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THE BOYS' FRIEND 1D

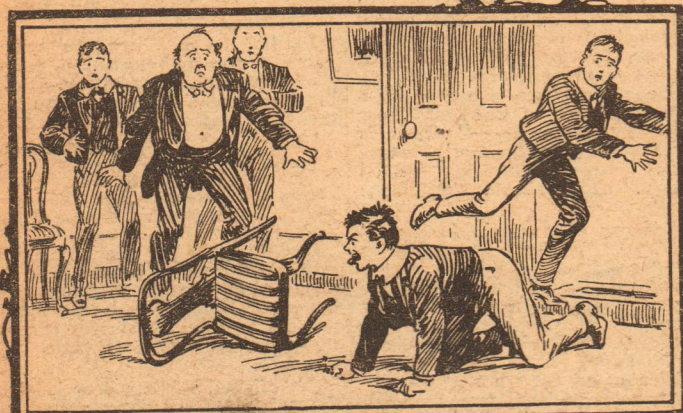
EVERY TUESDAY.

The object of THE BOYS' FRIEND is to Amuse, to Instruct, and to Advise Boys.

No. 486.—Vol. X. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY:

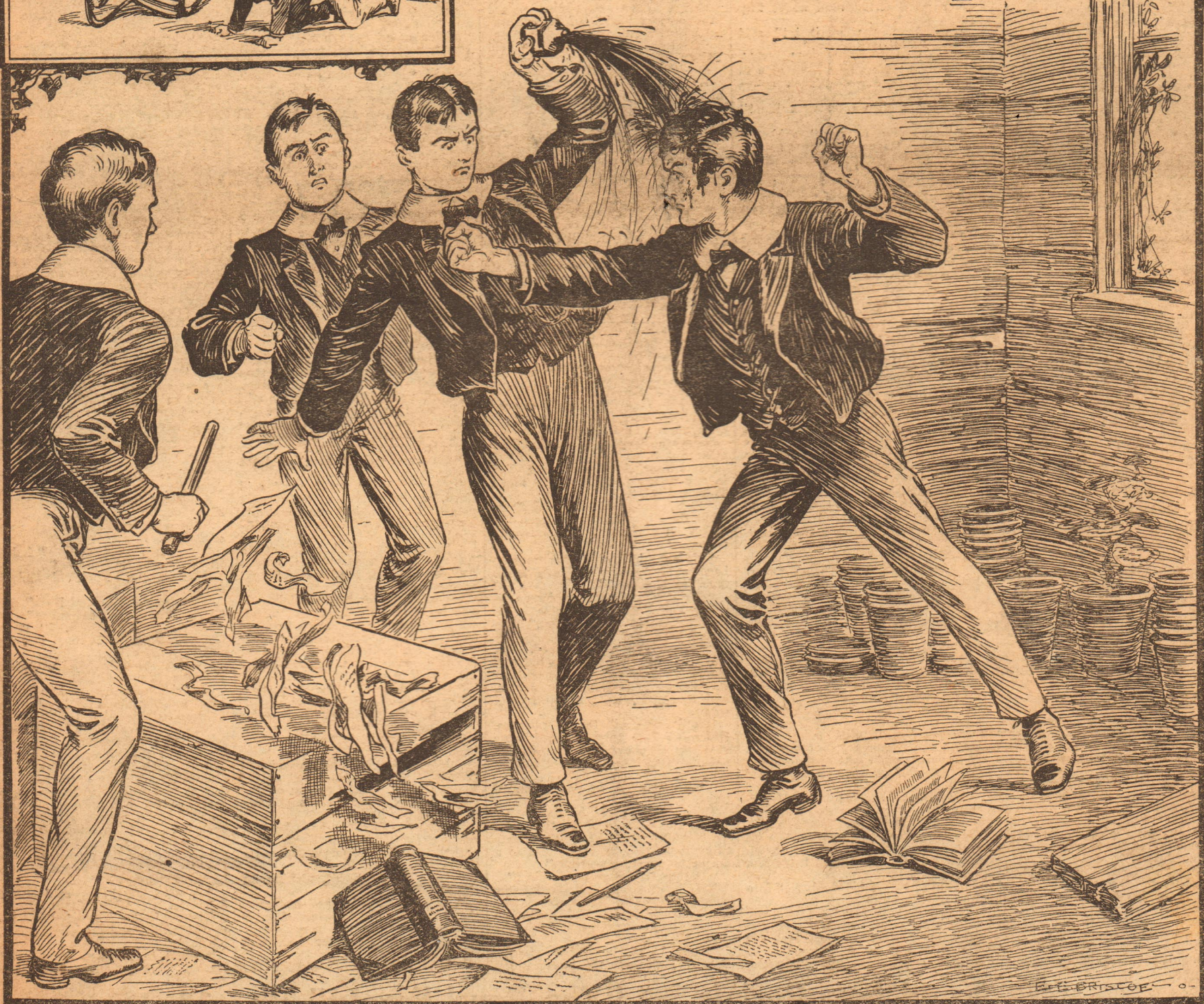
[WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 1, 1910.



THE BLOT

A Tale of Rayton College.

By Maxwell Scott.



TWO OF THE RIPPING INCIDENTS IN THIS WEEK'S SPLENDID CHAPTERS OF "THE BLOT."

YOU CAN START READING BELOW.



INTRODUCTION FOR THE NEW READER.

Philip Ashley is a brilliant lad at the Council School, but has declined an offer of a scholarship because of his mother, who is so poor that she has to eke out her living.

But one day comes Phil's opportunity. Bravely he stops the maddened horses in Sir David Rendle's carriage, and saves the life of Elsie, his only child. It is the turning-point in Philip's career, for by way of reward Sir David sends him to Rayton College, equipping him down to the smallest detail, and also engaging the lad's mother as a well-paid housekeeper.

Phil starts, light-hearted and jubilant, on the journey to Rayton; but on the way

a terrible revelation

is made to him. Sir David's nephew, Godfrey Mortimer, who, in the presence of Phil's benefactor, has promised to shepherd him in his new surroundings, and show him every kindness possible between one schoolboy and another, turns out to be a humbug and a hypocrite.

No sooner is the train clear of Highfield than Mortimer stirs up trouble; but Phil sets upon him, and holds him in check till at the next station some more Raytonians enter the compartment.

The newcomers are friends of Mortimer's, and when they hear Phil's story they christen him "The Blot."

After being treated with much snobbishness, Phil arrives at Rayton College, and is made Mortimer's flag. On the night of his arrival Phil receives anything but a bright reception in his dormitory. His fellow-sleepers make a rush at him, and strip him to the waist, afterwards liberally splashing his face, chest, and back with inky blots.

For some weeks Phil is ignored and badly treated. As the time of a great cricket-match comes round, however, Merrick, the school captain, hears that the Blot can bowl, and he is chosen as one of the eleven.

Philip turns up trumps, and through him alone the Raytonians win the match by one run.

A dastardly accusation of dishonesty is now brought against Philip by a friend of Mortimer's named Heath. In consequence of this Philip is shunned by the school, and even Merrick, his best friend.

The half-term holiday is now at hand, and Card and Tubb leave the college in a gorgeous touring car. Something goes wrong before they get very far from the school, and the two boys decide to walk on; they get into trouble with Farmer Stroggles, and are compelled to leap into a pond to avoid an unmanageable bull. They escape on to the high road.

As they vault over the gate the welcome toot, toot of a motor-car is heard, and a moment later the car which is to take them to Card's home at Barnby comes gliding round a corner of the road, not fifty yards away.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

The Biters Bit.

As the chauffeur said afterwards, you could have knocked him down with a feather when he first caught sight of the two forlorn-looking figures at the gate.

Both boys were bareheaded, Tubb's topper having been kicked to pieces by Stroggles' sons and Card having lost his when fleeing from the bull. Both of them were dripping wet from the armpits downwards, and were caked and plastered and festooned with mud and slime, and Tubb's once immaculate jacket had a gaping rent in the back, where the horn of the bull had caught it, which extended from between the shoulders to the waist.

"What hever 'ave you been a-doin' of?" gasped the chauffeur, stopping the car, and gazing at the two boys in open-mouthed stupefaction.

"Master Percy, what hever would your ma say if she saw you in this filthy condition?"

"Something rude, no doubt!" growled Card. "But she isn't goin' to see us in this condition. You'll have to take us back to the school, and we'll have to bath and change before we go to Barnby."

"But what 'ave you been a-doin' of?" inquired the chauffeur again.

"We've been havin' a bit of a lark, that's all," said Tubb.

"Lark!" said the chauffeur, holding up his hands. "When Hi was a boy that wasn't my hidea of a lark."

"Tastes differ, you see," said Card. "But turn the car round. We can't go to Barnby like this, that's certain. Take us back to the school."

"And pray your very, very hardest that we don't meet Holcroft and his crew on the way," said Tubb. "If they saw us in this state we'd never hear the last of it!"

"Holcroft!" repeated the chauffeur. "Who's he?"

"The chap who biffed you in the neck with a rotten orange just after we started," said Card.

"Then Hi 'ope we do meet 'im!" said the chauffeur grimly. "Hi'll learn 'im a thing or two if we do!"

However, to Tubb's and Card's relief, the chauffeur's hope was not fulfilled. They saw nothing of Holcroft or of any of his chums on their way back to the school, and, by great good luck, they managed to slip up to their dormitory without being spotted by any of the other boys.

Having bathed and donned fresh clothes and toppers, they returned to the car and once more set out for Barnby. And the car had scarcely passed through the school gates ere the chauffeur gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"That's 'Oloroft, isn't it?" he said, pointing to the solitary figure of a boy who was walking up the otherwise deserted road about fifty yards ahead.

"By Jove, yes, so it is!" said Card. "And he's alone!"

"Good business!" said Tubb gleefully. "We ought to be able to get a bit of our own back now—what?"

"What shall we do with him?" said Card.

"Leave 'im to me!" said the chauffeur. "He won't want nothin' more done to 'im when Hi've finished with 'im!"

Neither Tubb nor Card had any intention of leaving Holcroft to be dealt with by the chauffeur. But there was no time for argument just then, for by this time the car was close behind the unsuspecting leader of the Paulite juniors.

Hearing the car coming up behind him, Holcroft glanced round. A startled look crossed his face when he saw who were in the car, but before he had made up his mind what to do the chauffeur had stopped the car, had sprung out into the road and had seized him by the arm.

But the chauffeur, in popular parlance, had bitten off more than he could chew. He had caught a Tartar. Quick as thought Holcroft landed him a blow between the eyes which made him see more stars in half a second than ever he had seen in his life before. Then, wrenching his arm away and lowering his head, he butted the chauffeur into the ditch and took to his heels with a shout of derisive triumph.

His triumph, however, was short-lived. Stumbling over a loose stone, he came down rather heavily on his hands and knees, and before he could pick himself up Card and Tubb were on him. He made a gallant fight, and it was not until the chauffeur came to the aid of Tubb and Card that he was finally overpowered and pinned to the ground.

"Brave warriors!" he snorted, vanquished but undaunted. "Three to one! Why don't you get another man or two to help you?"

"What shall we do with him?" asked Card, ignoring the taunt.

"Duck 'im in that pond," suggested the chauffeur, pointing to a pond on the other side of the road.

"Tar and feather him!" said Tubb.

"Brilliant idea!" said Card sarcastically. "Only we don't happen to have either tar or feathers handy. Tell you what! Let's carry him off in the car and turn him loose ten miles from the school and leave him to tramp home."

"Right-ho!" said Tubb. "Into the car with him!"

It was easy to say "Into the car with him!" but, in view of the strenuous resistance which Holcroft offered, it was not so easy to do it.

However, by rolling him up in one

of the rugs, they deprived him of the use of his limbs, and rendered him practically helpless.

He was then lifted into the car and laid face downwards on the floor. Card and Tubb climbed in beside him, the chauffeur resumed his seat at the steering-wheel, and once again the car dashed off in the direction of Barnby.

To all appearance, Holcroft had resigned himself to his fate, for he offered no further resistance, but lay quietly where they had placed him, and did not even reply to the gibes and taunts which flowed in an incessant stream from the lips of Tubb and Card.

As a matter of fact, however, if one may let the reader into a secret, Holcroft's resignation was only assumed. Though his body was quiet his brain was excessively active, and was planning a subtle scheme by which he hoped to turn the tables on Tubb and Card, and to pay them back with compound interest for the practical joke they had played on him.

"How far are we from Barnby now, Bradshaw?" asked Card presently.

"About six miles," replied the chauffeur.

"Then we're nine from Rayton?"

"About that."

"Pull up at the end of another mile, then, and we'll turn our prisoner out," said Card.

At the end of another mile the chauffeur stopped the car, and half turned round in his seat to watch the fun.

But there was no fun—at least, there was no fun for Tubb and Card and the chauffeur, though there was much for Holcroft.

"Now then, my beauty, this is where we part!" said Card, addressing Holcroft. "Hope you've enjoyed your drive. There will be no charge, thank you! You can get up now."

Holcroft did not stir. Card prodded him with his foot, but still he did not move.

"Change here for Rayton!" said Tubb facetiously. "Up you get!"

But still Holcroft did not move.

With an uneasy laugh, Card rolled him over on his back, and no sooner had he done so than a cry of horror burst from his lips.

Holcroft was frothing at the mouth, his eyes were tightly closed, and the muscles of his face were twitching convulsively and distorting his features in a manner that was positively terrifying to behold.

"Good heavens, he's in a fit!" gasped Tubb.

At the word "fit" the chauffeur jumped down from his seat and ran round to the back of the car.

"Yes, he's in a fit sure enough!" he cried. "Hi 'ave a sister what takes fits, and she halways twitches and froths at the mouth like that."

Tubb and Card, white and scared, regarded each other with panic-stricken glances.

"I—I never knew he took fits, did you?" said Card huskily.

"Never!" said Tubb.

"If he—if he dies, they'll say we did it!" groaned Card. "Do people often die of fits, Bradshaw?"

"Very often," said the chauffeur solemnly.

"But your sister has never died in any of her fits, has she?" asked Tubb anxiously.

"Not yet," said the chauffeur, "but she's been has near death has makes no difference. Hi remember once—"

"Never mind what you remember," said Card. "What's to be done for Holcroft?"

"P'raps if we was to loosen 'is collar and dash some water in 'is face he might come round," suggested the chauffeur.

"Let's try, then," said Card.

While Tubb and Card unfastened Holcroft's collar the chauffeur sprinted to a neighbouring stream, and returned with his cap full of water.

But it was all to no purpose. Holcroft's face only twitched more violently than ever, and he showed not the slightest sign of "coming round."

"What else can we do?" pleaded Card.

The chauffeur shook his head. "Hi don't know of anythin' else we can do," he said. "The honly thing to be done is to get 'im to a doctor as quick as possible."

"Is there a doctor at Barnby?"

"Hi believe so, but I don't know where he lives. 'Adn't Hi better take you all to the 'All, and then one of the servants can fetch the doctor?"

"The 'All"—in other words, Barnby Hall—was the house which

Card's father had taken for the summer.

"Yes, that'll be the best thing to do," said Card. "Take us to the Hall as fast as the car will travel."

By the time they reached the Hall Holcroft had ceased to froth at the mouth—the fact was he could not keep it up any longer—and his muscles only twitched occasionally—he was getting tired of that too—but he was still to all appearances completely unconscious.

The Hall was a fairly big modern mansion standing in a well-kept park. Card's father, as the reader may remember, was a company promoter who had acquired a considerable fortune by methods which, to say the least of them, were distinctly "shady." Like all men of his stamp, he loved to display his wealth, and although he had only taken Barnby Hall for the summer months he had brought with him a small army of footmen, coachmen, chauffeurs, gardeners, grooms, and stableboys, to say nothing of a butler, a valet, a private secretary, and innumerable female servants.

The moment the car pulled up outside the main entrance of the Hall a couple of footmen in gorgeous livery came down the steps to assist Card and Tubb to alight and to carry their bags into the house. They were followed by the butler, who came forward rubbing his hands and bowing deferentially.

"Your pa and ma 'ave gone for a drive," he said to Card. "They said I was to tell you—" Then his eyes fell on the apparently unconscious form of Holcroft. "Good 'evings!" he exclaimed. "What is this?"

"It's one of our school chums," said Card. "We—we invited him to come for a ride in the car, and he— he suddenly went off like this."

"Fits," said the chauffeur. "My sister—"

"Never mind about your sister now!" said Card impatiently.

"We've heard enough about her!" He turned to the two footmen. "Carry him into the dinin'-room," he said, "and lay him on the couch. Then send for the nearest doctor as quick as you can. Hurry!"

The footmen attempted to lift Holcroft out of the car. As soon as they laid hands on him, however, he went off into another violent "fit," with the result that one of the footmen had his wig torn off his head, while the other got Holcroft's heel in the pit of his stomach, and sat down on the drive gasping like a stranded codfish.

The "fit," however, soon passed off, and with the aid of the butler and the chauffeur Holcroft was carried into the house and laid on a couch in the dining-room.

"Now send for the doctor," said Card to the butler. "Tubb and I will stay here and keep watch on him till the doctor comes."

The butler sent one of the grooms off for the doctor, and then returned to the dining-room. Holcroft was lying on the couch stiff and rigid and with wide-open, staring eyes. Tubb and Card, pale and frightened, were standing by his side.

"He seems quieter now," said the butler.

"Too quiet for my fancy," said Card, in a hollow voice. "He hasn't moved for the last ten minutes. You—you don't think he's dyin', do you?"

"He does look bad, and that's a fact!" admitted the butler. "P'raps a drink of water might revive 'im."

He walked over to the sideboard, and returned with a glass of water, which he held to Holcroft's lips.

At the sight of the water Holcroft's face underwent a series of horrible contortions. The butler drew back in alarm.

"Hydrophoby!" he gasped.

"That's what it is! They always go off like that at the sight of—"

He had no time to finish the sentence. The word "hydrophoby" had given Holcroft a new idea. Suddenly sitting up, he snarled and bared his teeth and snapped at the butler's hand. Then, rolling off the couch, he ran round the room on all-fours barking like a dog.

"Bow-wow-wow!" he barked, rushing at Tubb and Card, who, with howls of fear, scrambled on to the table out of his reach.

"Gr-r-r!" he growled, making for the butler.

With an earsplitting yell of terror, the butler dropped the glass of water and bolted from the room, with Holcroft capering after him and snapping at his heels.

In the entrance-hall, outside the

dining-room door, a footman was just passing carrying a large tray full of glasses. Into him the terrified butler crashed, bowling him over like a ninepin and sending the glasses flying in all directions.

"Help! Murder!" shrieked the butler, as Holcroft playfully snapped at his calves.

"Help! Police!" howled the footman, crawling into a corner, and holding the tray in front of him like a shield.

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked Holcroft, capering about, and snapping first at one and then at the other.

Alarmed by the uproar, a number of servants came running into the hall. Among them was one of the pageboys. His glittering buttons seemed to have a fascination for Holcroft, who bounded towards him on all-fours, barking joyously.

With a bloodcurdling howl of fear, the pageboy turned and fled upstairs. Holcroft, warning to his work, bounded after him.

At the top of the first flight of stairs was a landing window. It was open, and was only eight or ten feet from the ground. In his terror the page sprang to this window, and, forgetting that the conservatory was underneath, he scrambled out and dropped—or intended to drop—to the ground.

In the conservatory the undergardener was making love to one of the housemaids. He had just slipped his arm round her waist, and was trying to steal a kiss, when

Crash!

The pageboy crashed through the glass roof and dropped on the gardener's head. The gardener yelled, the housemaid screamed, the pageboy howled.

Luckily none of the three was seriously hurt, and by the time the page had explained what had happened Holcroft had returned to the entrance-hall, and was chasing the terrified servants into the kitchen.

Out of the kitchen a door led into the dairy. In the dairy one of the maids was making butter. At the sight of Holcroft she dropped her butter and hastily stepped back. Unfortunately a large shallow pan of milk stood on the floor behind her, and into this she sat down with a flop that sent showers of milk raining in all directions.

By this time Holcroft was beginning to think he had carried his joke far enough. Also, the doctor would be arriving soon, and Holcroft was not such a fool as to think he could deceive the doctor in the same way that he had deceived Tubb and Card and the servants. Accordingly, after making a final playful snap at the dairymaid's ankles, he curled up on the floor and lay quite still.

It was some little time before anybody ventured to approach him. It was Tubb who finally summoned up courage to enter the dairy.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "He's gone off into a stupor. Quick! Get a rope and we'll tie him up before he comes round!"

Card and the butler rushed in with a rope. As they were about to pass it round Holcroft's arms he opened his eyes and gazed vacantly around him.

"Where am I?" he muttered dreamily.

Tubb and Card exchanged glances of relief.

"He seems rational enough now," said Card.

"He does," said Tubb. "I don't think we need tie him up."

"Where am I?" asked Holcroft again.

"You're at Barnby Hall," said Card. "Don't you know us?"

"Yes," said Holcroft. "You're Card, and that's Tubb. But how did I get here?"

"Don't you remember what's happened?" asked Card.

Holcroft pondered, and passed his hand wearily across his brow. Then his face brightened.

"Yes," he said, "I remember now. You collared me and rolled me up in a rug. I couldn't breathe; I was suffocatin'. Gradually my senses left me. My brain reeled. I felt as if I was goin' to have a fit. I—I—What happened next, old man? Did I have a fit? Have I been ill? Why am I lying here?"

"Poor chap!" said the butler sympathetically. "My word, Master Percy, your pa will be angry when he 'ears about this!"

"About what?" said Card defiantly.

The butler gazed at him reproachfully, and gravely shook his head.

"About the way you've been ill-treatin' this poor boy," he said.

"Rolled 'im up in a rug, suffocated 'im, sent 'im into a fit! It's a mercy you didn't kill 'im outright!"

"Oh, I don't bear 'em any ill-will!" said Holcroft generously. "Besides, I'm all right now. But how am I goin' to get back to Rayton? I'll have to walk, I expect."

"Indeed you won't!" said the butler. "You'll just go and lie down till the doctor comes. You don't know how bad you've been."

"Have I really been bad?" asked Holcroft innocently.

"You 'ave," said the butler—"runnin' about the 'ouse an' barkin' like a dog. Hi thought at first it was hydrophobia, but now Hi know it was temporal insanity brought on by ill-treatment. Ha, 'ere comes Chapman! Well, Chapman, where's the doctor?"

"He's out at a case in the country," said Chapman, "and won't be back till late this evening."

"Then please send word that he needn't come," said Holcroft. "I'm all right now; I don't need a doctor."

"You must come and lie down till Mr. Card comes back, at any rate," said the butler. "He won't be long now, and Hi couldn't take the responsibility of lettin' you go till he 'as seen you."

He had scarcely finished speaking ere the sound of carriage-wheels was heard.

"Here he is!" said the butler.

He hurried off to the front door, outside which an open carriage had just stopped. In the carriage were Mr. and Mrs. Card.

"Have Master Percy and his friend arrived?" asked Mr. Card.

"Yes, sir," said the butler; and then, without any beating about the bush, he plunged at once into the story of what had happened.

Mr. Card listened with a grave face. It certainly did strike him that some of Holcroft's symptoms were rather peculiar, to say the least of it, but he had not sufficient medical knowledge to know that the whole business was an elaborate hoax. He believed, in fact, as the butler believed, that Holcroft had been driven temporarily mad by the ill-treatment he had suffered.

Believing this, he was naturally very angry with his son and Tubb. Also, fearing that the affair might come to the ears of Holcroft's parents, and they might take action, he did everything in his power to gain Holcroft's good-will.

He insisted that Holcroft should spend the week-end at the Hall, and sent the car to the school for his things. While Tubb and Card were lectured on their cruelty and confined to the house for their misbehaviour, Holcroft was given the best of everything, and had one of the jolliest holidays he had ever spent.

On Monday the three boys returned by motor-car to Rayton.

"Well, Card, old man," said Holcroft, as they stepped out of the car, "your people have given me a toppin' time, and I'd like to give you something in return to show my gratitude."

"What are you gettin' at?" growled Card suspiciously.

"I'm goin' to make you a present of a tip that may be of priceless value to you in after life," said Holcroft. "If ever you are captured by a set of bounders and carried off in a motor-car, and you don't want to have to walk home, pretend to have a fit; that'll make 'em take you to their journey's end. When you get there pretend to go mad, and run about the house barkin' like a dog. That'll frighten 'em, and when you come round their fond parents will try to make it up to you by givin' you the time of your life!"

Card glared at him and nearly choked.

"You mean to say," he gasped, "that all that—that fit and that madness—was a sham?"

"The shammiest sham that ever was shammed," said Holcroft. "But it came off a treat, didn't it? See! Your pa even gave me a sovereign to say nothing about it here! He, he! Dear old boy! My love to him when you write!"

And he waltzed away, and was out of sight before Tubb and Card had recovered from their stupefaction.

A Visit From Sir David.

MORTIMER and Heath were sauntering round the quad. It was the Saturday after the half-term holiday. Dinner was just over, and the two boys had strolled out for a breath of fresh air. The afternoon was

fine but dull, and it looked as if there might be rain before long.

Presently they were joined by Jordan and Sadler.

"The very chaps we're lookin' for!" said Sadler. "What are you goin' to do this afternoon?"

"We were just discussin' the question," said Mortimer. "Heath was suggestin' a spin up the river, but it's too hot, and I'm not in the mood for violent exercise this afternoon. I just want to laze."

"Besides, it's goin' to rain," said Jordan, "and it's poor fun on the river in the rain."

"Can you suggest anythin' better?" said Heath.

"Yes," said Jordan. "Both Sadler and I are like Morty—we're not in the humour for violent exercise, and we were wonderin' if he and you would help us to make up a four at bridge."

"The very thing!" said Mortimer. "I'm on that! It's just what I want!"

"Will you play?" asked Jordan of Heath.

"Oh, yes!" said Heath. "Where shall we play?"

"In my study, of course!" said Mortimer.

"But who'll keep watch?"

"The Blot, of course."

Heath shook his head.

"I don't think he will," he said. "In the first place, he isn't forced to fag for you on half-holidays, and in the second place, I feel sure he'll have a conscientious objection to keep watch while we play cards."

"Conscientious objection be hanged!" said Mortimer. "The Blot is my fag, and he'll do as I order him, or I'll make it hot for him! I wonder where he is?"

"He was in Big Room ten minutes ago," said Jordan. "But he was gatherin' up his books and papers as if he was off to read somewhere."

"He's always readin' nowadays," said Sadler gloomily. "He'll win the Beresford, I expect, and it was as good as a gift for me until he came."

"He'll not win the Beresford if I can help it," said Mortimer. "Wait here a minute while I see if he's still in Big Room."

He hurried off to Big Room. There were several juniors there, but Philip was not among them.

"Anybody know where the Blot is?" he asked.

"No," said Card. "We don't take any interest in such vermin."

"He was here ten minutes ago," said Mortimer.

"That wasn't our fault," said Tubb.

"Didn't you see him go out?"

"Please, Mortimer, I did," said Atkin, who was one of the new boys who had come to Rayton at the same time as Philip.

"Did you see where he went?"

"No, but I know where he usually goes on half-holidays."

"Where's that?"

"You know that row of buildings at the back of the old fives-courts?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the little room at the end of the row?"

"The lumber-room? Yes."

"Well, that's where the Blot goes. I think Hogan has lent him the room. Anyhow, he takes his books and papers there, and works there by the hour. He collected his books before he went out of here, so I expect that's where he's gone."

There was a gleam of vindictive triumph in Mortimer's eyes when he rejoined his three chums.

"Good business!" he said. "You know how often we've been puzzled to know where the Blot disappeared to on half-holidays? We guessed he had sneaked off somewhere to read for the Beresford, but we could never discover where. Well, I've discovered at last. Come along, and I'll show you."

In the meantime, Philip had settled down to work in the lumber-room. He had seated himself on one of the empty boxes, and had placed his books and papers on the other, along with a bottle of ink and a case of mathematical instruments.

He was hard at work, struggling with the intricacies of a difficult problem, when the sound of approaching footsteps fell on his ears. It was not often that anybody passed that way. He wondered who it could be.

He soon learned. Suddenly a shadow fell on the paper on which he was writing, and on looking up he saw four grinning faces—the faces of Mortimer, Jordan, Sadler, and Heath poked against the outside of the window. Then the door was flung open, and Mortimer strode in with the rest at his heels.

"Run to earth at last!" cried Mortimer gloatingly. "So this is where you skulk away to, is it?"

"I'm not skulking," said Philip. "I'm working."

"Well, you've got to stop workin' now!" said Mortimer, sweeping Philip's case of instruments off the box, and sending it clattering to the ground. "And I'll take jolly good care you don't work here any more. In the meantime, you've got to come back to the house and keep watch outside my study door, while Heath and Jordan and Sadler and I have a game at bridge. So, pack up your traps and come along."

A resolute look crossed Philip's face.

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind," he said.

"You won't?" roared Mortimer.

"I will not," said Philip. "I'm not bound to fag for you on Saturday afternoons, and even if I were I wouldn't keep watch while you played cards."

Mortimer, emboldened by the presence of his three chums, clenched his fist, and aimed a lusty blow at Philip's head. Philip dodged the blow, sprang down from the box on

box, he strode away with his three chums.

There were tears in Philip's eyes as he gazed at the wreck around him. His secret work-room had been discovered, and he would never be able to work there again. The work of weeks had been destroyed, and his books had been spotted and blotted with ink, and had been rendered, in places, illegible.

He cleaned up the mess as best he could, and then walked sadly up to the house to clean himself. Several juniors were loafing outside the door and in the corridors, and the sight of Philip's ink-stained face and collar evidently afforded them much amusement.

"Novel idea, that, isn't it?" said Tubb.

"What?" asked Rigden.

"Don't you see?" said Tubb. "The Blot has printed his name on his face, so that everybody'll know him at sight."

This was only one of many similar remarks which fell on Philip's ears as he trudged up to the wash-room. It took him nearly half an hour to make himself presentable, and he had just

"No, sir," said Philip. "Did Mortimer know you were coming?"

"Godfrey? No. I didn't know myself that I was coming until this morning. Fact is, I had to run over to Barnby to see a friend of mine on business—Mr. Card, of Barnby Hall. He has a boy here, he tells me, Percy Card. Do you know him?"

"Yes, sir," said Philip. "He and I are in the same House."

"And chums, I hope."

"I'm as chummy with him as I am with any of the boys," said Philip evasively.

"That's right," said Sir David. "Well, as I was saying, I had to run over to Barnby this morning, and being so near to Rayton I thought I'd slip over to the school before I went back to Highfield, and pay you and Godfrey a surprise visit. I was half afraid, being a half-holiday, you might be out; but I'm glad to find that you are in, at any rate. Do you know where Godfrey is?"

Philip did know. He knew that Mortimer was in his study, playing cards with Heath and Jordan and Sadler. And it would have been an easy matter for Philip to have taken Sir David up to the study, and to have let him see for himself how his canting, hypocritical nephew spent his half-holidays!

But Philip was not built that way. Much as he had suffered at Mortimer's hands, he was too honourable to play a low trick like that. On the contrary, his one anxiety at that moment was to give Mortimer warning that his uncle was there, so as to give him time to clear away the cards before his uncle saw them.

"He may be in his study," he said, in reply to Sir David's question. "If you'll wait here a moment, I'll run up and see."

"I'll come with you," said Sir David, who had been to Rayton several times before, and knew where Mortimer's study was.

"Oh, no, sir, don't do that!" said Philip, in alarm. "I'll be back in half a minute."

Without giving Sir David time to reply, he dashed away and raced up-stairs. But if he had looked round, he would have seen that Sir David was following him—not because he suspected anything, but merely because he wished to see his nephew as soon as possible.

The study-door was locked, of course. Philip knocked, loudly and insistently.

"Who's there?" growled Mortimer.

"I," said Philip, in a low, excited voice. "Your uncle has just arrived."

Mortimer flung down his cards and sprang to his feet with a gasp of dismay.

"Is he there?" he called out.

"No."

Mortimer heaved a sigh of relief, and hurriedly unlocked and opened the door.

"You'd better clear out, you chaps," he said to his chums.

They hurried away, and Mortimer turned to Philip.

"Where is the old josser?" he asked.

"If you mean Sir David," said Philip, "I left him downstairs. He asked me if I knew where you were, and I said I'd run up and see if you were in your study."

Mortimer caught him by the arm and pulled him into the study.

"I must go down to him at once, or he'll smell a rat," he said hurriedly. "Gather up those cards and shove them in one of the drawers. I'll keep the old buffer downstairs as long as I can, so as to give you time to have everything cleared away before I bring him up."

He darted out of the study, but had no sooner crossed the threshold than he pulled up with a startled gasp of consternation.

Sir David was coming along the passage from the head of the stairs, and was less than half a dozen yards from the study-door.

"My dear uncle, this is a surprise!" said Mortimer, speaking loudly so that Philip might hear.

Philip had just collected all the cards into a heap. He heard Mortimer's words, and realised that Sir David had followed him upstairs and was just outside the door.

For a moment he was panic-stricken, and he had barely time to thrust the cards into his jacket-pocket ere Sir David, still grasping his nephew's hand, walked into the study.

(Another ripping instalment of this grand school tale will appear next week in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

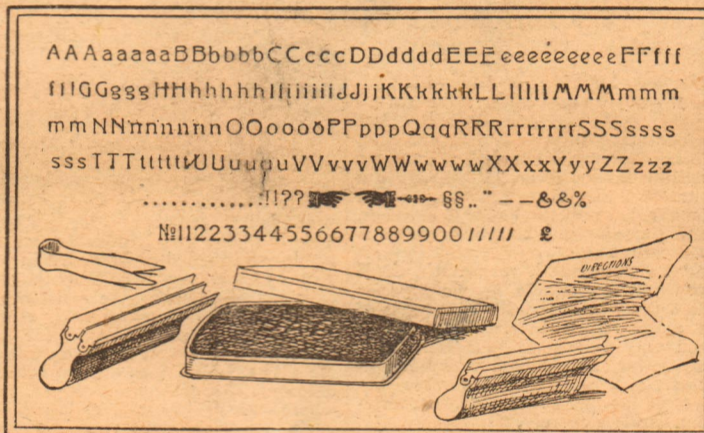
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which he was sitting, and snatched up a heavy ebony ruler.

"Touch me, if you dare!" he cried, planting himself with his back to the wall. "I'm ready for you now—all four of you!"

There was an awkward pause. The four bullies looked at each other sheepishly. None of them had the pluck to tackle Philip, for there was that in his eye which warned them he was in a dangerous mood.

It was Heath who at last broke the silence.

"I told you he wouldn't come," he said to Mortimer. "But we don't really need him. We can lock the study door. Come away. We're only wastin' time here."

Mortimer glared at Philip for a moment, then, swiftly and suddenly, he snatched up Philip's papers—papers on which there was the work of weeks—and tore them into ribbons!

Philip sprang at him with a passionate cry, but Mortimer nimbly eluded him; and, seizing the bottle of ink, he flung its contents in Philip's face. Then, after kicking over the

stairs again, when he heard a motor-car glide up to the front door.

Mildly wondering who it could be, but never for an instant dreaming of the surprise in store for him, he put on his cap and walked to the door with the intention of searching for some new hiding-place where he could work in peace and quietness. And the moment he opened the door he saw, to his amazement, that the new arrival, the man who had just arrived in the motor-car, was Sir David Rendle—Mortimer's uncle and Philip's benefactor!

Sir David had just alighted from his car and was giving some instructions to his chauffeur. Turning round, he saw Philip, and came towards him with smiling face and outstretched hand.

"Well, Ashley, my boy, how are you?" he said, wringing Philip's hand.

"Very well, thank you, sir," said Philip. "How are you?"

"Never better in my life," replied the baronet. "You didn't expect to see me here to-day, did you?"

finished, and was descending the stairs again, when he heard a motor-car glide up to the front door.

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"Never better in my life," replied the baronet. "You didn't expect to see me here to-day, did you?"



YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

I want all my boys to look upon me as their firm friend and adviser. There are few men who know boys as well as I do, and there are no little trials and troubles, perplexities and anxieties, in which I cannot help and assist my readers.

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**. All boys who write to me, and who enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply.

All Letters should be addressed: **The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, 23, Eouverie Street, London, E.C.**

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TWO NEW STORIES—ONE STARTING NEXT TUESDAY WEEK.

I AM sure that my friends will be glad to hear that, although the budget of stories with which I am providing them at present is very good, yet, as they must, in the natural course of things come to an end, I am replacing the first two of them that finish with two splendid new yarns.

The first serial I shall publish is called "Yorkshire Grit," and it will prove to be a most excellent and fascinating tale of Bradford, Leeds, and the West Riding; it will deal with life in the great mills of this highly important centre of industry, and will commence next Tuesday week.

I have been going over the story with the author, Mr. Stacey Blake, who was born in Bradford, and knows this part of the country, and who knows the life of the wool worker very thoroughly indeed, and I think my friends will find that the result will be a story which they will follow with intense interest from start to finish. I am not going to disclose more of this tale at the moment, except to say that the hero is a character every boy will like and appreciate fully before the story comes to an end.

With regard to the second story which I have in preparation, I do not propose to say anything very definite about it this week. I may say, however, that it will be from the pen of a very clever and well-known novelist. Moreover, this famous novelist is one who, up to the present, has not written a boys' tale. He is a gentleman who has travelled all over the globe in many strange, out-of-the-way places, and naturally during these journeys he has had many exciting adventures. His experiences as a traveller will form the foundation of the story which he is writing for **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, and I am perfectly sure that in this new serial I can promise my boys a very great treat.

A LETTER FROM A SCOTTISH FRIEND.

I am sure all my readers, and particularly my supporters who live north of the Tweed, will excuse the publication of the following letter. Personally, I hardly think it needs an excuse, and I am putting it in the paper just to show my friends the type of boy I have gradually gathered round me as readers of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**.

"Dear Editor,—I sincerely hope you will forgive me for taking this liberty of writing to you, and thereby wasting your valuable time, but after reading **THE BOYS' FRIEND** containing your two new serials, namely, 'The Blot' and 'The Railway Waif,' I feel I must offer my humble congratulations in your endeavour to have nothing but first-class stories, etc., for your readers. I am 24 years of age, and have been a reader of **THE BOYS' FRIEND** for the last six years, never missing a single copy during that time, and with age creeping up to these years when young men look about for something more serious, more exciting, something they consider more manly. Then, sir, with that time upon me, I should be quite happy to acknowledge to everybody that **THE BOYS' FRIEND** was, and is, and will always be my favourite paper.

"I keep my 'Friends' until I have three, then I hand them to one of my companions, or one of my workmates, which has helped to get many new readers for the 'Green 'Un,' for I am always trying to do my little best to help on what I consider is the best paper for all ages.

"In reading your paper, sir, it has helped me immensely to realise my ideal in regard to what a British lad should be either at college or in the workshop, an ideal, sir, I set before me every day, trying hard to be what the editor of the 'B. F.' should like me to be, a real true Britisher before everything else, striving nobly, honestly, and straightforwardly to attain our ambition.

"I live at home with my mother and two younger brothers. My father died six years ago; therefore, upon me fell the mantle of my father's trust; may God always help me to keep it. At the early age of eleven I was working in a jute mill, therefore, dear Editor, if my writing and spelling are not up to the standard you usually receive, I ask your for-

givenness, knowing my lack of schooling. My spare time, after six at night, doesn't amount to much, but by devoting an evening now and then to reading and writing, I am always pulling up the river, and though the current is strong, yet the harder and longer you pull the easier it becomes, and though 'tis a hard task yet it is a pleasant one.

"I should like it very much, sir, if you put an article in your paper describing fully the different parts of a merchant steamer. And trusting you may find space to acknowledge my letter, I wish you every happiness, and would like to see the sale of the 'B. F.' trebled.—Remaining, yours sincerely,

"LOCHEE."

I like this letter because it is cheery, sensible, and manly, and it says things which I am glad to hear from lads who have grown up. It seems to me that it is a proof that the influence of our paper on the boy or young man who reads it is a jolly good one.

What my young friend asks for at the finish he will see in **THE BOYS' FRIEND** shortly.

I want to tell him how much I ad-

mire his manly spirit, how much I admire him for the fact that when his father died he took on himself the task of looking after the home, and, believe me, he will find ample reward for whatever sacrifices he has had to make, apart from the real pleasure I am sure it must have been to him to do these things.

A PIT BOY'S TROUBLE.

"Pit Boy" asks me to tell him of something which will stop black hairs from growing under his eyes. He says: "I am growing into manhood, and these black hairs spoil my complexion. I do not want to shave them, for they will grow thicker and thicker."

My young friend, "Pit Boy," is a little too fastidious, I think. If he takes my advice he will not worry about the little hirsute trouble of which he complains. Anyway, I know of no remedy which he could possibly adopt, and the best advice I can give him is to leave things alone.

A BOY IN DOUBT.

E. M. tells me he is at work with a certain firm, and he lives in a state of doubt as to whether, sooner or later, he will be discharged from his employment. He also tells me that he has a great deal of doubt about the prospects of the job which he is following.

I think this youngster is in the position of many another lad when he starts work. The change from school life to a serious work-a-day world is a pretty big one for any boy, and the novelty of it is bound to produce a good deal of doubt in his mind—particularly if he finds that he does not altogether give satisfaction in his work, and is occasionally reprimanded. Again, a reason for his doubt may be found in the fact that the two conditions are totally different. School life, and life where one has to take orders from one's superior are two different things.

But my boy must not allow these thoughts to disturb him too much. Let him make up his mind that whatever task is given him, whatever work he is set to do, he will do it whole-heartedly and with enthusiasm. If he flings himself into his work, and forgets everything else but the job he is doing, he will find that his employers are pleased with him, and very soon will be showing undoubted marks of their favour.

Every job has prospects. I will

not say that every van boy will rise to be the head of a great railway, but at least one van boy I know did so. I will not say that every booking-clerk will ultimately become the general manager of a railway, but this is certainly the experience of the general manager of one of the most successful railways in England today. I will not say that every grocer's lad will become a millionaire, but Lord Sraithcona is a proof that this is possible.

It all depends on the boy himself, and so to this lad who has written to me his doubts about the place he is in, I would say the future depends entirely upon yourself. Do every job which you are set intelligently and willingly, and you will soon find that your work, even in its minor way, is appreciated; gradually you will be put on to more responsible employment, and in this way lies success.

CANNOT GRASP THINGS.

Curiously enough, the next letter which I pick up deals with a lad who says that he has not much confidence in himself. This makes him very nervous, with the result that his foreman, being an impatient, short-tempered man, bullies him. His foreman often says to him, "You have been here two years, and cannot do this thing," and yet my poor young friend, A. F., tells me he devotes all his evenings to study, and even then finds that he cannot grasp things.

Well, my dear lad, you have not much to worry about—in fact, the less you worry over this difficulty of yours in grasping things the quicker will you get the habit of mastering the subjects you have to learn and the tasks you have to do.

Don't get downhearted, my boy; do your level best. Try to put your mind absolutely into the work in front of you, and if your foreman does get cross with you, do your best to forget it. Every time you are set something to do, go one better than your last effort; you will then find that after a bit your tasks will become easier, your foreman more pleased with you, and the future much brighter and cheerier.

A WOULD-BE DOG TRAINER.

"Doggy" is a friend of mine, who wants me to tell him what kind of dogs are the best to train for tricks.

It is said that the mongrel—that is to say, the cross-bred dog—is the most intelligent, yet I have seen some extremely clever well-bred dogs performing, so I have my doubts with regard to this.

If my young friend takes up dog-training, he will find that some dogs betray an aptitude for tricks far more readily than other dogs, and in this respect are very like human beings. Some can do things, and will, while others can't do them, or won't.

My friend also wants to know which dogs are the best jumpers. Well, the long-legged dog is naturally the better jumper. The greyhound, boarhound, and borzoi will all make very good jumpers; as a rule, the greyhound will clear obstacles better than most dogs.

A useful book on dog-keeping and breeding, costing 1s., is published by L. Upcott Gill, of Drury Lane, London, W.C.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

How to Answer An ADVERTISEMENT.

IN sitting down to answer an advertisement for a vacant situation, you want to remember that a hundred or more other boys will reply as well, and that for your application to be effective it must be the best of the whole bunch.

What usually happens is this: The advertiser has all the letters placed before him, and then goes through them one by one. The untidy, badly-written, and badly-spelled he throws into the waste-paper basket, and the few promising applications he puts on one side. He then makes a second, and, if necessary, a third selection, until he has weeded the applications down to a mere half-dozen. What you want is at least to be among these half-dozen.

White paper of good quality is the first consideration, and black ink. The envelope should match the paper, and the stamp should be neatly affixed at the top right-hand corner with a narrow margin. Do not enclose a stamped envelope when answering an advertisement; it is

a nuisance to the advertiser, and can do no good. If a man wants you, you may be sure he will write.

In writing to a firm put "Dear Sirs"; if to an individual "Dear Sir." In the case of a pseudonym being used by the advertiser such as "Beta," "Box 14," etc., put "Dear Sir." In addressing the envelope put "Messrs." before the title of a firm; if writing to an individual, put "Esq." after his name.

With regard to the actual letter, make it brief, and to the point. A long, rambling letter will do your case no good. Mention your age, education, previous positions, if any, experience, state of your health, and so on. Enclose copies of any testimonials you may hold from a clergyman, schoolmaster, or previous employer. Never send original testimonials. Conclude the letter by putting "Yours obediently."

The whole art of answering advertisements is to send well-spelled, brief, and clear letters on good paper and smartly finished off.

THE END.

RUNNING.

Capital Sport for Cold Autumn Days.

ON bright Saturday afternoons in October one can see harriers out on their runs, a glow of health on their faces as they swing gracefully along. One can see them every week on our open spaces in London, and there are few towns or even large villages that have not a harriers' club.

If you are not a footballer, and have no definite winter sport, take up running in some form or other. It is splendid exercise—manly, natural exercise—and you will be all the fitter during the week for a run on a Saturday afternoon.

In this article I am going to give a few useful hints to runners—both men who use the track and harriers—and one of my first tips concerns the wind, which is perhaps the most important factor in swift running. Get your wind in good order, and you will not have much further trouble.

Now, in getting a sound wind for any athletic feat, you must set your face firmly against tobacco in any form.

Tobacco is absolute ruination to the wind. Having disposed of the subtle weed, you must next get your digestive organs in a state of perfect health, for if the stomach is not doing its work properly you cannot have good wind-power.

Your diet should consist only of plain, nourishing food, eaten at regular times, masticated slowly, and never "bolted." Avoid all indigestible stuff and late suppers, letting your last meal of the day consist principally of a cup of hot cocoa and some buttered bread.

Get in some exercise in the fresh air before your breakfast; if you keep a dog, take him for a short run.

Having got so far, you should be in a fair way to putting your wind in good order, and a course of walking, skipping, and actual sprinting and running should be indulged in.

The running kit consists of knickers, vest, sweater, and strong, and comfortable shoes, and you should make it your aim from the first to get good style and action, and never to overtrain.

THE END.

(More splendid articles next Tuesday in **THE BOYS' FRIEND**. "Yorkshire Grit" starts the week after next.)



THE STREETHOUSE RED ROSE INTERMEDIATE RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB.

Three times head of their League, they passed through one season without a single defeat.

3 Grand New Serials Start in "The Boys' Herald" This Week—1d.

"EVER-READY" JACK.

Our Grand New Story Series.

THE BUCKING-UP OF GAYTHORPE'S.

JACK CARTON rose the morning after the day he had left the Stores feeling worried and anxious. Deeply he regretted striking the American, for now the weary hunt for employment was to commence again, and by his hasty act he felt he had injured his mother as well as himself.

He was unusually silent as he hurried through his breakfast, for he had not told his mother of the scene at the Stores that had made it impossible for him to remain there. He knew it could do no good, and only worry her. If he could find fresh employment to-day, he could tell her when the news would be no shock. If, on the other hand, he failed, he would have to tell her, and confess that, by striking a man who had called him a thief, he had lost a good job and eighteen shillings a week.

Several times during breakfast it was on the tip of his tongue to tell his mother the whole story, for it was the first secret he had had from her, and he felt miserable about it; but he wished to save her worry, and the only hint he gave was when he seized his cap to go out.

"Wish me luck, mother dear," he said, in a voice that trembled a little.

His mother smiled as he kissed her. "I always wish you luck, Jack," she said. "But why—"

Jack was out of the room, and running down the stairs.

Outside Dewson's buildings he stopped, hesitating which way to go. It was only a little while after half-past eight, for he had left as though he were going to his work at the Stores. Should he go to Gaythorpe's? Young Brown had told him that the grocer wanted him back, and he felt that with the new experience he had gained he could do well, but could he go back to the man who had dismissed him without waiting for a word of explanation?

Pride said no, and Jack had taken a few steps in the other direction, with a vague idea of seeking employment elsewhere, then he stopped and turned back. It would be madness to allow pride to stand in the way.

He rang the bell, and presently Mr. Gaythorpe appeared at the little door in the shutters, as he had appeared morning after morning to admit him to the shop.

"Carton!" he gasped. And then, after a slight pause, whilst man and boy felt awkward, he held out his hand.

"I'm glad to see you again, Carton," he said. "I treated you unfairly, and I wish to goodness you had never left me. I'm told you're doing well at the Stores."

"I was, sir, but I've left and come to see if you can give me a job. I've got some ideas for bucking up the business. I—Hallo, Snuffer, old man—you'll wreck the place, you scoundrel!"

The mongrel bull-terrier had nearly knocked over his master as he danced joyfully round the boy with whom he had been such good friends.

"I should very much like to have you, Carton," said Mr. Gaythorpe. "But, to be candid, my business has dropped terribly lately. I'm afraid I can't pay you the wages you would want."

"I'll come for fifteen shillings for a start, sir, if you'll pay me more when things get better."

The grocer smiled weakly. "You seem confident of yourself, Carton, and—well, I suppose young blood will tell, and you have proved yourself to be a smart youngster. I'll take you on as junior assistant, and sack Peters."

"Please don't do that, sir," cried Jack. "I reckon if things go we'll have to think about engaging more men, rather than sacking the old ones."

The grocer shrugged his shoulders and frowned slightly. He did not like the idea of Jack being so confident of success where he had failed.

When the other assistants arrived they were astounded to find Jack bustling up a fat lazy boy, who was cleaning out the shop as though he had the whole day to give to it.

"I'll work his fat down a bit, sir,"

said Jack to Mr. Gaythorpe, when the errand-boy went off at a quicker pace than he had ever moved before, "then it won't cost so much to put him into a uniform."

"A uniform!" gasped the grocer. "Yes, sir. If I may offer advice, I'd put him into a neat uniform and buy him a bike. People like to see a smart-looking chap go up to their doors, and, with your name on his cap and on the bike, he'll be a walking advertisement for you."

"I'll think about it," said Mr. Gaythorpe. "I tell you what, Carton, you'd better come upstairs and have a bit of dinner with me to-day, and we'll talk things over. Something's got to be done, or I shall be a bankrupt. I dropped the little bit I had behind me by speculating on the Stock Exchange."

Jack thought how strange it was that his former employer—the man who had turned him out of his shop in disgrace, the man who was three times his age—should now be appealing to him for advice.

At the end of the meal Mr. Gaythorpe had agreed to clothe the fat boy in a green uniform, and to buy—second-hand, if he could—a carrier-cycle.

"What I reckon you want, sir," said Jack, after his first two suggestions had been agreed to, "is some special article that people can only get from you. That brings people into the shop, and they'll probably buy something else. Now, there's a biscuit they had at the Stores—a grand biscuit that can be sold at a good profit for fivepence a pound. I heard the firm's traveller telling the buyer that they would stamp the name of a firm who would take a big quantity upon them."

"Yes," said the grocer, "but I can't take a big quantity."

"You could if you boomed the thing. Why not go to the people and give a big order? Call them 'Gaythorpe's Biscuits,' get the monopoly for them in this district, and make a big show in the windows? People will talk about them, and you'd get a grand advertisement."

"Yes," said the grocer, keeping down his excitement by a great effort, "there might be something in it. I'll go and see the people."

"Mother!" Jack announced, dashing into the room that night. "I've gone back to Mr. Gaythorpe's, and I'm a sort of junior manager, idea provider, and errand-boy hustler in one!"

Then he poured out the whole story.

"Jack," said his mother, "I'm sure you will get on. You deserve success. Mr. Gaythorpe will make you a partner, and—"

"I've got a bit of imagination, mother, but I can't quite imagine that."

"Stranger things have happened, Jack," said his mother quietly, as they sat down to supper.

Jack had been back at Gaythorpe's nearly a fortnight, and people in the district were beginning to ask themselves what had happened at the hitherto old-fashioned shop in the High Street. The fat boy had become slightly thinner through riding the carrier-cycle, and greatly fancied himself in his smart green uniform.

The windows, too, looked different. Jack was putting into practice several things he had learned, or what had occurred to him at the Stores. His principal work at the shop consisted of attending to orders for delivery, and seeing that they were sent out quickly.

But in four days' time—on Saturday—Gaythorpe's was to make the big bid for success suggested by Jack's midday talk with the grocer.

Gaythorpe had been to the biscuit-makers and made the offer, which had been accepted. Many hundred pounds of the particular sort that Jack had mentioned were being stamped with his name, and he had the sole sale for some miles round.

Jack and the grocer, assisted by Hooper, who was a fairly smart window-dresser, had got out a design for the fitting of both windows. Large bills had been printed, announcing that "Gaythorpe's Biscuits" were finer than others at double the price, that they were made specially for the firm, and that once tried were always eaten, etc.

It was the most ambitious thing that Gaythorpe had ever attempted, and from the proprietor down to the errand-boy there was great excitement and anxiety to see what Saturday would bring forth.

That afternoon Jack saw a well-dressed man enter, and after speaking somewhat curtly to the grocer, withdraw with him to the little office

at the end of the shop. Then, after talking for some time, he went out.

"Carton!" Jack was staggered at the harsh, tremulous note in Mr. Gaythorpe's voice and the pale, haggard face. He hurried into the little office, and the grocer closed the door.

"Carton," he gasped, "I'm ruined! They won't give me a chance! I'm obliged to you—you've done your best—but I'm beaten!"

"Why, sir?" cried Jack. "What's the matter? What has happened?"

"The wholesalers have refused to execute the large order I sent them yesterday because I owe them nearly fifty pounds, and they won't trust me for another penny. I've spent the money to try and improve things, thinking they would trust me for a bit more, seeing that I've dealt with them for twenty years and always paid up promptly, except for the last two accounts."

"If you could pay them fifty pounds by Friday morning, would they deliver the goods here in time for Saturday?" asked Jack quickly.

"I expect they would," said the grocer gloomily. "But I haven't a chance of getting the money, so it doesn't matter. We're short of stock now, and it will be no earthly use making a boom if we haven't other goods besides biscuits. I may as well put the shutters up at once."

"There's no need to do that, sir," said Jack quietly. "I will lend you fifty pounds."

"Lend me fifty pounds!" gasped Mr. Gaythorpe, looking at his young assistant as though he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Yes," said Jack, and explained how the railway company had rewarded him for saving a train some weeks before.

"The money is in the savings-bank," he went on quickly. "If I fill in a withdrawal form at once I should have the money on Friday morning."

"My boy," gasped Mr. Gaythorpe, seizing him by the hand, "you're a brick, you're one of the best. If you lend me this money I will pay you sixty pounds for it, and give you ten per cent. on the biscuits you induced me to take up."

"If you'll put that into writing, sir," said Jack, in a businesslike voice, "I will go straight away to the post-office."

He had heard a good deal of Mr. Gaythorpe's promises which he always seemed to forget in cooler blood, and he argued that if he saved the grocer's business, the offer was only a fair one.

Then Jack, armed with the written promise, hurried to the post-office, after going home to get his bank-book. With a quickly beating heart at withdrawing such a large sum, he filled in the form, and then left the place feeling that he had added the role of financier to his list of occupations.

But on Friday morning there was no warrant for the money, and the grocer looked anxious when Jack told him.

"I hope you didn't make any mistake in filling in the form," he said.

"No, sir; I expect it will be there when I go home for dinner."

But it wasn't.

Several times during the afternoon and evening the grocer sent him home to see if the warrant for the withdrawal of the money which meant so much to him had arrived, and each time Jack returned to say that it had not.

Late that night Mr. Gaythorpe, who was convinced that Jack had made some error in filling in the form, decided on the off-chance to give him a duplicate order for the goods, and told him to get the money and go straight away to the wholesalers with it.

"I'll put off opening until ten o'clock," he said, "and say we're unable to cope with the large number of mail orders. If you can get the goods here by then, it will be a bigger ad. than ever; if you can't, I'm ruined!"

"I'll do it, sir," said Jack confidently.

The warrant for the withdrawal of the money arrived by the last post that night, too late to be of any use that day, but Jack knew he would have plenty of time to obtain the money at the post-office, and then reach the wholesaler's place in the City Road by nine o'clock, when they opened.

Then would come the hustle.

"You won't get another order from us unless you get the goods to our place by a quarter to ten," said Jack Carton calmly.

He had refused to discuss his business with a young clerk, and been ushered into the presence of the assistant-manager, who had just arrived, paid the money, and asked for the goods to be dispatched at once. The remark that such quick delivery was impossible had brought forth Jack's threat.

"We should be sorry to lose Mr. Gaythorpe's custom," said the assistant-manager.

"You will be very sorry. Gaythorpe is going to buck up. Look here, it's ten past nine now. You've got motor-vans; if your men hustle it could just be done."

The assistant-manager walked to the telephone, and Jack heard him give sharp commands to someone at the other end.

"You'd better ride back on our van," he said to the boy; "you'll be able to show the driver the way. Go down the yard. Our men are what you call 'hustling,' and it will be ready to start in a few minutes."

Jack thanked him, and found the huge motor-van. Mr. Gaythorpe's order only filled four cases, and the driver grinned when he saw his load. The yard-foreman was hustling the men around, and soon after Jack had taken his seat beside the driver, the big motor-van rumbled out into the City Road.

It was nearly twenty-five minutes past nine.

"We ain't goin' to do it in the time," said the driver; "but I'll let 'er rip as much as I dare. These things ain't bloomin' electric broughams."

"We've jolly well got to be there in time," said Jack.

But as they turned into the Kingsland Road, it looked for a moment as though they would never live to get there, for the rushing motor-van skidded across the tram-lines right in front of an advancing double-decked tram.

Then there was a terrific crash, as the huge vehicle dashed into the front of the motor-van. Jack and the driver at the moment of impact had the presence of mind to throw themselves into the back of the van, and by so doing undoubtedly saved themselves from serious injury.

Jack was the first to get to his feet. He was only a little shaken, and had no time to think about the collision. He had to get the goods to Gaythorpe's in time for the opening. But how was he going to do it now?

Then his face lighted up, and, to the astonishment of the crowd collecting round the wrecked motor-van, he stood up and shouted to the driver of a taxi-cab that was evidently making for the City after having dropped a passenger somewhere in the district.

The man wheeled the cab round, and the crowd fell back as he drove up alongside the van.

"Here!" cried Jack. "I want to get these cases to Gaythorpe's—a grocer's shop in the Stoke Newington

High Street. If we get there before ten, you'll get half-a-sovereign."

"Right you are," said the man. "If the cash is good enough, I don't mind being a sorter Carter Paterson and Parcels Delivery van. Buck up, then, an' get the cases in."

The driver of the van helped Jack to get the four cases into the cab, and glanced anxiously at his watch as it started off.

It was twenty to ten.

The taxi bowled along beautifully, threading its way in and out of the heavy traffic. The driver meant to earn that ten shillings if he possibly could.

They were past Dalston Junction, and in the Stoke Newington Road at a quarter to ten. Another five minutes, thought Jack, they would be alongside the pavement outside Gaythorpe's shop.

But alas for his hopes! Just as the cab entered the High Street something went wrong with the engine; there was a muffled explosion, a plunging on of brakes, and the cab came to a stop.

Jack had seen men tinkering about at motor-buses and cabs before, and knew what a long delay it usually entailed. But what could he do save—

Ah!

He was out of the cab in a flash, and seized hold of an empty barrow standing outside a wine-merchant's shop, and pulling it up to the cab, started to put the cases on it. The angry wine-merchant, who came bustling out of his shop, made no protest when Jack explained the position.

"Come along to the shop for your fare as soon as you can!" Jack cried to the cab-driver. "I dare say you'll get your half-sovereign."

Then, with quite a little crowd at his heels, he ran along with the barrow containing the four cases of goods that meant so much to Gaythorpe's.

"Saved!" cried Mr. Gaythorpe, wiping the beads of perspiration from his brow. "I shall never forget this, my lad!"

And as soon as the shutters were taken down the crowd began to swell round the window filled with biscuits.

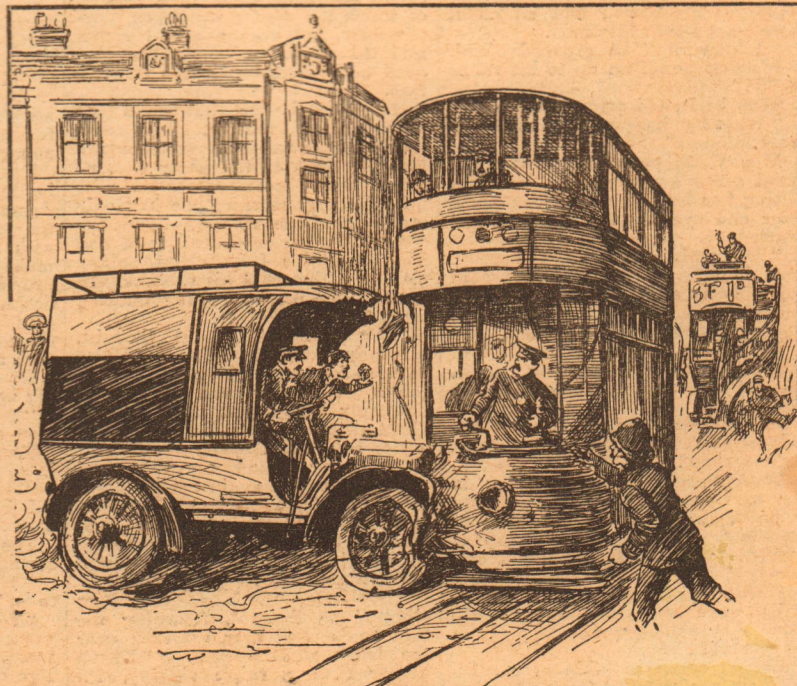
"Gaythorpe's got something special," said other tradesmen; but although a vast crowd was congregated outside, few of the curious entered. But gradually the regular customers began to enter to buy other things, and bought biscuits as well, and by midday the assistants had all they could do to serve the people.

From early in the afternoon there could be no doubt of the big success of Jack's idea for bucking up Gaythorpe's.

It was nearly midnight when Jack, tired out, put on his overcoat and cap, and said good-night to his employer.

"Carton," said the grocer hoarsely, "some time ago I called you Ever-Ready Jack. You have more than justified that title over to-day's work."

(Another adventure of Ever-Ready Jack next week.)



The rushing motor-van skidded across the tram-lines right in front of an advancing double-decked tram. Then there was a terrific crash, as the huge vehicle dashed into the front of the motor-van.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

START IT NOW.

"TOM WILLING."

A Stirring New Poor Boy Story. By VESEY DEANE.

The Sack Again.

"THAT'S Mrs. Wood," said Mr. Timms, grocer and provision merchant, to himself, as he caught sight of an elderly figure tearing across the street towards his shop. "Now, I wonder wot brings her out so early in the morning?"

Timms was peeping out of his shop-window. He was a great hand at peeping, was Timms. With the solitary exception of disguising brown sand as sugar, peeping was his greatest accomplishment. From behind a huge pile of dummy cocoas he watched the progress of his customer with a troubled eye.

"Don't she look blessed mad! I—I hope she ain't comin' in here!" The woman stopped in the centre of the road, cast a hot eye up at the grocer's door, and steered straight for it.

"She is coming here!" gasped Timms, retiring hastily from the window. "That's done it! I'll bet it's that young scoundrel's doings ag'in! Wot has 'e been doing ov now, I wonder?"

He had just time to pull open the sugar drawer and pretend to be busy with a scoop when the red face of the lady appeared like an angry sun on the other side of the counter.

Mr. Timms, twisting his face into his best smile, nodded across to her. "Good-morning, Mrs. Wood," he said—"good-morning! It's a very nice sort ov day cons—"

Swish!

A heavy umbrella, swung by a muscular, though feminine, arm, hissed viciously through the air, and only a swift duck saved the grocer from a sudden and painful blow.

"Don't you dare stand and grin at me, you—you murderer!" gasped the woman, regaining her balance by a tremendous effort, and sinking into a chair which stood close beside the counter. "What do you mean by it? Answer me that!"

Timms hastily got behind the heavy scales before venturing to make a reply.

"My dear madam," he began, "calm yourself! Wot ever's happened? Be calm! Jist sit still an' pull yourself together like! You'll be all right in a minit!"

Mrs. Wood drummed on the counter in a frenzy of wrath.

"You—you dare tell me to be calm, you—you himage!" she screamed. "Would you be calm if half ov your family had the doctor using the stummick-pump on 'em, and when you don't know whether your husband was alive or poisoned? Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The grocer's puffy face went as white as his apron, and an awful fear leaped into his heart.

"I knew it!" he groaned aloud. "It's that 'ere Tom up to his tricks ag'in!"

Then he leaned across the counter. "What has happened, in the name ov goodness?"

Mrs. Wood swept her broad, red hand across her streaming forehead, tilting her bonnet at a rakish angle over one eye in the process, and started.

"Ow could you do it—ow could you do it? And me wot has paid my bills so regular, except the four months when my man lost his job! Oh, you wicked, wicked man!"

By taking two thick handfuls of his own hair and tugging at it, Timms succeeded in restraining his temper.

"Look here!" he yelled. "Either tell me what I've done or—get out ov my shop!"

With this ultimatum ringing in her ears the woman quietened down a trifle. Diving her hand into her handbag, she produced a scrap of crumpled paper. Smoothing it out, she held it across the counter.

"There's my order!" she cried. "You can see for yourself—two pounds ov golden syrup—as plain as a pikestaff!"

Golden syrup as plain as a pikestaff is a new article of diet, but Timms seemed to understand.

"Yes, yes; I know all about

that!" he admitted. "I gave it to my boy, Tom Willing, and he took the goods round to you himself."

"He—he didn't do nothing ov the sort!" the woman wailed. "What he brought me was—was two pounds of soft soap!"

"Good 'eavens!"

"Yes, and I never noticed it, being busy at the time, and my daughter, who was making the puddin', went and put that stuff in!"

"Deary, deary me!"

"And we didn't find out until this morning, when Tom and Harry were going to school. I gave 'em a slice each, and nearly poisoned 'em, pore things! And, what is worse, my husband has gone off to his work with a big piece of the pudding for his dinner! If he eats it, goodness help you!"

"What—what will he do?" the grocer wailed.

Mrs. Wood turned a pair of pitying eyes on him.

"He'll just about half kill you!" she said slowly. "He was a prize-fighter before he started brick-laying!"

A cold shiver ran down the narrow back of the provision merchant. Then suddenly another hot rush of anger came to him.

Stooping down, he picked up a huge stick, and, gripping it tightly, strode round to the front of the shop.

"Look here, Mrs. Wood," he said, "I know nothin' of this unfortunate affair, but I believe every word you say. You send me the doctor's bill and I'll settle it. And—and tell your good husband that I've started off now to pay that young hound for the mischief he's caused."

An assistant was called forward from the back premises to guard the counter; then Mr. Timms, wrath blazing from his eyes, rushed out of the shop in search of his victim.

Mrs. Wood followed him as far as the edge of the pavement, shouting out encouragements.

"See that you give the young varmint a real good 'iding!" she shrieked. "Something that he won't forget in a hurry!"

"You can leave that to me, madam!" cried Timms vengefully.

Meanwhile, Tom Willing, the cause of Mr. Timms' troubles, a sturdy, easy-going lad of about fourteen years of age, was trudging along the quiet streets with the big basket tucked contentedly under his arm.

The fiery red hair which could be seen beneath the cap told of a temperament which might one day be roused, and the eyes, although somewhat somnolent, were wide apart and steady in their gaze. Tom was a bit of a dreamer, and had desires, of which the reader will learn more presently, but even a casual glance told that there was much that was good and promising in his freckled face.

He looked the sort that would take a deal of rousing, but once thoroughly awakened, would see a thing through to the bitter end, no matter what the cost might be.

So far that morning, he had only made one little mistake—handed a servant the wrong parcel, and had had to double back about half a mile to make good his mistake. So he felt that he was really bucking up.

"I'm doing A-I!" he thought, blissfully ignorant of the awful fate in store for him. "I've been in this job a month now, and old Timms has only threatened to sack me about twice. I think I shall ask for a rise next week."

He swung round a corner, and rested his basket against the railings of a house for a moment. The street was quite deserted, but as Tom glanced down it he saw, dangling from a house about halfway down the street, a very long rope-ladder.

"By Jove, that's a jolly long climb!" he thought, following the thin cords until they vanished over the ledge of the roof. "That's higher than a ship's rigging, I'll bet!"

The fatal instinct that was his birthright came to him again.

"I believe I could shin up that like—like winking," he muttered; "and I'd get a rare view from the top! I wouldn't be surprised if I could see the bay and the shipping and the lighthouse on the breakwater."

Like a moth to the candle Tom was drawn down the street, and found himself in front of the flimsy ladder. The basket of provisions might as well have been in Hong Kong for all he remembered of them now.

"Now for the crow's nest!" he cried, gripping the narrow cords.

He was a different lad now. The slumbering eyes were bright and the lips firm. In another second he was shinning up the swaying ladder like a monkey. Height nor danger did not trouble Tom—he never even thought of them. Rung after rung passed beneath his sure feet, and in a few moments he was pulling himself over the sloping roof.

"Here, hi! What are you after?" A surprised voice cried out, and Tom, turning round, caught sight of a black face peering at him from the far side of a row of chimneys.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" stammered our hero. "I—I just came up to—have a look round!"

The sweep, a great broad-shouldered fellow, gave vent to a whistle of amazement.

"Bless me 'eart!" he exclaimed. "If that don't beat everything!"

Tom was crawling on his hands and knees over the tiles towards the man, and presently came to a halt beside the chimneys. Then, standing up on the narrow ledge of the roof, he turned, and threw his eyes

3 GRAND NEW SERIALS START IN "THE BOYS' HERALD" THIS WEEK.

out across the smother of rooftops.

"I thought so," he cried. "Yes, I can see the ships and the lighthouse! Isn't it grand—eh?"

The sweep lowered his bundle of wands, and stared at Tom.

"Do you know that I'm the only man in Portquay what can climb a rope-ladder over sixty feet high?" he asked.

"I didn't know it," said Tom innocently; "but I don't think it's much to crow over."

"I believe yer, blowed if I don't!" the sweep breathed. "But there, I suppose you've been a sailor?"

A wistful look leaped into the lad's face.

"I haven't," he said slowly; "but—but I mean to be some day."

"Good luck to ye!" said the sweep. "Can't say I fancy the job myself. Chimneys is good enough for me. The job's dirty, but the money ain't."

Tom did not reply. He was feasting his eyes on the blue stretch of sea shimmering beneath the hot rays of the morning sun. His stepfather, with whom the reader will shortly make acquaintance, had made the lad promise never to go down to the docks, and Tom honestly stuck to his pledge. That was the reason that the present opportunity had exerted such a strong influence on him.

He was aroused from a fit of musing by the sweep.

"Are you looking for a job?" the man asked.

Tom came back to earth—or, at least, housetops—with a rush.

"Great Scott! No!" he cried. "I—I forgot all about that. I—I have a job."

The man of soot shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if I was you, I'd get back to it," he said. "What are you on?"

"I—I'm delivering groceries," gasped the luckless Tom, hastily scrambling down the roof, "and I've left my basket—"

He had reached the parapet now, and the sweep saw his red head vanish over it, while the two strands

of the ladder began to jump and sway with his hasty descent.

"Left 'is basket, 'as he?" the man thought. "If that ain't the limit! He'll be dashed lucky if he finds it ag'in!"

Tom simply flung himself down that ladder and into the street. But when he turned the corner, the blank railings told him that his fears were only too well founded. The basket and parcels had vanished!

"Phew! That's settled it!" he gasped, taking off his cap and mopping his brow. "I have made a hash ' it this time. It's the sack as sure as eggs!"

He clambered up on to the railings, and glanced down into the area below. No; the basket had not fallen over there.

"It's a thundering good job for me that I did deliver some of 'em!" he thought. "I expect dad'll have to pay for what I've lost."

The door beneath the stairs opened, and a pert-looking maid thrust her fluffy head out. Her eyes fairly twinkled as they alighted on the troubled face of Tom.

"Hallo, boy!" she cried. "Are you looking for a basket?"

Tom nodded his ginger head, heaving a sigh of relief at the same time.

"I am, miss," he cried. "Hand it up, please!"

The maid laughed.

"Oh, I haven't got it," she said; "but I know who has!"

"Wh—who took it?" Tom breathed anxiously.

"Mr. Timms," cried the maid; "I was cleaning the steps when he came up. If I were you, I wouldn't go back to the shop."

"Did he look angry, miss?" our hero asked pleadingly.

"Rather! Fair boiling, in fact! He told me that you had poisoned about six people—"

Tom made a wild clutch at the railings.

"What's that?" he cried. "He said that you had given a customer soft-soap—ha, ha, ha!—instead of syrup. Ha, ha, ha!"

The girl went off into a fit of laughter, and Tom, still balancing on the narrow ledge of the railings,

It was well on in the evening before he turned at last into the little street in which his home was situated.

His knock on the door brought Croome out in his shirt-sleeves.

The stepfather—a fat-faced, unpleasant-looking individual—scowled as his eyes alighted on Tom's face.

"You've come at last, 'ave you?" was his greeting. "Well, ain't you proud of yourself—eh?"

Tom took off his cap, and slipping past the man, hurried into the kitchen and drew a chair up to the table. Croome had just been having tea, and the hungry lad promptly helped himself to a huge slice of bread, and poured out a cup of the fragrant brew.

"I couldn't help it, dad," he said. "It was as much Timms' fault as mine. He wouldn't let me have a light in the cellar, and I made a mistake with the drums."

"Nearly p'isined a 'ole fambly!" said Croome, leaning against the wall and eyeing Tom gloomily. "Do you know that Timms 'as been 'ere, and I've to pay twenty-two shillings—a doctor's bill?"

"Twenty-two shillings! Hookey! That's rough!" gasped Willing, through a mouthful of bread-and-butter.

"Rough!" repeated his stepfather. "It's wuss than that. It's rotten!" He lounged across the little room, and dropped heavily into a seat opposite the lad. "Blessed if I know wot to do with you!" he continued grimly. "I don't believe there's another boy like you in—in the 'ole world! This makes the tenth job wot you've been kicked out of since Christmas! Why don't you keep your wits about you?"

Tom heaved a sigh. "I wish you'd let me go to sea," he murmured, repeating again his old, old cry. "I know I'd be all right there. Somehow or other, I don't seem to be any good on land." He scratched his curly head thoughtfully. "Besides," he continued, "I don't think that you want to keep your wits about you as a grocer—much. You ought to see Mr. Timms. He's always making mistakes; giving people margarine for butter, and—and 1s. 4d. tea when they ask for 2s.!"

Croome shrugged his thick shoulders.

"Oh, that's part of his business, I suppose!" he remarked. "Anyhow, he makes a bit out of them mistakes. All you do is to get the 'push' for yours!"

"If you'd only let me go to sea—" His stepfather leaped to his feet, and scowled across the table at the eager face.

"I've told you a hundred times that you'll only get away to sea after you've stayed in one job for six months!" he cried. "That ain't a 'ard condition to make, but it seems a jolly sight more than you can do. Take it from me, you won't go to sea until you do what I ask."

With that he crossed the room and flung himself through the door. Tom returned to his attack on the bread-and-butter, with a sigh.

"He still harps on that," he thought; "yet he and I don't seem to hit it very well. If I were in his shoes, I'd—I'd jump at the chance of getting rid of a nuisance like me!"

But Mr. Croome wasn't nearly so disinterested a person as he pretended to be.

(Why is Croome so anxious that Tom should keep a job six months? Why won't he let the boy go to sea? What is the mystery surrounding Tom Willing? Does he manage at length to avoid getting the sack for a whole six months?)

These and many similar questions will be in the mind of the reader, who can have them all answered by reading the further exciting chapters of this grand new serial which appear in this week's issue of that famous paper "The Boys' Herald." A grand new football yarn and a stirring tale of school life commence in the same number. "The Boys' Herald" is on sale on Wednesday—price 1d.)



SEXTON BLAKE; FOREMAN.

Being a Grand New Serial of the Great Detective, and His Assistants Tinker and Pedro.



NEW READERS START HERE.

The opening of this story finds Sexton Blake, the famous detective, with his young assistant Tinker, on the night previous to their embarkation to East Africa on a pleasure shooting trip. At the very last moment this long anticipated holiday is abandoned.

Sidney Temple is a young engineer, at present engaged in a large undertaking at Redcliff Dale to construct a scheme of supplying three neighbouring towns with water from a broad and swift river. This clever young engineer will make his name famous in the engineering world if he can only successfully finish the job in the contracted time. Everything goes well for six months, but now some unknown enemy is destroying all his plans and completed work.

Sexton Blake and Tinker, disguised as navvies,

obtain employment in the workings of this great scheme at Redcliff Dale. This village is better known by the fancy name of "Ginger Town," and the famous detective and his assistant get lodgings at the cottage of Job Peckchaff some distance away from the workings.

Tinker is employed on the day shift, while his employer works with the night shift, and consequently the two only meet on rare occasions.

Black Jock is an exceedingly harsh and suspicious foreman, under whom Tinker is working. In the night the work of months is mysteriously made a complete wreck, and the machinery put in a dishevelled condition.

So far, Sexton Blake has not struck the slightest clue to the mystery he has come to solve, and nothing but ruin stares Sidney Temple in the face.

The detective, now known as Bob Packer, is promoted to ganger, or sort of petty foreman, and, half conscious that something is going to happen, he stays on after his usual working hours. A huge pump is employed to keep clear any water that fights its way past the dam of the river.

A sound comes from the pump-house—a short cry of pain or alarm. The detective finds the engine-minder drugged and senseless. He then catches the enemy actually at work throwing vitriol over the bearings of the great shaft of the pump. A terrible struggle ensues, and the marauder flies, while Sexton Blake miraculously escapes death.

He returns to the helpless engine-minder, and while attending him Sidney Temple appears on the scene. The pump is again set in motion, but the rush of water is threatening destruction with horrid swiftness. It is a fight between flood and fire. The water slowly gains over the fast-working pump, and Blake and Temple have stoked the fires to white heat, and can feed the furnaces no more.

And there they wait, their eyes fixed upon the rising flood, that seems to mark off inch by inch their remaining chance of life.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

THE 10th CHAPTER.

Across the Red-lit Waters.

TINKER couldn't sleep that night.

It could hardly have been a guilty conscience, for he had done nothing worse that day than give Black Jock, the foreman, an air-voyage in the bucket of the travelling crane, and that did not trouble him.

And it couldn't have been indigestion, for Tinker's digestion was like that of an ostrich, equal to anything.

Whatever the cause may have been, the fact remains he could not get to sleep; or, having got to sleep, he promptly woke up again.

He tried turning over on the other side so often that the bed-clothes all got mixed up, and the bed became all lumps. Then he thought that the room felt awfully stuffy, and he got up to open the window wider. He no sooner raised the sash than Pedro, who had a big tub for a kennel in the garden underneath, came out of it, rattling his chain, and preparing to hold a conversation in barks.

Tinker told him to lie down, and leant out of the window, listening.

The night was very still. From a farther room in the cottage behind him came Job Peckchaff's melodious snore. For Job was sleeping soundly. So was Mrs. Peckchaff, or she wouldn't have let him.

But outside hardly a murmur broke the silence and stillness of the night.

It was so still that Tinker listened for something, a familiar sound that he missed. It came to him at last what it was—the distant thud, thud of the big pump.

Job Peckchaff's cottage was situated about a mile from that corner of the great reservoir where the pumping-station stood, and its dull, booming stroke had become one of the familiar sounds carried thither when the wind set that way, or the air was still, as it was that night.

"Something queer about this!" he muttered. "The pump has never been stopped before, night or day, since it was started."

He listened still more intently. Then it seemed to him that he did detect a sound coming from that direction. But it was a rapid, throbbing sound, quite unlike the slow, regular beat of the pump.

"The big engine is racing—racing mad enough to sling her flywheel over the moor!" he ejaculated. "Has old Spanner had something stronger than cold tea to-night? Or has he gone off his nut, or—There's something wrong over there, and I'm going to see!"

When Tinker came to a decision he acted promptly.

He slipped into his clothes with a rapidity that would have beaten a London fireman, and under two minutes had dropped out of the window into the garden beneath.

Pedro hailed his arrival with a demonstration of delighted approval.

He took it for granted that Tinker was going for a sort of late evening stroll, and, of course, would take him. But Tinker shook his head, and waved him back into his kennel.

"Just you hush up, and go and play Diogenes in your tub!" he ordered. "You can't come, old son!"

But the bloodhound whimpered his keen disappointment, and Tinker relented.

"Well, come along, then," he said. "Only just you behave as if you were at your great grandmother's funeral, or you'll get licked—see? We're not out for rats!"

The highly-trained dog instantly ceased his gambols of delight, and, dropping into a sedate stride, followed his young master through the garden gate out into the road. Soon leaving this, Tinker struck off at a smart pace along the side of the hill, slantwise towards the nearest angle of the unfinished reservoir, where the pumping-station was erected.

Had he not known the way, those strange sounds would have guided him.

Louder with each step he took, the throbbing, thrashing noise beat upon his ear, until the weird tumult thrilled his nerves with excitement born of its own mad, feverish music, and made him increase his pace to a run.

A sharp spurt down a spur of the hill brought him out upon the broad top of the great dam, a solid wall of granite ten yards wide at the top and broadening to a hundred at its base, and stretching a full mile across the vale.

He could hear voices of men in the distance, and the beat of men's feet hurrying along the top of the great wall.

They were some men of the night-shift working at the other extremity of the reservoir, who had doubtless been alarmed by the unusual sounds from the pump-station.

But Tinker paid little heed to them. He stood for a moment, rooted to the spot by the spectacle before him.

Beneath him, but about two hundred yards away, stood the pumped and its adjoining engine-house, the lofty top of the former barely level with the huge wall on which he stood.

But around the building now stretched a foaming and turbulent sheet of water that extended as far as Tinker could see into the darkness beyond.

It formed already a big lake in that angle of the huge reservoir bed, which was deepest here, where the great pipe, or conduit, destined to supply the distant town with water, was to pass out through a tunnel in the base of the dam.

Out of the midst of this dark, heaving, yellowish flood arose the black shape of the building, shaking visibly with the fierce beat of the machinery within. From the window of the engine-room, and from its open door, there streamed a vivid vermilion light, as though the place were on fire.

But Tinker knew what it meant. "The flood water has broken in," he gasped, "and old Spanner has double-stoked the fires to race the engine and try to keep it down! But he's failed—he's failed! And he is completely cut off now!"

How to save the old man? He racked his brains for some expedient.

And there seemed none! The oncoming men were still some distance away, and every moment lessened any slender hope.

He could see that the water gained rapidly. Already it was washing through the open doorway. And that meant that it was at least thirty feet in depth; a mass of water sweeping around the building with a force no swimmer could hope to stem!

He shouted to the men to hasten, and an answering shout came back, but still all too far away!

But another answering cry came from the very building itself.

The voice was so mixed with the general din, the rush of the water, and the fierce beat, beat of the iron monsters striving in battle below, that Tinker did not recognise it.

But Pedro did! It was the voice of his master!

He gave an answering bay that split the night air like the blast of a bugle, then leapt sheer down from the top of the dam!

"He will be carried away!" cried Tinker, running to the edge and peering down in an agony of dismay. For the bloodhound was to him like a human friend.

The red glare from the open doorway threw a lurid track across the dark water, and he looked to see the dog struggling through it, but saw, to his intense relief, that Pedro had not struck the water at all. It was beyond reach of his leap.

He had landed on a narrow embankment of clay that had been built, some ten feet from the base of the dam, to keep the flood-water, should it rise, as it had done now, from washing away the concrete foundation ere time had set it hard.

Baying loudly, he was running up and down the bank, as if minded any moment to plunge into the flood.

Tinker shouted to him, ordering him to remain where he was.

Then from the building came that voice again. And Tinker knew it now!

"It's the gov'nor!" he gasped. "It's Mr. Blake! Good heavens! Is he in there?"

Then, without a second thought, he sprang from the dam as the bloodhound had done.

It was a sheer leap of nearly forty feet, and but that he struck deeply into the soft clay, he might have broken a limb, or at best have rebounded into the swirling water.

Happily he did neither.

Breathless, but unhurt, he drew his feet out of the clay, and, holding Pedro tightly by the collar, strained his eyes across the water towards the engine-house.

He could see the interior well, lighted as it was by the red glare of the engine furnaces.

He saw the floor deep in water that looked like blood, beaten into billows by the action of the great pump. He saw the crank of the engine as it leaped from the flood in its rapid stroke. The rest was invisible, except the upper part of the

flywheel with its halo of yellow spume.

He saw the cinder-heap—now but a tiny islet—and the three crouching figures upon it. And one he knew was the man dear to him as a father—Sexton Blake!

The detective must have seen him upon the bank, for he raised his arm, and Tinker saw his lips move. But the shouted words were lost in the wild tumult of sounds. It was doubtless a warning to go back, to retreat far from the building.

For the worst peril that threatened was now close upon its dread climax. The water, leaping in waves under the pump's tremendous strokes, was near upon the glowing furnaces. And yet Blake knew that to shut off steam and stop the pump would have been worse than useless. The flood, unchecked, would then have risen two feet to one, bringing the end nearer, that was all!

It was very near now. A few more of those leaping waves, and—

Tinker understood that peril all too well!

"Merciful Heaven! Is there nothing I can do?" he cried, in an agony of spirit.

THE 11th CHAPTER.

Triumph and Disaster.

THE oncoming men had now reached that part of the dam

right above where Tinker stood upon the bank below. There were only half a dozen of them; a ganger and a small squad, who chanced to be working at a spot much nearer than the others, and had thus heard the strange din from the pumped.

"By thunder, mates, look!" Tinker heard the foremost shout. "The flood-water's up, and the pump-house is cut off!"

Cries of amazement and alarm from the other men echoed his own, as each arrived within sight of the flood.

"If old Spanner's in there he'll be drowned like a rat! We can't save him!" cried one.

Tinker raised his voice to the highest pitch his lungs would allow.

"He is in there," he shouted, "and Bob Packer and Mr. Temple along with him! And the water's close on the engine-furnace! They'll be blown to pieces or scalded to death!"

"Mercy on us!" came a cry from above. "What's to be done?"

"Cut through this bank here, and let the water into the conduit tunnel. It's the only chance!" Tinker shouted back. "Get me a spade and sling it down like lightning! There's not a moment to lose!"

By a lucky chance, or that sort of habit that makes a soldier snatch up his rifle at an alarm, one of the men had brought his spade with him.

"I've got mine!" he shouted. "Stand clear, mate! I'll heave it over!"

Tinker backed away with the dog, and the spade came down, striking deep into the earth.

"We'll get a rope and come down and help!" cried the ganger. For, stout-hearted fellows though they were, none thought of leaping from that fearful height, or dreamt that the boy beneath them had actually done so.

"Yes, get a rope!" cried the others.

"No, no!" shouted Tinker. "I don't want help." For he knew that a score of men could not cut a channel across that broad bank in time; and he did not want to imperil more lives. "Get me a keg of powder and a fuse from the magazine! I'm going to blow away part of the bank!"

"By gum! Never thought of that! It's the only way," exclaimed the ganger. "I'll get 'em, lad—I'll get 'em!"

The magazine—newly built since the late explosion—was fortunately not far away; in fact, the watchman in charge of it had been one of the first to hear the strange noises, and leaving his post, had joined the other men as they ran past.

But a few minutes passed ere Tinker heard the ganger call down from above:

"Here's the keg, lad, and a length of fuse. I'm lowering 'em in the bight of a rope. Look out! Better wait till I can get down to lend a hand."

"No, no!" cried Tinker. "Stay where you are; I can manage alone."

Tinker had something of Sexton Blake's magic power of command in a grave or perilous crisis—the power that comes of a resourceful brain, and a bold, determined spirit. The men obeyed him instinctively, boy though he was.

Craning over the edge, they watched him breathlessly.

He had not been idle whilst waiting for the blasting-powder. Working at furious speed with the spade, he had dug a deep but narrow hole through the clay into the ballast beneath.

Catching the keg of powder as it was lowered and cleverly swung out to him from above, he detached it from the rope and unwound the length of fuse fastened around it. Then, with the big blade of the strong pocket-knife which he always carried, he cut a small hole in the lid of the keg and inserted a bit of the fuse—cut as short as he dare make it.

The keg he now placed in the bottom of the hole he had dug, covering it with clay, which he stamped down hard, leaving the fuse projecting.

All this, long as it takes to tell, was done in less than five minutes, so rapidly did he work.

But the water was now level with the top of the bank, lapping on to it, in fact. Pedro was running up and down along the edge, baying and whining by turns, longing to plunge into the flood and battle his way to Sexton Blake.

But Tinker's command held him back. He was too highly trained to disobey even in his wild yearning and excitement.

Tinker lighted the fuse; then, catching the dog by his collar, dragged him back. But he would not retreat far in case the fuse should fail.

And fail it did! It glowed red and hissed crisply for a moment or two, then spluttered and went out, a jet of water from one of the wavelets leaping upon the edge of the bank having touched it.

Tinker gave a gasp of dismay—time, time was so precious.

Bidding the dog remain where he was, he ran forward, opening his knife as he went, and kneeling down, cut away the damp portion of the fuse.

Then, relighting the bit that remained—now perilously shortened—he sprang back.

The fuse hissed, glowed scarlet, then seemed to go out again. He took a step forward. Then came a flat, stunning explosion, a vermilion glare before his eyes, and a shower of stones, clay, and sparks that covered him.

But he little heeded that. He had succeeded.

For one brief moment a yawning, black trench appeared, stretching right across the bank as though cut at a single stroke by a mammoth spade in a giant hand. The next, and the yellow, spumy flood poured into it, leaping rather like a living thing, and, widening the jagged channel as it went, plunged into the space between the bank and the great wall, and thence, with a thunderous roar and a thousand hollow echoes, swept into the dark mouth of the tunnel underneath.

His heart trembling between hope and fear, Tinker glanced towards the isolated pump-house.

He gave a cry of joy and triumph.

The water had swept back like a receding billow, leaving the base of the building, and even the top of the mound on which it stood, clearly visible.

Sexton Blake and his two companions were saved.

A great cheer went up from the top of the dam, where quite a crowd of men were now assembled. It was echoed from the pump-house in the ringing, powerful voice of Blake himself; answered by Pedro again in the loudest bark of delight he could fetch from his strong lungs.

"Look out below there, boy—look out!"

The warning cry cut into the cheering suddenly coming from above.

Tinker, intent on watching the isolated building as it emerged from the flood, was little dreaming of any peril to himself.

It came suddenly, all too suddenly to be avoided. And the cry was too late.

There was no shock, nor any sort of warning sound; only suddenly the ground seemed to shiver under him and then to melt away, as the entire bank dissolved into the foaming flood, that seized him instantly and whirled him, like a chip in a mill-race, headlong towards the black mouth of the tunnel under the dam.

By instinct he closed his mouth and held his breath.

Great stones bruised his limbs, as they, like him, were carried down in the rush. He heard shouts dimly, as from a great distance, or like voices in a fevered dream. But they soon

melted into a mighty, roaring sound, and were lost.

Just for an instant, ere his head was covered by the clayey deluge, he glanced upwards at the sky, now brightening with the approach of dawn.

Then a mighty grey shape loomed over him—the wall of the great dam. He saw the arch of the tunnel, just a mere black crescent, for the water filled it almost to the top; and he plunged his head downwards lest it should be dashed against the granite edge.

A mingled and tremendous noise, like the booming of heavy guns, the roar of a great gale and the crash of billows on a rocky coast, now thundered in his ears.

His last glimpse of the sky was as of a vast dome, strangely bright, and lit with flashes of fire.

Then all the wild lights and all the terrific sounds rose up into one blended glare and final crash—and all was darkness and utter silence.

He was in the tunnel.

THE 12th CHAPTER. Just Touch-and-Go—Dr. Job.

THE great conduit, some twenty feet in diameter where it left the reservoir, gradually narrowed to half that width at the outlet on the farther side.

Through it the flood-water swept, filling the entire space as it narrowed, and swirling round in convolutions, like fluid poured through a funnel. It carried the helpless boy with it, his body spinning through the centre of the vortex.

To him, it was all mad chaos at that first wild plunge into blackness.

Then magically his brain cleared and worked with great speed—vividly. He felt tranquil, and even happy, although he had no hope of life; indeed, he thought that very sense of calm and peace was the coming of death.

One triumphant thought rang through his brain above all—he had saved Sexton Blake! What did his life matter, weighed in the balance against that?

Then he thought of Pedro. Ha! Had he, too, been swept into the flood?

Science tells us that the longest dream takes but a fraction of time in the dreaming—that the visionary events of a whole day are actually crowded into the brief space whilst the sleeper draws a single breath.

It was so with Tinker now.

His thoughts had dream-speed in that brief but awful journey through darkness and silence absolute.

He recalled vividly a thousand happenings, near and afar off, of his short, but busy and adventurous life; grim moments when, as now, his life hung upon a thread, and death seemed very near. And he had survived them all.

But now—now—

Suddenly every thought was scattered. The noises broke out again even louder than before. A great light burst upon him, dazzling his eyes. A fiery pain stabbed into his chest, waking him from his death-dream and bidding him once more battle for his life.

Several times he was spun round and round, now out of the water, now to be dashed back. At last he rolled over upon his back, tossing up and down upon what seemed a billowy sea, with the saffron-coloured dawn sky now shining into his eyes, now lost as a turbid wave washed over him.

He was spent, utterly exhausted.

Yet that fierce pain at his chest, which was the breath returning to his lungs, spurred him to make a fight for his life.

He turned over and tried to strike out. But his strength was gone, his limbs stiff and nearly useless. Even now he had sense enough to realise that the flood-water, having burst through the tunnel, would soon spread over the wide valley and dwindle harmlessly away.

But it had time to drown him long ere that.

He tried to keep up a feeble stroke, hoping to reach the rising ground at the valley's side. But his limbs refused their office, his sodden clothes began to drag him down.

Then suddenly, as he felt himself sinking into the still heaving water, something bumped against him. Instinctively he snatched at it, and his fingers closed on to a metal ring.

It was the ring on Pedro's collar. The bloodhound, like himself, had been caught in the flood, and swept through the tunnel, but being of tougher make, had suffered less from that grim journey.

Burdened though he was with

Tinker's now almost helpless weight, the gallant dog swam bravely on, making, with that sagacity which at such a moment is better than human wisdom, straight for where he knew the ground shelved upwards towards the hillside.

He made a noble fight for it! The flood, though fast spending itself as it widened and spread, was still deep and strong in the middle of the valley, where it rushed with the force of a mountain torrent.

Through this Pedro battled his way inch by inch, Tinker clinging with one hand to his collar, but with the instinct of self-preservation alone, for his senses were fast leaving him.

More than once the still fierce stream threatened to tear the two asunder, and drag the helpless boy back into its deep, central eddies.

But at last the gallant hound felt grass and shrubs brush against his feet.

Another brave effort, and he had struggled up the shelving ground, dragging his burden high and dry.

But the boy lay inert, deathly still. Pedro, after a vain effort to arouse him by licking his face, and even patting him with his paw, desisted, and, lifting his head, rent the morning air by a prolonged howl of grief.

Tinker partly opened his eyes, to meet a soft golden light.

So far as he thought about it at all, which was not much and only very hazily, he quite contentedly believed

Pedro raw just as he was, without troubling to take his brass collar off, and by way of a bit of light amusement after lunch, they took him—Tinker—and having pinned him down to the ground with brass-headed nails two feet long, through his arms and legs, they made a big figzig of damp gunpowder, and stuck it on his chest and set fire to it, and all sat round him in a ring to see if he would squeal.

But he wouldn't squeal, just to spite them, and stuck it out as long as he could till the figzig burnt through his waistcoat and set fire to his ribs.

Then he had to yell.

He tried to pull the nails out and get up. But the savage chief—who had ginger whiskers like Job Peckchaff—held him down, and said, in broad Yorkshire:

"Loi thee still, laddie—loi thee still an' go to sleep! You're doin' noicely!"

"Sleep! How the dickens can I sleep when my chest's on fire!" yelled Tinker, trying to struggle up.

He was broad awake now, and he knew it was a mistake about the savage chief; it was Job Peckchaff himself who held him. But there was no mistake about the burning at his chest. It was getting worse.

"Loi still, lad, an' go to sleep quiet loike; it's drawin' the pain oot beautiful," said Job soothingly, holding him down with a gentle but firm hand.

stuff, nothing solid being allowed him. "Never gave him bite nor morsel!" declared Job. "Oie only—"

Then he stopped awkwardly, his nerve failed him under his wife's eye. He tried to edge towards the door, but he was on the wrong side of the bedstead.

"Only what?" shrilled Mrs. Peckchaff. "What have you done to him? Don't stand gaping at me, you bull-headed dolt! What have you done to the poor boy?"

"Oie only—" faltered Job weakly, his eyes longingly on the door.

"Oh, it's my chest!" yelled Tinker, tearing away at the tucked-in bedclothes. "It's on fire! Something's burning me! Oh, o-oo! Pull it off!"

"It's the fever again—he's raving!" exclaimed Mrs. Peckchaff, now thoroughly alarmed. "There, there, dearie! Lie still—lie still!"

"I won't!" cried Tinker, kicking away under the bedclothes like mad. "Pull it off my chest! It's burning into my ribs!"

Just to humour him, for she thought he was delirious, Mrs. Peckchaff turned down the bedclothes and put her hand on his chest.

She drew it away with a yell.

Job turned rather paler, and managed to sneak half-way towards the door.

But the little woman was all pluck. She dived her hand into the breast of Tinker's nightgown again, and this time brought out something—something that looked like a red

The amateur doctor let out a yell that shook the windows, and raking the stuff off as he went, thundered downstairs to the kitchen pump.

THE 13th CHAPTER. Tinker Bucks Up.

"HALLO! That sounds promising, at any rate!" said a cheery voice from the doorway. "No undertaker need apply yet—eh?"

And Foreman Bob Packer, otherwise Sexton Blake, walked into the room.

"Your patient's better, eh, Mrs. Peckchaff?" he remarked lightly, although there was just a suspicion of moisture in his eyes and a slight shake in his voice as he said it.

For his heart was relieved of a heavy load.

Tinker had been ill, very ill indeed. For some hours he had hovered between life and death. But Sexton Blake possessed no small amount of medical knowledge, and a single glance at the boy told him that the danger was past.

Tinker, with a splendid constitution, would soon be himself again.

"Why, bless my heart, if he ain't calling for fried steak and half a loaf o' bread!" Mrs. Peckchaff exclaimed, with uplifted hands, as she vanished.

Blake sat down by the bedside. These two had met again, each out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. But they were not of the stuff to melt into flowery words over it. Just a hand-clasp, a brief silence, then they got to the practical part of it all.

"You got out of that place all right, then, sir?" said Tinker, almost casually.

"Looks like it," laughed the detective. "When the flood went down—which it did like magic after your bit of sapper-work—it was just a matter of throwing down planks and walking to dry land over the mud. Yes, all three got out, and none of us are the worse for it."

"Good business!" murmured Tinker.

"The bad part came after—when I heard what had happened to you," said Blake, in a lower tone. "There were plenty to tell me of that, but not one who thought you would ever be found alive."

"And how was I found, sir?" asked Tinker, his voice rather subdued.

"We found you," answered Blake, "upon the hillside nearly a mile down the valley. I—I thought you dead, lad. Old Pedro was beside you. It was his baying that guided us to the spot."

"And the flood is quite got under?" asked Tinker, after a pause.

"It spent itself harmlessly in the open valley, and has left no traces but the mud," Blake replied. "And the great pump, now acting quite perfectly again, will keep it down as before."

"But how did it come about—the accident to the pump, I mean, sir?" Tinker asked.

"It was no accident," said the detective. And he told him all.

Tinker drew a long breath.

"What a wicked plot!" he ejaculated. "To chloroform poor old Spanner, too! Has he got over it, sir? He is an oldish man."

"He is still rather queer, but he will no doubt recover," said Blake.

"And can he tell you anything about the attack? Did he see his assailant?" asked Tinker eagerly.

"No," was the answer. "He has nothing to tell except that, as he was stooping over the engine to oil it, he suddenly felt an arm thrown round him, and something wet and sickly-smelling pressed over his nose and mouth. He managed to tear it away, but it had done its work, for his senses left him, and the rest is a blank so far as he is concerned."

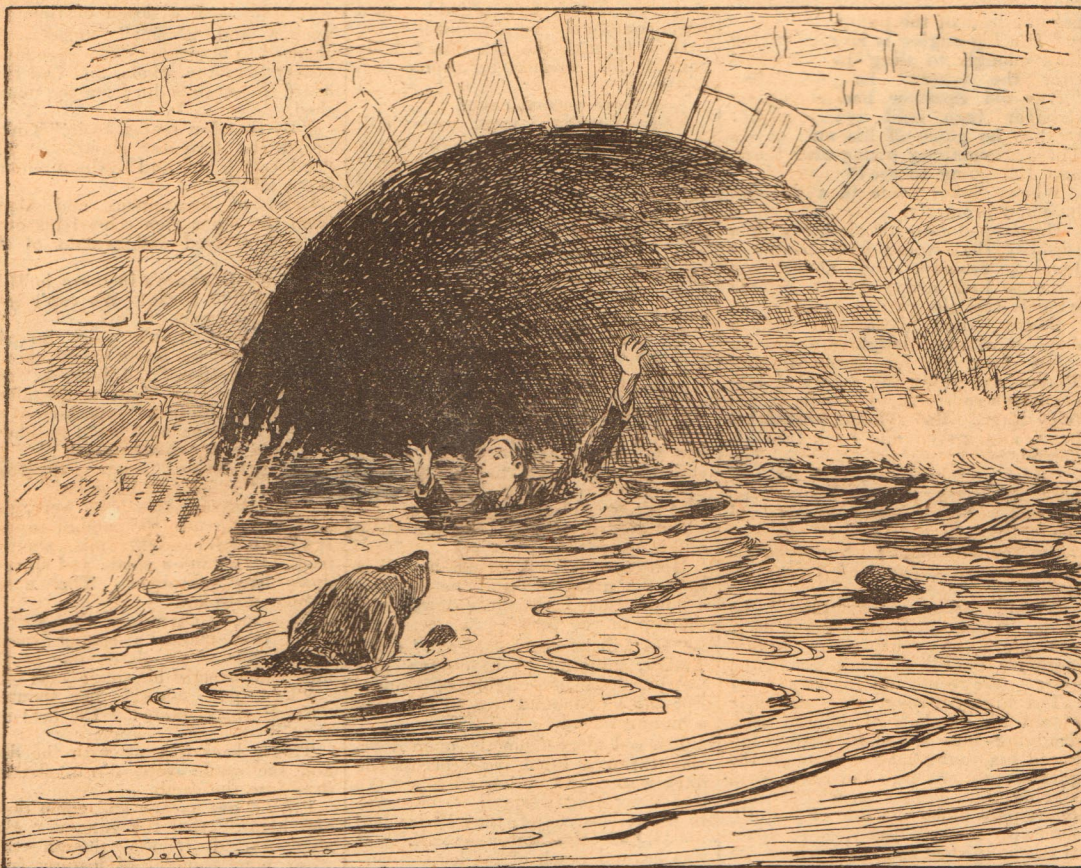
"But what do the men say about it?" was Tinker's next question, after a thoughtful pause. "They are a fine set of fellows, but they're just like sailors—they believe a lot in luck and ill-luck."

"I've thought about that," said Blake. "But Spanner is a sensible, reliable old fellow. He will hold his tongue, and the men will never know that it was anything more than an attack of illness that seized him, and caused him to leave the engine and pump to get out of gear. As you say, it would never do for them to know the truth. Men don't like to buck up against a dark plot, which they cannot fathom at every turn of their work."

"And, by jinks, a dark plot it is!" exclaimed Tinker.

"One of the darkest I ever set myself to solve!" said the great detective.

(Another splendid instalment next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)



Tinker was carried away by the terrible flood, and had at last become thoroughly exhausted. Then, suddenly, as he felt himself sinking into the still heaving water, something bumped against him. Instinctively he snatched at it, and his fingers closed on to a metal ring. It was the ring on Pedro's collar.

that he had died and was in another world.

Then mistily, through his half-opened left eye, he made out a washstand and a cane chair, and part of a shelf with two red glass vases and a china tiger, with a yellow body and purple stripes, upon it. Then it dawned upon him that these things belonged to his own little room in Job Peckchaff's cottage, and that possibly he wasn't dead after all, but had got back there somehow alive—how, he didn't care.

How long he had been there he didn't know. Whether the golden light upon the wall was that of sunrise or sunset, whether he had been there a few hours or several years, he hadn't the least idea, and he didn't mind, either.

He didn't mind about anything much. He felt very happy and comfortable, and thought he would go to sleep. So he went to sleep.

He had no notion how long he had been asleep when he began to dream.

He dreamt that he was taking a rather damp and splashy trip across the ocean, just clinging to Pedro's tail. Then a storm came on, and they got washed on to an island and were captured by savages, who all wore pink spotted cotton frocks and black bonnets with purple roses, like Mrs. Peckchaff.

Then the savages promptly ate up

Tinker redoubled his struggles, and let out a yell that made the cottage ring.

"What's the matter with the boy?" The voice came from below—a shrill voice, that made Job's brick-dust-red face turn pale.

It was Mrs. Peckchaff's.

As Tinker soon discovered, she had been his nurse. And a splendid nurse she made in spite of her queer temper. She had gone out for an hour or so that evening, leaving her patient in Job's care.

But she had come back now.

There was a quick, jumpy step upon the stairs. Job looked as if he would have liked to climb out of the window or crawl under the bed. But there wasn't time for either. The door popped open, and his wife came into the room with a skip like a squirrel.

"What's the matter with the boy?" she cried, another skip taking her to the bedside. "Are you worse, dearie? Are you worse?"

"It's my chest!" cried Tinker, trying to get his hands under the bedclothes, which were tucked in tightly. "Something's burning me—burning me like mad!"

Mrs. Peckchaff darted a look of black suspicion at her husband.

"It's the spasms he's got!" she exclaimed. "You've been giving him something to eat?" For Tinker was on gruel and broth, and such sloppy

flannel shirt, tied up in a flat bundle, but steaming fiercely, like a pudding just lifted from the boiling pot.

Tinker gave a sigh of relief.

"Wh-a-at!" she ejaculated, holding the thing out by one corner. "Wh-a-at's this?"

Job had got close to the door now, and felt bolder.

"It's a poultice—joost a poultice of bread and moostard Oie put on his chest to draw the cold oot, same as moi ould mother allus done," he said valiantly, as he reached for the knob of the door.

Mrs. Peckchaff gasped.

"A poultice!" she fairly screamed. "I'll poultice you! I'll teach you to come any old mother tricks on a poor, helpless boy I left yer to watch while I ran out for a breath of air!"

And she heaved the whole contraption at him.

The red flannel shirt dropped with a dull stump to the floor half-way, but the poultice continued its flight to the mark, and took Job just under the chin, spreading lovingly round his neck.

It was no longer scalding; Tinker's unfortunate body had taken the bite out of it. But it was still warm, decidedly warm! And the mustard—which Job had not spared in his anxiety to do Tinker all the good possible in the short time at his disposal—had a lively sting in it.

PLEASE NOTE THAT A GRAND NEW YORKSHIRE SERIAL IS COMING SOON IN THE B.F.

"DREADNOUGHT DICK"

A Thrilling Serial of Battleship Building on the Thames. By ALLAN BLAIR.



In This Grand New Serial You Read Of:

DICK ELTON, a plucky young page-boy in the employ of

SIR GARNET ROYAL, a famous Naval architect, who has just completed the plans of a new Dreadnought—H.M.S. Mammoth—for the British Government. The enormous vessel is being constructed on the Thames' bank.

CYRUS BRIANT, Sir Garnet's nephew, an underhand, unscrupulous fellow, who has managed to worm his way into his uncle's favour.

Sir Garnet Royal lives in a lonely mansion on the borders of Epping Forest. One evening, while taking his usual walk, he becomes the victim of

a vicious attack.

Some fiery spirit is thrown in his face, and he is rendered stone-blind. It is afterwards discovered that the safe in Sir Garnet's workshop has been forced open, and the plans of the battleship stolen.

The following day, taking advantage of his temporary position as ruler of the house, Briant dismisses Dick Elton.

Dick makes his way to Ingelstone, where his widowed mother lives, and there falls in with an old chum of his, a blacksmith boy named Ben Mugget.

They both start off for Barking, with the view of getting employment on the new British Dreadnought, and are successful in so doing.

Inspector Studgrave, the detective who has taken the case in hand, is discharged from Scotland Yard for making

a supposed false charge

against Admiral Ranchard. However, with the aid of Dick Elton and Ben Mugget, he determines to expose the affair.

Lottray, a mysterious foreman, and his accomplices set fire to the shipyard in several places at the same time, and escape by boat up the river, while the leader of the strike is arrested as the promoter of this outrage.

Work is once more resumed in the shipyard, and Studgrave, with Dick, pays a visit to Sir Garnet Royal, who rigorously disbelieves that his nephew, Cyrus Briant, is connected with this terrible business.

Mystery succeeds mystery. The latest outrage is the premature launch of the mighty vessel.

Briant swindles his blind uncle of fifty thousand pounds, and disappears.

For some weeks the Dreadnought is worked upon while it is lying in the river, and now the great ship is actually able to make her way down the Thames.

Dick and Ben attend the huge vessel on its speed trials; but the ship has not proceeded far before it is found necessary to repair the one and many defects of the mechanism.

Dick Elton is laid upon by two seamen in the night and pitched overboard. The men are allowed to go ashore at Southsea, and Dick and Ben, making their way to Portsmouth again, meet these two villainous seamen, who await at the station for some other undesirable. The lads hear from their conversation that something serious is afoot, and without a moment to spare they warn Captain Heggart, who is also ashore. But they are too late. The great ship is seemingly in the hands of madmen. The Mammoth is ploughing through the water at a fearful rate, and people have crowded to the end of the pier, and the mighty vessel is making towards them.

Too late now to traverse that pier and gain the shore. In a few seconds the Mammoth will crash into the pier, and they will be cut off.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

The Ship at Large.

IT was a moment of the most supreme excitement. Tragedy, terrible and awe-inspiring, loomed ahead. Nothing it seemed could avert that tragedy, and, recognising that, the thousands of people on the shore gazed out seaward, dumb with horror at the impending calamity.

Those on the shoreward end of the pier raced along towards safe ground in a wild, panic-stricken rush.

But it was those on the pierhead who represented the very core of the coming tragedy. They were effectually cut off. Their escape was barred by the onward, rushing monster now charging full-tilt at the pier's neck.

To attempt to rush past the point where the Mammoth would strike would have been madness—probably certain death.

Their only hope—if hope might still be permitted to a forlorn crowd so perilously placed—was to remain where they were. Not that many could have moved even had a way of escape presented itself. Abject fear and panic had frozen their faculties. A sort of paralysis had seized them, and had dried up even the instinct of self-preservation, which is Nature's first law.

So, like a flock of frightened sheep they huddled there in a packed mass, clinging to rails and seats and other fixtures for such slight help as these things might yield.

Those ashore, although clear of personal danger, were by no means free from the general panic. Many gave vent to useless shouts and to impotent shrieks. Many stood stock-still, gazing open-mouthed at the rushing monster of steel and flame that was presently to cause such devastation.

Out of this utter powerlessness one little group was to be roused by one warning voice.

The group consisted of Captain Heggart and the other officers of the Mammoth. The voice was that of Dick Elton.

"Look, sir!" the boy cried, pointing along the beach towards Eastney. "Look at all those boats. Couldn't they do some good if they put out? Couldn't they help to pick up—"

"By Heaven, boy, yes!" cried Captain Heggart. "Come along all of you!"

He started off at a run, followed by Dick and Ben and his subordinate officers.

Not a moment was wasted. Thirty, forty, fifty boats were launched in no time, and propelled by strong, willing arms, were on their way to the pierhead.

Yet every man bending to his

cars could not help but turn his head towards the great, rushing, tearing ship.

Nearer and nearer, amidst a cloud of surging foam and flying water, the Mammoth rushed like a living thing at the throat of her prey.

Then of a sudden—crash, crash! Z-ripp, tear! Crash, and crash again!

A mighty swaying and a rocking, a cloud of dense steam that for a few seconds hid the monster's wicked work, and then what was to be seen?

The great ship, unharmed save for mere scratches upon her pointed armoured bows, was clear of the pier which she had cut clean in two, and was steaming westward and outward with scarcely any perceptible lessening of her terrific speed.

She might have taken a dive through a barrier of tissue-paper for all the harm she seemed to have sustained. Her internal equipment might be faulty, but in her steel-clad frame there was nothing lacking in her strength and power of striking a blow.

But the pier! Was that the proud South Parade Pier, that poor, puny, twisted thing whose neck lay under the lapping waves beneath which it had been forced, while its head, like the head of some guillotined monster, rolled about spasmodically upon its insecure supports?

What a sight! What a pitiable picture the once proud structure presented. Massive iron stanchions and girders lay and hung in fantastic twistings. Planks and beams made of the same strong material as the ships of Nelson's days lay in all their splintered whiteness, their oaken hearts broken by the superior force of that twentieth-century example of man's ingenuity.

Wrecked, destroyed, pulverised,

split in twain! A bicycle beneath a steam-roller could not have presented a more complete spectacle of smashed and buckled shapelessness.

And the people on the rocking pier-head—what of them? They were safe, unhurt save for those injuries of shock to unstable nerves and frenzied brains. There they were, not one man, woman, or child killed or seriously harmed.

Round about them now were crowding the boats that had hastened to the rescue. Into these the people were lowered, and every soul taken ashore, for there were boats in plenty approaching from all sides, others having followed the first flotilla as soon as it was seen what service they could render.

The threatened tragedy had ended mercifully, and not one single life was lost.

Meantime, the Mammoth had turned, and with steam full up was racing out to sea!

Destroyers in Pursuit.

AMID all the vast concourse of people who had witnessed the wild manoeuvres of the Mammoth, none had watched more keenly than a certain party of three men.

These three sat at an upstairs window of a house bordering the beach at East Southsea. Two of these men were Seaman Hudd and Stoker Malcolm. The third man with them was the stranger whom they had met at Portsmouth Station.

Stranger! Not much of that about him. It was true that his face was bronzed, and that he wore a beard. But beard and bronze were both false, and had they been removed, the man would have stood revealed as the villainous yellow-skinned Lottray!

They had hurried to this house, where apartments had been procured for them by a confederate previously. They had arrived in time to witness the extraordinary movements of the giant warship. And among all the thousands who witnessed the sight, they alone knew anything of its meaning.

There had been a saturnine gleam in Lottray's eyes as he watched the great ship getting under way. His

undisguised satisfaction had increased with the vessel moving. He observed her gathering speed at every moment, and saw her turn in the direction of the pier.

At the sight of the panic-stricken crowd upon the pier, he had rubbed his hands with fiendish triumph as he made a mental forecast of what would happen.

"There'll be murder done! People will be killed! Well, so much the better!" he murmured. "How well Redlaw's got the ship in hand!"

"I should think so!" exclaimed Malcolm, in a thick voice, for, like his two companions, he had been drinking. "There's no better navigator anywhere than Redlaw, look for him where you may. Fine engineer as well. Knows everything about the Mammoth. See how he's bringing her round so as to take the pier at a bit of an angle. Hark at 'em on the pier now! I'm thinking there'll be some squeaking in earnest when she strikes!"

"What is to happen then?" Lottray asked. "I left the details to you and Redlaw to arrange."

"And we arranged 'em. The Mammoth is to cut the pier in half, so that the Great Marsh people will have to pay heavy for damages. Then Redlaw has arranged to bring the Mammoth to a full stop sudden. He's got a fakement of his own invention which'll let him do that. When she's stopped, after smashing the pier, he and the others will make their escape in the boats. 'Twill be easy enough amid all the confusion that'll follow."

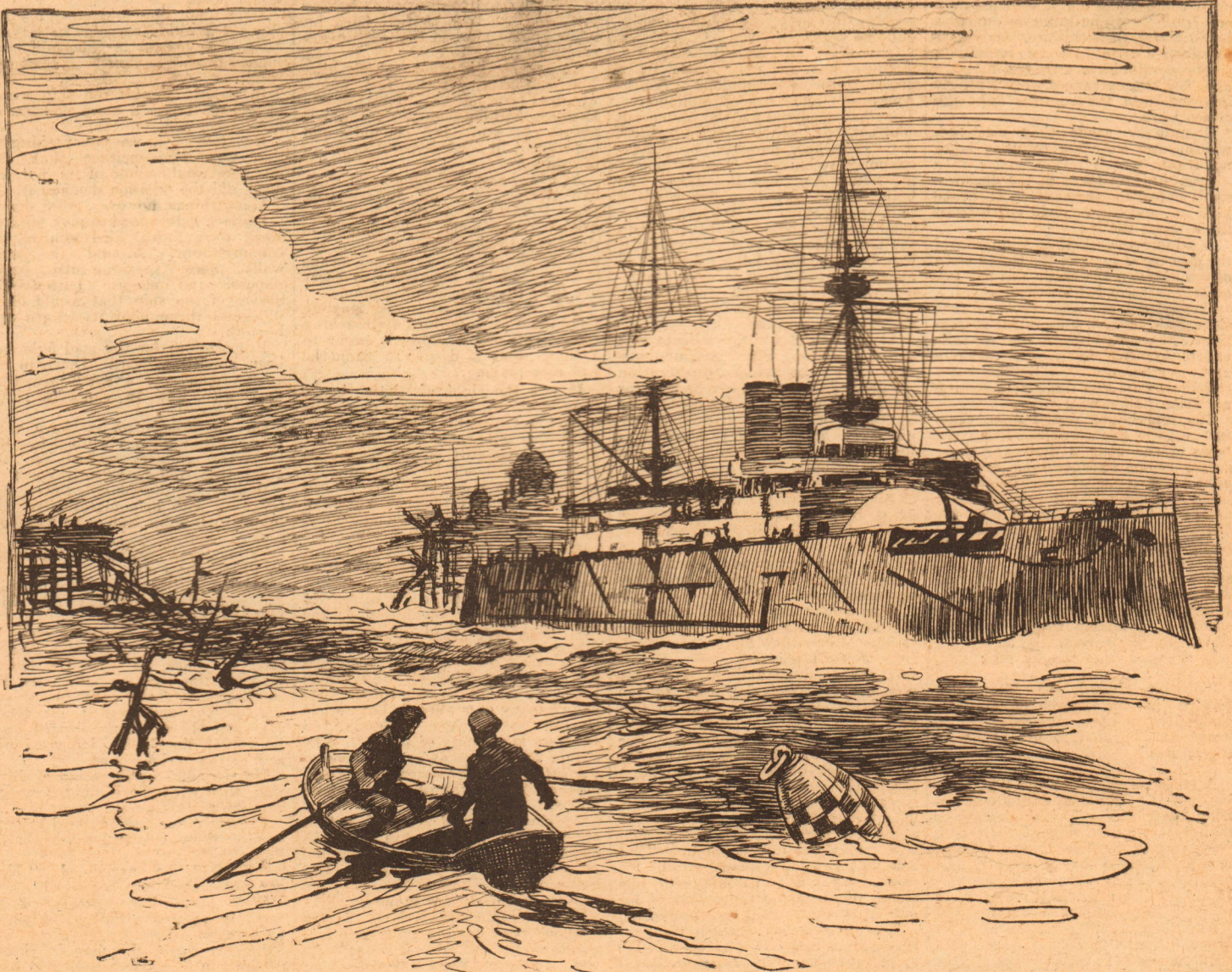
"But if there should be a mistake?"

"Tain't likely there will be. His plans have been made too careful. But even if anything did go wrong and he got nabbed, I s'pose he'd clear himself by swearing that something had gone wrong with the steering arrangements. Wouldn't be far wrong in saying that, I reckon." And Hudd grinned significantly as one knowing the full extent of the Mammoth's defects.

"You forget," Lottray said, grinning, too, "that there's a lieutenant of his Majesty's Navy aboard."

"Ay, but he's safe enough. Trussed up like a fat fowl."

(Continued on the next page.)



The Mammoth rushed like a living thing directly towards the pier. Then of a sudden—crash, crash! Z-ripp, tear! Crash, and crash again! A mighty swaying and a rocking, a cloud of dense steam that for a few seconds hid the monster's wicked work, and then what was to be seen? The pier was cut in two.

"All the worse. It would show there'd been something like mutiny."
 "H'm! I forgot that. Wouldn't be much use for Redlaw to spin that yarn about the steerin' gear going amiss, would it? But he'll take the risk. It's worth it considerin' the nice lump sum of money he's to have. And there ain't much risk after all. You'll see, he'll get off scot-free after striking the pier."
 And for that event, like so many of those outside, they waited in breathless silence.

But when the mighty impact came that cut the pier in two, and the Mammoth went steaming forward without any appreciable slackening of speed, these three looked on in wonder.

"Must be something wrong," muttered Hudd. "It can't be that Redlaw's lost his head, can it?"
 "Seems to me he's gone mad!" was Lottray's comment.

Malcolm shrugged his shoulders like one who could not see his way to contradict this statement.

"All I can say is, I'm glad I'm not aboard. Hallo! What's happening? What are the people running for?"

"Can't you see?" said Hudd. "It's Captain Heggart and the other officers. They must have seen everything that's happened. Enjoyed themselves, too, I should think, to see their pet ship running amuck like this."

"There's somebody else!" Lottray spoke suddenly as his eyes, directed through the window, fixed themselves on two figures running. "Look—look! Young Elton and that fellow Mugget. Hang 'em! What are they doing here?"

"Busily engaged doing nothing, like the rest of 'em," laughed Malcolm.

"But they've been my evil star! They've been in my way more than once, interfered with my schemes and spoiled my plans. Why are they running? What is Captain Heggart going to do? Come! We must follow them and see."

In such a vast crowd of people the risk of being seen was but small. They hurried from the house, and were swallowed up in the stream of people all speeding along the promenade in the wake of Captain Heggart and the other officers.

What the captain was going to do none could tell. They watched him enter the grim building set upon a knoll along the seashore, known as Southsea Castle. Some impetuous spirits would have crowded in after him, but the entrances were strongly guarded, and the sentries kept the crowd back.

Round the castle they clustered, waiting and watching for they knew not what.

Presently, up through the darkness sped a rocket skyward. It broke high up, and fell in vivid red balls of fire towards the sea.

A minute passed, then from one of the checkered forts in the broad strip of sea between the castle and the Isle of Wight ascended another rocket.

Then, from out a porthole of that same fort, flashed a powerful searchlight. It swept over the moonlit waters, cutting down space like a great scythe, until its fanlike beam rested athwart two destroyers getting up steam half a mile away.

The searchlight rested upon them for perhaps five seconds. From the bows of the nearest destroyer there swung round an answering beam of light. Then what happened was interesting to all, but intelligible to none save those acquainted with the Morse code, plus a knowledge of the secret signals in vogue in the Navy.

A prolonged, but quickly executed series of flashes, dots and dashes, dashes and dots, mystifying to the general observer, but clear as the speech of a human tongue to those aboard the destroyers.

Interpreted, the message ran:

"Mutiny aboard the Mammoth. She is in the hands of traitors. Follow her at once, and order her to heave to. Threaten to fire at her if she refuses."

A tricky errand, but one that must be obeyed. How it would end nobody knew. For British destroyers to fire at another ship of their own Navy was a terrible thing. Officers in charge prayed that it might not be necessary. If it were—well then—In a very few minutes the destroyers were off in pursuit of the Mammoth.

And they would catch her. The Mammoth was mighty. She had a displacement of 32,000 tons. Her speed, as we know, was twenty-three knots, terrific for so big a ship. But the destroyers, mere pigmies though

they were in comparison, could steam at thirty-six knots.

Yes, they could catch her as they could catch the swiftest torpedo-boat. But would they catch the Mammoth? If so, what would happen when they had caught her?

To predict that was beyond anyone's power. The fate of the great ship in the hands of traitors, and the fate of the destroyers now setting out in pursuit of her, was in the lap of the gods.

Surrender of the Mammoth.

LOTTRAY had ventured the opinion that Redlaw was mad.

He was wrong, yet right. Ordinarily, Redlaw was sane enough, as sane as he was unscrupulous and cunning. But just now he was certainly not responsible for his actions. He had "put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains." In other words, he was drunk—mad drunk.

Tempted by a large sum of money offered by Jelfer J. Jelfer through the agency of Lottray, Redlaw had undertaken to do such damage to the Mammoth, to exploit her faults of workmanship in such a way as not only to entail great loss to the Great Marsh Company, but to wreck their career as builders of warships.

For quite a number of years before the laying down of the Mammoth no warships had been built on the Thames. Only after strong representations had been made to Parliament that the very existence of Thames-side dwellers depended on their getting a fair share of the Admiralty contracts had Britain's greatest river—greatest in every way, that is, apart from mere length—recovered something of its ship-building glories of the past.

It was well known that in future many ships would be built on Thames-side. The Great Marsh Company, an old-established and highly-reputable firm, looked forward to a busy and profitable time.

But another firm rose up in rivalry.

Jellow's! Jellow's in the past had mainly devoted itself to the building of tramp steamers and other craft for the Merchant Service. The prospect of securing some of the Admiralty contracts had spurred them to action. They had increased their docks enormously, and had spent money lavishly in the laying down of ship-building plant.

Ostensibly an English company, Jellow's was in reality run by a group of unscrupulous South-American and other millionaires. They had tendered for the Mammoth contract, but to their chagrin had lost it. They had, however, been commissioned to build the Ogre for one of the South American Republics. In building this ship they had resolved to demonstrate to the British Government that they could build better than the Great Marsh people. Perhaps it was because they knew they would never hold their own in fair competition that they had resolved to resort to foul means in order to achieve their purpose.

At the head of the syndicate was Jelfer J. Jelfer. Since unscrupulousness was the chief qualification required, Jelfer was the very man for the job. In order to be continually on the spot without attracting suspicion to himself, he had posed as the designer of the Ogre. In reality he was nothing of the sort.

The design was actually the work of Sir Garnet Royal. Even while the great British designer was engaged on his big preliminary task, sectional drawings in duplicate of these designs were continually passing into Jelfer's hands through the treacherous agency of Cyrus Briant.

Thus Jelfer was enabled to secure the designs for a ship exactly similar to the Mammoth. So far, so good, from Jelfer's point of view. But it was not good enough. His object was not to equal the work of the Great Marsh Company, but to surpass it.

How was that to be done? For two ships to be built on exactly similar lines would result, providing the workmanship was equal, in two ships of exactly the same character. The Great Marsh Company, as the older and more reputable firm, would still retain the upper hand. That wouldn't suit Jelfer's book at all. He wanted to kill two birds with one stone, to make the reputation of his own firm, and to ruin the opposition.

How to do that? Much thinking revealed to him one way only. He must prevent Sir Garnet Royal superintending the building of the Mammoth.

There was but one way of doing

that, and he did it. That assault on Sir Garnet Royal in Epping Forest was Jelfer's work. At his instigation, a gang of ruffians had waylaid the famous naval architect, had knocked him senseless, and worse than that, had, as we know, blinded him. Thus at one stroke had they prevented Sir Garnet from superintending the building of his great ship.

From that moment the game seemed to be in Jelfer's own hands. He had bribed Cyrus Briant into subjection. Briant was entirely and absolutely under his thumb, bound to carry out his orders, and powerless to break away from his tyrannical rule.

The building of the two ships had proceeded. Over and over again things had happened to the Mammoth to delay her completion, and to enable those connected with the Ogre to get their work done first.

Yet, owing to superior workmanship—for the bulk of the workmen were honest, though there were many traitors in the camp—the Mammoth had been completed first.

That was a thing that Briant could not avoid without drawing upon himself the suspicion of the Admiralty. All he could do—and that was bad enough—was to alter his uncle's plans so as to turn out the Mammoth full of faults. As regarded her internal equipment, she was about as full of faults as she could well be.

But still Jelfer was not satisfied. No ship is turned out absolutely perfect, and it might well happen that the Ogre might be faulty too, as faulty almost as the rival vessel.

Something must be done, something drastic, to cripple the Great Marsh Company. As well as having their reputation tarnished, they must be ruined financially.

It was Jelfer's determination in this respect that had brought about the present state of things. He had urged Lottray to do something, anything—to concoct some fiendish scheme or other to spoil their rivals in business.

Lottray had done it. His scheme had been crude, but it had been effective.

With Redlaw, he had arranged to seize a favourable opportunity for the ship to run amuck. What Redlaw had done, we already know.

But to nerve himself to do the desperate thing he had done, Redlaw had flown to brandy. So that instead of stopping the engines after cutting the pier in two as had been his intention, he allowed the ship to run madly on.

There was no one to check him. The lieutenant and the few sailors who had been left aboard by Captain Heggart had long ere this been made prisoners, and lay bound and imprisoned in some remote corner of the ship.

As to the rest of those aboard, they, like Redlaw, were in Jelfer's pay. Like Redlaw, too, they had been drinking, and while clear enough in the head to steer and manage the ship aright, they were by no means calm enough to remember to carry out their prearranged programme.

Not until they had passed Hayling Island and were rapidly approaching Selsey Bill did it suddenly occur to Redlaw what a desperate game he was now playing.

It was the sight of those signals from fort to destroyers that first made him realise his perilous position. Gone was his chance of escape now, gone all possibility of any reasonable excuse if he should be captured. In running away as he was doing, he had labelled himself a thief on a colossal scale. What he had done amounted to nothing less than the stealing of a battleship. What his punishment would be if he were captured, he did not know.

But why should he be captured? He asked himself the question, and his drink-inflamed brain made a desperate answer.

He would resist capture. Here was he aboard the biggest and fastest battleship in the British Navy. He hadn't many men aboard, but he had enough to manage with in fair weather, and plenty of stores. Why should he not get away into foreign waters, then, under cover of the darkness, enter a boat, and so get to land unseen?

A mad idea, of course, but it appealed to him now in his half-drunken state. He had appropriated to himself the captain's cabin, and going to it now helped himself to yet another strong dose of brandy.

To him came one Kelvert, a man who had been hand-in-glove with him all through Jelfer's schemes. He was perhaps the soberest man aboard at that moment. His face was pale with excitement as he pushed open the cabin door.

"Do you know what's happening?" he cried.

"I know what's been happening."

"But now—now!" demanded Kelvert. "We're being pursued."

"Pursued!" cried Redlaw, hiccoughing. "Who cares? Who can catch us? Don't we know that the Mammoth can do 23 knots?"

"What's the good o' that? Two destroyers are after us, and they can do 36. They're coming up to us rapid on the starboard quarter."

Redlaw blinked his bloodshot eyes. "Then give 'em snuff!" he said, with an oath. "Teach 'em to mind their own business."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, fire on 'em!"

"Are you mad, Redlaw?"

"Not me!" roared the other. "I mean what I say, by Heaven! Fire on 'em! Sink 'em! Put a shell into 'em! Thunder and blazes, we'll play the game through. If it's war, we'll give 'em a taste of the Mammoth's power."

"You're mad, man—you're mad! We've barely thirty men aboard, and—"

"I don't care, if among them there's a gunner or two. Gee-whiz! Here's sport! I'll be a captain, and I'll fight the ship!"

From end to end the word went round. One or two of the more sober men would have thrown up the game then and there, but they were overruled by the desperate majority, ready for any evil work, and heedless of any risk they might run.

So this strange and motley crew of freebooters "cleared for action."

Not, indeed, in the way an ordinary ship's crew would have performed that work.

Had this been real battle, and had the Mammoth been properly manned, a bugle would have sounded the orders—"Clear lower deck," and "Clear ship for action." At those calls a thousand men would have rushed to every corner of the vessel, each to perform his allotted task. Boats—cutters, galleys, and gigs—would have been swung off their chocks, and sent spinning into the sea; steel davits would have been unshipped and laid flat on the deck; everything of wood would have been hurled overboard, while anchors and chain cables would have been securely lashed to the deck in order that in the thick of the fight none of them would break loose.

Meantime, the bridge and other exposed positions would have been hung with fringes of rope and matting to protect against shell blast and splinters.

In a few minutes the ship would have looked like a mere skeleton of her former self.

But just now, we say, nothing of this was done—neither time nor numbers would allow of it; nor, indeed, did the occasion demand it.

Many things, however, were done. Redlaw, determined to play his mad freak to a finish, hied him to the conning-tower. Around the steel walls were speaking-tubes, telephones, and electric buttons—the nerves of the ship that would carry messages throughout its length and breadth.

Preparations for the mad fight had been hurried forward. Down in the engine-room was a small squad of men with one to supervise their operations.

On the fire-control platform were the range-finders, while in the barbettes gunners waited for the order that would presently come.

Redlaw, in the conning-tower, was chortling with demonaical glee. His brandy-fed brain had quite lost control of itself now. He was mad, if ever man was, yet method remained in his madness still.

He had adopted the role of captain. He essayed to fill that role with ludicrous completeness.

With bloodshot, wavering eyes, he glanced around the circular box of steel in which he was. He looked through the sighting slits, saw the smoke track of the destroyers steaming astern, and gritted his teeth. He looked at many bright-hued, horizontal lines that indicated the arcs of the various guns.

He signalled an alteration of direction, then eyed the leading destroyer through a sighting slit again.

Presently her bows seemed to cross one of those coloured marks in his line of sight.

"X S!" he exclaimed. "They can put a shell into her now!"

With a horrible gritting of his teeth he pressed a button. A signal to X turret.

In that turret the man in charge of the gun in which a shell had been placed was bending with an eye to the telescopic sight, and a hand grasping the revolving wheel. Near

to him stood another man, with his eyes fixed on the fire-control platform up on the steel mast.

"Range 2,500 yards!" he exclaimed.

Instantly the other man adjusted the gun, then waited—waited for the order to fire!

It came! There was a sudden clicking sound, an indescribable humming murmur, and then—
 Chaos!

Tremendous was the explosion—far more tremendous than even the ordinary firing of a 1,250lb. shell should have made.

A fearful roar, a pandemonium of sound, a crashing and a smashing, and a pounding following the mighty thud! A pungent, suffocating smell of nitro-glycerine and scorched steel; a dense, obscuring cloud of smoke, and general chaos all around.

The mighty gun had burst! Among all the faults of the Mammoth's equipment, here was one of which none of those aboard had been aware. By order of the arch-conspirators, Jelfer J. Jelfer and Lottray, the guns of the Mammoth had been faked so that when they were fired this would happen. They had not intended that their own accomplices should suffer. But the best laid plans of fiends, as well as of mice and men, "gang aft agley."

The villains had suffered death by the means adopted for the destruction of others.

The smoke cleared, to disclose a scene of carnage and wreckage. The barbette chamber had had its sides blown out. Upon the deck, in which great holes showed, five men lay dead, while others were wounded.

Those who lived were completely sobered by this unmeditated happening. The speed of the ship slackened, and all the men crowded to the deck.

All save Redlaw, who grovelled and quivered upon the floor of the conning-tower in a fit.

Slower and slower grew the Mammoth's speed, until presently she was pitching helplessly about, completely uncontrolled.

And up to her with great swiftness came the two destroyers.

They were up to her, one on either quarter, steaming slowly, steering erratically in consonance with the Mammoth's helpless drifting.

Upon the warship's deck men stood helplessly wringing their hands and shouting appeals for mercy.

An officer in command of one of the destroyers shouted inquiries through a megaphone, and got back a disjointed account of what had happened.

"But you have naval officers and men aboard!" he called back. "Where are they?"

An intimation that they were bound and imprisoned below, and more pleas for mercy.

"Release your prisoners at once—we'll talk of mercy later!"

Out of darkness presently, and up to the moonlit deck, tottered officers and members of the crew who had been bound and thrust below.

Two minutes of quick explanation, and they got to work.

Steam was shut off, and anchors were lowered. The Mammoth came to a standstill.

Aboard her clambered men from the destroyers to take her in charge.

Mutineers were made prisoners. Redlaw, their leader, still unconscious in his fit, was placed in a bunk, close watch being kept upon him.

Within an hour the destroyers turned to make their way back to Portsmouth. With them was the Mammoth in tow!

(The final chapters of this grand serial will appear next Tuesday, "Yorkshire Grit," by Stacey Blake, the week after next.)

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COLONEL PEPPERCORN'S CABINET.

BY MORTON PIKE.

A GRAND COMPLETE, LONG STORY OF STIRRING ADVENTURE.

THE 1st CHAPTER. The Arrival of Colonel Peppercorn.

"If your Excellency is still in the same mind, we shall make Gravesend in half an hour," said the captain; and the man who had been gazing over the taffrail since daylight turned and looked at him.

"I am still in the same mind," said the passenger. "Twill be worth five guineas to leave this rat-haunted leaky tub and set foot on English soil again!"

"And 'twill be worth twice that sum to be rid of you," retorted the captain with some warmth, "for you are the most unpleasant passenger I ever carried!"

"Zounds, sir! You are a vulgar fellow, and you may be sure that the owners shall hear of your insolence!"

"For the matter of that, your Excellency may do as you like, but I tell you I would as lief carry a Bengal tiger loose on the deck as have you aboard my ship again!" And, turning on his heel, the captain walked aft, where he met one of the other officers. "Mr. Jason," said he, "when the pilot comes aboard you will be good enough to have the Governor of Ramchowder's trunks placed in the boat, for he is landing."

"And an amazing good job, too, sir!" said Mr. Jason. "I think we've all had enough of him!" And the pair exchanged a glance that spoke volumes, but they kept silence as the undesirable passenger went by on his way to his cabin.

He was a large man, with a heavy face covered with purple veins, and he wore an old military cloak that had originally been scarlet, but was now stained and encrusted with salt by the long six months' voyage from India.

A little later, when the town of Gravesend began to show through the light fog that covered the river, six sailors tramped below, and came up again, each with a heavy trunk upon his shoulder.

Behind the men came the Governor of Ramchowder, carrying a small, brass-bound case in his hand, and behind the Governor a small blackamoor, shivering in the keen morning air.

He was little more than a child, and he wore a broad silver collar round his neck like an exaggerated napkin ring, which showed he was a slave.

As the huge East Indiaman wallowed on the surface of the flood, and the pilot came alongside, various members of the ship's company and sundry of the passengers also, assembled to see the last of the man with the purple face.

When his trunks had been lowered into the boat, and a sailor had carried the shivering black boy down the ladder, the man turned, seemed about to speak, but contented himself with a look of unutterable contempt at the crowd of bystanders, and went over the side.

That was the last they saw of the Governor of Ramchowder, but we have not done with him yet by any means.

As the watermen dipped their oars and pulled away from the vessel, something like a cheer broke from those on deck, but the Governor of Ramchowder only scowled as he shook his clenched fist at them, and

hid the brass-bound case under his cloak.

"Hang you, for a pack of dirty dogs!" he muttered, and said no more until they came to the landing place.

He made no long stay in Gravesend, but hired a postchaise, saw his trunks safely corded upon it, and taking his place with the blackamoor beside him, was soon rattling up Windmill Street and so to the London road.

He threw himself back in the chaise and stretched his legs in front of him, saying something in a foreign tongue to the blackamoor, who opened a bag, from which he drew a curious pipe, and handed it to his master.

To get a light was not so easy a matter, and he dealt the boy a sounding cuff on the ear before it was accomplished; but at last the pipe was going in full blast, and his Excellency the Governor of Ramchowder smoked all the way up to town, so that anyone might have thought the chaise on fire to have seen the wreaths that curled through the windows.

When they changed horses, he reviled the old postillion and the new postillion, and the landlord of the posting inn and everybody within earshot, and as that had been his habit from the moment he set foot on the ship at Calcutta, six long months before, it is not much to be wondered at that the captain should say what he had said.

The chaise finally came to a stand before a certain door in Lincoln's Inn, where the governor alighted, and went up a winding staircase, the point of the long sword that lifted the skirt of the red cloak striking against the balustrade, and jarring on the oak panelling.

When he had found the door he wanted, he opened it with a bang, surprised three clerks who were making entries in three ledgers, and demanded to know whether Mr. Winks was within, and, being answered in the affirmative, told the clerk to announce Colonel Peppercorn, and not to let the grass grow under his feet, either!

"Oh! So you are Winks, are you?" said his Excellency the late Governor of Ramchowder. "I want a house, small, quiet, not overlooked. Must have a garden and a wine-cellar. These are your orders, and be hanged to you!"

Mr. Winks, the attorney, a mild, sallow man, who for many years past had been the colonel's agent, but who had never seen him before in the flesh, scratched his wig with the end of his quill, and as if seized with a sudden inspiration, said:

"I have the very thing for your Excellency not a gunshot from this place. Will you leave your case in my office?"

"No, I will not!" thundered his visitor. "And look here,

Winks, no more 'Excellency.' I have done with all that; just plain Colonel Peppercorn in future!"

Mr. Winks bowed humbly, took his hat, and they went out.

That was how the house in Large Heart Lane, which had been empty so long, found a tenant at last, and a most extraordinary tenant he proved.

He did not take possession that day, or the next, but the news of his coming preceded him. Mr. Gribble, the agent, said at the tavern that he was an Indian nabob, or something of that sort, immensely wealthy and very eccentric, and the street was agog to see him.

No one was more interested than Jim and Jerry, the two apprentices of Mr. Rackstraw, the cabinet-maker, who lived next door.

"He's come, Jim!" said Jerry in a stage whisper, stealing down the outer shop in his square-toed shoes to beckon his fellow-apprentice, who put down his plane and followed him to the street door.

A hackney coach had drawn up in front of the next house, and when the driver had descended from his box and let down the steps, a very curious passenger got out.

"Why, he's a blackamoor!" whispered Jerry. And a blackamoor he was, a little negro boy with a gold-laced three-cornered hat on his round bullet head, and a red livery coat also plentifully besmeared with gold lace, his dazzling white teeth chattering with the cold like a pair of castanettes.

Mr. Gribble, the agent, stood on the cobble pavement with his hat in his hand, and then first a leg appeared at the coach door, and was followed by a head and shoulders, the body being muffled in an old scarlet cloak that left nothing to be seen but the head and the legs.

As far as they could tell the cloak covered a fat body, but it was only a glimpse they caught, for the blackamoor bowed low, and Mr. Gribble bowed low, and the stout gentleman,

walking majestically up the steps, disappeared into the house.

When the hackney coachman had carried in several large trunks covered with brass-headed nails, the door closed with a bang, and the two apprentices went back into the shop again, not very much the wiser after all.

"If that's Colonel Peppercorn," said Jim, "he looks very bad-tempered!"

"He does that," assented Jerry. "Did you see how he struck the steps with his cane? Even Mr. Gribble seemed afraid of him! Folks say he's immensely rich."

"And a regular miser," said Jim. "We must have a squint at him through the garden wall."

His companion chuckled as he resumed his work.

"Look out! Here's the governor!" cried Jim, beginning to plane for dear life, while Jerry applied himself to the hammering of nails into a box he was making, as Mr. Rackstraw entered the shop and looked searchingly at his two apprentices.

Jerry could never keep his tongue quiet very long.

"If you please, sir," he said, "Colonel Peppercorn has come."

"That's not your affair, is it?" replied the cabinet-maker. "You attend to your own business and leave our new neighbour to look after his. I have no doubt he is quite competent."

Now, about a year before, when the next door house was still empty, the cabinet-maker had erected a shed against the garden wall, and the workmen had dislodged two bricks in the doing of it.

Jerry and Jim soon discovered that by removing the bricks they could obtain quite an extensive view of the next door premises, the growth of ivy on the other side of the wall hiding the existence of their spyhole.

True, there was not much to see, except a neglected garden, with a wooden seat round the mulberry-tree, a terrace of Portland stone, and an old sundial; but they kept their find to themselves, because there was a feeling of secret mystery in being able to see without being seen.

For a couple of days after the new tenant's arrival they paid repeated visits to the spyhole without once setting eyes on the Indian nabob.

But they might have saved themselves the trouble, for early the next morning the shop door opened with a bang that set the bell upon it jingling like mad, and the colonel himself strode into the shop.

"Stop that infernal thing!" were his first words, pointing to the bell

with his cane, and Jerry did so.

"Where's your master?"

"May it please your honour, he is within," replied the apprentice. "Then bring him without!" roared the fiery gentleman, with a flourish of his cane that made Jerry feel that it was not altogether safe to remain within reach of it.

Mr. Rackstraw soon appeared, mild-looking, in a brown suit, with a grizzle wig and a foot rule in his hand.

"I want you to cut a square hole in my front door, with a sliding panel behind it," said the colonel.

"Through which you can see anyone who comes, I suppose, sir?" said Mr. Rackstraw.

"What's that got to do with you, sir?" thundered his customer.

"Can you do it?"

"I can do it, sir," said the cabinet-maker.

"Then do it, and be hanged to you!" was the reply. "And look here, what is that wood?" he said, pointing to some red boards that stood against the wall.

"That is mahogany, sir," said Mr. Rackstraw, Jerry and Jim in the meanwhile peering through a crack in the door at this irascible visitor.

"Then make me a cabinet," he said. "None of your trumpery kickshaws, but a solid, substantial cabinet, with safety locks, and a secret hiding-place that no one can find but myself."

"I will prepare your honour a plan."

"Hang your plans, sir! I want a cabinet! Can you do it, or can't you?"

"I can make it, sir," began Mr. Rackstraw.

"Then why in the name of fire and brimstone don't you start? Never mind what it costs! I must have it in a fortnight!"

"Tis a short time, sir," ventured the cabinet-maker nervously.

"I never said it wasn't!" snapped the colonel, drawing from the pocket of his long-flapped waistcoat a solid gold snuff-box set with precious stones. "Deliver it to me next door, and your bill with it!" And without another word he went out, the dull bang of his own door coming to their ears a moment after.

"That is a terrible man," said Mr. Rackstraw. "James, bring me my pattern-book into the upstairs room." When the colonel entered the panelled passage of his new home, he looked round about him and nodded to himself.

"They will never find me here!" he muttered. "And if they do they shall have a warm reception!" And he chuckled as his gaze roved over the substantial solidity of the building, and a curious gleam of triumph lurked in his bloodshot eyes.

He had received no visitors as yet, and it was the first time anyone had seen him out of doors, his very seclusion vesting him with an air of mystery that made the apprentices doubly eager to know what he did and how he lived, and what those huge cases had contained that sailormen and porters brought up from the docks.

As for Mr. Rackstraw, he was seen no more that day, being very busy with plans and measurements, and foot rule and compasses.

But a little before noon another customer entered the shop and was received by Jerry.

He was a slim, loose-jointed young man, who bestowed a wink on the apprentice, and, removing his clay pipe from one side of his mouth to the other, said laconically, "Governor in?"

Jerry looked him up and down, not quite certain whether to call him sir or not, and deciding against it. "Mr. Rackstraw is in, but he's very much engaged," said the apprentice. "Is it anything I can do?"

The young man laughed, said he thought it was, and, tilting his hat on the back of his head, seated himself on the bench beside Jerry, and swung his legs backwards and forwards.

"I want some wood," said the self-possessed individual—"as much as you can give me for, say, a shilling."

"What's it for?" inquired the lad.

"Rabbit-hutch," said the newcomer; "but there ain't no hurry." And he looked round the shop with a knowing eye, seeing far more in that brief glance than simple Jerry had any idea of. "Help yourself," said the affable stranger, producing a Dutch tobacco-box, with quaint figures etched on its brass lid.

"I mayn't smoke here," said Jerry. "Well, you can smoke somewhere else, can't you? That's right good



Sambo clutched the broad balustrade and gazed upwards, his eyes staring, and his mouth wide open, and all the while the man came nearer and nearer. The boy let up a piercing scream, and fled in terror.

Virginia that never paid duty. Don't spare it; there's plenty more where that came from. See much of the old gentleman next door?" And he jerked his head in the direction of Colonel Peppercorn's house.

"We've only seen him once," said Jerry, with some curiosity. "Do you know him?"

"Yes," grinned the young man. "I knowed 'im in the East Indies. He used to ride on a white elephant out there, with its tail tied up with blue ribbons. Ever been in the East Indies?"

"No," said Jerry, handing him back the tobacco-box, "but I've been to Hendon."

"Have you really, now?" cried the visitor, and he burst into a peal of ironical laughter, which brought Jim into the front shop with a saw in his hand. "Don't suppose you two fellows have been anywhere?" said the young man on the table. "You must come round with me to a tavern I know of one of these evenings, and I'll tell you tales that'll make your hair stand straight up. It's called the Hole in the Wall."

The two lads exchanged a look, and both laughed.

"Oh, you know it, do you?" said the stranger, looking rather surprised. "Rather a rum place, ain't it, for two highly respectable apprentices like yourselves?"

"We were thinking of something else," said Jerry, who was what we should nowadays call a "blab." "There's a loose brick between our master's garden and Colonel Peppercorn's next door—that's our hole in the wall."

"Oh, I see!" said the young man, laughing again, but his shrewd little eyes seemed to turn inwards, as though he were reflecting.

Just then there came the sound of Mr. Rackstraw's feet overhead, and he slid off the bench, saying: "Look here, I'll come in again for that wood. I've just remembered that I have an appointment with our bo's'un, the other side of Temple Bar. Have some more 'baccy before I go?" And he emptied the rest on to the bench and went out hurriedly.

At the corner of the street, just out of sight of the shop, he picked up a thick-set man with a very blue complexion, which might have been the result of the want of shaving, or grains of gunpowder from a pistol fired point-blank in his face.

"Well, any good?" said the burly man.

"Good!" retorted his companion. "I should think it was good! Rackstraw's apprentices are a couple of mugs. I've got the lay of the house, and I've seen where the stairs are. We'll skin old Peppercorn before the month's a fortnight older, as sure as my name is Jack Sheppard!"

THE 2ND CHAPTER.

A Visitor of the Night.

A WEEK passed by without further sight of Colonel Peppercorn, but his cabinet progressed rapidly, thanks to the united efforts of Mr. Rackstraw, his apprentices, and three journeymen, who worked at it from sunrise to sunset.

It was, as the colonel had commanded, solid and substantial, and it was two men's work to lift.

Jim and Jerry tried hard to discover where Mr. Rackstraw intended to put the secret hiding-place, but he kept it locked up in his own inventive brain, and made it himself when the shutters were up, and his two apprentices off on some errand, whether they had been sent for the express purpose of getting them out of the way.

One day three dark-complexioned men, evidently Asiatics, although they were both dressed in European clothing, passed and repassed the house several times.

Two of them stood on the opposite side of the street, while the third knocked, and knocked, and knocked again at the colonel's door without result.

"The colonel sahib is, perhaps, away from home?" said the man, putting his head into the cabinet-maker's shop, with a little cringing bow, and a smile that showed his white teeth.

"He's never gone out since he came," said Jerry, "and I saw his blackamoor go in not long ago."

"Thank you, sahib," said the inquirer, and as the head was withdrawn Jerry saw a gleam in the almond-shaped eyes, and a wave of passion sweep across the dark-skinned visage.

The three men disappeared, and while Jerry was pondering in his own mind why their neighbour should

keep his door so obstinately closed, their chance acquaintance came in, a black patch over one eye, and a knotted cudgel tucked under one arm.

"Ha, how are we?" he said. "I've been in the wars. Met the press-gang down Wapping way—eight of them with clubs, and their lieutenant with a hanger. None of your King's Navy for me; but it was lucky our bo's'un was there, too. We roasted their ribs for them, and there's three won't get over it in a hurry."

"What! Are they dead?" queried Jerry, opening his eyes.

"Good as," said his new acquaintance; "but, there! If it hadn't been them, it would have been us. Thought I wasn't coming back, did you—thought I'd forgotten all about the Hole in the Wall and the tankard we're going to drink together one of these fine nights? By the way, what about that other hole in the wall? Seen old fire-eater lately?"

"If you mean the colonel," said Jerry, laughing, "he was in the garden the other day in a gold-coloured robe with a turban on his head, looking grander than the Lord Mayor."

"I'd like to see that," said the young man. "Any chance of a squint this afternoon? I'm sailing for China in a couple of days."

Jerry rubbed his chin. "There's no harm in you having a look," he said. "If you want that wood, you can come through and pick it out for yourself. We are making that for the colonel." And he pointed to the cabinet.

Jack Sheppard stopped in front of it, and examined it carefully.

"Any secret drawers?" he asked, with a grin.

"There will be," said the unsuspecting lad. "It'll be behind here somewhere, but that's all I know, for master is keeping it to himself."

"Is he, now? Well, I never!" And he followed the direction of the lad's hand as he pointed to a cavity at the back of one of the other drawers that was shallower than the rest, and then he went out in Jerry's wake through the inner shop and the large work-room, and down the steps into the garden, where a perfect forest of timber stood in stacks, weathering.

"Come in here," said Jerry, lowering his voice. And he led the way into a large lean-to shed.

From the wall at the back Jerry drew out a brick, and, peeping through the opening, cried in an excited whisper:

"He's there now. Look!"

Jack Sheppard, perhaps the most daring housebreaker of whom we have any record, bent down, and saw more than he had hoped to see. Colonel Peppercorn stood on the terrace of Portland stone, clad in that marvellous robe of cloth of gold, on which the wintry sunlight glistened brightly.

He held a long pipe with a metal bowl in one hand, and in the palm of the other something that looked like a piece of glass, nearly as large as a bantam's egg, only no glass in the world ever shone with such red, and green, and violet light, and the watcher knew that it was an enormous diamond!

The colonel was not more than ten paces from that unsuspected spyhole, and the rascal saw his swollen features wrinkle with a crafty smile as he suddenly closed his fingers over his prize, and shook the clenched fist in the air.

"You think you'll get it, you dogs?" he cried aloud. "You'll follow me, will you? You'll lie in wait for me, but I'll outwit you all! Ha, ha, ha! I'll hold it with my life, and when I die it shall be buried with me!"

Jack Sheppard heard every word, and trembled like a leaf, and when the colonel swung round and strode into the house, the watcher left the hole in the wall with obvious reluctance.

"Rum old gentleman, that!" he said to Jerry, making no mention, however, of what he had seen. "They used to call him 'The Terror of Bengal' over there."

"I think you had better go now," said Jerry, who was getting a little anxious. "What about that wood?"

"Oh, yes, what about that wood?" replied the other, in an absent-minded voice.

Jerry had replaced the brick carefully, and they were leaving the shed, when Mr. Rackstraw's voice was heard calling loudly.

"Plague on it, there's master!" exclaimed Jerry. "I'm not supposed to bring anybody here!"

"Well, what of that?" said Mr. Sheppard. "There's a door yonder. Can't I get out that way?"

"If you'd be so good," said Jerry.

"Draw the bolt softly, and please to pull the door to."

"Right you are, my pippin!" said his new acquaintance, and as Jerry ran into the house, Sheppard walked with a brisk and business-like step towards a high wooden gate that led into a side lane, and which was armed with some formidable spikes on the top.

There was an evil grin on the fellow's face as he reached the gate and drew the bolt back, but he had no intention of passing through it, and, gliding behind the stacks of timber, he hid himself and waited!

Through the dusk he presently saw Jerry come quickly to the gate and bolt it securely, and when the lad had returned to the house, the rascal sat him down on an oak baulk and lit his pipe.

The light faded out of the sky, and a few drops of sleety rain began to fall, but the rascal did not mind that.

Only once, when a man's footsteps were heard coming down the yard, did he leave his seat and step softly into the far corner, where he lay flat down on his face, and waited till Mr. Rackstraw had tried the gate and locked it.

He saw the worthy cabinet-maker stand for a few moments, lantern in hand, looking about him and listening, and then he went back again into the house, and there was the crash of bolts and the rattle of chains, at which the young man in the yard smiled as he rose to his feet.

"A wet night, and all the better," he said to himself, and, stepping out into the middle of the yard, he examined the backs of the adjoining houses.

Now, those were the great days of the coffee-house and the tavern, which really answered the purpose of clubs as we know them now.

Almost every respectable tradesman and shopkeeper went forth in the evening to his particular haunt. If it were a tavern, as in the case of Mr. Rackstraw, he would find his own chair waiting for him, his own clay pipe, with his name written on the side in ink, and as soon as he made his appearance the drawer would bring his particular beverage unasked, and set it down before him.

One after another his neighbours and cronies would drop in, and there they would sit for a couple of hours or so, drinking moderately, smoking tremendously, and discussing the topics of the day.

Somewhere about ten o'clock, if snow was on the ground, or the weather was bad, their apprentices would come for them, it being part of their duty to escort their masters home, for footpads were numerous, and the young bloods of the West End thought it fine fun to molest a respectable citizen, and often to seriously maltreat him.

"Stop!" said Mr. Rackstraw. "Do you mark yonder man, who seems to be observing our house? I have seen him more than once of late, and I am in the mind to know his business."

They stopped, all three of them, the worthy cabinet-maker and his two apprentices, the latter hiding the horn lanterns beneath their coats, and clutching their cudgels.

The clock of St. Clement Danes chimed half-past ten, and it was a wet, blustering night; a cold wind blew down Large Heart Lane, creaking the signs that swung before the shops most dismally, and the rain swelled the gutter, and poured noisily from the overhanging spouts and gables of the narrow thoroughfare.

It was a quiet street at most times, and at half-past ten there was rarely a soul abroad in the whole length of it; and yet yonder was a dark figure leaning against one of the iron posts, apparently watching the house for which they were making.

His arms were folded across his chest, and he was so muffled in a heavy cloak that it was impossible to make out more than that he was a man.

"Master," whispered Jim, "let Jerry and me try to come against him, he cannot mean any good."

"So do, Jim," replied Mr. Rackstraw. "No, stay, you are too late; he has seen us."

The man, suddenly turning his head in their direction, must have caught a glimmer of the lantern light, for he took to his heels and disappeared into one of the narrow streets that led in the direction of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

They went on again, and gained their dwelling without further adventure, but the incident was not forgotten.

"He was there two nights ago,"

said the cabinet-maker. "Hold the light higher, Jerry, that I may see if the door bear any marks."

They saw nothing, but once inside Mr. Rackstraw took special care of the locks and bolts, and went round the lower part of the house again, trying every door and shutter to make certain that they were secure.

"To-morrow I will speak to the watch," he said. "I trust no one is planning a robbery."

The two apprentices bade their master good-night, and went to their own room, which was a species of cupboard opening off the shop itself.

"You shall fetch master home to-morrow night," said Jim, "and I will see who this fellow may be; if he is up to mischief, he shall feel my cudgel on his pate."

"So be it," replied Jerry; "we will take it turn and turn about." And then they lay down, but it was a long time before they fell asleep.

Silence reigned in the house, save for the occasional scamper of the mice behind the wainscot or through the shavings that littered the floor.

Once or twice the stairs gave one of those mysterious creaks that you often hear, and then both would start and say, "What was that?" and lie listening again.

"Do you think," said Jerry, after one of those breathless pauses—"do you think that man might be watching the colonel's house? Could he be one of those Indians, think you?"

"He might be," said Jerry; and he lay turning the matter over in his mind until he glided into sleep without knowing it.

The cabinet-maker's apprentices were not the only wakeful folk in Large Heart Lane that night.

Colonel Peppercorn's little blackamoor, who slept on the ground floor, was unusually restless.

There were rats in the large cellars underneath the house, and, as everyone knows, one may easily mistake a rat for a two-legged creature after dark.

He was only ten years old, and very miserable, for his master was a tyrant, and used to whip him unmercifully with a rattan when he had drunk more brandy than was good for him, which he did every day of his life.

The big old house frightened Sambo, the creaking of the signs outside in the moaning wind frightened him, and the fact that his master slept above stairs, while he was all alone below, was the most terrifying thing of all.

All at once a door banged somewhere in the attics, and Sambo sat up on his pallet bed.

Why should a door bang? he thought. Perhaps the house was haunted!

It only happened the once, but the shivering child continued to sit up, sobbing softly to himself, and listening with all his ears.

By degrees the nervous tension began to grow upon him to such an extent that he felt he could not stay there any longer; the mat outside his master's door would be better than that, and he would have the colonel's snores for company. So, pulling on his breeches and putting on his coat, he slipped his bare feet into his buckled shoes and prepared for his voyage through that house of mysterious noises.

To wake the colonel he knew would have meant a fearful thrashing with that cruel cane, and so, making no more noise than a mouse, he went up the staircase step by step.

At the bend on the first landing he met a stronger draught than any, so strong, in fact, that it fluttered the tails of his livery coat, and the dreadful thought came to him that he must have left a window open somewhere.

Dare he go up all alone and close it? The very idea sent an added shiver through his little body, but what happened next made his heart jump up and stand still, for his eyes fell on a dark figure above him coming noiselessly down the stairs.

THE 3RD CHAPTER.

The Secret Cabinet.

THE intruder wore a strip of black crape pinned under his hat, and a square-skirted blue coat, ornamented with brass buttons; and holding a small lantern in one hand, he examined the Eastern weapons and curved scimitars with which Colonel Peppercorn had adorned the panelled walls.

Sambo clutched the broad balustrade and gazed upwards, his eyes staring, and his mouth wide open,

and all the while the man came nearer and nearer.

Suddenly he looked down, as if conscious that somebody was watching him, and starting backwards with a cry of alarm, he let the lantern fall clattering noisily down the staircase.

The sight of that terror-stricken black face had been too much even for Jack Sheppard.

A piercing scream from the terrified lad rang through the silent house, and he fled shrieking at the top of his voice.

Clinging to the balustrade as he went, his legs shot from under him as he reached the first angle, and had it not been for a rope that dangled there, he would have been precipitated headfirst into the staircase well, and ended all his troubles on the stone floor beneath.

He heard the thief bounding down behind him, but his arms and legs twined round the rope, and from the roof of the house a brazen clang awoke the neighbourhood.

It was the alarm-bell, and as he swung there backwards and forwards like a pendulum, the bell continued to clash and toll, and Jack Sheppard knew it was time to be off.

As he sped up the stairs again, he heard Colonel Peppercorn spring heavily out of bed, and as he gained the attic the colonel opened his door and fired two shots into the darkness, roaring out, "Thieves!" and "Murder!" at the top of his voice.

Jack Sheppard knew that it was time for immediate action, and climbing out through the little window, stole softly along the leaden gutter behind the parapet.

Finding the lower windows securely barred, he had scaled the stout ivy that covered the back of the house; but he knew it was no use attempting to descend that way, and slinking among the chimney stacks to avoid the neighbouring windows, he had soon placed half a dozen roofs between himself and Colonel Peppercorn's dwelling.

Once he peeped over into the street and smiled a cunning smile, for he saw a man immediately beneath looking up.

There was a simultaneous gesture of the arms, and the rogue continued his way until he saw that the man beneath him had stopped again, by which he knew that the door of the house below was open and would afford him a means of escape.

To one who, loaded with irons, had yet managed to leave his cell in Newgate, break open doors, and reach the street, the present situation was but child's play.

The dormer window on the roof led him into an empty room, and coolly passing down the stairs, he walked out with all the effrontery imaginable, and joined his confederate in a neighbouring alley.

The bell still clanged, and the street was now full of people, summoned by a watchman's rattle, which Colonel Peppercorn was swinging through an open window; but Jack Sheppard and Blueskin chuckled to themselves, as though the whole affair had been a huge joke.

From beneath his cloak Blueskin produced a brown jacket, which Jack Sheppard put on. A scratch wig completed the transformation, and the two scoundrels went back into Large Heart Lane and mingled with the excited crowd.

The watch came with their staves and lanterns, and as Mr. Rackstraw and his two apprentices made their appearance, the colonel's head disappeared from the window, and he was heard unbarring the door.

He flung it open so suddenly that the watchmen fell back, for the colonel in that flaming robe of his, with a drawn sword in his hand, was a formidable object.

He had not a hair on his head, which was polished like a billiard-ball, and he foamed at the mouth as he said horrible things in Hindustani. "Well, sir," said one of the watch, "when you've done spitting like a wild cat, perhaps you'll tell us what it's all about, and why you disturbed the whole neighbourhood at one o'clock in the morning?"

"Go to Gehenna, the whole pack of you!" roared the colonel, flourishing his sword with such violence that they retreated down the steps. "Rackstraw, I want you—you're the only honest man in the crowd; as for the rest, the first that sets foot across my threshold shall have a yard of steel through his gizzard!"

Mr. Rackstraw, who had armed himself with a long screwdriver, elbowed his way up the steps.

"Come in, sir!" thundered Colonel Peppercorn, and the moment the cabinet-maker had entered, the

colonel banged the door to in the face of the rest.

"He's a madman, surely," said an irate householder.

"He ought to be in Bedlam," cried another, "bringing honest folk from their slumbers in this fashion."

"Never mind, my masters," growled one of the watchmen, "I will lay information before the magistrate to-morrow. 'Tis not mete that any should set the town in such a turmoil and never a word of explanation."

Then the crowd dissolved, all save Jim and Jerry, and the three dark-skinned men who had tried to gain entrance without result.

These, after whispering together in an unknown tongue, at last went away, leaving only the two apprentices, who waited, as in duty bound, for their master.

When he came out at the end of half an hour, Mr. Rackstraw looked very grave, and his breath smelled strongly of some strange beverage, of which the colonel had made him partake.

"Good faith, sir," said Jim, "and what was it all about?"

"Thieves," said Mr. Rackstraw. "A man got into the house through the attic window, and if the little blackamoor had not seen him, I doubt not they had been murdered in their beds!"

The next morning Colonel Peppercorn made a second visit to Mr. Rackstraw's establishment, his face more purple than ever.

Jerry was coming down the little staircase that opened into the outer shop by a door in the panelling when he heard the colonel's voice saying:

"Now, sir, show me the secret of the cabinet, and have a care that there are no eavesdroppers."

Jerry remained where he was, for the temptation to see and hear were too strong for him, and there was a slit in the door through which he could do both.

He could not help smiling to himself as his master locked it, and sent Jim out into the yard with strict injunctions not to return until he was sent for, and then he placed his eye to the crack.

"We completed this yesterday," said Mr. Rackstraw, removing a cloth from the piece of furniture. "I think you will agree with me that it is both handsome and the thing you want."

"'Tis handsome enough," grunted the ex-Governor of Ramchowder, "but the hiding-place is the most important thing about it."

"If your honour will have patience, I will explain," said Mr. Rackstraw; and he drew forth a bunch of keys. "We have here three drawers, all apparently the same; but if your honour will look closely, you will see that the centre one is shorter by a foot from front to back than the others."

"I see," said Colonel Peppercorn.

"Now, sir," continued the inventor, "to get at the cavity, it is necessary to remove the centre drawer; but that cannot be done without taking out the lower one. Try for yourself."

The colonel seized the drop handles and tugged, but the middle drawer opened only so far, and no farther.

"Permit me, sir," said Mr. Rackstraw, closing it again and removing the lower drawer altogether. "Now, sir, will you try again?"

And this time the middle drawer slid out without effort in the colonel's hand, revealing behind it a sliding wooden panel that closed the secret space.

"It is marvellously well contrived," said Colonel Peppercorn, "and genius shall be rewarded. Will you have the goodness to leave the room that I may see whether I can work the thing myself?"

Mr. Rackstraw bowed and smiled, rubbing his hands with evident satisfaction at having pleased his extraordinary customer; and he went away into the back shop and closed the door behind him.

The moment he was gone, the colonel's manner underwent a change, and all his bluster seemed to have vanished as he looked stealthily round the room.

Then he drew a bundle of wadding as large as a child's head from beneath his cloak, and, opening the drawers, placed it in the secret hiding-place, and, locking the cabinet up, dropped the keys into his breeches pocket.

When he had done this, he looked round the room again, and after listening intently for a moment, drew himself up to his full height, cleared his throat, and shouted for Mr. Rackstraw in a voice of thunder.

Mr. Rackstraw came running in, fearful lest there was something amiss; but the colonel clapped him on the shoulder, vowing he was the honestest knave in the whole world.

Mr. Rackstraw bowed low, rubbing his arm the while, for the colonel's grip had hurt him.

"Then nothing now remains, your honour, but to deliver the cabinet, and that we can do in the twinkling of an eye," said Mr. Rackstraw.

"You do no such thing!" bellowed the eccentric customer. "Keep it where it is until I give you my instructions. It's not going into that rat-hole next door. But you leave that to me, sir—you leave that to me. Five-and-twenty guineas, you said. Here you are!"

And he counted out the coins in a row on the edge of Jerry's bench, Jerry all the while behind the door, seeing and hearing everything.

"Hang the receipt, sir—hang the receipt!" said Colonel Peppercorn, and out he went into the lane, cast a shrewd glance right and left, and set off at a great pace for his lawyer's in Lincoln's Inn.

Once more he burst into the outer office of Mr. Winks, brought the three clerks tumbling off their stools with a smack of his cane that sounded like a gun-shot, and marched straight into Mr. Winks's room.

Mr. Winks was eating his dinner which was sent in from a neighbouring eating-house, and looked up, a knife in one hand and a fork in the other. Half a pint of sherry stood on the desk beside him, and the colonel bore down upon it, and tossed it off at a draught, flinging the glass into the fireplace.

"Old campaigning habits, Winks. Always take what you can get—that's my motto!" he roared.

"Now, then, business. Thieves broke in last night. Find me another house Winks—somewhere out of town—and find it now!" And he emphasised the last word with another sounding thwack on the desk-top that made the clerks in the outer office jump again.

"There is a house at Hadley Green, sir," said Mr. Winks, whose nerves were seriously upset by his violent client. "Tis very secluded in its own grounds, sir."

The colonel drew out an enormous watch, and consulted the dial.

"We'll go and look at it at once," he said. "You can finish your tiffin while they are getting a coach. And, willy-nilly, Mr. Winks had to go."

The house was furnished, and the colonel took it on the spot, and as the clocks were striking four, the coach put him down at Mr. Rackstraw's door again, and he entered as usual like a whirlwind.

"Rackstraw!" he roared. "I'm changing my quarters; to-morrow you must deliver the cabinet with your own hands, and, mind you, without a scratch on it, to the Warren, on Hadley Green. Five guineas and the coach hire. Understand, to-morrow, and don't take your eyes off it until you hand it over to me!"

And he stroked the polished mahogany top with his enormous fat hand.

"Well," said Mr. Rackstraw, as he looked after the colonel's departing figure, "although you are a prompt payer, you are too blustering for a quiet man like myself, and I shall not be sorry to see the back of you. This shall be the last job I undertake for Colonel Peppercorn!"

THE 4th CHAPTER. Exposure and Discovery.

FULL of the pleasant prospect of a jaunt out into the country with Jim and his master, Jerry had been sent to bespeak a coach for the morning, and was hurrying back with his hands in his pockets, when he ran into his new acquaintance of the uncompleted rabbit-hutch.

"Hallo! You look very chirpy! What's going on?" said the shaggy sailor. And Jerry, being somewhat of a guileless youth, and very talkative, told him.

"Did you hear what happened last night," he asked, "to the colonel?" Jack Sheppard looked at him with a blank face, and shook his head, and listened to Jerry's account of the mysterious thief.

"Humph! So the old gentleman's taken fright, has he?" said Master Sheppard, laughing. "I tell you, my lad, he's an arrant coward under all that bluster. I'll give you some tales about him in India when we have that tankard at the Hole in the Wall."

"Oh, so that's his game, is it?" he

soliloquised, when Jerry had left him. "Hadley Green, eh? We shall want a couple of horses for that job—in fact, we'd better have a few pals with us and do the thing properly. I'll go and see if Blueskin is sober yet."

There was a sharp frost that night, and the sky was leaden grey the next morning, as Mr. Rackstraw and his apprentices drove away in a hackney coach and pair with Colonel Peppercorn's cabinet securely corded on the top.

"It will snow before we get there," said Mr. Rackstraw; and it did.

By the time they reached the foot of Barnet Hill, where they drew up at the old Red Lion to take their mid-day meal, the ground was white, and the huge flakes filled the air as though they would never cease falling.

The coachman was in two minds whether he would carry them further, but the promise of half-a-crown, and a pint of hot ale on account, worked wonders, and they started off again.

To the town-bred lads the sight of the snowy slopes and the frozen ponds was a delightful picture, and on they toiled up the steep curve of the hill and through the quaint old town until they reached their destination, the horses panting and the driver fidgeting to keep himself warm.

It was an old house, low and rambling, standing in a rookery, and if Colonel Peppercorn desired solitude, he had certainly found it there.

The snow in the drive came up to their knees as they carried the

Suits of armour gleamed in the corners of the hall and staircase, and thick carpets deadened all sound as they went from room to room and corridor to corridor.

There were a thousand things to interest them, and Jerry made an accidental discovery that was destined to stand him in good stead before the night was passed.

He stumbled on the stairs, and, stretching out his hand to save himself, a piece of the panelling slid back, revealing to their eyes the little closet out of the colonel's bed-chamber, in which stood that precious cabinet.

"This house must be full of hiding-places," said Jim, as they closed the panel again. "I shouldn't care to live in it; one might be robbed and murdered here without anyone being the wiser."

The little blackamoor, who had attached himself to the lads, shuddered at Jim's words, but they only laughed at him, and after a while they returned to the dining-room, where they found Colonel Peppercorn and Mr. Rackstraw sound asleep in two easy-chairs.

The candles guttered on the table, and the room was filled with tobacco-smoke and the reek of the spirit they had been drinking.

It was very hot, too, for a roaring fire of logs blazed on the hearth, and as the trio sat down very quietly in a row at a respectful distance from their betters, the clock in the hall chimed midnight.

Jim yawned, and Sambo's eyelids began to quiver, but on a sudden the

castles one reads about in the old fairy stories.

He reached the pump at last, in a brick-floored scullery or outer kitchen, chill as a tomb, and he paused with his fingers on the handle to peep through a window that looked out into the stable-yard.

The moon was shining, and the snowflakes had ceased to fall, but as he looked at the mantle of white that lay deep over everything, his vision was suddenly and startlingly obscured by the passing of a black figure by the window!

The figure was followed by another, and another, seven in all—every man masked with crape, and muffled up to the ears!

He knew that they were robbers, and he was on the point of running back to the dining-room to raise the alarm when the kitchen door opened, letting in a waft of cold air and cutting off his escape!

It had evidently been tampered with already, and Jerry covered down behind the pump in the shadow, expecting nothing less than death.

If the blood seemed to freeze in his veins, it did not prevent his heart leaping wildly and his throat aching with a sudden spasm, for one of the gang spoke in a low whisper to the rest as they filed in, and he recognised the voice.

It was the talkative young man who wanted to build a rabbit-hutch, and the apprentice was conscience-stricken as he realised how he himself had betrayed the colonel's movements.

"So far, so good!" growled a burly man in a hoarse whisper—it was Sheppard's companion Blueskin.

"Now, Jack, lead the way!"

"Not so fast," said Sheppard, with a chuckle, as he blew on his fingers. "We've got our birds safely housed, and we can take our time to pluck them. The roads are a yard deep in snow, and there's no fear of anyone disturbing us this side of noon to-morrow."

"That's very well in its way, Jack," growled Blueskin. "Twill be easy enough to bind them hand and foot, but don't forget the diamond has got to be found."

"Leave that to me, old grumbler," replied his mate. "What does the colonel want with a new cabinet and a secret drawer, think ye? The stone's there, I'll wager a guinea. But come along if you're all ready. Be handy with the gags, and no bloodshed if we can help it."

"It's those cursed youngsters I'm thinking of," said one of the other men. "A mar is sooner silenced than a slippery boy."

"They're sound asleep in bed, Diggory," said Jack Sheppard. "I tell you the colonel and Master Rackstraw were alone when I squinted through the shutter."

One of the gang opened a lantern, and they followed their leader out of sight so noiselessly that Jerry might have thought it all a dream were it not for the position in which he found himself, cowering there against the pump side.

He sprang to his feet as he heard in the distance the tall door of the dining-room thrown open, and the low murmur of fierce voices as the desperadoes rushed in.

Could he do nothing? His brief glance at the yard had shown him the snow well-nigh up to his middle, and the nearest house was a long way off, and as like as not they would not open at his summons—and even if they did help might come too late.

"The diamond," he said to himself; "it is that they have come for, and what else could Colonel Peppercorn have hidden in the secret drawer in the front shop?"

He remembered a back-stair leading out of the kitchen to the servants' quarters overhead, and, slipping off his shoes, the plucky lad reached the upper floor undiscovered, and peering over the baluster for a moment, heard Colonel Peppercorn's voice shouting loudly for help.

The voice was instantly stifled, and as a chorus of hoarse laughter followed Jerry knew what had happened.

"If they stay to drink," he thought, "I can do it yet." And, sliding the panel back, he found himself in the little room, where the moonlight shone brightly.

The colonel, in his tipsy haste, had forgotten to lock the drawers of the cabinet, knowing nothing about the panel, and in a moment Jerry was on his knees, reaching for that roll of wadding which he had seen him place in the secret receptacle.

To draw it forth was the work of a moment, and tearing it open, he took out something cold and round—

(Continued on the next page.)



"Where is Colonel Peppercorn?" said the first man to enter, gripping the lad by the throat. And Jerry was so startled that he could only point to the dining-room, whither the party sped with all haste.

colonel's cabinet between them into the house—after Mr. Rackstraw had unlocked the front door—and up the staircase into a tiny room that opened out of a large bed-chamber.

Mr. Rackstraw had received minute instructions with the keys, and his orders were not to leave the house until his eccentric customer arrived.

The colonel came after a while in a yellow postchaise, preceding a four-horsed waggon piled up with his goods and chattels, and they saw with some dismay that he had been drinking heavily on the road.

Colonel Peppercorn was bad enough, but Colonel Peppercorn well laced with brandy was likely to prove a difficult handful.

They drove the waggon into the stable-yard and left it there, and the roads being well-nigh impassable by reason of the tremendous snowfall, the colonel insisted on Mr. Rackstraw and his apprentices staying there for the night, to the great joy of little Sambo, the blackamoor.

The first thing Colonel Peppercorn did was to inspect the new cabinet alone, and, after piling up the fire in his bed-room grate, he locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

Again there was that cunning gleam in his bloodshot eyes, and again he muttered to himself as he descended the staircase:

"I have the dogs this time. All the black imps in Hindustan shall never find it!"

The boys explored the old house while the colonel and their master sat in front of a huge fire in the dining-room.

colonel awoke with a start, and rolled his parched tongue round his thick lips.

"Fire and brimstone!" he snarled. "Throat like a limekiln! Sambo, you imp of sin, fetch me a jug of cold water from the pump!"

The poor little blackamoor, who had started up in terror at the voice of his master, trembled at the prospect of the long stone passage and the vast kitchen he would have to traverse before he reached the water, but Jerry took pity on the child.

"I'll go, Sambo," he whispered. "You stay where you are."

And he went out so quietly that the colonel was sound asleep again before he had set the door ajar.

Once in the huge hall, the silence and mysterious gloom of the place had their effect even on the sturdy apprentice lad, and Jerry found himself walking on tiptoe unconsciously.

The snow that clothed the world without threw a ghostly half-light on to the staircase, and the suits of mail, which looked like some ambush of armed men waiting for their victim; and Jerry glanced over his shoulder as he went.

His hair seemed to want to bristle on his head, and the small of his back tingled oddly.

Once he almost wished that Jim had come with him, but he dismissed the idea as absurd, and proceeded with his jug into the long corridor that led at right angles from the hall straight to the kitchen.

It was all so cold and silent. The whole place seemed frozen and under a spell, like one of those enchanted

one glance in the moonlight showing him that it was the diamond.

As he slipped it into his pocket and passed out on to the stairs again, another peal of ribald laughter came from the room below, and, without knowing exactly what he did, he turned the handle of the first door he came to, crossing the room on tiptoe and drawing aside the curtain of one of the long windows.

If he dropped it into the snow the thieves would never discover it, he thought. But things were about to take a very different turn.

To his horror, he saw a party of horsemen dismount at the gate and approach the house, holding the skirts of their riding-coats high as they floundered cautiously through the deep drift.

The lad's first thought was that these were others of the gang, but he was quickly undeceived, for a thundering knock on the front door was followed by the stern command: "Open in the King's name!"

A shrill whistle came from the dining-room, chairs were overturned, and there was a scurry of feet as the interrupted robbers fled towards the back of the house for their lives.

When Jerry had leapt down the staircase three steps at a time and opened the door as fast as his trembling hands could draw the bolts and chain, he found himself gripped by the throat, and recognised the well-known features of Jonathan Wild, the famous thief-taker of those days.

"Where is Colonel Peppercorn?" he said, in a low whisper. And Jerry was so startled that he could only point to the dining-room, whither the party sped with all haste.

It certainly was an odd sight to see the occupants gagged and bound to four chairs, but why the newcomers should burst out one and all into a roar of laughter he had yet to learn.

"Unloose Master Rackstraw," said Jonathan Wild, "and those youngsters, but I think the colonel is just as well where he is—eh, my lord?"

A tall gentleman in a Ramilies wig nodded, and said in a low voice: "Take the gag out of his mouth, and let us hear what he has to say for himself."

Jonathan Wild went up to the arm-chair and untied the neck-cloth that was bound tightly round the colonel's face.

"Well, Michael Johnson," said the thief-taker, "how goes it, my pippin?"

The blood rushed back into the bully's face until he looked like a red cabbage.

"What do you mean, fellow?" he spluttered. "You mistake me! I am Colonel Peppercorn, the Governor of Ramchowder, foully ill-used by thieves, who fled at your coming!"

"Come, sergeant," said the tall gentleman, stepping into view, "the game is up! I happen to be the Governor of Ramchowder, as you know perfectly well, you scoundrel!"

The man in the chair went so suddenly limp that his whole frame seemed to turn into jelly, and he

stared open-mouthed at the speaker; while the three dark-skinned men, whom Jerry recognised again, crowded forward and said something to the gentleman in an unknown tongue.

"Be patient, my friends," he laughed, "we are coming to that. Where is the Begum's diamond, Johnson, that you appropriated when you chose to impersonate myself and scuttle back to England with the proceeds of your roguery?"

"Mercy, my lord!" gasped the impostor. "I have done wrong, but of the diamond I know nothing!"

"May it please your honour," said Jerry, holding it out in his open palm, "is this the thing you seek?" And the three Indians fell upon their knees and prostrated themselves before that marvellous stone.

"Egad, my lad," said the Governor, "you have done well for yourself! And if you came by that diamond honestly, you shall claim the reward of fifty thousand rupees which the Begum of Pulgar has offered for its recovery."

Jonathan Wild whispered something in his ear, and the Governor turned with a smile to Mr. Rackstraw.

"It may interest you to know, sir," he said, "that this insolent fellow who has been masquerading in my character for the last six months is no colonel at all, but a rascally non-commissioned officer in the service of the Honourable Company, who, having robbed right and left with both hands, and accumulated a handsome fortune, thought it expedient to retire. Unluckily for himself, he stole the Begum's diamond, and that has been his undoing—Eh? What's that?"

And he turned to the door as several men came hurriedly in, dragging three others with them. "Ah, you have got the thieves!" said the Governor of Ramchowder.

"They have lost the greatest thief of all, my lord!" cried Mr. Rackstraw. "Twas Jack Sheppard who was their leader!"

"No matter," replied the Governor, with a grim smile. "These three shall swing to keep this rascal company." And he turned his back on the sham colonel.

The Governor was both right and wrong. Mr. Rackstraw and his apprentices spent a pleasant morning at Tyburn to witness the execution of Jack Sheppard's confederates, but "Colonel Peppercorn" cheated justice by dying in his cell before they could try him.

"I shall preserve this cabinet to my dying day," said Mr. Rackstraw, "to remind me of a most extraordinary business!"

"Twill serve, master," said Jerry, "to keep my reward in, if you will permit it!"

"For my part," said Jim, with a laugh, when he and Jerry were out of earshot, "I think it might make a wondrous good rabbit-hutch!"

THE END.

("The Marathon at Mansbury," Next Tuesday's Grand, Complete, Long Story.)

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT.

Our Helpful Series That Will Interest All Boys, Whether Scouts or Not.

To Win the Marksman's Badge.

ANOTHER badge that you fellows ought to try for is the marksman's. It is one of the badges that count towards being a King's Scout, and it is fairly easy to win when you have done a little shooting.

And to my mind shooting is a thing that every scout who possibly can ought to go in for. The day may come—I don't say it will, but everybody knows it may—when we shall have to stand together to defend our country. And on that day the fellow who can shoot a bit will be worth heaps more than the joker who has never handled a rifle.

The sooner you start shooting the better, because you can't be a good shot straight off. It takes a great deal of practice, and so the earlier you commence, the better chance you have of being a marksman.

And boys usually make first-rate shots. Their nerves are steady, their eyesight is good, and they are generally fit. A number of my boys are rattling good shots, and can knock some of the men who shoot at the same range into a cocked hat. Men who have been shooting for years, too!

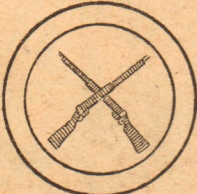
How to Learn.

You don't all get a chance to learn shooting, I know, but in most towns now there are miniature rifle clubs, and if you fellows concoct a nice little letter to the secretary, asking permission to use the range, I have very little doubt that the committee would make some arrangement for you.

In my own town the Rifle Club people are awfully decent. They allow the bigger of my boys to go and shoot for an hour every Wednesday evening, during which time nobody else uses the range. They don't have to pay anything, except a penny for ten rounds of ammunition, which the members of the club pay threepence for.

And I feel sure you'll find that other clubs will be just as sporting, if you only ask them nicely.

Of course, I have to promise that my boys sha'n't muck about at the range—point guns at each other, or kick up a row, or do anything silly like that. But of course hints about behaviour are not needed when one is talking to scouts!



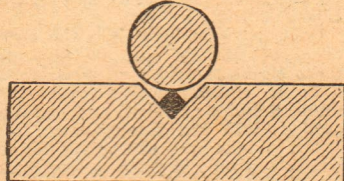
The Marksman's Badge.

One or Two Tips.

Supposing you have been able to fix these up, here are one or two little hints that may help you.

Position.—Be comfortable. Try to get the correct position—body at an angle of forty-five degrees to the target, legs well apart, left elbow well under the rifle and almost directly in front of the right—if you can. But err on the side of comfort. If you're in a strained, uncomfortable position, you can't shoot.

Holding.—Hold the rifle firmly with both hands. Don't just let the stock rest on your left hand—grasp it. Get the butt well into the hollow of



How the Bullseye should look through the sight of your rifle.

the shoulder, not on the muscles of the arm.

Aiming.—Get the sights on the bull so that they look as in the sketch if you find that suits you. If you find you can shoot better with a fine sight—that is, with less foresight showing in the V of the backsight—do so. But always take the same amount of foresight each time—never vary it.

Be careful that you don't cant your rifle to right or left. This inclines your sights, and your shots go low right or low left as the case may be.

Let-off.—Never pull the trigger. Let it off by getting the other fingers of your hand curled well round the small of the butt and squeezing the first finger towards them. This is just about the most important thing in shooting. If you pull or jerk the trigger, your shots will fly away to the right.

Breathing.—Hold your breath while you press the trigger.

Scores.—Always keep a record of your score, and try to improve each time you shoot.

As you will most likely get a chance to shoot on a miniature range, I'm not going to say anything about wind or the other things you run up against in shooting on a full-sized range.

(I shall be pleased to deal with any scouting difficulties in this column, or by post.

THE SCOUTMASTER.)

BOXING NOTES.

The Right-Hand Body-Blow.

THE right-hand body-blow certainly comes next in importance to the straight left. It is comparatively an easy blow to deliver, but cannot well be practised before a glass. The best method of teaching yourself will be dealt with in a moment.

First, it is necessary to describe what the object of the blow is. The "mark," or the point where the ribs curve up to the breastbone, is peculiarly sensitive to a hard blow—indeed, its effects are sickening unless the muscles be closed tightly over the place. A hard blow directed at the ribs upon either side also has an exhausting effect, and it is to these two places that the right-hand body-blow should be sent. You should hold the forearm tense and firm, and shoot it forward with all your weight.

The hanging sack described in the notes on an inexpensive gymnasium is first-class for practice. By advancing and retreating—and always remember to keep the left foot before the right—to and from the sack, and driving in your right, you will soon learn to do the same thing to an opponent.

To throw your weight well forward you should keep your own body close to that of your antagonist. This also prevents him from hitting you with his own right hand.

It is well, also, to step a little to the left as you go in, for this prevents your man from swinging round.

Another excellent method of practice, both for the body-blow and the straight left, is to get a friend with whom very likely you are learning to box to stand still

In an attitude of defence

and allow you to pound in blow after blow at him. He will have his guard up, of course, but this is nevertheless an excellent plan, especially for teaching the footwork accurately.

In delivering a right-hand body-blow it must always be remembered that the blow should be directed with a slightly upward motion, otherwise you are very liable to hit your man below the belt, which is a foul.

The most renowned exponent of the right-hand body-blow is the old champion Robert Fitzsimmons. To such a pitch of perfection had he brought this swift upward-moving blow that it is said he could easily lift men right off their feet and out of the ring.

THE END.

(Another Boxing Article Next Tuesday.)

BLUSHING.

FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 8, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

Advertisement for a Silver Watch Free. Includes an image of a watch and text: "A SILVER WATCH FREE. For Postal Order 1s. (or 13 stamps) we will forward a massive 18-ct. Gold Simulation Chain, together with our generous offer of a Solid Silver Watch Free per return post (lady's or gent's). These watches have solid silver cases, reliable movements, and are guaranteed timekeepers. We are simply giving them away to introduce our goods. (Dept. O), LONDON SUPPLY STORES, Invicta House, Swanscombe, Kent."

Advertisement for Fretwork. Includes an image of a person working and text: "FRETWORK. NEW PENNY DESIGNS. Send us two penny stamps, and we will send you an ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE of our new and wonderful series of PENNY FRETWORK DESIGNS, together with FULL-SIZE DIAGRAMS for making two novel BELL-RINGING MONEY-BOXES in Fretwork.—Write (Desk 4), NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION, 63, Farringdon Street, E.C."

DEADWOOD DICK SALOON AIR PISTOL.

The largest sale of any air pistol in the world. Can be carried in the pocket. Specially introduced for in and out door sport. Latest and greatest novelty extant for shooting Birds, Rabbits, &c. Sent securely packed in case, together with 100 rounds of ammunition and a quantity of darts. Prices: No. 1, Japanese, 4/6; No. 2, Silver-plated all over, 6/-; No. 3, extra finish, 8/6; postage 4d. extra. Enclose id. stamp for Illustrated List.—B. FRANKS & CO., Gun Manufacturers, Empire Works, Caroline Street, Birmingham.

Advertisement for Grow a Moustache. Includes an image of a man with a moustache and text: "GROW A MOUSTACHE. A smart, manly moustache speedily grows at any age by using 'Mousta,' the only true Moustache Food. Remember, Success positively guaranteed. Boys become men. Acts like magic. Box (sent in plain cover) for 6d. and 1d. for postage. Send 7d. to J. A. DIXON & CO., 42, Junction Road, London, N. (Foreign Orders 9d.)."

Large advertisement for The Royal Card Co. Includes images of watches, brooches, and cards. Text: "FREE! FREE! FREE! SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU. TIE-PINS, BROOCHES, CHAINS, RINGS, FREE FOR SELLING CARDS. To advertise our new series of lovely Xmas and New Year Cards we offer every reader of this paper a handsome present absolutely FREE simply for selling or using 12 cards at 1d. each. Our 1910 Grand Prize List contains over 200 new gifts, including Ladies' or Gent's Watches, Electric Trains, Chains, Rings, Phonographs, Real Furs, Roller Skates, Umbrellas, Cinematographs, Toys of all kinds, Accordeons, Air Guns, Steam Engines, Pins, Brooches, Etc., Etc., which we are giving away to purchasers of our cards. This Splendid AEROPLANE FREE WRITE NOW. All you need do is to send us your full name and address (a postcard will do) and we will send you per return a selection of Xmas and New Year Cards (including numerous folding cards) heavily gold-mounted, beautifully coloured and embossed, to sell or use at 1d. each. Use or sell what you can within 28 days and we will reward you according to the list we send you. WRITE NOW. IT NEED NOT COST YOU A PENNY OF YOUR OWN MONEY. Don't Delay. Post Now. Simply send a Postcard. THE ROYAL CARD CO. (Dept. 23), ROYAL PARADE, KEW, LONDON. SPLENDID VARIETY OF CARDS."

Advertisement for Philip Leslie & Co. Includes images of watches, phonographs, and aeroplanes. Text: "FREE! FREE!! FREE!!! WATCHES, PHONOGRAPHS, AEROPLANES, ETC. SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU. Simply for selling 12 of our new range of Xmas and New Year Cards we give you a handsome present ABSOLUTELY FREE. All you need do is to send us your name and address (a postcard will do) and we will forward you a selection of our beautiful hand-painted, gold-mounted, and other Xmas and New Year Cards and postcards, together with our new 1910 PRIZE LIST, containing upwards of 200 splendid FREE GIFTS, including 30-hour Lever Watches, Chains, Rings, Phonographs, Mono-Railways (the latest scientific novelty), Aeroplanes, Air Guns, Furs, Cinematographs, Toys, Musical Instruments, Etc., Etc. Sell or use the cards within 28 days; and send us the money obtained, and we will reward you according to the grand list we send you. EVEN IF YOU DO NOT SELL A SINGLE CARD WE WILL GIVE YOU A PRESENT JUST THE SAME. 200 FREE GIFTS. SCIENTIFIC MONORAIL FREE. WRITE NOW. A Postcard will do. FREE GIFTS. PHILIP LESLIE & CO. (Dept. Xmas & New Year 12), Card Publishers, Richmond, London."

Advertisement for Craic, Craic & Co. Includes an image of a man in a suit. Text: "Just as an Advertisement Sent Post Paid To your Door. £2-2 Suit FOR 15/- 7/6 BOOTS Lady's and Gent's 1/- Per Week. Send Size. CRAIC, CRAIC & CO., Head Office (Dept. 5), 81, Dunlop St., GLASGOW."

Advertisement for Robey Ltd. Includes an image of a gramophone. Text: "SENT FOR 4/6 DEPOSIT. HALF SHOP PRICES. Send 4/6 for the world-famed 'ROBEYPHONE,' with 24 selections and sumptuously decorated 17-in. horn, powerful steel motor, 10-in. disc, and loud-tone sound-box, which I sell at HALF shop prices. I supply ROBEYPHONE, GRAMOPHONE, ZONOPHONE, EDISON, AMBEROL, COLUMBIA, PATHE, EXCELSIOR, & other well-known Phonographs and Records on low monthly payments. Sent on approval. 5,000 testimonials. GEO. ROBEY, LTD., World's Provider (Dept. 10), Coventry. WRITE FOR LISTS."