in pursuit. The sight of two boys running hard was enough to attract attention. Twice or thrice the fugitives desperately eluded clutching hands or outstretched feet to trip them by.

A broadly lighted street loomed up ahead, and they put on a spurt. Surely there they would be safe!

Two rough-coated and capped figures started up before them from the shadows.

Captain Punter's voice rang out behind.

"Stop them!"

The juniors halted. The next second Punter and a burly tough had overtaken them, and they were borne to the ground. Too breathless to struggle, the hapless fugitives were crushed to the ground under the weight of their assailants.

"Help!" gasped D'Arcy faintly.

The two rough-coated figures ran forward and joined in the tussle. But they did not attack Blake and D'Arcy; they attacked Captain Punter and the rough.

The two scoundrels were dragged off and hurled aside with smashing blows, and Blake and D'Arcy found themselves dragged to their feet and rushed on at breathless speed by their unknown rescuers.

Too amazed even to think, they rushed on, following the guidance of their unknown friends, and the yells of pursuers died away behind.

The sight of a policeman's uniform at the corner of a street assured them of safety, and they slackened down. Blake reeled breathlessly against a wall, and D'Arcy hung on the arm that was supporting him.

"Bai Jove!" he panted.

"But who——" gasped Blake. "My only hat! Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! Wally!"

Tom Merry and Wally laughed breathlessly as they stripped off the greatcoats and caps which had so effectually disguised them. The meeting had been a fortunate one, and the juniors were jubilant.

"Tom Mewwy! This is weally most surpwisin'!"

"Blake! How on earth did you get to New York?" demanded Tom Merry. "I recognised Gussy running, but I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you."

Blake chuckled.

"Let's get out of this; I'll tell you over a good supper."

The way was clear enough now. The reunited chums lost no time in getting to the hotel, where Mrs. Stuyvesant received them in utter amazement. But her satisfaction equalled her amazement. Detective Bright had lately called in to report progress, and to accept fifty dollars for current expenses. The return of the juniors followed the departure of the detective.

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Stuyvesant, as she kissed Arthur Augustus on both cheeks. "It is amazing, my dear children. And how fortunate Master Blake is with us, too. To bed now, my dears, and we shall leave New York by an early train in the morning, before anything further happens. I will cable Lord Eastwood at once."

The juniors were glad enough to go to bed, after a good supper, and they slept like tops till the morning.

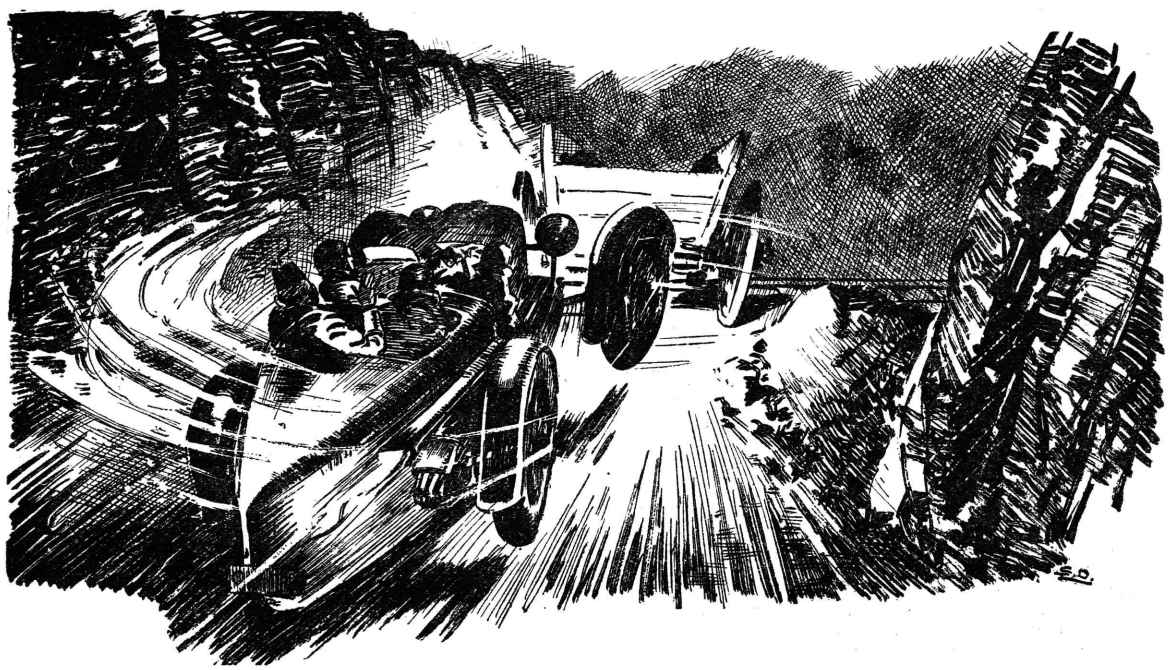
Bright and early they awoke and packed their belongings to accompany Mrs. Stuyvesant to the Erie Railroad depot, where they were to take the westward-bound train. Of Captain Punter they saw no more in New York, and they never expected to see the rascal again.

Under the care of Mrs. Stuyvesant and the faithful Louis, the five juniors and Pongo stepped aboard the train on the Jersey City side of the Hudson River, and as the train rushed westward the juniors, easily forgetting their perilous adventures in New York, looked forward with eager eyes to greet the new scenes that were unfolding before them.

THE END.

ANOTHER GRIPPING YARN OF LIGHTNING BRUCE BRADMAN!

YUSUF THE TERRIBLE!



Bruce Bradman employs a masterpiece of strategy to outwit a master bandit—and in doing so outwits his other enemies—the Selongese kidnappers!

CHAPTER 1.
The Vendetta!

A DENSE white mist wrapped the mountains. Below the valleys lay hidden in a drifting sea of vapours. Huddled against a steep bank by the side of the loose, stone-strewn road a lonely inn stood out of the fog, whose wreathing wraiths wound about it like a shroud.

Before the tumble-down building a long, low crimson racing-car was jacked up Bent beside it Bruce Bradman was busy changing a wheel. The jagged flints encountered since he had entered Albania had played havoc with his tyres.

Inside the inn, Hari, the Babu interpreter, was working overtime in a more or less vain endeavour to make himself understood by the innkeeper—a villainous-faced Albanian who spoke no language intelligible to any of Bruce's party.

It was very still everywhere, and the silence of the mist was ruffled only by the metallic clatter of Bruce's wheel wrench and the muffled cadence of Hari's urgent voice berating the innkeeper—sounds that drifted through the partly open door. The place might have been—what, in fact it was—on the edge of beyond.

Whistling softly to himself the famous speed crack went on with his work. He gave the wrench a final jerk, then stopped whistling abruptly. Still crouching, he craned forward on the qui vive.

No noise had reached him. All the same, he was aware of someone's presence. That mysterious sixth sense warned him that human eyes were focused on him.

Very cautiously he peered round the end of the bulbous back towards the far side of the road. Some struggling scrub grew there. Half-veiled in the mist a head was rising above the low bushes.

Bruce's hand reached for the wrench. Still under cover, he tinkled the implement against a hub. Whoever lurked across the way should suppose he was still intent upon his task.

Gradually the prowler grew bolder. The head moved forward. As it came Bruce had a glimpse of an Oriental fez that crowned it.

His pulse quickened. A fez spelt Asiatics. And a band of Asiatics had been on his trail ever since he had left London with Jimmy Cope, who, with that potentate's permission, was posing as the white Rajah of Selong.

To be sure, the real rajah was hurrying home by sea to forestall a rebellion, while his "double," Cope, diverted the attention of the conspirators' agents. But the latter did not as yet know the trick played upon them. They would stick at nothing to wipe out the man they presumed to be their ruler.

Stealthily the man opposite emerged from the bushes. As he stepped into full view Bruce saw that he wore baggy trousers below his short, cut-away jacket. And since the innkeeper and other Albanians hitherto encountered wore queer white kilts after the Greek fashion, Bruce had now no doubts as to the intruder's identity.

Noiselessly, the fellow stepped nearer, seeking to get a look at the motorist. A sudden stride brought him into full view. His eyes met the Englishman's.

In a trice Bruce whirled his wrench as the other grabbed at his waist sash. He snatched a long, old-fashioned pistol from it, and a flash of flame stabbed the mist. A ball whistled past Bruce's head and crashed into the stone wall behind.

"Would you?" Bruce cried, and charged out from the car tail.

The fezzed one clutched for a second pistol at his waist. As Bruce came at him he swung the gun to fire. Too late to jump aside, Bruce did the only thing he could—he hurled his wrench. It struck the fellow as the weapon spat. The shot went wide, and with a howl of pain the prowler dropped his pistol on the road.

He did not wait to meet Bruce's berserk rush, but spun, round, and, with the speed of an antelope, vaulted into the scrub. He vanished like some mountain goat down a steep incline. As Bruce reached its edge the mists closed in around the fugitive.

With a shrug Bruce walked back to where the pistol lay and picked it up. Of antique design, it was obviously of Oriental manufacture, and equipped with an ornate barrel nearly eighteen inches long. It was engraved with curious Eastern characters.

"What's up?" a cool voice asked from the inn doorway.

Bruce looked round and saw a lean, fair-haired young fellow regarding him from the threshold. It was Cope.

"They're on our trail again, Jimmy," the speed ace announced tersely, displaying the captured weapon. "This blunderbuss smells like Selong. Some Eastern gent took a pot-shot at me just now from the bulrushes." He

jerked a thumb at the scrub. "I've a hunch we'd best be getting along."

Cope scrutinised the gun shrewdly, then cast a dubious eye down the mist-wrapped road.

"It'll be out of the frying-pan into the fire," he muttered. "If the road ahead is anything like this one we've just come along it's as bung full of precipices as a porcupine's full of quills. I wasn't built for spiral nose-dives; I'd sooner wait here and put up a good fight behind a stout stone wall.

"Better have a look at the place then," Bruce returned. "And the sooner the better. That merchant's pals won't be far away."

He signed Cope into the inn and followed him to a dingy room, where the Babu and a mahogany-faced, squat-figured man busied themselves with a stew of goat's flesh.

Hari stopped abruptly, his brown cheeks suddenly gone green. From the heart of the mists outside rang a volley of shots.

Bruce sprang to the window and peered out into the murk. But he could see nothing. There was a moment's silence while the echoes died away on the hillside. Then a second volley crashed out—this time louder and closer.

"They're here!" Cope growled, reaching for his hip.

Bruce drew his automatic and crouched below the sill. As Cope stepped towards him he raised a quick hand in warning.

Through the mists came the sound of running feet. They swerved towards the inn.

"Lie low—and wait," Bruce breathed, straining his eyes into the fog.

The runner was nearer now. The thud of his footfalls increased. His stertorous breathing grew audible as he laboured up the steep incline.

A moment, and a slim shape broke from the mists. It made for the window and came tumbling in across the sill.

Bruce jumped back just in time to avoid the newcomer. With a startled cry the latter picked himself up and crouched to the wall, his hands half-raised as Bruce and Cope covered him simultaneously with their weapons.

He was a mere lad. His short embroidered jacket was slashed and torn. His hands were stained with wet earth, and a streak of blood splashed his sweat-bathed forehead. His chest rose and fell heavily. He was all but spent.

"For the love of heaven!" he panted in broken English. "It is Yusuf and his men—they are after me! If they find me they will kill me! It is the law of the jak (vendetta)! Just now they nearly got me——"

He paused, his bloodstained profile turned towards the window. Through the mist came further shouts—men calling to one another. They were approaching the building.

The boy's wild eyes turned pleadingly to the travellers.

"For myself I fear not death," he said, steeling himself. "But I would live—to avenge my brothers—my father——"

Bruce shot a glance at Cope, and, as the latter nodded, whipped up the lid of a long box settle which stood by the wall. He pointed to the box, and in a trice the lad slipped into it.

Bruce lowered the lid silently, tossed an embroidered cloth carelessly over the settle, and sat calmly down upon it. As he did so, that same sixth sense warned him for the second time that day. He looked sharply at the door and glimpsed the innkeeper outside in the passage.

The man's bright, bird-like eyes met his for a fleeting second. Then the fellow was gone. Had he seen?

Bruce had no time to wonder. Outside a rush of feet announced the arrival of pursuers. Two fierce-eyed men, their great black moustaches bristling with dew, appeared at the window. For an instant they inspected the four motorists. Then one of them demanded something in what was presumably Albanian.

Bruce shrugged and shook his head. Sprawling carelessly back on the settle, he drew his legs up on it and lay with his ankles crossed.

The men at the window spoke again, more sharply than before. Then they stepped back out of view. A third voice spoke to them in an undertone.

For a minute a muttered consultation ensued. When it ended, one of the Albanians appeared again at the window. Footfalls sounded in the passage. The second Albanian strode into the room, the innkeeper on his heels.

"'Im say—you get up," the innkeeper announced, signing for Bruce to rise, and with a nod towards his companion.

Bruce's answer was an elaborate yawn. He slid his automatic under his left armpit, the butt protruding. His right hand fell gently upon his chest.

"Get out, the pair of you! I'm tired, and when I'm tired I'm peevish!" he retorted.

"'Im forget 'is boots last night," the innkeeper persisted, with another nod towards the Albanian. "I put 'em in de box. He want. You please to get up, Englishman."

"Tell him to call again in the morning, then," Bruce retorted lazily, and, as he saw the Albanian's hand shift towards the long guns in his sash, moved his own fingers idly towards the automatic butt. "Before I budge, I'll see you, your pal, and the boots in blazes!"

The Albanian did not understand the words, but guessed their purport. His black eyes flashed dangerously. But, lounging against the wall was Jimmy Cope, an automatic balanced gently in his palm. By the table, the sailor rose, a hand thrust in under his jacket, just above the hip. Instinctively, the ruffian turned towards the remaining stranger—Hari.

"Lord and Al Capone-like gang chief," the Babu bleated nervously through chattering teeth. "In me you behold failed B.A. of Calcutta University, and therefore man of wise cracks and eruditions. My admonishments are that you sheer off, P.D.Q. We, your obedient servants, are chock full of gats and bumpings off. We should be grievous to put cross upon you, but——"

With a roar of fury, the bandit snatched a pistol from his sash. But it never rose to cover Hari. A flash of fire spat from Bruce Bradman's shoulder. The pistol lofted at the ceiling. And the Albanian fetched up with an oath, nursing a wounded wrist.

"Had enough?" Bruce asked, without stirring. His stern grey eyes fixed the ruffian.

The latter scowled back venomously and shook his fist menacingly at the sphinx-faced Britisher. Between his clenched teeth he growled an angry sentence.

"'Im say you got no bessa (document of safe custody)," the innkeeper declared. "'Im Yusuf's man. Yusuf, 'e settle with you."

"O.K. by me," Bruce drawled languidly. "And now hop it, the pair of you. You make me tired."

He waved a hand towards the door.

With further scowls and imprecations, the two men withdrew. Like a ghost, the man by the window faded into the mist. As the sound of their footfalls faded in the offing, Bruce sprang to his feet. He snicked a curtain across the window.

"All right," he called softly, and the settle lid rose slowly.

The lad raised his head and for an instant peered cautiously round the room. Then, assured that the danger was over, he stepped out on to the floor, and, one hand extended, marched over to Bruce.

"You save Dushan's life. Him not forget," he said, with obvious emotion.

"Oh, that"'s all right!" Bruce replied carelessly. "It's nothing."

"For you—yes. For me, everything," Dushan asserted warmly. "Yusuf and his men—may they be thrice accursed—have kill my family. Yusuf, he kill you, too, now, when he finish wrecking the train he waits for down the valley. Him plenty men. You go at once—quick—yes?"

"What, in this mist?"

"More dangerous things than mist, lord. Yusuf," Dushan said urgently. "Hurry, while you have time. I remember. If you want help, send this ring to me. I come—I swear it."

The lad thrust something into Bruce Bradman's hand, and ran to the window. He listened there for a second, then vaulted nimbly across the sill. A moment and the mists had swallowed him up.

Bruce glanced down at a gold ring cupped in his palm. He thrust it into his pocket and swung round on Cope.

"Let's get out of this!" he said curtly. "I don't think I'm buying any shares in that Yusuf."

CHAPTER 2.

Bruce Bradman's Strategy!

THE innkeeper had disappeared, as had the other two Albanians. Bruce and his pals did not wait to find out what had become of them. They kicked the jack free and set the self-starter whirring.

Long, low and wicked, the great car slipped away into the white pall, loose stones rattling beneath its slowly turning wheels. To left and right the fog billowed in like the folds of some vast curtain. And unseen by the wayside, yawned, as the travellers knew, the gaping jaws of frightful precipices. And, to complete the unpleasantness of the position, Yusuf and his men lurked somewhere in the mists.

With infinite caution Bruce steered his bus down steep dips and up stiff gradients, feeling rather than seeing his way along the loose surface. As he drove, the echoes of the racer's exhaust boomed back like gunfire from the craggy slopes. It seemed that all Albania must resound to the din.

At any yard might come a hail of lead. Fierce fighters and savage bandits, the Ghegs of Albania were notorious throughout Europe for their daring. Dangerous as the

Bruce gained the little truck, shoved off with a single thrust, and, as the trolley started, flung himself flat upon its wooden platform. The trolley gathered speed at every yard, while bullets whistled shrilly by from Bruce's pursuers.

Selongese might be, Bruce and his friends realised that now they went in peril of an even greater hazard.

Yet, as they fought their way onwards along a road that seemed to wind and twist in circles, the mists thinned perceptibly. Breeze from some gap in the hills stirred the vapours, carving a cleft that, for a little, left the trackway clear.

Bruce promptly put on speed and dropped down hill towards a corner. As he reached it, a shot rang out from rocks above the road, and a bullet droned past the windscreen.

Bruce jabbed his foot down on the gas. The bus shot forward with a sudden blast. Yusuf! Bruce took the turn all out, a hurtling hail of stones flung up astern, and set the speedster plunging down a steep, straight hill as further lead came singing past.

A dip, a short, sharp rise—a friendly crest beyond! The racer took the hump at speed and smashed into a wall of mist that unexpectedly rolled athwart the bridge. As Bradman bent to clutch the brake, a dark shape rose up on the road in front.

The brakes went on with a shriek—too late. The car nose struck a towering object with a crash and sent it flying in a hail of riven wood. The car jumped like a broncho in a fit, went into a wild dry skid, and rolled against a bank. Half over on its side, it came to rest, its occupants scattered in a mass of tough, dwarf bushes.

Before they could scramble to their feet, a knot of forms came rushing through the mist, and a tidal wave of men flung themselves upon them.

Bruce tried to draw his gun, but went down as a gun butt took him on the head. The mists went mistier, and the noise of shouting faded out. When he next knew anything, powerful hands gripped him. He was hauled to his feet.

A group of hard-faced men surrounded him. Like the man on the road they wore baggy trousers and short jackets, with fezzes on their heads. He guessed them for Albanian bandits.

Near by, Cope, Joe, and the Babu were similarly guarded, while a tall man, with sharp, aquiline features and bushy, grey moustache, advanced to scan them.

"So!" A grim smile twisted on his lips as he regarded the captives. "We have—what? A party of pestiferous foreigners, I perceive." He spoke in halting French. "Well, if you have smashed that farm wagon I put across the line to wreck the train we are expecting, I have at least got something for my trouble. And that is you."

The captives' blood went cold as they heard the words, train wreck. Dushan had spoken of such a project. This must be Yusuf. In trying to avoid him they had simply run into the bandit's arms.

"May a thousand lightnings smite you!" the chief blared, warming to his theme. "You have spoilt this plan of mine. The train is due, and there is no time to replace the obstruction. I have a mind to tie you to the track and let the train run over you." He glared ferociously, first at the white men, then at the Babu.

Bruce looked through the shifting vapours. On the ground his keen eyes caught the glint of metals. He realised that they had struck a level crossing where some narrow-gauge line ran through the hill country.

He saw the bandit chief hesitate. Then a new, jarring sound caught his ear. A small trolley shot out of the mist down the track. Two men swung off it and came running towards Yusuf. The speed crack's heart missed a beat as he recognised the pair for the two men who had pursued Dushan to the inn.

For a moment they spoke volubly to Yusuf, with nods in the prisoners' direction. As they told their tale the bandit chief's scowl grew in ferocity.

"You worthless scum!" he roared, swinging round abruptly on them. "So you have not merely robbed me of my projected spoils, you have balked me of my sacred vengeance on my enemies. For this you shall assuredly die, since it is worth nothing to me that you live——"

"But, excellency and esquire," the ready-tongued Babu cut in, "you are erroneously informed concerning minus quantity of emoluments. This gent and armiger"—he jabbed a fat finger at Cope—"is monarchical cove. He is Rajah of Selong and millionaire. You perceive immediate pecuniary advantage——"

"Ransom!" Yusuf breathed, starting.

Yusuf said something in a quick tone, and the bandits strained forward eagerly to scan the royal prisoner. For a second Bruce's captors' grip slackened.

In a flash Bruce hurled them from him. With a panther bound he reached the line, and, head down, dashed for the trolley. A shout went up behind him as the bandits roused. A burst of lead came whistling past.

He gained the little truck, shoved off with a single thrust, and, as the trolley started, flung himself flat upon its wooden platform. Set on a sharp down grade, it gathered speed with every yard, while bullets whistled shrilly by.

None hit him. Mist and their own flurry spoilt the bandits' aim. The fog swallowed him quickly, and pitching, rocking, the trolley hurtled onwards down the falling grade.

Tooth and nail Bruce clung to it. At every yard its very speed threatened to fling it off the track. He gritted his teeth. To crash meant death. And on him alone and his safety hung the future of Jimmy and the rest.

Breathless, he hung on, while the platform under him jerked and pounded. Then the speed began to fall away. The grade was ending. Encouraged, he raised his head, and saw a ruddy glare, a cone of sky-flung sparks, rush towards him.

His heart stopped with a thud. The train for which Yusuf had lain in wait was racing down on him, and this was a single track line!

The truck was slowing—slowing. Would the pace fall enough for him to jump clear? As he asked the question

the truck swung up on two wheels round a bend. He saw a great black mass—the engine—rush to meet him.

A billowed wave of choking smoke, the hiss of steam, the dull red fan of fire, the great, black smoke-box towering above him.

The gap between him and the buffers snapped shut like elastic.

He went up on his toes, steadied by his fingers, poised, eyes on the great steel giant, then leapt. He landed hard upon the smoke-box platform, too stunned to see the trolley hurled in air.

Bruised and shaken, he lay there on his grimy perch, while the train whirled onwards with him through the night.

* * * * * * * *

Bruce Bradman left the police chief's office convinced of two things. The police would never catch Yusuf, since they were tacitly in league with him. And if anything were to be done for Cope and the others, whom the bandit chief by now had borne off into the mountains, it must be done by himself.

One ally he could call on—the boy Dushan, whose ring he had. But while Dushan might act as a guide, he could serve as little else. A half-grown lad and wounded, he was far too weak to fight. And, anyway, the odds would still be too great to tackle.

Nevertheless, Bruce showed the ring to a Tosk peasant, and in due course Dushan turned up, as from the ground itself. How the message had reached him he did not volunteer, nor did Bruce think it expedient to inquire.

Walking coolly into the sole hotel the town possessed, Bruce Bradman had announced himself as the Rajah of Selong, and booked a room. For the rest, he told a marvellous tale of escape from bandits, and saw to it that news of his adventures were broadcast far and wide.

Then he settled down to await the sequel. He would not want for allies long, he told himself.

The sequel came when a score of brown-skinned Asiatics struck the town. Dushan, who had eyes everywhere, reported their arrival, whereupon his Royal Highness the Rajah of Selong vanished, owing, so the hotel-keeper bitterly complained, a heavy bill. It appeared that the man who had been passing himself off as the rajah was nothing but a barefaced impostor.

The hotel proprietor might have added, but did not, that the "impostor" had paid double to have the story put about. Bruce Bradman knew how to reward generously those who served him, so it came about that further news arrived. The rajah was in Yusuf's hands.

Curiously enough, these tidings interested the brown-skinned men who had just hit town. One of them made discreet inquiries, spoke of hiring guides, but found no takers. The local Tosks had a wholesome respect for Yusuf and his ferocious band. No bribes could tempt them into risking his vengeance. Yusuf had an unpleasant habit of nailing traitors by the throat to their own front doors.

Achmet, the saturnine leader of the Asiatics, was in a fury of despair, when, at the eleventh hour, he received a caller. A thick-set peasant, his muscular body swathed in a hairy sheepskin coat. His weather-beaten features were almost hidden behind his thick, black beard and fierce moustache. With him was a lad, whom he addressed as Dushan.

"If you want Yusuf, I will guide you to him," the peasant said. "I have a score to settle with him. Besides, unlike these cowards of Tosks, I fear nothing. Me, I am a Gheg."

* * * * * * *

With the noiselessness of serpents, the twenty Selongese wriggled up the steep mountain slope, their dark bodies invisible against the dun brown of the parched turf. Ahead, a range of boulders lay against the sky, where twinkling stars glimmered in shimmering points of light.

And in their midst crawled Bruce Bradman, clad in his sheepskin. As he had planned, the speed ace had got himself allies—the very foes who, had they guessed the truth, would have made a start by cutting him down.

"I have played my part," Bruce growled at length, halting. "I will leave you to yours, my friends. So be sure you deal faithfully with Yusuf, for he is a perilous man."

"Amen!" Achmet answered devoutly. "Do you go. And now, brothers, when that star—Aldebaran—meets that jutting point of rock, rush the encampment."

Slowly the star crept towards the jut—met it—and vanished. As one, the natives rose. Their fierce yells woke the hillside as they charged the rocks. And, at the same instant, Bruce and Dusham dashed for the bandits' lair upon its farther side.

As one, Bruce and the lad slipped in among the rocks. Near lay a hut. Outside its door a bandit stood irresolute, his rifle raised.

"That'll be the gaol," Bruce whispered, creeping in behind the man.

Too late he heard the catlike footfalls, and spun about. Bruce gave a tigerish spring and brought him crashing to the ground. As the fellow rolled aside, unconscious, Bruce sprang past, and burst the hut door inwards with his gun-butt. Cope, Joe, and Hari sprang out to greet him.

Close by lay the big red car, which Yusuf had hauled up the mountain. The quintet ran towards it, urged by the noise of combat working towards them. The Albanians were fighting for their lives.

As Bruce reached the car, a man came running. His quick ear had caught the downfall of the hut door, and he came to face a fresh attack. He was Yusuf.

"Dogs——" he roared, swinging his pistol.

Crash! Dushan's long rifle spat viciously from the shadow of the car tail. Yusuf halted, as though some giant hand had gripped him. He tottered on his toes a moment, then, dropping his weapon, pitched forward on his face.

"That—for my father!" the lad cried exultantly. "The jak is truly made!"

"And we have still to make it!" Bruce growled, dragging him aboard the racer. "Come on, you chump! The Selongese are through!"

He grabbed at the self-starter button as a dark-skinned wave broke from the rocks, bearing the surviving bandits before them. The engine broke into a thunderous roar, and, with a spurt of flame, the speedster leapt.

It took a gap between the boulders as a hail of bullets whistled through the air, and hurtled down the narrow trackway which, for so long and often, Yusuf's men had climbed.

Like Aldebaran, Bruce Bradman faded into nothingness against the dawn, and his rescued party with him. The Selongese were still vainly hunting for their prey as the sun rose red above the mountains.

THE END.

(Next week's issue of the GEM contains another thrilling yarn of Lightning Bruce Bradman, the speed king, and his pals. Don't miss it!)

Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, December 31st, 1932. LG