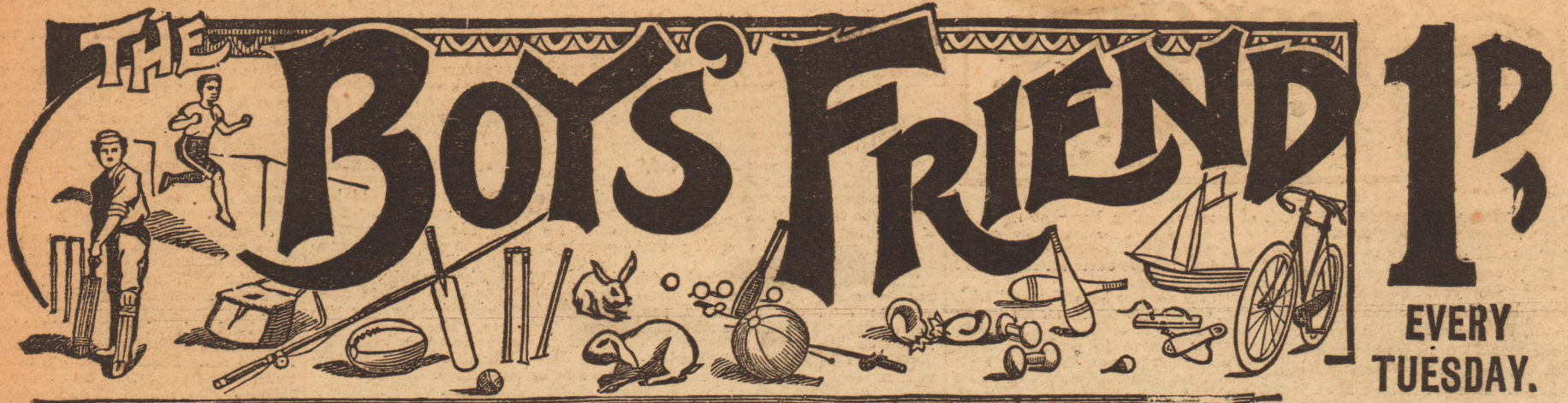


YORKSHIRE GRIT! A Superb New Mill-land Serial, By Stacey Blake, **STARTS THIS WEEK.**

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THE BOYS' FRIEND 1^p



EVERY TUESDAY.

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

No. 488.—Vol. X. New Series.]

ONE PENNY:

[WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 15, 1910.]

YORKSHIRE GRIT!

BY STACEY BLAKE



THE RUNAWAY STEAM-LORRY!

An Incident You Will Read of in This Week's Opening Chapters of our New Yorkshire Serial. It's Ripping!

SUPERB NEW SERIAL.

STARTS TO-DAY.



THE 1st CHAPTER. Alone in the World.

LOOK here, Jess, don't cry any more; I can't bear to see you. I want to be brave, but when I see you sobbing, I—well, I just want to join in myself. But I mustn't. I've got to put a bold face on, because I've done being a lad now. I've got to look after you, so I've got to be a man. And it won't bring her back, will it, if we cry ever so? And it will please her best when she looks out of Heaven if we're just being brave and all that."

Dick Allen kissed his little sister straight there in the street. He took her by the hand, and together they set off down the grey, gloomy Great Horton Road, a pathetic little pair in their shabby black, looking out on the world with their pale, tear-stained faces.

Under the grass of a little forsaken burial-ground beside a church where they had attended in more prosperous days they had laid their mother in her last rest. It was a little gloomy God's-acre, beside a grimy playing-field flanked with mills. Mingling with the burial service had come the careless voices of boys at football and the hum of looms.

The world went on, even though their mother was dead. They had to bear their own sorrow. That was the lesson Dick Allen was at this moment learning. True, they had not come quite unaccompanied to the funeral. Three neighbours had pulled out their mourning, and had gone up with them, but these had paused to wash away their sorrow at a corner house of refreshment in Southfield Lane, leaving the two chief mourners to go on ahead.

"And, of course, you will have to look after the house now," Dick went on with a great effort at cheerfulness, "while I shall earn the money."

"As a half-timer, Dick?"

"No, I shall go full time. I've passed my standards. I'm thirteen. I reckon I can't afford a fancy education now. A chap can't keep a home going on half-time—eh?"

"Where shall you go for a job, Dick?" asked Jessie, greatly comforted, and taking courage herself.

"You wait and see, little 'un. But I think I shall try Trimble's. I'm thinking I'll be able to get a ligger-on's job."

"But there's a strike on there. The lads would just about kill you, Dick, if you tried to get on there."

"Would they? Not much!" said Dick, clapping a doubled fist inside an open palm, as indicating what he would do if anyone opposed him in his efforts to get a living. He stopped all at once before a cookshop window, where dripping was for sale.

"Good stuff that," he said. "Goes further than margarine, and there's more taste in it. Is there anything at home?"

"Half a loaf," said Jessie, "and there's a bit of tea in the tin, and some sugar. But do you think we can afford dripping till you get a job, Dick?"

Dick had a weight of coppers in his pocket, which, counted out, gave a total of one shilling—their whole available capital.

"Tisn't much; but we've got to keep our strength up. Go in and get half a pound, Jess. And try and get 'em to put it in paper that won't soak the grease up. You can waste a lot like that."

They got away round through Dirkhill Road and Trinity Road, out at length into Manchester Road, whence they reached Scotland Street, which was home. Their dwelling was in a little yard called Johnson's Fold, which was flanked in on one side by a shoeing-forge and on the other by the unclean dwelling of a rag-sorter. A bunch of little three-roomed cottages filled up Johnson's Fold. They were cheap because they were tumble-down. A big sooty wall of a wool-combing mill effectually shut out all sunlight from the yard. From this mill came day and night the roar of machinery. It never stopped except at week-ends, one lot

of workers going home at night to rest, while another lot came on to take their place and work through the night till the other lot came back in the morning.

"We'll not live here always," Dick said, for he was not insensible to the disadvantages of Johnson's Fold; "but it'll have to do till I start making good money. You look a bit pale, Jess, and that cough of yours would be better if you could breathe in a bit of sunshine."

"I say, Dick, but we lock mother out to-night," murmured the little girl when they sat down in the dim kitchen after their meal.

Into the boy's throat came a choking feeling, but he swallowed it down.

"She's in a better place than Johnson's Fold," he said thickly, as he smoothed the little girl's hair. "And—and I want to be there, too!" sobbed the child in the extremity of her grief.

Down Dick's cheeks rolled hot tears, but he set fast his teeth and stifled his grief.

"But what should I do if you left me, kiddie?" he said. "What should I do without my little housekeeper? I'm going to work, you know, Jess. I'm going to earn money, only I can't get on unless I have somebody to look after me. Now, you're just the girl. You aren't very big, but you're real good for your size."

"Yes, dear Dick, I'll look after you well," she said, drying her tears. "Shall I start and wash the kitchen floor now?"

"I'll smack you if you do. You're going to bed, young 'un—at least, after you've had some milk."

"But we can't afford milk, Dick."

"But we're going to. Here, am I gaffer in my own house? Now, you're going to drink a penn'orth of milk, when I've fetched it, and, maybe, you'll have to lay an egg in it. Your face is a lot too white."

He obtained these luxuries out of his slender store of money, which left him exactly sixpence; but he had strong faith in himself. On the morrow he was going to start his fight with the world, and he was going to fight with good courage, not only for himself, but for little Jessie. It all began sooner than he anticipated. Indeed, it began that night.

Jessie went off to bed, and he stayed down in the dusk thinking. Presently he felt restless. He crept up the wooden stairs and noiselessly opened Jessie's door. She was sleeping. He made sure of it before he went down. Then he went out into the yard and through the archway into the street. He somehow felt he wanted to be setting at something. He begrudged the hours between now and morning, because he could not be up and doing. He wanted to be working. He wanted to start his new life.

It came into his mind that he would go and have a look at Trimble's mill, where he proposed to go and apply for a job in the morning. Of the dispute there he had little knowledge, save that it had begun because some improvements in machinery were threatened, which, it was said, would turn out work quicker than some of the hands wanted. That this strike was a very real thing he found out when he got up into Mill Lane through Vulcan Street. There were lights in many parts of Trimble's mill. Outside the yard gates was gathered a crowd of men and youths watching. Dick inquired of one what it was all about. The answer came in the shrieking voice of a woman, of whom there was a sprinkling in the crowd.

"Sithee, he's putting up the new machinery before your very eyes. Will you stand it, lads? Are you going to sit down and let your living be taken away from you? Sithee, he'll not want half of you, lads, when he's gotten his new machinery up. Why don't you smash it, lads? You'll starve if you don't."

"Ah! Smash it an' all!" growled a lot of voices.

"And smash them as comes to work it—if any comes!" shrieked another woman.

"You're a lot o' fools!" cried

a workman with a new view of it. "Yon frames'll spin quicker, maybe. Very well, there'll be more brass for the pockets, and—"

But a yell drowned him, and a woman shook a lean fist in his face. "You're a daft lot, with not a ha'porth o' brains among you."

Someone hit the speaker in token of disagreement. Dick moved to the gateway, from which a board hung with the lettered announcement upon it that hands were wanted.

"Don't thee go and apply, lad," said a voice over his shoulder.

He turned and saw a grimy-faced youth who chewed the end of a cigarette.

"Tha seems to be eyeing that notice a bit hungry like."

"If I am, what's it got to do with you?" said Dick, with more courage than discretion. "I suppose a chap can read a notice on a wall if he likes."

"Notices like that ain't good for such as thee, lad, because tha might forget thyself and go and ring the bell and ax for a job."

"And suppose I did?" said Dick, resenting the other's bullying tone.

"Well, to begin with, I should smash thee up myself. The work inside there is ours—when we like to go and get it. Only we're teaching old Trimble a lesson. But we ain't going to have thee, or anybody else, smelling round after our work, see?"

"No, I don't see," said Dick quietly. "I reckon I've got to get my living like other chaps."

"Not here, that doesn't. That's what we're watching for. The chap as comes applying here won't get further than the gate, I'll bet. Now, get thee gone, 'less tha wants tha nose-end porzin'."

There was very much of what is called the Britisher in Dick Allen—that is to say, a sort of dogged pluck that feeds on defiance. It was not so much the lighted windows of the mill calling to his necessity, or the fear of the hunger that he knew would await him and Jessie that impelled him to go and do what he did, but rather the threats of this dirty lout who was trying to terrorise him.

"Look here; I'm not frightened of you, anyhow," said Dick, moving towards the bell-chain.

"Touch it, and just see what'll happen to thee."

Dick put out his hand, gripped the swinging handle, and gave it a good tug. With a clanging of the bell in the yard came a sudden surprised silence. Then the big youth's voice shrieked out:

"Here's a lad applying for a job! Take that, tha beggar, for thi blooming cheek!"

The blow got Dick behind the ear before he was aware of its coming. He staggered forward, clutched at the bell-chain again in the effort to keep his feet, and went down against the wall with the bell clanging noisily on the other side of the gate. But he was up again on his feet the next moment, angry and indignant, and he was prepared for the fellow's next attack; and he not only made a good defence, but he managed to get a blow in for himself. But his assailant knew a better trick than that of being hammered by a youngster who seemed to know how to take care of himself. He raised a cry of "Black-leg!"

"Here's the first of 'em! The first blooming blackleg to go after our jobs. Come on, lads, bang him in t' ear! Give him summat to tak' home with him!"

There came a swarm of lads and youths about Dick. He shrank back against the wall, white-faced, yet not the less determined to defend himself, and he hit out spitefully at those who attacked him.

"Oh, ain't he hot?" cried out his first aggressor. "He wants cooling a bit. Let's drop him in t' water. Let's take him up to Crabtree's pool and give him a dowsing."

The proposition met with popular approval, and Dick was seized and borne down by sheer weight. He struggled his hardest, but he was hoisted on strong shoulders and carried off up the street to the smelly mill-pond adjacent to Crabtree's dye-works. He fought every inch of the way. In the mill-yard, which was open because Crabtree's were working all night, he nearly escaped. He got a foot free, and jerked it out under one of his captors' chin. The grip on him was relinquished for a moment, but others closed in, and they bore him up to the filthy pond and threw him in.

"That'll teach you to be a black-leg!" yelled the big youth as Dick crawled out, almost sick with the filth upon him.

"And here's a lesson for yourself,

you brute!" Dick cried, letting out a blow at the other's chin with all the strength of his body behind it. The big youth went back, clawing at the air, stumbling, and finally diving into the pond at the very spot where he had helped to throw Dick. But Dick did not wait to see more. He saw an open way, and took the opportunity to escape. There was some little half-hearted pursuit by sympathisers of the big youth, but he easily eluded them, and finally got home wet and filthy of body, and not a little weary of heart.

His first grip with the world had not been pleasant, and it began to enter his mind that the question of getting a living was not an easy one. At the same time, he did not allow himself to be discouraged. It was not merely himself he had to fight for, but for the little sister who was sleeping upstairs. Their mother was gone. There was no one to look after little Jessie but him. No, he would have to be very brave.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. A Juggle With Death.

DICK was up again out of bed soon after four. It is real work in mill-land, where the hooters scream out at six in the morning, calling the workers to their daily round of toil. It was his intention to make a round of one or two of the nearest mills before beginning-time to see if there was any chance of a stray job as doffer-boy in the spinning mills (which is the work of removing the filled bobbins from the spindles, and putting on empty ones), or bobbin-pegger in the weaving-sheds (the task of getting the bobbins out of the steps and filling a pegged board with them all ready for the looms). He prepared his own breakfast, and he took some up to Jessie, bidding her stay there and rest longer, on pain of earning his severe disapproval.

"You aren't looking any so well, kiddie," he said, "so you'll stop in bed for a bit. There's only dripping for breakfast this morning, but I tell you what—if I pick up a job to-day, we'll have sausages for supper. There! Won't that make you open your eyes? Now just eat up, and then turn over and get another bit of sleep. There's nothing like sleep to make you fat. By-by, kiddie."

After his experiences overnight, he had no mind to try the Vulcan Street district, so he went away down the Manchester Road into Tyrrel Street, and joined the hurrying workers going up Thornton Road. Pale workers from the night-shifts in the wool-combing mills clattered home, meeting those going to take their places. Sometimes wives met husbands, and children met mothers in a curt good-morning as they passed in the street, the only association they ever had save for week-ends. And yet they laughed and were cheerful—these people whose lives were all work; and even Dick found himself breaking into a whistle. He whistled a bar, and stopped. It was hard to be gay with the memory of that newly-turned grave up in Great Horton.

He lingered about in front of a big mill where a crowd of men, women, boys, and girls waited for the blowing of the whistle. There was such a crowd there that he felt shy at going in to inquire for work, and he went further up the road, trying to get up his pluck. Time after time he stopped before one mill and another, and with beating heart tried to put together the words he would have to say in seeking employment. Once he got as far as the sixth step up to an office, then his courage deserted him, and he went back to rehearse again what he would say. Then at last he managed it. He went to a time-keeper in his office, was handed on to a foreman, and from him received a curt refusal.

He went to another mill with greater courage, but no more success, and from there onward he tried every weaving and spinning place in the neighbourhood. Finally, he went up to Briggs' wool-combing mill, where he thought he might have a better chance, for wool-scouring and combing is not a popular industry, and, indeed, is looked upon in Bradford as a worker's last resort. Briggs' is a good place, but at the best wool-combing is a nasty occupation, unhealthy, and unclean; but Dick was badly wanting work, and he was getting into the mood to be willing to take anything. He got no work there, but he got an adventure that nearly put him beyond the need of any employment.

On the edge of the pavement under the wall of the mill stood a big

motor-waggon piled high with wool-packs. These tight-pressed packs, each containing some hundredweights of wool, were being drawn up, one at a time, by a pulley to the store and the wool-sorting-room at the top of the building.

Dick stood for some minutes underneath looking on at this operation, when all at once, as he stood watching the upward journey of a great pack, he saw, to his horror, the rope looped around it giving way. During an instant of time he saw the strands of the rope uncurling like grass-snakes; he saw two ends fly apart, and he was conscious that the big wool-pack was growing suddenly bigger.

He stood, gripped more in fascination than fear, unable to move, watching with up-staring eyes the death that was coming down upon him.

A hand gripped him from behind at the last moment, and snatched him from death. There was a confusion and a wild shouting. Dick had hardly time to gather his scattered senses, nor chance to find who had rendered him service, when other things claimed his attention. The wool-pack fell half upon the driver's seat of the waggon, rolling from the seat somehow upon the driving, or the change-gear levers. Quite what happened it was impossible to tell; but the running engine somehow got jerked into gear, and the waggon started suddenly forward. It flung away the wool-pack that had fallen on it, and started off at a gathering pace down the slope into Thornton Road. The thoroughfare crossed at right-angles. It seemed that the uncontrolled waggon would go straight for a cook-shop on the other side of the road, but, curiously enough, at the bottom of the side-street it began to swerve as though some invisible hand controlled the steering, and actually cleared the corner and started away down Thornton Road. But by this time Dick was in full pursuit, with half a dozen others; but he got ahead of them, and was almost up to the lumbering runaway, when it swerved round the corner.

He hung on at the back, and gripped hold of an edge of a wool-pack, pulled himself up, and got his fist in a hole where the sacking had split. By a great effort he pulled himself up. He got his knee over the edge, and scrambled on the top just as the ponderous machine made a dive for the side of the road. It mounted the kerbstone and cut off a lamppost like a crisp carrot, then bore forward again on the opposite track as though it would smash into a fried-fish shop. Then Dick got down to the steering-wheel, and though he had never controlled any motor of any kind before, so that the position was novel and strange to him, he gripped on the control and managed to keep the clattering machine in the middle of the road.

He wanted to stop it, but he did not know how to do it. He did not know which lever or what handle to move. Meanwhile, the waggon was gaining in pace, helped by the descending gradient and by a peculiarity of the engine control which he did not understand. The throttle always had a tendency to open, owing to the vibration of the engine, but Dick did not know this, nor even where the throttle was or what it did. He only knew that both to stop and start the machine certain handles had to be moved; but which, and the method of their manipulation, he had no idea.

It took him all his time to steer with his two hands, let alone experiment among the levers on the steering-pillar and the rods at his side, but it had to be done, and, holding fast to his steering with one hand, he made a grab at a lever that came nearest to his reach with the other. By ill-luck it was the rod that controlled the sparking. He pushed it away from him. The immediate result was a sudden increase of speed. The ponderous, clattering vehicle seemed to leap away. The speed of it frightened him, and increased the difficulty of steering. Now it swerved to one side of the road, now to the other. By a hair's-breadth it missed a child that was crossing the road; the next moment it skimmed the flanks of one of a pair of horses that were going in the same direction, drawing a heavy load of empty warp-beams.

The next thing he knew was that the horses had taken fright and were galloping in terror upon his track. Yells and shrieks penetrated to his ears through the din. For himself he had hardly time to be terrified. His whole brain and strength were concentrated on stopping this monster.

He swerved around into Tyrrel

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

Street, dashed over the tram-lines in front of the town-hall, got around into Market Street, and then by a miracle turned into Bank Street, with the steep slope of Darley Street in front of him. It was on this steep hill the motor-wagon, as he had hoped, found its quietus. It gradually lost speed. The engine laboured. The impulses grew slower, and it finally stopped half-way up.

He waited ten minutes, after which, through the crowd that had gathered about him pushed the man who had been in charge of the motor-wagon, breathless still with running, and pale with fear.

"Are you all right, lad?" he gasped, though he was looking more at the wagon than at Dick.

"As right as rivets," answered Dick, with renewed cheerfulness.

"What about those horses?" "They were pulled up at t' corner of Brewery Street. Sithee, lad, what's your name? You're a gradely lad. Your name ought to go in the 'Observer' for this."

"I'm not particular about that," Dick said, in confidence, as he imparted his name and address to the motor-man, "but I'll tell you what I do want—I want a job. If you can put me on to one, I reckon we shall be about quits."

"Lad, I'll tell t' gaffer, never fear. This stuff belongs to Henry Trimble."

"What! Where the strike's on?" "Ay; this wool, when it's scoured, will be spun on his new machines. Maybe there'll be a chance for you there, lad."

"Yes, a chance to get my head broken," grinned Dick. "I had a shot there last night, and got thrown into a mill-pool for my trouble."

"You don't say so! But you lads will soon get tired of that. Now I must be going. But I sha'n't forget to tell t' gaffer, and mebbe he'll send for you."

**THE 3rd CHAPTER.
For His Sister's Sake.**

THIS promise of employment did not stop Dick meanwhile looking round for work elsewhere. He was mindful that there was little food at home, and only sixpence to buy more, while there was little Jessie needing good nourishment and little luxuries that at present he had no means of purchasing. So he filled in his time that morning in looking about where stray jobs were to be picked up, but he found no luck.

He tried two or three places in Valley Road without success, and then he tramped over the bridge by Manningham Station, up the steep hill of Queen's Road, and round into Manningham Lane, thence up Oak Lane to where the great chimney of Lister's breathed black smoke into the high air. No fortune waited him there. There was not a little job for him in all Manningham Mills. He was not wanted. No one had any use for him.

If it had not been for the adventure of the early morning which promised work at Trimble's, he would have gone back disheartened. As it was, he went back with a smile, and told Jessie of the great things that were certainly waiting him. Threepence of his last sixpence he spent in potted meat and milk for her.

"But what are you going to have?" she asked.

"Why, bread-and-dripping, of course!" he answered cheerfully. "I like it better almost than anything. There's a real lot of goodness in it. I think I enjoy it better than I should roast-chicken and peas."

"But perhaps I should enjoy it, Dick."

"No, I don't know that you would. It's not so good for little 'uns like you. But I tell you what—you shall have what you like when I get some work. I shouldn't be surprised if that ride I had this morning brought me a regular fortune."

"Oh, Dicky, you are silly."

"Nonsense; girls don't understand business. You just wait and see."

But the waiting did not bring anything, although for the sake of his little sister Dick always pretended to be full of hope and quite certain that any minute he might get the offer of a most lucrative job, although really his hopes began to sink, and he could only think that either Trimble's had no use for him, or that the motor-man had forgotten all about him. Nor did he find any success elsewhere.

Day after day he toiled about the smoky streets, trying to find a place where he could labour for his bread; but luck was always against him, and as the days passed and he grew

gaunter, his heart began to fail him, and he found it as hard to keep a brave face before Jessie as it was to get the food she needed.

Some of their little treasures he took to the shop in the Manchester Road which flaunted three golden balls opposite the Dusty Miller public-house, and with the few shillings thus obtained he bought the necessaries that little Jessie needed and his own meagre supplies.

It was a sight of the little girl's white face one breakfast-time that wakened a new determination in him.

"I'm going to try to get on at Trimble's, if they kill me for it," he said to himself.

He went straightway, boldly in the daylight, and rang the yard bell. As usual, there was a sprinkling in the street of those on strike, and no sooner did they see him than the cry of "Blackleg!" brought a crowd about him. Intimidation is, of course, unlawful, but, like many other unlawful things, it is sometimes done with impunity.

"Why, it's t' kid we chucked in t' pond the other night!" cried somebody. "Sithee, kid, we'll just about kill you if you take a job on here!"

"Bash the little rotter now," cried somebody, "and prevent him going in!"

Dick stood with his back to the mill-yard gate, his heart beating, but his face set and determined.

"What! Is he too big for you, or ain't there enough of you?" jeered a man to a group of half a dozen loud-shouting youths, among whom Dick saw his principal aggressor of a few nights before.

"Leave him to me!" cried this big fellow. "I've a nice bit to get back, tha knaws. You little, white-mugged rabbit, put up your hands! I'll give you a chance! Here, take that! Oh, you little animal! You'd hit back, would you? Now, I'll teach you!"

Generally in stories the small boy thrashes the big boy, but in real life, other things being equal, the big one usually has the advantage. Dick Allen defended himself bravely enough, but he would have been in the way of a good hammering only that in response to his ring a small door in the big gates opened, and an old man put his head out.

His appearance was greeted with a storm of derision, but Dick lost no time in taking advantage of the open door. He slipped inside, and the door was shut.

The old man—little, thin, and white-haired he was—peered through spectacles into his face.

"Is it a job you are wanting, my lad?" he said.

"That's it," answered Dick, wiping the blood from his face. "I want to see Mr. Trimble."

"You can see him now, lad."

"Are you Mr. Trimble, sir?"

"Yes; at present my own door-keeper. The scoundrels! They've hurt you—eh?"

"It's nothing, sir—just a bruise! I got one or two in myself."

"You're a plucky youngster. But I'll make those villains eat humble pie before they're done with—or, at least, the one or two idle scoundrels who are responsible for the mischief. They've no brains. The alterations I'm making in this mill will be a benefit to them, only they haven't sense to see it. I think I can find you a job—at least, I can give you a trial. Only your hours will be pretty long. As a matter of fact, we're living in the mill altogether a few of us just now. Of course, I suppose I could get police protection if I wanted it, but that sort of thing makes one unpopular afterwards. Besides, I don't care about the excitement of going through a yelling crowd twice a day or so, because my heart is not over strong. Here! I don't know why I'm gossiping to you, lad. What's your name, now, and what can you do?"

"I've never had a job before, sir, but I'd try hard to do anything you set me on. My name is Allen—Dick Allen."

"Allen—Dick Allen!" repeated Mr. Trimble, scratching his head, as though to arouse his memory. "You don't live in Scotland Street, by any chance?"

"Yes, sir; in Johnson's Fold—Number Three."

"And are you the boy who steered my motor-wagon out of mischief last Friday?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"No buts about it. It was a plucky act. I don't mind saying so straight off. My man told me all about it. There's been a job here waiting for you some days, but you'll understand I've been a bit too busy to look after you. These new frames

are my own invention. A bit of 'em has been made at one place and a bit at another. But no one can fit them together except me. I've got a bit of help, but I've got to watch every screw and nut that's put in. It's what you've got to do, lad, if you want to get on. You've got to work yourself. I started, lad, just as I suppose you're starting now—without a halfpenny to my name, and I've never stopped working since. But I'm a silly old man talking to you, lad, like this, only I like the look of your face. I never had any children of my own—no little 'uns. I've a nephew—yes; but none of my own. Here, come along, lad! I want you to work, not listen to my chatter."

He put a hand on Dick's shoulder, and led him away, talking all the time in a queer, old-womanish way, with many a word of dialect in his plain speech, but somehow always a tone of kindness at the back of it.

Dick found himself in a great room, amid a maze of dismantled and half-built machinery. There were half a dozen mechanics at work fitting it up. Dick was given a spanner, and set at work tightening up rows of

about the entrance to Trimble's mill. But he had reckoned too soon. He had been seen by two or three of the big lads who were beginning to know his personality well, and there came a yell and a cry as a crowd of them started in pursuit.

Dick was fleet of foot, and he kept ahead and reached Johnson's Fold in safety, and closed and bolted No. 3 behind him.

"I've got a job," he burst out breathlessly—"a real fine job! Here, don't be frightened of that!" he added, as there came a spiteful thumping on the door. "That's only some chaps who are jealous of me. It's all right, Jess. I shall be able to buy you eggs and cream and sausages for tea."

He suddenly remembered that he had come in with the money in his pocket, but no food that the money would buy. It had been a meagre breakfast, and he did not like the sharp, thin look about Jessie's white face. He must go out again to get this needed food.

At the moment that the thought crossed his mind a stone came through a pane of the window with a

He was going out prepared to suffer a thrashing rather than his little sister should be frightened. He pulled back the bolt, opened the door, and stepped out into the yard to a chorused greeting of "Boos!" from the dozen or so young roughs assembled there. There was not one among them less than four years his senior. They received him with a choice variety of abuse.

"Look here," Dick said, when he had carefully shut the door after him, "my little sister is in there. She's sick, and I don't want her frightening."

"What are you—a nurse-maid, you little rotter?" yelled one coarsely.

"I suppose you're not a lot of cowards," Dick continued. "You don't want to hurt and frighten little girls?"

"But we want to give thee something, you little blackleg!"

"All right. And how many do you want me to stand up to?"

"How many? Be gobs, I've gotten my own to get back!" cried his old aggressor, shouldering his way to the front. "I'll give you something that'll prevent you working at Trimble's or anywhere else for a good long time!"

"All right. I'll stand up to you, and take all you can give me if you'll go out of this yard and stop frightening my sister."

"Oh, ay; that's fair!" cried one or two who had the British sense of fairness. "T' lad can't do more than take his guel. Come on, Widdop; he can't say no fairer."

So Dick went out into the street a sufficient distance away from Johnson's Fold, and faced the big youth Widdop fairly and squarely for the first time. It was fated that in the life that lay before him he would have to meet this antagonist in other circumstances, but hardly in any so hopeless as this.

"Look here, I'll hold your coat!" exclaimed one lad more generous than the rest. "You're a blackleg, but you seem to have grit. Eh, but why don't you be a proper sort of lad and come on strike w' us an all?"

"Because I've got my living to get," answered Dick. "And I'm going to get it, too!"

"Eh, but thart crazy! Time!" This chronicler would have liked to have recorded a fight in which Dick Allen—plucky boy as ever stepped in shoe-leather—wore down his big antagonist, and in the end whipped him, but this story has set out to tell of a boy's life as it was, and in real life defeat comes quite as often as victory. And, anyhow, it was a very honourable defeat.

Dick fought hard. He dodged and parried as many of his opponent's heavy, slugging blows as he could, and got in not a few spiteful little punches himself; but for all the fierce resentment and desperation that filled him, he found himself gradually being worn down.

Maddened by the pain of his hurts, he rushed in wildly upon his enemy, but Widdop, with his greater reach, stepped back and dealt the small boy a staggering blow that sent him tumbling into the gutter.

Dick was up again immediately. He was dazed. He could hardly see, and he was smitten by a maddening pain, but he had to face this foe. He was purchasing peace and immunity from interference for little Jessie by what he was undergoing.

He went down again. Then someone called out that it was enough.

"T' kid's taken his gruelling, Widdop. He's stood up to thee. Tha's paid him out for the bit he gave thee."

"That'll learn thee to be a blackleg!" said Widdop in his ear as he sat on the kerbstone, wiping his face with his rag of a handkerchief. "And I tell thee what. Don't go to Trimble's any more. The men's coming out to-night in force to smash all that new machinery. And anybody found there will very like get smashed as well."

At that moment there came a cry of "Copper!" which caused a general exodus of all concerned. Dick cleared off with the rest. He had no need for sympathy or commiseration. He was suffering very painful hurts at the moment, but he would get over them, and, at least, he was not conscious of any shame.

He slipped away through some devious passages into Duncan Street, and thence into Manchester Road, where at a butcher's he bought three chops—two for his and Jessie's dinner, and the extra one for her supper.

"Better have a bit of steak for your eye," said the butcher humorously.

"Nay, can't afford it!" said Dick.

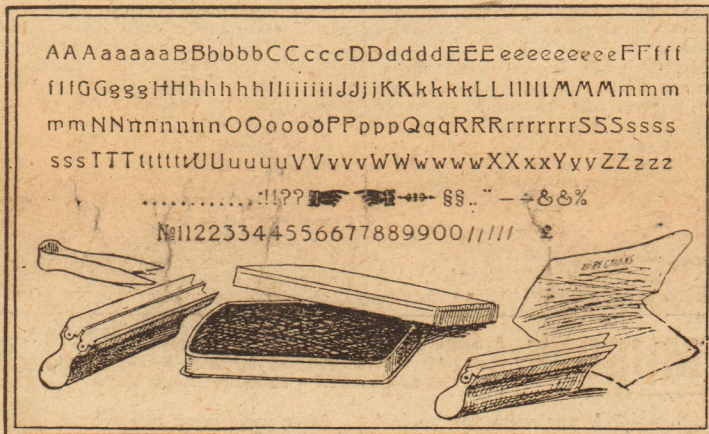
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nuts that clamped the spinning-frames together, and showing himself handy and quick in the use of this tool, he was put on to fitting the bolts as well.

"We'll have to find you a shake-down in the mill," said Mr. Trimble to Dick, when they knocked off work for something to eat. "That rough crowd outside will not be very gentle with you. I think you'd best stop here with the rest of us."

"I'm afraid I can't, sir. You see, there's Jessie. She's my sister, and she'd be afraid to be alone. Besides, she's not very strong."

"What, lad—eh? But where's your mother?"

The old man became very gentle when Dick told him.

"All right," he said; "you must not stop too late. And you'd better run away home for dinner now, and take your day's wages home with you. Happen you'd like it to get the little lass something to put bone into her."

Dick found a way out over a neighbouring mill wall, and he reached the street, as he thought, without being observed by the loungers who hung

clatter and a tinkling noise, showing him the kind of reception that would be waiting him.

Jessie gave a little cry of alarm, and looked fearfully towards the window. Dick saw the blood shrink from her face and fear creep into her eyes. Rage and indignation came into his heart that she should be frightened, but he made haste first to quieten her fears.

"It's all right," he said; "they can't hurt you. It's only their playful way. They're out for a lark, and they don't know you're in here. Look here, you go into the back scullery and make a fire to cook some chops on that I'll get soon, and then I'll go out and talk to those chaps."

"Oh, Dick, but they'll hurt you!"

"Nonsense, kiddie! You don't know how I can take care of myself."

He kissed her, and pushed her into the inner scullery, and shut her in just as an unearthly noise of hammering sticks and stones came on the outer door. He went towards it with beating heart and face that was white. But it was firm-set; the mouth was hard, and there was no shrinking in his eyes.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

YORKSHIRE GRIT.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Then I'll put you a bit in, lad, for nowt."

"Oh, thanks! That's good of you. But I bet I shall eat it!"

And he did, instead of a chop, which gave another chop for Jessie on the morrow. He took in a loaf of brown bread as well, and half a pound of margarine instead of his favourite beef dripping.

"Oh, Dick, Dick, you've been hurt!" cried Jessie when she saw him. "Those horrid big boys—"

"That's all right, kiddie! We've only just had a bit of a game, you know. It was nothing. This sort of thing hardens a chap. Now, slip this meat into the pan."

"Dick, I think I could kill anyone who hurts you!" said the little girl, with tears coming into her eyes.

"Bless you—hurt! Nonsense! A bit of a bruise or two like this doesn't hurt a chap like me. Now, come along. I want to hear the dinner frizzling. My word! I shall have to send you to a cooking school, kiddie, because we shall soon have something better than chops even! I shall be making a regular fortune one of these days!"

He forced a laugh on his painful face, and kissed her, so that she, too, smiled.

THE 4th CHAPTER. In the Thick of It.

DICK'S bruised face caused comment when he got back into Trimble's mill, which he succeeded in doing without trouble.

"All right; it shall go down against them," said Mr. Trimble, shaking his head. "Um; but you'd have done better to have stopped in the mill with us."

"I will to-night, sir. I've got a neighbour to go in to be with my sister. And I think you'll want all the help you can get inside here to-night, sir." And he told of the hint Widdop had given—that there was going to be an attack on the mill that night. They mean breaking up this new machinery that they say will produce yarn too quickly, sir."

"And will earn them more wages, too. Fools! But I don't think they dare. Anyhow, if they do, I shall not

hesitate to ring up the police. I've stopped at doing that before, while they've limited themselves to shouting. I don't want to get the fools into prison, but if that is what they intend—well, we shall see."

Dick worked steadily on at his fitting job through the afternoon. His head spun round as a result of the hammering it had received, and his eyes were heavy and weary. But he gave no sign of it. He felt so great a joy at getting employment that he would have cheerfully borne twice as much fatigue.

At intervals he was deputed to go out into the mill-yard for the purpose of making observations through a little peephole in the big gates, and to report any sign of hostility on the outside. He reported all quiet right into the evening; indeed, unusually quiet, for there appeared to be even no pretence at picketing for the purpose of peacefully persuading away outside labour.

As a matter of fact, the main and mischievous elements among the strikers were gathered together in the club-room of a public-house not very far away, where they were gathering valour for their intended enterprise by a mixture of beer and speeches. The beer had its effect upon ill-nourished stomachs, even as the fiery speeches excited ill-nourished brains, and by the time all the talkers among them had had their say, most of the crowd were ripe for any folly. Another round of beer they had before starting. Where the money came from for this nobody inquired about, though it was shrewdly guessed by the publican who was profiting that it came out of the pockets of a rival manufacturer who stood to profit out of Trimble's loss.

Anyhow, the facts are that a very ugly crowd made way at half-past nine in the evening to smash a road into Trimble's mill, and to destroy all this new machinery that was going to work too fast. More inflammatory speeches were made under the gateway before the attack was actually begun, which were heard by those within.

Mr. Trimble hesitated no more. He ran to the telephone to ring up the police. There came no reply from the exchange. He could get no answer of any sort. He wound the handle of the receiver desperately, but without result. Afterwards it was found that the wire had been severed.

He came out white-faced and agitated.

"What can we do?" he cried. "I believe they mean it! If it comes to

physical force, we can't oppose them. The big gates will soon go, and afterwards there's not much in the way!"

Then Dick came in with a suggestion. He had not been up and down and across the yard so many times in daylight without taking in such means of defence as offered. His was a quick mind to grasp the possibilities of things.

There stood in the yard a ponderous road locomotive, a slow but powerful engine for the towing of heavy weights, that had come in from Keighley a few days before dragging a train of drays conveying the last parts of the new machinery. It had a huge flywheel of the kind to which a belt may be fitted, so that while stationary, its power may be transmitted to other machinery. Indeed, it had been so used on an occasion when a breakdown in the engine-room would have caused a stoppage of the whole mill.

"There is a belt for that road-engine," he said. "At least, I have seen a big one hanging up in the engine-room, one with copper rivets."

"Yes, yes, lad; but what's your notion?" asked the mill-owner impatiently. "See, lad, if you have an idea you shan't lose by it!"

"It is that we get steam up in the engine, run it alongside the gate, get a dummy pulley on a waggon—or on the ground—on the other side, fit the belt between the two, and keep it running full speed close up to the entrance!"

"By goy, and a champion idea!" exclaimed one of the mechanics in frank approval. "Not a man would face that—and he wouldn't be a man long if he did. That great belt would either saw a man in two, or take him to the flywheel and smash him to bits."

There was no discussing it. The preparations were quite simple, and because of their simplicity likely to be extraordinarily effective. The yard gate swung under an archway, which, twenty feet farther, opened into the yard. On each side of this archway they made their arrangements. While steam was rising in the engine-boiler they fitted a free pulley-wheel on the other side of the archway.

From among the pile of discarded machinery that littered the yard, they selected a wheel of suitable diameter, so that it could be fastened together to make an effective barrier, and they fitted it upon a piece of shafting which had one end rigidly jammed in a hole in the wall and the other

bound fast to a wheel of a heavy waggon.

The belt was got out and buckled round the pulley till at last there was nothing wanting save steam in the engine. They watched with feverish impatience the pressure rising in the steam-gauge.

While they worked, the attack began on the big gates in earnest. It was not merely the hammering of sticks and stones, but there was another sound—the lighter, crisper noise of sharp axes cutting at the soft wood. The gates seemed to be splintering. There was no steam yet. Would it never come? Was it going to be too late?

"It's no go!" gasped the mill-owner. "It'll be too late. They'll be through in a minute!"

"In a minute I'll have steam!" cried one of the hands, with his face close up to the gauge. "By goy, I'll risk it now!"

He opened the throttle. The engine moved in a curve towards the archway. A little manœuvring got it into position close against the wall, then the belt was circled round the flywheel. The engine backed a little to pull tight the belt, and the wheels were scotched.

At that moment came a crashing noise and a shout of triumph. A way had been chopped through the big gates. Two or three dark figures tumbled in through the hole. There was a moment's fumbling at bolts, and then the double door was thrown open, and a black, jostling crowd came scrambling under the enclosed archway with a hoarse chorus of shouts.

Then at that instant, as the crowd surged into the entrance, steam was turned into the cylinders, and the belt began its swift, endless race between the two wheels. It ran in shape almost like an elongated pear, the thin end coming at the free pulley, which was very low down, so that the lower part of the belt on the side farthest from the engine was very near the ground. The upper part might have been three feet away from the lower. The two halves racing by each other offered a menace that men used to machinery were not likely to oppose.

The front of the crowd came to a sudden stop; but those behind, who did not know what was ahead, urged them on with wild cries, for indeed by all the worst elements of the neighbourhood, the throng had grown to huge proportions.

"Get on! What in wickedness are you stopping for?" "Give over your shoving, you lot

of fools! By goy, there's a running belt here waiting to cut in two the first man who falls against it!"

In the yard Mr. Trimble showed himself for a moment. They recognised his figure through the sawing belt. A yell of execration greeted him, and a volley of stones came hurtling at him. One struck him on the head, and he staggered and fell.

Dick leaped forward into the open, and for a moment stooped down and protected the old man with his own body till help came. One stone caught him heavily between the shoulders and another of the arm. But he was made of hard stuff.

An instant later he was out of the line of fire, rubbing his bruises. He heard above the hum and hiss of the engine a voice that he knew:

"You rotten little blackleg! Show thyself again and I'll give thee something!"

"You're hurt, lad!" said the engine-man to Dick.

Dick shook his head. He pointed out a weakness in the defences.

"If there's any brains among them they'll think of it. If they could get a long pole—a scaffold-pole or a ladder—and throw it on the belt, they'd fetch it off the pulleys like winking. Look here, we can't hold this place long. I've got to make dash for it and bring the police!"

"Lad, how can you?"

"Not through the gateway. It means dropping over the wall. I can't go out where I did at dinner-time, over the wall into Birkett's mill-yard, because they're shut up now, and there's spikes on the top of the wall. If I dropped over at the far end there, I don't think I should be noticed, for they are too busy round the gate here. And see, if they start shoving anything into the belt, keep them back with stones."

"You're a good plucked 'un, lad, but you are running risks. By goy! Dare you do it?"

But Dick was off. He climbed up over some packing-cases to the top of the wall as far from the gate as it was possible to get, and the engine-man saw him disappear over the edge.

"The lad's got the pluck of ten!" he gasped. "I'd give my week's brass to know he's through safely."

Then all at once the engine-man was chilled to the heart as he heard a wild, hoarse cry outside:

"There's a man on the wall, black leg! He's just dropped over!"

Down him! Down him!" (Another grand instalment of this powerful new Mill Serial will appear next Tuesday.)

HOW TO DEVELOP MUSCLE.

A Superb Series of Articles Specially Written for THE BOYS' FRIEND by the World-Famed EUGEN SANDOW.

ALL the world admires a strong man, strength being recognised by every race. Some years ago I made a tour of the world in order to extend the science of physical culture, visiting America, Australia, India, Africa, etc., and in every country I visited the greatest possible interest was taken in my lectures, and my feats of strength were witnessed by, I may safely say, millions of people of all nationalities.

The old idea that physical strength was obtained at the expense of mental strength has been exploded, and if such were the case, I should not be writing these articles. I know, however, that every increase of strength means a corresponding improvement of the mental qualities, and I mean all my readers to be not only "good specimens" of muscular development, but clever, industrious, successful citizens.

However, I suppose I had better be getting on with the instruction, instead of giving you a lecture on the many benefits derived from physical exercise, as these will become increasingly apparent as we proceed.

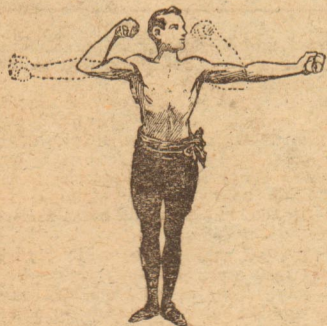
The exercise I gave you in my first article was, if you remember, devoted entirely to the development of the arm muscles—the biceps and triceps. This week we shall continue to strengthen these muscles, but we shall also call others into action—the deltoid and neck muscles.

Now, I want you all to become acquainted with the names of the various muscles, and know where they are situated. This knowledge will enable you to take a more intelligent interest in your work, and help you in concentrating the mind on the muscles being exercised, on

which point I was very precise last week.

If you exercise before a looking-glass, keep an eye on the muscles brought into play—or where they ought to be; some will not become noticeable until you have been working a few weeks—and concentrate your mind on the movements, and you will be rewarded by an immense improvement in your strength and physical condition.

The following exercise you will find a little harder than the one already given, but read the instructions carefully, and you will have no difficulty in carrying out the movement correctly.



Exercise 3.—Ready Position.

Extend both arms in a line with the shoulders, palms of the hands upward.

MOVEMENT.—Alternately flex each arm until the dumb-bell is over the shoulder, and straighten again till the triceps are thoroughly in the strain. Throw the head well back, and rotate from side to side so as to face the outstretched arm. Muscles: Biceps, triceps, deltoid, and neck muscles (lateral).

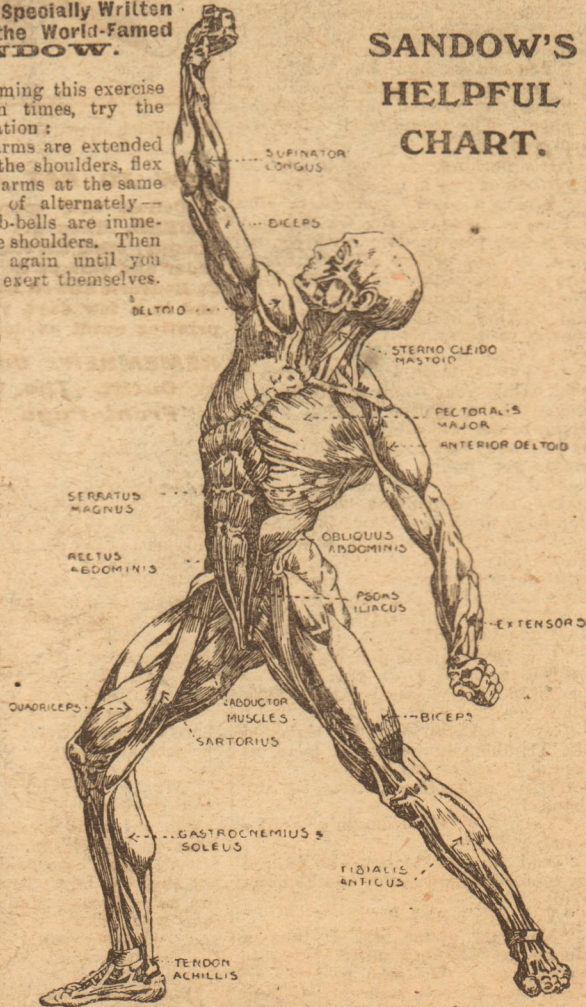
After performing this exercise about a dozen times, try the following variation:

When both arms are extended in a line with the shoulders, flex (or bend) both arms at the same time—instead of alternately—until the dumb-bells are immediately over the shoulders. Then straighten out again until you feel the triceps exert themselves. Bend the head forward whilst you flex the arms, and throw it back as the arms are extended.

Perform these movements as well as those already given regularly every morning, and you will see the arm muscles begin to stand out in relief in a way which will make your heart rejoice, and encourage you to continue the work with unabated zeal and energy.

(Another splendid article by Eugen Sandow next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

SANDOW'S HELPFUL CHART.



An Interesting Diagram Supplied by Mr. Eugen Sandow to Assist Readers of THE BOYS' FRIEND to Follow His Splendid Articles.

A BOXING CHAMPION IN THE MAKING. BY JIMMY BRITT. SEE THE SPLENDID ILLUSTRATED ARTICLE IN THIS WEEK'S PENNY PICTORIAL.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!



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, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

IN this week's number of THE BOYS' FRIEND "Yorkshire Grit" starts. My friends will remember that last week I had a good deal to say about this serial, and I am anxiously looking forward to receiving letters from them, telling me what they think of it.

Another interesting little feature that will soon commence is the series of tales, "The Lads o' London." This series will deal with sundry phases of boy life in the great city, in the wonderful collection of houses and streets and great buildings which we call London. They will prove just as fascinating to the boys who live in provincial towns and the country as to the boys who live in London, and I think my chums will regard them as quite a successful feature of our paper.

While I am talking about the "Green 'Un," I would like to suggest to those of my enthusiastic correspondents who really take a pleasure in criticising the paper, that they should send me a little letter telling me not only what they think of "Yorkshire Grit," but also their opinion regarding "Sexton Blake, Foreman," "The Blot," and "The Railway Waif."

It may interest my readers to know that I have a new story—a very good one, too—in preparation for them, and I shall have something more to say about it very shortly.

A ROUND-SHOULDERED BOY.

"Welshman" is a South Wales reader of my paper, who tells me he suffers from very round shoulders, and wants me to give him some of my good advice. I am only too glad to give "Welshman," or any other friend of mine, any advice I possibly can which will be for his or her benefit—for, as most of my friends realise, there are a very large number of girls who read THE BOYS' FRIEND, and it is a jolly good thing, too, for there is nothing in it which will ever do them any harm.

"Welshman" tells me he has a very decent job in an office, that he is a light-weight, only about seven stone, and is very fond of boxing. I am glad to hear this, because my young friend's inclination for boxing ought to help him to get rid of his round shoulders. He should invest in a pair of light dumbbells, about two pounds each in weight. He can get a pair like this for about ninepence or a shilling anywhere, and a few simple exercises with them will speedily put his shoulders right.

The first one is to stand with head erect, the hands down beside the body grasping the dumbbells firmly, the feet slightly apart in the attitude common in boxing, the weight resting well on the legs. Raise the dumbbells straight out in front of the face, and swing them as far back as possible on a level with the shoulders. As the dumbbells swing back, carry the head back and throw out the chest, taking in a good deep breath, breathing out again as the dumbbells are brought back to the position in front of his face.

Another simple exercise is to stand in the same position, one foot in front of the other, with the knees slightly bent, and to raise the dumbbells from the sides high above the head, throwing back the head as the dumbbells are raised above it, and taking a deep breath. Then lower the dumbbells to the sides again, breathing out slowly.

These two exercises will suggest quite a number of others to my correspondent, all of which will speedily help to rid him of his round shoulders, and give him an erect carriage.

HOW TO BECOME A FOOTBALLER.

E. R. is a friend of mine who wants me to tell him how to become a first-class footballer. He says he has played the game for many years, and finds it very difficult to get on, not according to E. R., because he is a poor player, but because most football clubs seem to prefer country players.

I don't think my young friend can be quite right in this idea. The competition amongst football clubs for good players is now so keen that any lad who really shows some skill out of the common at the game can always be certain of a trial by a better club. All he has to do is to send a line to the manager stating his qualifications, and asking to be given a chance. In this way he will get a trial, and if he really has the makings of a good player in him, he will most assuredly get the opportunity he wants.

AN UNHAPPY AFFLICTION.

One of my friends writes me a very cheery letter regarding a somewhat sad affliction, about which I am glad to say he does not seem to worry very much. He had the misfortune to be born without the right hand; he is at present fifteen, and tall and strong for his age, but he finds it difficult, because of this missing hand, to get employment.

He goes on to tell me, however, that although this hand is missing to the wrist, yet, having always been used to doing without it, he can do anything quite as well as a boy with two hands—in fact, he was top boy out of twenty at carpentry at the higher elementary school which he attended.

Really, when I was reading this letter I could hardly believe that it was written by a left-handed boy! My young friend writes a good and legible fist—far better than many boys who are blessed with both hands.

Naturally, my chum wants me to give him a little advice as to how he may secure a post.

He is evidently a lad of very bright and cheerful disposition, and I heartily congratulate him on it. I can quite understand that what seems to be an affliction is really no affliction at all, because he has trained his left hand to do the work of both, and it is only stupid prejudice which prevents people from employing him straightway. I do not think he should be depressed over the fact that for a few weeks he has been out of employment, because I think a boy who can write such an intelligent letter as the one he sends to me will very speedily secure other employment.

If he is very good at carpentry, why doesn't he take up the trade seriously? After all, cabinetmaking is fairly well-paid work, and a steady, industrious man need never be afraid of not earning a good and satisfactory living.

The example of this boy's pluck, determination, and cheerfulness, despite his handicap, is one which ought to be taken very seriously to heart by those of my friends who read this chat; those boys who are blessed with all the members of their body ought to be very grateful, and ought to cultivate their talents to the very highest of their ability, instead of grumbling—as many of them do—because they don't get on as rapidly as they want to, and because they don't find nice, soft, comfortable jobs in which they are well paid, and don't have to work very hard. Here is a lad who has demonstrated that with one hand he can beat boys with two at work which one would think necessitated the use of two hands; it only shows what courage and perseverance will do.

My young friend can also draw very

well, too. He might cultivate a talent for drawing comic pictures. In order to do this he should study the various kinds of comic drawings which he will find in most of the popular humorous papers, then try his hand at a specimen drawing, and send it to the editor of some paper like "Chips" or "Comic Cuts."

Whatever he decides to do, he has my very best wishes for a really successful future.

A QUICK ROAD TO HEALTH.

On a postcard, one of my chums, who signs himself R. J. W. M., asks me to give him a quick road to health. He says: "You know what I mean—how to train myself."

My young friend's question comes at a very opportune time, because he will discover that I am just starting a series of articles by the famous strong man and physical culturist, Mr. Eugen Sandow. R. J. W. M. will also discover every week in "The Boys' Realm" a lot of very useful information on this subject. "The Boys' Realm" is a great paper for all boys' outdoor sports, and it gives special attention to articles on training, etc., so much so that it has achieved an enormous circulation, and a great reputation as a journal for the athletic boy.

With the articles in THE BOYS' FRIEND, and with the articles in "The Boys' Realm," my young friend will find his question answered.

He should remember, however, that the road to health cannot be very rapid, and that those who wish to build up their strength can only hope for good results if they do it gradually, slowly, and carefully. He will have to learn to give up smoking, drinking, and any other bad habit, and that a really healthy body must be accompanied by a clean mind.

Remembering these things, and by taking his exercise seriously, and in moderate and reasonable quantities, he will find that week by week his system will grow stronger and more vigorous; he will also discover that exercise gives him a real satisfaction, and a sense of physical well-being, which will prove a source of greater pleasure to him than anything else.

A BOOK FOR YOUR SISTERS AND MOTHERS.

I don't often ask my friends to help me, but on this occasion I do want to get them to spread the news of a wonderful book which should be in the possession of every woman, whether she be a girl, grown-up young lady, or a married woman; in fact, the book about which I want to talk is one for either my young friends' sisters or their mothers, and I especially want them to tell their mothers about it.

The title of this work is "Every



Mr. Stacey Blake, the Clever Author of our New Serial, "Yorkshire Grit," which Starts This Week.

Woman's Encyclopædia," and it will contain information upon everything that a woman wants to know—everything. Just think of it! This work will be the first serious attempt to provide for women a book of reference to which, if they are in doubt upon any question affecting women, they can refer and discover the answer, whether it be a legal query, or a question with regard to love, marriage, cooking, dressmaking, servants or mistresses, gardening; in fact, if it is a question on anything which has to do with women, it will be dealt with in "Every Woman's Encyclopædia."

The first part will be published on November 1st, price 7d. As I am very much interested in this book, I want my friends to talk to their mothers and sisters about it, and I shall have some more to say on the subject next week.

A TIP FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

"Constant Reader"—good old "Constant Reader"—wants me to tell him how to make photographic developer. He should try the following prescription, which will be made up for him by any chemist:

Eikonogen, 50 grains; quinol, 40 grains; sodium sulphate, 1 ounce; water up to 10 ounces.

HOW SHALL THEY COLLECT.

H. C., who tells me he is an old chum of the "B. F.," has just been forming a football club with the aid of his friends, but finds that with the subscriptions they can afford they have not quite enough to buy the necessary apparatus.

"My friends propose to go round the village collecting," adds H. C., "but what I want to know, is it lawful to do this?"

In reply to this question, it is certainly quite the custom for members of a junior football club to ask for assistance, but somehow it seems to me that there are better ways than going from house to house collecting. Surely if the members of the club approached their own friends quite a goodly sum might be raised?

Then, again, by writing to one or two influential local gentlemen asking them to become presidents or patrons, a useful sum might be added to the club's coffers, to say nothing of arousing the interest of the village in the existence of the club.

I wish H. C. and his friends all possible success, both with the club and in the raising of the needful funds.

A LETTER FROM CANADA.

The following letter has just come to hand from the Land of the Maple Leaf, and as it is so interesting I am going to print it in full for all my chums to read:

"Prince Rupert,
British Columbia,
Canada.

"Dear Editor,—Thinking that perhaps you might like to hear from one of your Canadian friends, I take great pleasure in writing to you.

"I am seventeen years old, and am a clerk on the steel train which is laying the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway track through the mountain division. I am an Ontario boy, and find this part of the country very wild and beautiful. I receive your fine paper through one of your loyal British readers in the Mother Country, and find it a treat in the long autumn evenings. Wishing THE BOYS' FRIEND every success,—

"Your sincere reader,
"KENNETH CRANDELL."

Very many thanks indeed for your cheery letter, Kenneth Crandell. I hope it will not be long before you write to me again.

A SPLENDID EMBROCATION.

"Now that the football season is at hand I shall need some reliable embrocation, and should be glad if you would give me a good recipe. Many of your other readers might find it useful," so writes Peter McC., of Malvern, and I have much pleasure in giving the excellent recipe below, which I can say from experience is the best one he could have:

One raw egg, well beaten, half a pint of vinegar, one ounce of spirits of turpentine, a quarter of an ounce of spirits of wine, a quarter of an ounce of camphor. These ingredients must be beaten well together, then put into a bottle and shaken for ten minutes, afterwards being corked down tightly to exclude the air.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

BOXING NOTES.

FOOTWORK.

NEXT in importance to the principal blows that we have been discussing—the straight left at the head and the right-hand body blow—comes footwork. You can never be even a moderately good boxer until you have got your feet absolutely under control.

As regards footwork, there are a few definite rules which should always be borne in mind:

Always keep your left toe pointing straight in front of you. Always keep the right foot behind the left, and never let them cross. If in a "mix-up" your right does happen to come up in front, you will find yourself in a very awkward position, and very badly balanced, so that even a light blow will

easily knock you down.

Then you should always remember to keep the heel of the right foot just behind that of the left at a distance of eighteen inches or so.

It is better to keep the left foot flat on the ground, and the heel of the right just lifted off it. Footwork can be practised very well before a glass, or by just stepping across the floor.

It is an excellent plan when beginning to learn boxing to do regular footwork exercises—advancing and retreating. Step across the room as though you were attacking a man—left right, left right. Then retreat as though you were being driven back, but in good order—right left, right left. It is then that it is often difficult at first to remember to keep the feet in their proper position.

You should always remember never to run at an opponent, but to advance upon him quickly, remembering your feet all the time. If you charge, or throw yourself at him anyhow, you are certain to be taken at a disadvantage, and probably beaten before you know the mistake you have made.

Some boxers have their left heel held up also; but this is not to be recommended to beginners, as it is not so easy to maintain an even balance.

THE END.

BANTAMS.

LOTS OF MONEY TO BE MADE FROM THESE PETS.

BANTAMS make capital and most interesting pets, and the boy who takes up the fancy seriously can earn quite a useful addition to his pocket-money.

The bantam is, of course, a miniature fowl, and should be treated much on the same line as ordinary poultry. A dry roosting-place should be provided, with perches some eighteen inches above the ground. Ventilation should be given by making a place near the floor for fresh air to enter, and a small aperture under the roof from which heated air may escape. There must be no direct draughts.

The run should be as spacious as possible, and should be kept scrupulously clean, no garbage, such as decaying cabbage stumps, being allowed to lie about and rot. Pure water should be provided daily. As for diet, this should be much as is the case with domestic fowls. In winter, a warm

breakfast of barley-meal

and boiled potato-peelings should be provided. At mid-day some green food and table scraps should be given, and in the late afternoon some good grain, such as wheat, barley, oats, or mixed poultry corn. The great point is not to overfeed one's birds, and they should have no more than they will readily pick up a meal.

Boys should make a start with a cockerel and three pullets of common breed, such as one can buy at any livestock shop. Every care should be taken of the birds, and all possible done to make the pullets lay and to improve their condition.

By-and-by, as you become an expert in the keeping of the pets, you should visit all the local shows and make yourself conversant with the leading varieties, and if you persevere, the time will come when you can buy some pedigree stock for yourself.

White bantams are not advisable for town-living boys, but most of the other kinds may be kept. The Frizzled are quaint little fellows, and the Hamburg and Brahma bantams are well worth keeping.

THE END.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

BY
THE
AUTHOR
OF
"THE
ODDS
AGAINST
HIM."



Our Grand Series of Complete Stories.

MR. PAULOS, OF PARK LANE.

THE disastrous fire that had killed his employer's ambition and caused him to retire from business had thrown Jack Carton out of employment again, but now he did not worry, for he had received nearly seventy pounds from Mr. Gaythorpe in payment of the money he had lent him, together with the interest and his commission, and this, with the balance he had in the bank, had brought his capital up to almost a hundred pounds.

With a hundred pounds behind him, and an excellent reference from the retired grocer, he felt no anxiety; and now, with Snuffler waddling along at his heels, he was walking rapidly towards Dewson's Dwellings to tell his mother that he had been taken on by Brownlee & Co., the big wholesale grocers, as an assistant packer at fifteen shillings a week.

"Come on, you old rascal!" he said to the dog, who was stopping behind and half scaring the life out of a nervous French poodle. "I've got good news for the little mother; and if you lag behind I'll sack you, Snuffler."

The dog, after another fierce glance from his small bloodshot eyes at the frightened poodle, wandered amicably on. Nominally, he still belonged to Mr. Gaythorpe, who had taken a little house opposite Stoke Newington Common, but since Jack had saved him from the fire he was generally to be found round Dewson's Dwellings waiting for him to put in an appearance.

It was now a week since Jack had risked his own life to save the dog's, and all that week he had been worrying about his mother. Her visit to the old friends in the country had been cancelled by a telegram, received just as she was about to start, merely saying "Don't come," and no letter of explanation had been received by her. Jack saw that she was upset, and vaguely hinted at some mystery, and the whole thing angered him.

"Next summer," he said savagely, as he began to climb the long flight of stone steps with the mongrel bull-terrier at his heels, "I'll take her away to the seaside, but I shall have to jolly well get on to be able to do it!"

As he opened the door of their little flat at the top of the model dwellings, he heard voices, and stopped in astonishment. One voice he recognised as his mother's. The other was the voice of a man, evidently a man of education, though he spoke with a slightly foreign accent.

"Your writing to Perry's put me on the track, Margaret," the man was saying harshly. "Young Perry works for me, and told me all about you, thinking I would help your boy. Bah! Help you when you scorned me and married a fool who left you penniless, who—"

"Are you speaking of my father?"

Jack, trembling with rage, stood

in the doorway confronting a short, dark, clean-shaven man, dressed immaculately, who looked out of place in the poorly-furnished room. He saw a hard, sallow face and two small, cruel black eyes staring into his with a look of intense hatred.

"Yes," said the man, "I was speaking of him. If you don't like to hear the truth, boy, you need not remain."

Jack saw his mother cowering away from this strange man, of whom she evidently stood in great fear, and then he turned angrily upon him.

"Clear out!" he cried.

The man stared at him in surprise for a moment, then the black eyes flashed with rage.

"You'll listen to me, you impudent cub! Chance has put me upon the track of the woman who years ago spurned my love, and has awakened in me all the bitterness that I felt twenty years ago. I am a powerful man. I can obtain everything that money or influence can buy, and I am going to have my revenge. I will crush you and your mother. I'll hound you from place to place! I'll—"

"Get out!" thundered Jack.

"I tell you I'll—"

He broke off, and gave a scream of alarm, for Snuffler, seeing him raise his arm threateningly at the boy, had sprang forward and leapt at his throat.

The man fell backwards with the dog on top of him, and Snuffler meant business. His eyes were red, and there was the fighting ridge down his back.

"Snuffler!" called Jack, as his mother shrieked for him to save the fallen man. "Snuffler, come off!"

But the dog took no notice of him. He had gripped the man by the throat, and held tight. Jack saw that he would kill him unless he could be got off immediately, and dashed into the scullery.

There was a pail of dirty water there, and seizing it, he dashed back into the room again and threw the contents over the man and dog.

The cold water had its effect. Snuffler, with an angry growl, drew back, and Jack caught him by the collar, whilst the man, covered with the dirty water and looking a wreck of the well-dressed figure of a few moments before, scrambled to his feet and put his handkerchief to his throat. Fortunately for him, Snuffler had seized him in a fleshy part of the throat, and the wounds were not serious, though it was probable that Jack's prompt action had saved his life.

Without a word he staggered to the door, then on the threshold he paused.

"You shall pay tenfold for this!" he muttered hoarsely; and then the woman and the boy heard the outer door close with a bang, and they were alone.

"Oh, Jack!" wailed Mrs. Carton, in a weak voice, and the boy thought she was going to faint.

"Don't worry about him, mother," he cried cheerfully. "The chap must

be mad! I've something much more pleasant to talk about. I've got a job at Brownlee's, the wholesalers. You know, the people I hustled up for Gaythorpe one day. I reckon there's a fine chance there."

But although Mrs. Carton was pleased, she could not forget the words of the strange man, and that night she told Jack, who had been anxious to hear the story but did not care to ask her, all she knew of the man who had that day visited their humble dwelling.

It appeared that his name was Michael Paulos, now a millionaire, who lived in a huge house in Park Lane. Just before she had become engaged to his father, Paulos, who was then a wealthy man, had proposed to her, and been refused.

"Several times," said Mrs. Carton, in a low, anxious voice, "I had wild sort of letters from him, but I ignored them, and gradually thought he had forgotten all about me. Oh, I wish I had not written to the Perry's! The casual remark has roused all the old bitterness in him, and after what happened this morning he will take some terrible revenge!"

"But England is a civilised country, mother, and a man can't do all that sort of—"

"He's a dangerous man, and a very powerful man, Jack!" said his mother. "Beware of him!"

And that night Jack Carton thought a lot about the strange Mr. Paulos, of Park Lane.

The next morning as Jack set off to commence work with his new firm he noticed a shabby-looking man standing in a doorway opposite the entrance to Dewson's Dwellings.

"Suspicious-looking customer!" he muttered, as he hurried along to catch a tram to the City Road. "He'll get run in if the police see him hanging round. Waiting for an opportunity to slip in and steal something from the baker's shop, I should think."

But at Shoreditch Church he happened to glance round, and saw the shabby man sitting a few seats back on the tram he was on.

At the moment he thought little of it, but when the man got quickly off the tram immediately after him, and he saw him again as he turned into the warehouse of Brownlee & Co., he knew that he had been shadowed, and he felt convinced that the man who was ordering him to be shadowed was Mr. Paulos, of Park Lane.

"Well," he muttered, "he would have been certain to have found out where I was employed sooner or later; but if I hadn't been in a hurry I'd have led the beast a nice little dance round."

He soon picked up his new duties, and liked the other men, except a man named Wright, a burly, bullying sort of fellow, who took a delight in making sneering remarks at the younger employees, who were not in a position to retort.

Jack said nothing to his mother

about the shadowing incident, and after he had been with the firm a week and began to feel at home in his new job, he had almost forgotten the strange millionaire and his threats of vengeance.

Then on a Saturday afternoon when he had had to stop behind to finish an urgent job, and was making a short cut to Shoreditch Church, from which he could get the tram home for a penny, his heart suddenly leapt, and he stepped quickly into the doorway of a second-hand clothes shop.

For two men had emerged from a low-down public-house a little further up on the other side of the road, and in one he recognised Wright, the bully packer at Brownlee's, and in the other the shabby man who a week ago had shadowed him from Stoke Newington to the City Road.

They stood talking for a moment, and then separated, Wright going straight on, and the other man in the direction of Old Street.

Jack resumed his walk to Shoreditch very slowly. He had long ago decided that the shabby man must be a tool of the millionaire, and he now felt certain that what he had just seen boded him no good.

"I must keep an eye on Wright," he muttered.

He said nothing of what he had seen to his mother.

On the Monday he was standing at the edge of the pavement talking to a couple of other lads, after dinner, waiting for the whistle to recall them to their work, whilst Wright, usually a sullen sort of a fellow, was larking about with several other men.

"What's come over Wright?" said one of the boys to Jack. "It's something new to see him acting the giddy goat."

Honk! Honk!

A motor-bus came rumbling down the City Road, and then almost as it was level with the three boys on the edge of the pavement, Wright, who had seized a man's cap and was running away with it, crashed heavily into Jack with such force as to send him full length out into the road right in front of the quickly advancing motor-bus.

There was a cry of horror from the crowd of employees waiting outside the warehouse, a harsh grinding of brakes. Two women standing near shrieked and covered their eyes with their hands, feeling certain that the boy lying in the road in front of the great motor vehicle must be reduced to a shapeless, lifeless mass.

But the driver kept his head. The sudden plunging on of one of the brakes and the sharp twist of the steering-wheel was terribly risky, but it was the only thing to do if a young life was to be saved, and it was better to risk injuries to a score of people than take one life.

The great, cumbersome vehicle skidded halfway across the road, seemed on the verge of toppling over, and then, righting itself, came to a stop at the edge of the opposite pavement after sending a baked

chestnut barrow flying in the roadway.

A couple of men dashed into the road and picked Jack up. He had fallen heavily upon the back of his head, and, although conscious, was somewhat dazed. A little crowd was cheering the driver of the motor-bus, and the Italian vendor of roast chestnuts was stamping wildly on the pavement, shrieking for compensation in about six different languages.

"You'd better give him a couple of bob, Wright," said one of the foreman who had witnessed the scene, "and apologise to young Carton. Your mad fooling nearly ended in a tragedy."

The other men took it up, and Wright, as pale as a sheet, with a savage expression in his eyes, paid the man a couple of shillings, muttered a sulky apology, and then as the whistle shrilled out calling the men back to their work, he hurried inside. Jack stopped for a moment to thank the driver, and then the traffic was resumed, the crowd cleared away, and except for a few people the dinner-hour incident was almost forgotten.

But Jack knew that it was no accident. Wright had deliberately tried to throw him under the death-dealing wheels of the bus.

Later in the afternoon he found himself alone with the man in a corner of the packing-room.

"It was cleverly done," he said, in a low voice, "but not quite clever enough. Murder is a nasty game to play when people are suspicious."

He moved away, leaving the big packer staring at him with protruding eyes, white lips, and trembling in every limb.

But two days later he was summoned to the office, and the cashier handed him an envelope.

"There are two weeks wages, Carton," he said shortly. "We shan't require your services any longer. You are free to leave from now."

Mechanically, Jack took the money.

"But why, sir?" he gasped.

"Haven't I—"

"Those are my instructions," said the cashier. "Good-day!"

Jack found himself walking aimlessly along the City Road. He had been dismissed without a reason, and vaguely realised that he might have great difficulty in obtaining another situation.

Of one thing he was convinced, there had been plotting behind his back. There had been a deliberate attempt to seriously injure if not murder him, and he had been discharged through no fault of his own.

And the man behind it all, he realised with a shudder, must be the mysterious Mr. Paulos, of Park Lane. (Another story of "Ever-Ready" Jack's fight against his powerful enemy next week.)

NUTSHELL HINTS ON TRAINING.

Stand at an open window and breathe in through the mouth till the lungs are packed. Hold the air a moment, and then expel it through the nostrils. This is a wonderful breathing exercise.

"Little and often" should be the motto of the boy who wishes to keep in training for any particular sport such as cycling, rowing, or running.

Skipping is a splendid exercise for all open-air sports. Skip so that the rope goes backwards over your head.

Regularity is the keynote of success in training. It is no use going baldheaded into training for a few weeks, and then dropping it, only to take it up again at a later date. You must be regular.

SANDOW'S BOOK FREE.

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health and Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development by exercise. Special Offer: To every reader who writes at once a copy of this book will be sent free.

Address: No. 5, SANDOW HALL, BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.



"Snuffler!" called Jack. "Snuffler, come off!" But the dog took no notice of him. There was a pail of dirty water in the scullery, and seizing it, Jack threw the contents over man and dog.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

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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.

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. A huge pump is employed to keep clear any water that fights its way past the dam of the river.

The detective finds the engine-minder drugged and senseless. He then catches the enemy actually at work throwing vitrol 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 horrifying swiftness.

By means of a keg of powder and fuse Tinker blows away part of the bank, and with the rushing water he is carried under ground. He recovers, and returns to the workings.

One Sunday Sexton Blake is invited to spend a day with Sir Richard Blaise, while Tinker is left to find what amusement he could. He is in the garden of Ralph Ardoise, and can see no means of escape. This gentleman, with Sir Richard's daughter, make their way to the summer-house, and Tinker can see and hear them from his hiding-place.

He hates to play the eavesdropper, but he cannot help it. To leave his hiding-place and try to cross the open lawn is too big a risk.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

Heard in Hiding.

"MISS BLAISE," said Ardoise, speaking in a tone thrilling to hear, "I entreat you to consider your answer long and well before you give it. As my wife I can offer you a position that any woman might covet—that of first lady in the county, with a home against which your father's house, luxurious as it is, would appear like a peasant's cottage beside a palace. And if I have no other claim to distinction in the eyes of men, I at least have one—I am rich. And all that I have shall be yours, to say not a word of that devotion—"

The girl gave a gesture of impatience or distress.

"I can only repeat my words," she said. "It is impossible—quite impossible, Mr. Ardoise!"

The Gipsy Squire turned away his face, and Tinker could see, if the girl could not, that every line of it was working with evil passion.

Yet his voice when he spoke was merely sad and low, without a trace of anger in it.

"I think I understand, Miss Blaise," he said. "You have already given your affections elsewhere, and Sidney Temple is, if I mistake not, the most fortunate man on earth?"

The girl's pretty face flushed warmly.

"Mr. Ardoise," she said, "you really have no right—"

"Oh, do not mistake me!" he exclaimed, but still keeping his face

turned away. "I envy him. How could I help that? But I bear him no malice. Far, far from that. I would, for your sake, be his most devoted friend!"

"That's good!" muttered Tinker, who had a full view of his passion-convinced features. "Why, he'd murder Temple upon the spot if he were before him now! Ha, I begin to understand it all!"

But Miss Blaise began to speak again, this time turning eagerly towards her rejected lover:

"Oh, sir, if this is true, then use all your influence—and I know that you have much in these parts—to discover and bring to justice those who are trying to ruin Mr. Temple's great work, for you know that upon its success all his happiness and mine depends!"

"All that I can do I will do," said Ardoise. "But you greatly overrate my powers, Miss Blaise. I have no influence whatever with these men."

"Another whopper!" breathed Tinker. "A pound to a penny that he is the prime head of the whole plot!"

"You know, then, who they are?" exclaimed the girl.

"I do not know, but I own that I have some suspicion," answered Ardoise. "Have you ever thought, Miss Blaise, that this great work of Mr. Temple's, splendid as it is—and from my soul I wish it every success—yet spells ruin to scores of men in this district?"

"No! How?" she ejaculated, in startled tones.

"I mean to the grinders," said Ardoise—"the men who get their living by grinding cutlery and tools for the makers. They work sometimes alone, sometimes helped by their families, in those sheds which you may have seen along the banks of the river lower down the dale."

"Yes, yes; I know that. Go on, please!" exclaimed the girl quickly, as though a light was breaking in upon her.

"Great pip! I see what he's driving at now!" muttered Tinker. "Talk about throwing dust in her eyes—"

"Of course, steam power has taken much of their work from them," continued the Gipsy Squire; "but, still, there are some hundreds who get their living in this way, as their fathers did for generations back. Their grindstones are turned by water-wheels worked by the river, and—"

"I see—I see!" cried Miss Blaise. "And now—"

"And now that the river is to be dammed up and diverted into this huge reservoir their grindstones will stand idle, and they will starve," said Ardoise.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the girl. "I remember now that my father has spoken of this. He is now building several grinding-mills nearer to the towns, and intends to employ these men at better pay than they can possibly earn now. And they will be housed, too, in far greater comfort."

"All that is quite true, of course," said Ardoise gravely; "but these men are ignorant—a half-wild lot. They live only for the hour. They do not believe in fine promises for the future. They only see that this fine new work of Temple's is to take the bread from their mouths, and I am afraid that they hate it—and him—with a deadly hate."

The girl sighed deeply.

"Then you think that these outrages have been perpetrated by them?" she said.

"I have little doubt of it," said Ardoise, turning away once more to conceal the smile of triumph upon his face.

"It's a lie!" growled Tinker to himself. "There's far more craft and cunning in this plot than these fellows could have shown!"

But Miss Blaise appeared to be completely deceived.

"It is pitiful—pitiful!" she exclaimed. "But, oh, Mr. Ardoise, you have great power in this district

—most of these men are your tenants. Won't you talk to them, and tell them the truth? Tell them to be patient and all will be well. Use your power with them. And although I cannot give you my love, you will make me your friend for life!"

She gave him a trembling smile that might have softened a heart of stone, then rose and left him.

Ardoise rose, too, and bowed low. Then he turned away his face, and Tinker saw that its expression was absolutely fiendish.

"So I am rejected, finally rejected, for this pitiful London mechanic!" he muttered half-aloud. "Yes; I have some influence with these poor wretches, and I will use it—use it to crush Sidney Temple to the dust!"

"There's the snake's fangs showing!" thought the concealed boy. "I wish I could get a word with Mr. Blake; I know he is here."

Unmindful of the sharp pair of ears so close to him, the Gipsy Squire continued to utter his dark thoughts half audibly, flicking his riding-boot savagely with his whip:

"The poor chaps hold another meeting in the woods to-night, and Bates will be there to warn them up to the proper pitch. I should find them ripe to my hand—ripe for any mischief, and only wanting a clever brain and a bold hand to give it shape. Ah, Master Sidney Temple, by to-morrow morning—Ha, ha!"

And he strode away, with a low, chuckling laugh.

"He has got some black work on the way—and to-night!" ejaculated Tinker. "Oh, if only I could see Sexton Blake! But there is no time to look for him. I must follow that man, and find out if I can what mischief he means to set in train!"

It was growing dusk now—the early dusk of an autumn evening.

Tinker left his hiding-place and cautiously followed in the wake of the Gipsy Squire, who, turning his back to the house, had struck into a path leading through the lower portion of the grounds into the woods.

Prepared as he was for most things, the plucky detective little dreamt what a wild and grim night's work lay before him in the shade of those darkening woods.

Grave News.

SEXTON BLAKE and Tinker were destined to come together that evening under very strange circumstances, and in a manner which neither could by any possibility have foreseen.

To make this clear, we will leave Tinker on the track of his quarry through the woods, and show how "Bob Packer" passed his Sunday at the great house.

To confess the truth, the great detective thoroughly enjoyed that brief return to the rough mode of living he had lately undergone.

Sir Richard Blaise—a big, bluff, genial man of middle age—made a splendid host—treating the new foreman quite as an equal, although Blake never for a moment forgot the part he was playing of the plain and humble, yet intelligent working-man.

As for Sir Richard's daughter Maggie, she was so sweetly gracious to her father's humble guest that had Blake been of the susceptible sort, he might have lost his heart hopelessly that Sunday.

Sidney Temple was the only other guest that day.

In the afternoon they were in the drawing-room. Maggie was seated at the piano, softly playing some sacred music. Sidney Temple stood beside her, for the supposed purpose of turning her music—which he usually forgot to do.

At the other end of the room, Sir Richard and Sexton Blake sat talking together.

Presently a footman brought in a card, and Sir Richard, excusing himself to Blake, rose and left the room, with a startled and somewhat anxious look upon his face.

Seeing Blake alone, Sidney Temple

left the piano and came to him. Maggie continued her playing until a maid entered and approached her, bearing an exquisite bouquet of flowers.

"What is this, Janet?" Blake heard the young lady ask.

"Mr. Ardoise has ridden over and brought these for you, miss," answered the servant.

"But will he not come in?" said Maggie, taking the flowers with no very pleasurable expression on her face, lovely though they were, and laying them carelessly aside.

"No, miss," said the girl, in a lower tone, "but he begged that you would spare him a few minutes. He is waiting at the terrace steps."

"That girl has had her palm oiled with a handsome bribe to bring that message!" was the detective's mental comment.

With a shade of annoyance upon her pretty face, Maggie rose and followed the maid from the room. She went to that strange interview of which Tinker was to overhear the last and most important part.

Blake glanced at Sidney Temple.

The young fellow's face wore a puzzled expression. He had seen the flowers, but he had not heard the whispered message. The detective, with sharper ears, caught every word, and, like Tinker, he began to understand things!

"So that's how the wind blows, is it!" he said to himself. "Temple has a rival of whom he did not know. That throws a light into the darkness with a vengeance!"

But he said nothing of this to Temple, merely chatting casually on indifferent topics. Then the footman returned, and asked them both to join Sir Richard in his study.

"Ah, I'm glad you're here, Packer," he said, as they entered the study, "for you've got a decent set of brains, and your opinion will be worth having just now! There's a bit of trouble ahead of us, I'm afraid, Temple!"

"Trouble, Sir Richard! In connection with the works?" asked Temple anxiously.

Their host nodded gravely.

"Mr. Drexel has just been here," he said "He came over in a hurry to tell me that he doesn't like the look of things down in Slagford. He's a town councillor, you know, and he says that there is a very ugly feeling among the poorer folks down there about these blessed waterworks of ours. They are holding street meetings, and there's a lot of violent talk against the scheme."

"But why?" exclaimed Temple.

"It is all for their benefit!"

"In the end, of course," agreed Sir Richard, "but they are an ignorant, shortsighted lot, and easily misled. You see, they depend entirely upon wells for their water-supply, and these wells have mostly run dry lately. There is quite a water famine down there!"

"But that is the result of the dry weather," said Temple. "You know that there has been little or no rain in these parts for months."

"Of course—of course!" said Sir Richard. "That is the truth, and it has happened many a time before. But they—poor fools!—won't hear of it. They put it all down to the damming-up of the river, and they are bitterly hostile to the whole scheme."

"I have heard something of this," said Sexton Blake. "They say there is real suffering among the poorer folks for want of water."

"It is quite true, I am afraid," said Sir Richard, "and ugly rioting may come of it unless something can be done. Now, Temple, isn't it possible that you could hurry the work so as to speedily give them a supply of water?"

The young engineer shook his head.

"It could only be done at a fearful risk," he said gravely. "If I were to fill the great reservoir now, before the safety-slucies are completed, at any moment the dam might give way, and that would mean an inundation such as England has never seen before. Slagford—ay, and the two other towns, and all the villages in the dale, would be swept away like sand-castles on the sea-shore when a sudden gale sweeps the billows in. The loss of life would be enormous!"

And he shuddered, as though a picture of it all arose before his mind's eye.

"That is too awful to contemplate," said Sir Richard. "And yet—and yet if only the thing could somehow be managed in safety, what a world of grave trouble might be avoided!"

"It is impossible! It could not be done!" declared Temple.

Sexton Blake laid his hand on the young engineer's shoulder, whereat Sir Richard stared in astonishment.

"Temple," he said, in a change of voice that astonished his host still more—"Temple, few things are impossible, except to weaklings and fools. This thing can be done, and it must be done."

"But I tell you—" began Temple half angrily.

"I said it must be done," repeated this astonishing foreman, quite calmly and in a final manner, as though the whole thing were now settled. "I'll see you later on, Temple, and we will arrange the details," he added. "You will excuse me, I know, Sir Richard. I am going to stroll homeward and think this matter out. Will let you know to-morrow at what date precisely the reservoir will be filled and Slagford have a supply of water. Good-night, sir, and many thanks for a most enjoyable day."

And he stepped to the door.

"Stop, man—stop!" cried Sir Richard. "How—what the deuce—Confound you, Packer, come back and explain!"

But that amazing foreman had gone.

Ambushed!

ON leaving the great house Sexton Blake struck into the wood that adjoined the grounds. The sun had already set, and it was dark and eerie in the shadow of the trees, but it was quiet, too, and the detective longed for quiet just then. His brain was busy with new thoughts.

"So the cat is out of the bag now, and we have a glimpse of its colour!" he murmured, as he strolled on down the dusky, leaf-strewn paths.

"The Honourable Ralph Ardoise is Temple's secret enemy, and the simple fellow never suspected it! So far, Ardoise, for all his infernal cunning, has failed in his vile plot, but here is a new and dangerous weapon ready to his hand. These people in Slagford have been stirred up by some agitator, doubtless in the pay of the Gipsy Squire."

"A violent mob, cunningly led, might easily wreck Temple's work. There is only one way to prevent that—the town must be supplied with water before the mischief has time to gather to a head. It can be done, and it shall!"

And he instantly began to work out the difficult problem.

He brought no small amount of technical skill to bear upon it, for among the many gifts of this remarkable man was a talent for civil engineering, which he had studied, as he had many another branch of science, and mastered with the ready grip of a clear and powerful intellect.

He soon became deeply absorbed in shaping his plan. This made him far less alert than usual to external things, or he would have detected that something was astir in those woods. There was a sort of subdued agitation in the very air. The birds that should have been long at roost were still stirring in the leafy coverts, or flitting restlessly, and with low notes of alarm, across the dusky aisles. And from the distance came a strange undertone of sounds, like the movement of many feet and the murmur of muffled voices, with now and then a sudden silence that was more marked than all.

But Sexton Blake paid no heed to this. Perhaps because he never dreamt of any peril lurking in those secluded, peaceful woodlands, he gave himself up completely to the strange and difficult task he had vowed to carry out, and walked on down the shadowy path like one wrapped in a waking dream.

From this he was soon to be roughly aroused.

A little way ahead, without dreaming of their presence, were two men—mere shadowy forms in the dusk—who were standing behind a clump of tall bushes close beside the very path on which he trod.

The gigantic figure of one easily revealed his identity—it was Black Jock, the discharged foreman. The other, of squat, yet powerful build, was Bates, groom to the Gipsy Squire, and his prime agent in all the dark work past and to come.

This worthy pair had been speaking in low, cautious tones just before Blake drew near.

"The thing could be done," said Bates; "these chaps are quite ripe for it. I've worked 'em up finely. And there's nigh on five hundred of 'em—twice that number with the townfolk, who are sure to join us. They only want the right sort o' man to lead them; a man that is a man, and who'd stick at nothing when he'd put his hand to the work."

"I'm that sort of man!" exclaimed Black Jock, with a horrible growl. "I'll lead 'em!"

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

"Yes, you're the right kind!" laughed Bates.

"Hang! But Temple let a very fend loose when he sacked you! I believe you're game to smash him!"

"Ay, I'd do it with my own hands!" growled the burly ruffian. "Ay, and that fellow, Bob Packer, too! Tell you what, Packer is the only man you've got to fear. He has brains and he has muscles, hang him! I can feel where he struck me now!"

"I know the fellow, and I've good cause to!" muttered Bates.

"If we could get hold of him—knock him on the head, or tie him up somewhere until this thing's over—then we'd have nothing to fear. Temple and the rest would just be a lot of rabbits without him."

"Hist," cautioned Bates, in a whisper, "there's someone coming! I heard the leaves rustle on the path down yonder."

Black Jock peered through the thinner tops of the bushes. Then he gave a low exclamation of delight.

"Well, I'm blowed if it isn't the very man himself! Luck, or Old Nick, has played into our hands!"

"Bob Packer!" ejaculated Bates. "Him or his ghost. But you'll find he's no ghost if you get within reach of his fist! Keep back, man! We'll drop on him at the opening yonder!"

For Bates, who had a sort of reckless, bulldog courage, was for falling upon their intended quarry then and there, and made to break through the bushes in a rush for that purpose.

But the other ruffian held him back, and together they crept down behind the bushes to a small opening which the unheeding man had to pass.

There they sprang out upon him like a pair of panthers on their prey. But Blake was not taken wholly unawares.

Absorbed he might be, but his ears were quick, and caught the snap of a dried twig—the louder rustle of the dead leaves as his assailants pushed through the hedge.

With a quick backward step, he avoided their first attempt to seize him, and, Bates being slightly foremost, let him have a drive square between the eyes.

Down went the fellow all of a heap, sending up the dead leaves in a cloud.

Black Jock had sampled the driving power of that terrible arm before, and hardy giant though he was, had no fancy for another taste. He held off; then, stooping low, made a rush in, and attempted to close.

The detective evaded this, and, side-stepping, got in a right shoulder-hit on the ruffian's ribs. It sent him spinning half-round and backwards, and clean emptied him of wind in one prolonged "Whoo-oo!"

Staggering, he pitched over a projecting root, and fell heavily.

This gave Blake a respite. But it was very brief.

Bates was now upon his feet again, but he did not attempt a second attack, although the detective, who had no thought of beating a retreat, stood awaiting him. Instead, the fellow gave a low, peculiar call.

It was instantly answered from many points in the woods around. There came a quick movement of feet, the swish of undergrowth, trampled down or pushed aside, and a hoarse shouting, growing rapidly nearer.

Then, before Blake could have got away, had he been so minded, a score of men burst through the bushes and surrounded him.

It was a party of the grinders; a rough, wild-looking lot of fellows, with much of the gipsy stamp about them.

Most of them carried cudgels—evidently freshly cut that night for some special purpose; but here and there Blake caught the glint of steel, and could have sworn that more than one had a knife stuck in his waist-band, or even carried openly in his hand.

But beyond a hasty, startled glance, he was given scant leisure to look about him.

"Collar that chap!" shouted Bates, pointing straight at the detective. "It's Packer—Temple's boss foreman!"

There were cries of rage at this. Plainly the young engineer's name was fire to tow with them.

"Oh, him!" yelled a small, ferocious-looking man, who for a weapon carried a large pointed file, ground to a razor-edge on both sides. "Temple's boss ganger! Let us get at him! I'll treat him as I would Temple himself!"

He forced his way through the

through, and actually aimed a thrust at Blake with his ghastly weapon.

But the detective knocked up his arm with one hand, driving the other, clinched to a ball of iron, under the fellow's jaw, and dropping him like a sack of flour. A second, a third, and even a fourth, who attempted to strike at his head with their cudgels, or close in and seize him, he served in like manner.

This gave him a half-second's breathing-space, and seeing the folly of risking his life in a fight against such hopeless odds, he might have broken through and got away.

But Black Jock had now got up, and snatching a heavy cudgel from the nearest man, ran in and struck at Blake from behind, over the heads of those who hemmed him in.

It was a merciless blow, and the detective dropped senseless under it.

Fire and Tow!

TINKER found it no easy matter to stalk his quarry through the intricate mazes of those woodland paths, dark as the evening had now become.

For Ardoise walked with the rapid, assured stride of one who was familiar with every inch of the way, whilst Tinker was a stranger in a strange land. Yet he managed this difficult piece of work remarkably well.

Never losing sight of his man—although the thick, murky gloom

through a small gap in the bushes. It was a striking scene that met his eyes.

A dell, or large sandy hollow, rounded in shape like a basin, lay before them. It was completely shut in by a densely-grown fringe of tall trees, with thick undergrowth between, so that a traveller through the woods might have passed it within a few yards and never known that it was there.

It was itself quite bare of trees, save for the solitary trunk of a scathed and bleached oak which stood in the centre, the mere death-emblem of a once proud woodland monarch.

In the clefts of its withered trunk several torches were stuck, spluttering and flaring in the fitful wind.

These threw a savage glare upon the faces of a large number of men assembled around it.

There were upwards of two hundred of them, as Tinker roughly calculated, as wild-looking a lot of fellows as he had ever set eyes on in his life.

They were of all ages, from mere callow lads to greybeards of sixty winters, but all of them had a nameless stamp of savagery which Tinker had hardly dreamt of seeing in the England of to-day.

Every one of them was armed, with a stout hedge-stake or cudgel, while not a few bore weapons of a more dangerous kind, such as bill-hooks, or scythe blades fitted with short handles to serve as swords.

"You idiot!" he said. "Who trusted you with that fiend's toy?"

"Why, it's the squire—the Gipsy Squire!" cried one of the men. "Hands off him, mates! We all knows as he's a friend!"

"Ay, hands off him unless a few of you want your thick skulls broken with this whip-stock," said Ardoise calmly. "But as to being a friend, that's another matter! Friend indeed! It's a far cry between a gentleman and a rag-tag gang of dirty, slinking vagabonds such as I see around me!"

Nothing could exceed in bitterness the scathing contempt he threw into those words.

Several of the men—perhaps mechanics from the neighbouring towns, for their appearance was less wild and unkempt—looked angry at this, and began to mutter fiercely.

"Who's him I'd like to know?" demanded one fellow, pushing to the front, his face flushed and his eyes blazing with anger. "We ain't dirt under his feet! I'll 'ave yer to know I'm as good a man as you any day, whoever yer may be!"

Ardoise seized him by the collar, and with one jerk of his sinewy arm sent him reeling like a skittle full a dozen yards away.

There was a menacing outcry from the fellow's mates at this, and something of a rush towards the squire, who stood with a smile of contempt on his face, swinging the hunting-

big man with the iron bar. "The squire's one o' us! With us hand and glove!"

And the cheering broke out wild and strong.

Tinker, who from his place of concealment could see the face of the Gipsy Squire well in the torches' ruddy light, saw it slowly wreathed into a smile of triumph, as though he took an evil delight in the marked effect of his speech.

"He is fanning the fire!" muttered the boy. "There will be a fierce blaze come of this night's work!"

His impulse at first was to get away, find Sexton Blake, and warn him of the mischief that was evidently fast brewing, yet he felt compelled to stay and see more of this strange scene.

The big man, who appeared to act as a sort of leader, now cried out again:

"Ay, the squire's with us! Didn't I say he was one of us?"

Ardoise laughed contemptuously.

"One of you!" he exclaimed. "No! I'll have nothing to do with such a goose-livered pack! You talk! You're fine at talking, but you do nothing more!"

The big man reddened, looked round at his mates, then said awkwardly:

"Why, squire, we know our wrongs, and we've got muscle and pluck to right 'em, but it's brains we want to guide us. Won't you be our leader? You're the sort of man we want—eh, mates?"

There was a chorus of "Ay, ay! The Gipsy Squire's the man for us! He'll lead us!"

"Not I!" laughed Ardoise. "You forget that I'm a magistrate. I'll have no hand in your tuppenny plots! But I'll tell you something that I saw abroad last year, just to show you how men can act!"

He had them well in hand, for every man became silent, listening eagerly for his next words.

"It was in Spain—in Barcelona," he said. "That's a hotbed of Anarchists and insurgents, and riots are common. The authorities wanted to locate more soldiers there, so they set about building fine new barracks. Do you think the people were going to stand that? No; they wanted no more soldiers and no more barracks in their town! So what did they do?"

"Tell us, squire—tell us!" was the eager cry.

"Why, they gathered one night—not to talk, but to act! They marched on the new barracks—then nearly finished and well guarded by troops. It was fearful work while it lasted, and more than a few widows and orphans were made by that night's work! But they broke in at last, and dynamite did the rest! The new barracks went sky-high, and half the soldiers with it! But these fellows were men! They didn't talk, they acted! They were men!"

A growl like the rising of the sea followed his last words.

"And we're men, too!" cried the burly leader, flourishing his iron bar. "Squire, we'll show you before morning what we can do now you've given us the right hint! We will!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Ardoise. "I want to hear nothing of your childish plots! Little will come of it but bare words. For you'll scatter like a parcel of frightened boys at the first glimpse of the village policeman's helmet!"

"Will we? Will we?" came in a low growl from the men. "You'll see, squire—you'll see!"

The Gipsy Squire laughed that contemptuous, scathing laugh of his, and swung round as if to go.

But he halted again as a commotion arose on the outskirts of the throng. It divided right and left, and a fresh party of men came through into the light.

Tinker recognised the gigantic figure that stalked ahead of them in a moment. It was Black Jock, the discharged ganger.

"So he has joined them," muttered the boy, "and they won't be any the less dangerous for that! But, oh heavens, what is this?"

Two of the foremost men bore between them a limp, inanimate form, the head hanging loosely down, and the torchlight flickering upon a livid, white face with a ghastly red streak across its forehead!

Tinker's heart gave one great leap, then seemed to grow still and cold. It was the face of Sexton Blake, and the look upon it was that of death!

(Another instalment of this powerful serial next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)



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made that likely enough at every turn of the complicated, winding way—he yet had to keep at such a distance in the rear as would make retreat possible should Ardoise turn and see him.

The snapping of a dried twig underfoot, or the sudden swish of a bramble-spray, pulled aside and too hastily released, would have been quite enough to make him glance back. But Tinker made none of these fatal slips.

An Indian brave on the trail could hardly have beaten him at this clever bit of forest-craft.

At length they entered a belt of woodland where the trees grew close and dense. Between the trunks and interlaced branches gleamed a yellowish light, but shining unsteadily like that of a fire caught by gusts of the night wind.

Often, at sharp turns in the intricate track, Tinker was so close upon Ardoise that a stumble, or a slip in the loose sand, would have brought him down upon him headlong.

But it came to an end at last.

Ardoise, whose own movements, though rapid, had been stealthy and almost noiseless, now suddenly halted. Tinker stopped as instantly, so close upon him that he could have touched him with outstretched hand.

The Gipsy Squire, his body well-concealed by a tree-trunk, seemed to be peering intently before him. Tinker, slightly higher, for the path was very steep just here, stood on tip-toe, and looked over his shoulder

One even had a gun—a musket, or heavy duck-gun, Tinker could not tell which in that fitful light.

"They must be the tool-grinders down the river," he muttered. "A tough lot, as I've heard say, and, by jinks, they look it! They're here for mischief. What's the game, I wonder?"

He was not to be long left in doubt.

This startling sight seemed agreeable enough to the Gipsy Squire, for Tinker distinctly heard him give a low, soft laugh of satisfaction, then murmur half aloud:

"This looks like business at last! Bates has done his work well. They are indeed ripe to my hand. Now to sting them into action!"

He broke from cover, striding down the slope full into the torches' glare.

His sudden appearance was greeted with shouts of surprise and alarm. Many made towards him with uplifted cudgels, and the man with the gun actually approached and presented the weapon point-blank at his head.

This hostile demonstration did not appear to alarm the Gipsy Squire in the slightest degree.

He laughed, and dashed the gun aside with a blow of his heavy hunting-crop so violently that it flew from the man's hand, fell to the ground, and exploded, its charge of buckshot cutting through the twigs and leaves unpleasantly close to Tinker's head!

crop in his hand, and never offering to retreat a single step.

"Keep back, you fools!" shouted a burly fellow, naked all but trousers and shirt, and armed with a bar of iron heavy enough to have killed an ox at a single blow. "Keep back! It's the squire, I tell ye!"

And others echoed the cry, "Ay, it's the squire!"

"Squire or no, wot's he to us?" demanded another town mechanic of Socialistic bent. "Wot's a fine gen'l'man like him care about these new works, unless it's to make money out of 'em? With a cellar full of wine to swill all day long, wot's it to him if us an' the likes of us have to pay a penny a pail for water dipped out of a ditch, just because this Londoner has come an' shut off our river and dried up our wells? These 'ere works aren't nothing to him, I say!"

Ardoise turned on him so suddenly that the fellow leapt back quite a yard in fear.

"What!" he shouted, with sudden fierceness. "Nothing to me! Ten thousand times more to me than to such scum as you! Is it nothing to me to see my fair green lands blighted and blasted by the smoke of the filthy towns that will spring up like foul fungus all around here when these infernal works are completed?"

A cheer from the grinders greeted this fiery speech.

"What did I tell ye!" cried the

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 char for 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 fag.

From the time he enters the school plots of dishonesty, etc., are laid for him, and Mortimer does all he can to get Phil disgraced.

Philip is working up for the Beresford examination, and he is raked out of his secret study in order to keep watch while Mortimer and his companions play cards. This Phil refuses to do.

He is descending the stairs with the intention of discovering a new studying place, when Sir David Rendle drives up to the college on a surprise visit.

Philip rushes up to Mortimer's study to give him warning, while Sir David is closely following up the stairs.

Mortimer goes out to meet his uncle in order to detain him, while Philip is left to hide the cards.

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, walks into the study.

However, Mortimer and Philip go for a spin in Sir David's motor-car. Phil's hat is blown off, and as he descends from the car he slips, and two cards fall from his pocket. When Mortimer is questioned about this by Sir David he tells his uncle that Ashley plays for money, and relates to him the facts of the missing banknote which Phil is supposed to have stolen. Thus Sir David is most indifferent to Phil.

A fortnight later there is an announcement of a performance by the Rayton Amateur Theatrical Society. Rutherford and Holcroft learn from Tubb that they will not be admitted to see the show.

"You mean to go?" says Rutherford. "You bet!" says Holcroft. "And you shall go, too, dear boy! And it we don't smash up their giddy show—well, you can punch my head!"

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

In Ambush.

"**B**UT how will you get in?" asked Rutherford. "They are sure to post Hogan or somebody at the door to stop anybody goin' in who hasn't a ticket."

Again Holcroft winked.

"They're goin' to give their show in the Third Form class-room," he said.

"At four o'clock this afternoon," said Rutherford.

"The room will be occupied until dinner-time, won't it?"

"Until half-past twelve, at any rate."

"So they won't be able to start clearin' the room and riggin' up their stage until after dinner."

"Well?"

"Well, if we hurry over dinner, and cut the sweets, and then slip round to the Third Form class-room,

the odds are a hundred to one there'll be nobody in the room."

"It's likely enough."

"So in we walk, and there you are!" said Holcroft.

"Then Tubb and his crew arrive," said Rutherford sarcastically, "and out we are chucked—and there you are!"

"Ass!" said Holcroft. "We must hide, of course, and lie low until they've arranged the room and started the performance."

"But where can we hide!"

"On top of that big cupboard just inside the door. If we lie down flat on the top of that cupboard, nobody'll ever see us, especially as they'll darken the room before the show begins."

"Poor idea!" said Rutherford, shaking his head. "You're out of form, old man!"

"What's wrong with the idea?" demanded Holcroft.

"There's no fun in it," said Rutherford. "I don't doubt we could get into the room in the way you suggest and hide on the top of the cupboard, and see the show without bein' spotted. But there's no sport in that. I don't want to see their rotten show. I want to spoil it—to smash it up!"

"And so we will, dear boy," said Holcroft.

"But what can we do lyin' flat on the top of the cupboard?" asked Rutherford.

"A lot may be done," said Holcroft musingly, "with a couple of pea-shooters, a pocketful of peas, a few bags of flour, and a rotten egg or two! And a bottle of sulphuretted hydrogen isn't half a bad wheeze for clearin' a room in a hurry!"

Rutherford's eyes began to sparkle.

"That sounds better," he chuckled— "decidedly better!"

"You're on?"

"Like a bird!" said Rutherford.

There was a distinct danger at one time that the first performance of "The Pirate's Revenge" would have to be postponed on account of the performers being otherwise engaged. For Tubb and his fellow-actors were so full of their forthcoming show that there was no room in their thoughts for lessons; and the frightful "howlers" they committed in

class would, in ordinary circumstances, have earned them more than enough impositions to keep them at work for the rest of the day. The masters, however, took a lenient view of their shortcomings, knowing the cause thereof, and nobody got more than fifty lines, which, as Tubb said, they could "do on their heads" between tea-time and bed-time.

Morning school ended about half-past twelve. By that time everybody in the school had read the announcement on the notice-board; and Tubb and his chums were fully prepared for an angry demonstration on the part of the Paulites when they learned that they were not to be admitted.

"My hat! Won't they be jolly mad when they discover that we're not goin' to let 'em in?" said Card.

"Won't they just!" said Rigden.

"They'll kick up the very dickens of a row."

"I shouldn't wonder if there's a riot," said Tubb.

But there was no row and no riot, and the Paulites, so far from appearing mad, were most provokingly indifferent. Acting on Holcroft's orders, none of them applied for tickets, and all of them went about their work or their play as if they had never even heard of the forthcoming entertainment.

This rather nettled Tubb and his fellow-actors. Not the least part of the fun they had expected to get out of their entertainment had been the prospect of seeing the Paulites gnash their teeth and tear their hair and dance with rage because they were refused admission. They had looked forward to seeing their rivals begging for tickets on bended knees, and they had revelled in the prospect of refusing them with scorn and contumely.

"They're just bluffin'," said Tubb.

"They're pretendin' they don't care, but really they're as mad as mad can be. But I'll stir 'em up! Here comes Pettigrew! See me rag him!"

"Mornin', Pettigrew!" he said, winking at his chums. "Like a ticket for our show this afternoon?"

"Show!" said Pettigrew, staring at him blankly. "What's that?"

"Our amateur theatrical society, of which I am president, is performin' a play, you know," said Tubb proudly.

"Really?" said Pettigrew. "And can't you get anybody to come?"

"Of course we can!" said Tubb indignantly. "We're simply overwhelmed with applications for tickets. Would you like one?"

Pettigrew shook his head.

"I'm not very strong, you know,"

he said. "I'm afraid the shock would be too much for me. However, I might perhaps run the risk if you made it worth my while. How much will you give me to come for five minutes?"

Tubb snorted and stalked away. A little later he encountered Carfax.

"Like a ticket—" he began.

Carfax sprang back in pretended alarm.

"No, no!" he cried hastily. "I couldn't, really! Don't be offended, old chap, but I had a tooth out yesterday, and I couldn't stand any more torture at present!"

Tubb made a last attempt to "stir 'em up" by tackling Barker.

"Seen our announcement?" he asked.

"Yes," said Barker, in a gloomy, tragic voice.

"Like to come?" queried Tubb.

Barker hesitated for a moment.

"Yes," he said at last. "I'm tired of life, and I was just wonderin' what was the quickest way of committin' suicide!"

He held out his hand.

"Give me a ticket!" he said. "It'll be a horrible, agonisin' death, but I may as well die that way as any other!"

Dinner was always a hurried meal at Rayton on half-holidays. On this particular half-holiday, so far as Holcroft and Rutherford were concerned, it was a positive scramble; and long before any of the other boys had finished, these two had cleared their plates and were on their way to the Third Form class-room.

"All serene?" whispered Rutherford, as Holcroft cautiously peered round the corner of the school buildings.

"All serene!" said Holcroft, "Not a soul in sight. Come on!"

The door of the class-room, which was on the ground-floor, opened on to the quad. It was shut, but not locked. To open it, to slip inside, and to close the door behind them was the work of a moment for the two conspirators.

It should here be explained that the Third Form class-room was a bigish room, rather longer than it was wide.

At one end was the door, which was flanked on one side by a large wall-map of the world, and on the other by a big, high cupboard, which was used for the storing of blackboards, and so forth.

At the other end were two doors, leading into two smaller class-rooms. Between these two doors stood the master's desk. It was at this end of the room that Tubb and his chums intended to erect their platform or

stage, and the two small class-rooms they intended to use as dressing-rooms and waiting-rooms.

On one side of the room was the fireplace, and on the other side were two large windows. Down the middle of the room were rows of desks and forms.

The cupboard was a very big one, and was eight or ten feet high, so that it was not an easy matter for Holcroft and Rutherford to climb on to the top of it. However, by standing on Rutherford's shoulders, Holcroft managed to scramble on to the top; and then, reaching down his hand, he hauled his companion up beside him.

There was just room, and only just, on the top of the cupboard for the two boys to curl themselves up in a prone position. When they had done this, a raised moulding, about eighteen inches high, which ran round the top of the cupboard, screened them from the view of anybody down below.

"Makes a toppin' private box from which to view the performance, doesn't it?" said Holcroft.

"I don't know about a box!" growled Rutherford. "It's more like a seat in a crowded gallery! What's the giddy time?"

Holcroft glanced at his watch.

"Twenty to two," he said.

"And the show doesn't start till four," groaned Rutherford. "I shall have cramp all over me before—"

"S-sh!" whispered Holcroft. "There's somebody comin'!"

Voices and footsteps were heard outside. Then the door was flung open, and the members of the R.A.T.S. trooped into the room, accompanied by Hogan, and laden with planks, trestles, curtains, and other "properties."

"Lock the door on the inside," said Tubb, "or some of those rotten Paulites will be sneakin' in."

Two of "those rotten Paulites," curled up on the top of the cupboard, chuckled softly to themselves as they heard these words.

"Now, Hogan, you're in command at present," said Tubb, when the door had been locked. "What's the first thing to be done?"

"Sure, the first thing to be done, Master Tubb," said Hogan, "is to shift that desk into wan av the rooms at the back."

"And then?"

"We'll arrange these threstles across the ind av the room, an' lay these planks on the top av 'em, an' there's yer platform."

When the master's desk had been moved out of the way, and the platform had been erected, a cord was stretched across the room parallel with the front of the platform, and about six feet above it, and the draw-curtains were attached to the cord by means of hooks and rings.

"You understand how to work these curtains, don't you?" said Tubb to Smith minor, who was to be prompter, curtain-man, scene-shifter, and several other things.

"I think so," said Smith minor.

"When it's time to begin," said Tubb, "you ring a bell, and then you pull this string, and the curtains go like this."

He pulled the string, and the curtains drew aside and looped themselves up in the most approved fashion.

Two large coloured tablecloths were nailed up on the wall at the back of the stage, to cover the maps and diagrams.

Matting was laid down on the stage, and across the front, just outside the curtains, "footlights" were arranged in the shape of three paraffin-lamps with tin reflectors. In the centre of the stage were placed a small deal table (borrowed from Hogan's kitchen) and an empty barrel, set on end.

Finally, after the seats had been arranged for the audience and the footlights had been lit, rugs were hung in front of the two windows to darken the room.

"There! I think that's everything," said Tubb. "What's the time, Hogan?"

"A quarter-past three," said Hogan.

"Then we've no time to lose," said Tubb. "We've got to fetch our costumes and things, and carry 'em into one of the rooms at the back of the stage before the doors are opened. Come along, chaps!"

They hurried off, locking the door behind them. Scarcely had they disappeared ere Holcroft began to climb down off the top of the cupboard.

"Had enough?" said Rutherford.

"Goin' to chuck it, after all?"

"Not much!" said Holcroft.



There was an ominous creak. The platform trembled and swayed. Then down it went, and Tubb and his fellow-actors were precipitated to the floor, amid an avalanche of trestles and planks.

"Then why are you gettin' down? What are you goin' to do?"

"I'm just goin' to make a few alterations in their stage," said Holcroft. "Stay where you are; I'll be back in a jiffy!"

He dropped lightly to the ground, and ran to the other end of the room. He tied a few knots in the string which worked the draw-curtains, and shifted the position of the trestles which supported the platform. Then he climbed back on to the top of the cupboard, with Rutherford's assistance, and settled down to wait the arrival of the audience.

"The Pirate's Revenge."

THE fateful hour had arrived. It was four o'clock. In one of the small rooms at the back of the stage Tubb and his fellow-actors had donned their hired costumes.

In front of the stage about thirty Walkerite juniors were assembled. Outside the class-room a group of Paulites were chaffing Hogan, who was acting as doorkeeper.

"Time! Time!" shouted several of the audience, as the school clock chimed four.

Some stamped their feet. Others whistled. Presently Smith minor stepped in front of the curtain.

"Sorry to keep you waitin', chaps," he said apologetically. "But Hepworth's nose has started to bleed, and we can't stop it. Has anybody got a big key?"

Something whizzed through the air. It was too dark to see what it was, or who had thrown it. Smith minor thought it was a key which somebody in the audience had tossed to him. But he was mistaken. It was an ancient egg, flung by the unerring hand of Holcroft.

Smith minor tried to catch it, but he missed it, and it struck him on the chest, bursting as it did so, and bespattering him with greenish, evil-smelling slime.

"What cad did that!" he howled, dancing with rage and gesticulating wildly. "Was it you, Atkin?"

"Of course it wasn't!" said Atkin indignantly.

"Who was it, then?"

There was no reply. Smith retired behind the curtain, and strode into the dressing-room.

"Phew! Great ruff! Keep away!" cried Tubb, pinching his nose between his finger and thumb. "What on earth have you been doin'?"

"Some cad in the room chucked a rotten egg at me," said Smith, mopping up the mess with a towel.

An anxious look crossed Tubb's face.

"There aren't any Paulites in the room, are there?" he asked.

"No," said Smith. "I saw every chap that came into the room, and they're all our own chaps."

"Well, I didn't think one of our chaps would have played a scurvy trick like that," said Tubb. "However, if he plays any more tricks we'll get Hogan to chuck him out."

In front of the curtain the audience was getting more and more impatient.

"Time! Time! Time!" they chanted, stamping and whistling.

A bull rang.

"Hurrah! Now we sha'n't be long!" cried somebody.

But he was wrong. After ringing the bell, Smith minor tugged at the string, but the curtains refused to budge.

Tubb, in readiness for the rising of the curtain, had seated himself on the upturned barrel beside the table in the centre of the stage. He was Alonzo, the Pirate Chief, and was dressed in a red woollen shirt, a red knitted cap, knee-breeches, and sea-boots. A wooden sword dangled at his side, and two pistols protruded from the enormous belt which encircled his waist. On the table were a tin mug, and a whisky-bottle half full of cold tea.

"The curtain won't work!" whispered Smith minor, breaking into a cold sweat.

"Pull harder, you ass!" growled Tubb.

Smith pulled his hardest. But Holcroft had knotted the string to some purpose. The curtains remained immovable. The audience began to jeer.

"Here—get out of the way and let me do it!" snarled Tubb, striding to the side of the stage.

He snatched the end of the string out of Smith's hand, and gave it a vicious jerk, so vicious that the curtains, the cords, and the whole contraption came tumbling down.

How the audience laughed!

On the top of the cupboard Holcroft and Rutherford shook hands with each other. Tubb was furious.

"We'll have to manage without curtains," he snapped. "Help me to clear 'em out of the way."

Smith stooped down to pick up one end of the fallen curtains, and Tubb bent down to pick up the other. At the same instant Holcroft and Rutherford placed their peashooters to their lips and blew.

Smith stumbled forward, with an agonised shriek, and fell on his hands and knees. Tubb leaped into the air with an ear-splitting yell. Coming down, his legs got mixed up with his sword, and the next instant he was floundering on the top of Smith.

"Encore! Encore!" yelled the delighted audience. "Bravo! Top-pin!"

"Rippin'est play I've ever seen!" cried one boy.

"So real and lifelike!" said another. "You'd never guess they were actin', would you?"

Shaking with rage, Tubb advanced to the front of the stage and demanded the name of the "low cad" who had committed this "dastardly outrage." Needless to say, nobody could give him the information he asked for.

"It must have been a wasp that stung you," sang out Atkin. "I'll swear that none of us did anything—did we, chaps?"

"No!" roared the others, in chorus.

"Somebody did!" shouted Tubb.

"Well, if we catch him, we'll run him out and duck him in the river," said Atkin.

"Agreed! Agreed!" chorused the rest. "Now let the play go on."

The curtains having been removed, Tubb seated himself on the barrel again, filled the tin mug with cold tea, and emptied it at a single gulp.

"I'faith, but that was good!" he said, smacking his lips. "'Tis the first drop of good liquor that hath crossed my lips since my hated rival fell into my power."

"My hated rival!" he repeated, rising to his feet and striding to the front of the stage. "Yes. At last Count Bruno is in my power! 'Twas he who in the happy days of long ago cheated me of mine inheritance and sloped—I mean eloped—with the dark-eyed damsel who had promised to be my bride. For years I have pursued him across land and sea, and now at last—ha, ha!—at last I have captured the black-hearted miscreant!"

"Yes!" he cried, dramatically striking his breast. "Count Bruno is now a prisoner in the hands of Alonzo, the Pirate Chief! The hour of my revenge approacheth. My trusty minions are now bringing him to this secret cave. List! I hear footsteps! 'Tis they! 'Tis he! My hated rival cometh!"

He glanced at one of the doors at the back of the stage.

"Hurry up, you chaps!" he said, in a stage whisper.

"Half a minute!" answered somebody. "His nose has only just stopped bleedin'!"

There was an awkward pause, which lasted fully two minutes.

"'Tis they! 'Tis he!" said Tubb again. "My hated rival cometh!"

At last the "hated rival" appeared. It was Hepworth. He was dressed in a costume which included a pair of cricket flannels, top boots, and one of Hogan's cast-off livery-coats. His arms were pinioned to his sides with a rope, and he was dragged into the "secret cave" by two of Tubb's "trusty minions"—Card and Rigden—who were attired in much the same fashion as their leader.

"So, Count Bruno, at last we meeteth!" said Tubb, striking a theatrical attitude and folding his arms across his chest.

"Mercy, mercy!" squealed Hepworth, breaking away from his guards and casting himself on his knees at Tubb's feet.

"Base caitiff!" thundered Tubb.

"What mercy didst thou show to me when— Good gracious! His blessed nose is startin' to bleed again. For Heaven's sake give him a handkerchief, somebody!"

"I can't use it unless you untie my arms!" wailed Hepworth; and the audience rocked with laughter.

Tubb bit his lip. His play, which he had meant to be melodramatic and thrilling, was rapidly degenerating into a farce. He made a desperate effort to set things right.

"Unbind the miscreant!" he commanded.

Card and Rigden untied the rope by which Hepworth's arms were bound. Scarcely had they done so ere Hepworth let out a blood-curdling yell, and clapped his hands to the seat of his flannel trousers.

It was another pea from Holcroft's deadly shooter.

"You cad!" howled Hepworth, spinning round and facing Tubb.

"You beastly cad!"

"What—what have I done?" gasped Tubb.

"You know what you've done!" roared Hepworth. "Prodded me in the rear, you did, with the point of your sword!"

"I swear I didn't!" vowed Tubb.

"Who did, then?" bellowed Hepworth.

"I don't know," said Tubb wearily. "It's some johnnie in front who's playin' the goat. But take no notice of him. Let's get on with the play."

"Base caitiff!" he resumed. "Wipe your nose, you owl! The blood's tricklin' off the end of your chin! Base caitiff! What mercy didst thou show to me when thou elopedest with my dark-eyed bride? What mercy didst thou show to me when thou robbedest me of mine inheritance? Ha, ha! Thou tremblest! Tremble, you goat, and don't stand there like a stuck pig! Thou fearest my vengeance! But I will not slay thee in cold blood, as well I might. I will give thee a chance of saving thy worthless wife—life, I mean. We will engage in mortal combat. What—ho, without!"

Pritchard, in "pirate" attire, appeared at the door at the back of the stage.

"Didst thou call, great chief?" he asked.

"I didst," said Tubb. "A sword for this varlet!"

Pritchard disappeared, and reappeared a moment later with a wooden sword, which he handed to Hepworth.

"Now defend thyself, base caitiff!" cried Tubb, drawing his own sword and making a lunge at Hepworth.

"Half a mo'!" said Hepworth, fumbling for his handkerchief. "I'm afraid my nose— No, it's all right. I'm ready now."

"Have at thee, then!" cried Tubb. Click-clack! Click-clack! The wooden swords crossed and recrossed in approved theatrical fashion. One, two up; one, two down!

"Tame sort of fight, I call it!" whispered Holcroft to Rutherford. "Better liven it up a bit!"

He raised his shooter to his lips, and a pea smote Tubb on the ear, just as Hepworth's sword whizzed past the same spot.

Apparently Tubb thought it was Hepworth's sword which had smitten him. Apparently, too, he thought Hepworth had done it on purpose.

"All right! If you want real fighting you shall have it!" he hissed. "How do you like that, my boy?"

"That" was a crack across the knuckles which brought tears to Hepworth's eyes. Hepworth, goaded to fury, brought his sword down with all his might on the top of Tubb's head. Tubb retaliated by jabbing Hepworth in the ribs; and in less time far than it takes to tell Alonzo and his hated rival were bolabouring each other in deadly earnest, what time the audience made the room ring with its shouts of delighted approval.

In the midst of the fight a paper bag of flour came sailing across the footlights, alighted on Tubb's head, burst, and deluged him with flour. At the same instant another egg, more ancient if possible than the first, cracked itself on Hepworth's forehead. And a moment later a second bag of flour struck Card between the eyes, and a pea stung Rigden on the tip of his nose.

The uproar and confusion which ensued simply beggar description. The boys who composed the audience rose to their feet like one man, yelling "Turn him out!" and staring round the darkened room in vain for the person or persons who had thrown the missiles.

On the stage Tubb and Card coughed and spluttered as the flour powder found its way into their lungs. Rigden hopped about the stage, rubbing his nose and howling dismally.

Hepworth tore at the filthy, sticky mess which was running down his face, and bellowed for somebody's blood.

Alarmed by the uproar, the rest of the actors, headed by Pritchard, rushed out of the room at the back of the stage. And then came the grand finale.

Holcroft, it will be remembered, had altered the position of the trestles which supported the platform. By doing so he had intended and had succeeded in considerably weakening the stability of the structure. He had been rather surprised it had not collapsed while Tubb and Hepworth were fighting. But when six excited

youths dashed on to the stage, adding their weight to that of the four boys already there—

There was an ominous creak. The platform trembled and swayed. Then down it went, and Tubb and his fellow-actors were precipitated to the floor, amid an avalanche of trestles and planks.

The lamps which served as footlights were overturned, of course, and were instantly extinguished. As the door was shut, and rugs had been hung in front of the windows, the room was now plunged in total darkness.

"This is where we disappear, dear boy," murmured Rutherford, beginning to climb over the edge of the cupboard-top.

"I'll give 'em a dose of this before we go," said Holcroft.

He pulled out a bottle from his pocket. It contained a solution of sulphuretted hydrogen, probably the vilest-smelling concoction known to chemistry. He removed the cork, and aiming for where he thought the fireplace would be, he hurled the bottle across the darkened room.

His aim was true. The bottle struck the marble mantelpiece and was instantly shattered to atoms.

As the deadly effluvia spread itself about the room, the excited shouts of the actors and the audience changed to gasping moans and shuddering cries of disgust.

"Help, help! I'm poisoned!" shouted Atkin.

"Murder!" bawled Card. "Somebody's emptied a cartload of rotten eggs just under my nose!"

"Air, air!" moaned Rigden.

"Open the door!" yelled Tubb.

"Pull down the rugs!" bellowed Pritchard.

By that time Holcroft and Rutherford had scrambled down from the top of the cupboard, and were groping their way to the door. Ere they reached it, however, somebody pulled down the rugs which screened the windows, and a flood of golden sunlight poured into the room.

"See, see!" yelled Tubb, who was the first to catch sight of the two conspirators. "Holcroft and Rutherford! They're the bounders who have spoiled our show! Down 'em, quick!"

But it was then too late. By that time Holcroft and Rutherford had gained the door and had dragged it open. Outside stood Hogan. At the sight of the two boys he gasped.

"Now, how—" he began; but before he could say more Holcroft's head butted into his bread-basket, and the next instant Hogan was floundering on his back, and Holcroft and Rutherford were sprinting across the quad in the direction of their own house.

"After 'em! After 'em!" roared Tubb.

Mad for revenge, the Walkerites dashed out of the reeking class-room, yelling and shouting and shaking their fists. But Holcroft and Rutherford had got too good a start to be overtaken. With the infuriated crowd at their heels, they pelted round the corner of the school buildings, and a moment or two later they gained the shelter of their House, where they quickly closed and bolted the door.

From an upper window Holcroft addressed a few parting words to his baffled pursuers.

"Go away, little boys!" he jeered. "You're disturbin' our studies! Go and play at bein' pirates!"

"I'll pay you out for this!" shrieked Tubb, dancing and gesticulating with rage.

"Ho, ha!" said Holcroft, striking an attitude. "'Tis they! 'Tis he, my hated rival! What—ho, without!"

Rutherford's grinning face appeared at the window.

"Didst thou call, great chief?" he asked.

"I didst!" replied Holcroft. "This varlet—"

But Tubb could stand no more. Baffled and beaten, he hurled a final threat at Holcroft; then he and his followers sadly retired to plot fresh schemes of vengeance.

The Return of Cocker.

TEN days passed. It was Saturday morning. Dr. Paul, the handsome young Headmaster of Rayton College, sat in his study with an open letter in his hand. It had just arrived by the morning post.

For some time past, as previously mentioned, the other masters and the boys had noticed a great change in Dr. Paul. Once the jolliest of men, he had become gloomy, reserved, and taciturn. His face had grown thin and careworn, and he seldom smiled, and never laughed.

This morning the lines of care on his face were deeper than ever. His whole appearance was that of a man who was utterly crushed by a load of hopeless misery.

He read the letter again. It was written in an ill-formed hand on half a sheet of dirty notepaper. It ran as follows:

"Dere sir,—I will be at the usual place at nine o'clock to-morrow (Saturday) nite. I'm broke to the world, and must 'ave monney. I'll trouble you for fifty this time, and you better stump up and look plesent or you know wot wil 'appen.—Yours truly, JIM COCKER."

"It was five pounds at first," muttered Dr. Paul. "Then it was ten. Last time it was twenty. Now it's fifty. Next time, I expect, it will be a hundred. Where will it end—where will it end?"

He paced the study with rapid, agitated strides.

"It shall end now!" he said almost fiercely. "I can stand the strain no longer. I'm a coward, I know, but I daren't face the exposure. I must leave here. It's the only way out of the tangle. I must throw up my appointment here and leave the country."

A mental vision of Colonel Goldie's charming daughter rose before his eyes. An expression of anguish crossed his face.

"It will break my heart to leave her," he muttered. "But it is better I should go. She would only despise me if she knew. And she is bound to know if I stay, for I can't go on paying Cocker blackmail for ever. Yes; it's the only way. I'll go up to London to-day and interview the governors of the school. I'll ask them to accept my resignation, and if they will let me go at once, I'll come back here and pack up my things and go abroad."

Half an hour later Mr. Walker, the assistant-master, was coming out from breakfast when he was surprised to receive a visit from Dr. Paul, who had a small suitcase in his hand, and was dressed as if going for a journey.

"You're not going away!" exclaimed Mr. Walker.

"Yes," replied the doctor, in a hollow voice. "I'm going up to London on—on urgent private business. I'll tell you all about it, perhaps, when I come back. In the meantime, I leave you in charge of the school. Good-bye!"

And before the astonished and bewildered Mr. Walker could question him, he was gone.

On arriving at the station he booked his ticket, and was walking along the platform towards his train, when he almost ran into Margaret Goldie. He would have avoided her if that had been possible, but she saw him before he could turn away, and came towards him with outstretched hand.

"Good-morning, Dr. Paul!" she said.

"Good-morning!" he replied, mechanically raising his hat.

There was an awkward pause. Margaret gazed at him with wistful eyes. He loved her, she knew, and surely he knew that she loved him! Why this coldness, then?

"Dr. Paul," she said, in a low, troubled voice, "have I done anything to offend you?"

"Indeed, no!" he said.

"Then why do you avoid me?" she asked. "Why do you never come to see us now?"

"Because," he said, with sudden vehemence, "I'm not fit to associate with you! I'm not worthy of your friendship! If you knew—"

He broke off with a passionate gesture of despair. For a moment he gazed at her as if about to say something. Then, with a weary sigh, he held out his hand.

"Good-bye!" he said. "I'm going away—perhaps for ever!"

Then he dropped her hand, turned swiftly on his heel, and strode away to his train.

About five o'clock that afternoon Philip went down to the village post-office for stamps. On his way back to the school he had to pass a low public-house known as the Blue Boar, which was kept by a disreputable bookie named Hodgson. And just as he was passing the open door of this public-house he was amazed to see a man walk out he recognised at a glance.

It was Jim Cocker, the Highfield bookie, whose dying wife had given Philip that packet of letters to burn!

(Another stirring long instalment of "The Blot" next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

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THE 1st CHAPTER. A Queer Customer.

NOTHING was further from Mark Tacker's thoughts when he turned into his uncle's little shop that evening than that he was about to stumble on the first clue to a very remarkable mystery.

Yet so it proved. Old Joseph Tacker, his uncle, kept a small bird-fancier's shop in the Borough. He had a lot of other creatures as well—white rats, mice, guinea-pigs, and almost everything in the way of pets—for "Old Joe," as he was commonly called, was what is known as a natural history dealer.

This evening Old Joe was in rather a grumpy mood. Business was bad—uncommonly bad—and he had hardly taken a shilling all day. "Might as well be thinking of locking up, Mark," he said. "It's getting late, and there'll be nobody else in to-night. Fetch the shutters, lad."

Mark went off towards the back of the shop, passing down a sort of little alley-way, on each side of which were piled tiers of cages.

He was just in the act of raising one of the shutters to his shoulder, when he heard the sound of a motor-car outside. He turned, and saw a large chocolate-coloured car, with gleaming brass-work, drawing up at the kerb.

It was something new for a handsome motor-car to come to a standstill before the dingy little bird-shop. But that was not the only surprise. A big, heavy man, with a bushy black beard and motor goggles, stepped from the car and walked into the shop.

Though his eyes were shaded by the unsightly goggles, they appeared to be remarkably keen, and able to take in everything at a glance. He looked sharply round, as if to make sure there was no one else in the shop, and even glanced suspiciously into the dark background, where Mark was standing.

His business, when he came to make it known, proved to be of an odd kind.

"Have you any white mice?" he asked.

"White mice, sir?" repeated Old Joe. "Oh, yes, sir—plenty!"

"Let me have three pairs." Mark heard the request with open-eyed wonder. It astonished him. Whatever could this great, black-bearded man want with three pairs of white mice?

Old Joe was only too pleased to secure a customer at such a late hour to bother much as to the nature of his business. He hobbled off down the shop, and presently returned with a cage containing about a dozen of the little white, pink-nouted creatures.

"Here they are, sir," he said, holding up the cage for inspection. "Little beauties, too, every one of them! Fit to take a prize at any mouse-show, sir!"

The stranger made an impatient gesture. He appeared to have something else to think of than a mouse-show, or any other kind of show. He seemed to be in a hurry, too, and curtly ordered Old Joe to pick out any six he liked from the cage.

While Old Joe was transferring the mice to a perforated box, Mark slipped out of the background and edged his way forward. This black-bearded stranger interested him. He

watched from behind. He swung round sharply, and flashed such a look at Mark through his goggles that the young fellow hastened to turn away and pretend to busy himself with the cages.

But no sooner did the man leave the shop with the box of white mice under his arm than Mark was at the door, watching him as he crossed the pavement to his motor-car.

He noticed something peculiar, too. He observed that, for such a heavy man, his feet were unusually small, and one of them—the right foot—had a decided inward twist. It caused him to open his eyes again in wonder. He felt that he had made an important discovery, for he had read somewhere—in the "Police News," he was certain—of footprints which displayed this identical peculiarity. The right foot was described as having the same inward twist.

He turned back into the shop, feeling that he was on the track of some singular mystery. Yet, for the present, he could not form an idea as to what it was.

"Queer sort of customer, Mark!" observed his uncle.

"Something more than queer, I should say," replied Mark.

"Why, lad, what makes you think so?"

"One or two little things I noticed about him. That beard of his was false, to begin with."

"False! How could you tell?"

"Oh, I could tell easily enough! He was faked up, too, in other ways. The goggles were a part of the disguise. He didn't want his eyes to be seen, lest they should give him away."

"You don't suppose there's anything wrong?"

"That's just what I do. Something surprisingly wrong, too. Why did he want the white mice?"

"Ay, that seems a bit strange."

"The strangest thing anyone could imagine. He is not the sort of man who would be likely to waste his time on pets. To my way of thinking, he wanted them for some queer purpose."

"To try some new poison on them, perhaps?"

"No. I don't think that's his idea."

"For what purpose, then?"

"I can't say. I'd give a good deal to know. I'd like very much to run across him again, and find out what he's up to."

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Trapped While Tracking.

BY an odd chance, Mark's desire to meet the black-bearded stranger again was destined to be gratified sooner than he expected. He had good cause to regret afterwards that he fell in with the man for the second time, for it landed him in a position of dire peril.

A few days later he was packed off by his uncle on an errand which took him to one of the suburbs south of the Thames. His business was to pay a small debt to a local tradesman and obtain a receipt, but as the tradesman was out when he arrived, he was forced to wait until late in the evening.

It was long after dark when he set out for home. The neighbourhood was new to him, and was all the more confusing now that night had come on. To make matters worse, a thick,

foggy mist began to fall, so that he could hardly see a dozen yards before him.

In his hurry to get back to the main road, where he wanted to catch an electric tram, Mark lost his bearings. He missed his way somehow, and found himself in a road which was utterly unknown to him. Here he was forced to come to a halt.

The road was flanked on either side by the old style of suburban residences, with area-railings in front. It was empty at the moment. There was not even a soul in sight of whom he could inquire his way.

While he was looking helplessly round, he saw three dim figures coming towards him through the mist. He was about to hurry forward and ask directions, but as the figures grew more distinct he stopped short with a sort of thrill. One of the three, who was walking on the inside, he recognised at a glance. It was the big black-bearded man who had purchased the white mice. If the beard was really false, it must have formed part of a permanent disguise.

Mark had little desire to come face to face with the men. He dodged into a doorway to avoid them. He pretended to be searching for the number of the house, hoping in this way to escape observation.

The men came slowly on. He heard them pass quite close behind him. He did not dare to turn his head, but he felt as if the eyes of the black-bearded man were boring into the small of his back.

When they had gone by, he slipped out and looked after them. They were a singular trio. The man on the outside was a long, lathy individual, with bottle-shaped shoulders, and as thin as a whipping-post.

The figure in the centre presented a striking contrast to the other two. It was that of a dumpy, insignificant-looking hunchback, who scarcely reached to the elbows of his taller companions. Yet both were inclining their heads towards him, and appeared to be listening attentively to what he was saying.

Curious to learn what had brought three such men together, and where they were bound, Mark followed cautiously in their footsteps. Chance

had put it in his way to discover something of their secret, which he felt sure was no ordinary one. He determined not to let the opportunity slip, even though it meant an hour or two's delay in reaching home.

He shadowed them to the end of the road, where he saw them turn the corner. He slipped on after them. He allowed them to get a little way ahead before he ventured to show himself, and then crept noiselessly in their wake.

From corner to corner he traced them in this way. The mist favoured him. The three ahead went steadily on their way, never once looking back, and appeared wholly unconscious of being followed.

They soon came to a more open part, where there was considerable space between the houses. The buildings appeared to be of the old, substantial style, shut off from the road by a high front wall, and each surrounded by its own private grounds.

Without even a glance behind them, the three men turned in at the gateway of one of these houses. Mark hung back until he heard the gate clang, and knew that they were safely housed.

He lingered a while in the roadway, uncertain what step to take next. To venture further might be dangerous, and yet he could not tear himself away without striving to discover something about these men and what secret they had in common.

He moved on to the gateway. Stationing himself in the shadow of one of the side pillars, he took a careful survey of the house.

It was one of those solid type of houses built fifty or sixty years ago, when it was probably occupied by some City merchant. At the present moment it was in darkness, save for a light which shone from the window of a room to the right of the hall. Mark concluded that the three men were closeted in that room.

The blind had been drawn down, but there was a narrow space at the bottom through which he thought he could just peep. He wanted to get a glimpse of the room, and so learn what was going on.

With a hasty glance up and down the road, he slipped through the gateway. Moving as cautiously as if he were treading upon eggs, he stole towards the window, which, as in the case of many old houses, was quite six feet from the ground.

Straight beneath it was an iron grating, covering a small area which gave light to the window of a basement-room.

Mark stepped on to the grating, gripped the stone sill above, and raised himself on tiptoe. He had almost succeeded in getting a peep into the room, when there was a crash beneath him that startled him out of his wits.

As suddenly as if the earth had opened, the grating gave way under his feet, falling from the inside as if it was hinged, like a trapdoor.

For one brief second Mark hung suspended from the window-sill by his

finger-tips, then dropped straight down into the area.

He alighted with a jar that seemed to make his teeth rattle. Before he had a chance of recovering himself, an arm was stretched out from the area window, and he was hauled bodily into the room.

There, in the darkness of the basement, he found himself in the grip of the big black-bearded man whom he had traced to the house with the two others.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. A Curious Prison.

FOLLOWING the first shock of surprise came the thought that he was trapped. All too late, he perceived the mistake into which he had fallen. It was plain now that he had been recognised when he slipped into the doorway, and the men were aware all along that they were followed.

The big man dragged him roughly across the floor, which seemed to be lumbered with bulky packages. He threw open the door.

"Hi, there! Ralstone—Meaden!" he called out. "Come down here, the pair of you!"

The basement stairs creaked, and the two others descended. Ralstone, the thin, bottle-shouldered man, came first. He brought down a light, which he held above his head as he surveyed Mark with a vindictive scowl. Behind him, a malignant grin on his pasty face, stood the hunchback.

"Close the grating and shut the window," ordered the black-bearded man. "Be quick about it. We have little enough time to spare, and must decide what to do with this meddling young cub."

Ralstone put down the light and stepped out into the area. The grating was raised, and Mark heard a click, as if it fastened with a spring lock. The window was pulled down, the shutters closed, and a heavy swing bar placed across them. The bar was fastened with a padlock, making the room as secure as a prison.

These precautions taken, the big man pushed Mark roughly aside, and signed to his two companions. All three left the room together. The hunchback glanced back over his shoulder as he passed out, a menacing grin on his evil face. The door was locked, and Mark was shut up in the underground chamber without a chance of escape.

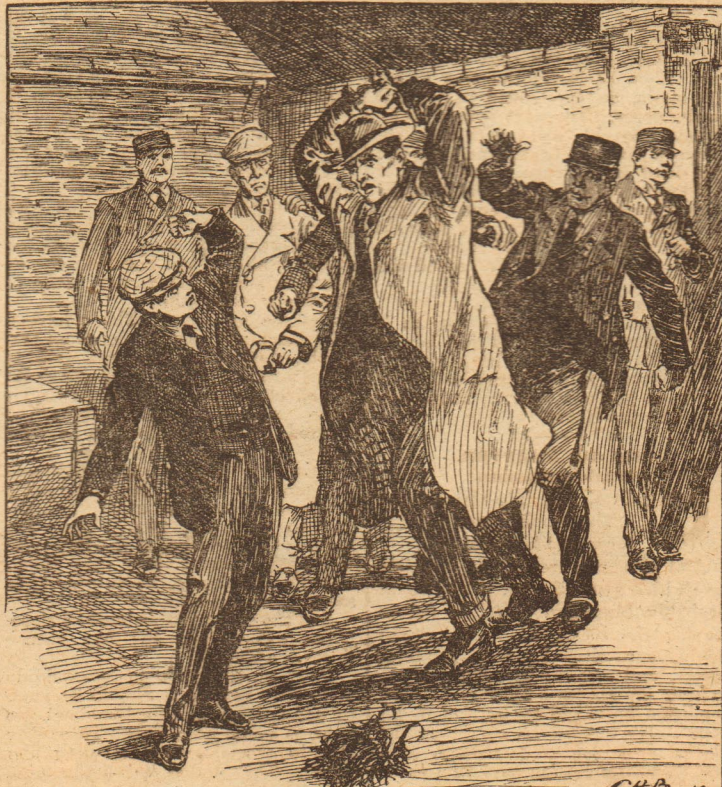
His position, as he well knew, was a serious one. It was clear that he had fallen into the hands of a dangerous gang—men who were engaged upon some unlawful undertaking, concerning which it was of the utmost importance that they should preserve secrecy. For this reason they would not hesitate to take strong measures with anyone whom they found spying on their movements.

They had not removed the lamp when they went out, and by its light Mark was able to take a survey of the room. What he saw was a surprise to him. Even in his fear for himself, he was struck with wonder on beholding the contents of this underground chamber.

The place was crammed with all sorts of valuable and costly articles, which seemed to have come from almost every part of the world. Magnificent furs and sables, superb Oriental rugs, ivory, lace, and a vast lot of other valuable stuff lay piled in heaps upon the bare floor. In addition, there were several large packing-cases, some of which had been already prised open, as well as a huge pile of chests, bales, crates, and packages of every description. No gang of burglars—no ordinary burglars, at least—could have made such a haul as this, not even if they committed twenty robberies.

While Mark was wondering where all these valuable goods came from, he heard a noise in the passage outside which brought his fears for himself crowding back. It was a sound as if something heavy was being pushed or dragged towards the door of the room. He kept his eyes fixed on the door, not knowing what to expect, or what fate was in store for him.

The door was thrown open, and a weird-looking object was pushed into the room. It was a huge, hideous, grinning idol of Hindoo or Chinese work, squatted cross-legged on a low pedestal. The eyes, which had probably been composed of lustrous jewels, had been removed, leaving only the hollow sockets. How such a thing had come into the possession of these men, or to what use they intended to put it, Mark could not imagine.



The prisoner caught sight of Mark. With a fierce cry he sprang forward, raising his hands above his head as if to beat the young fellow to the ground with his handcuffs.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

On the latter point he was not left long in doubt. The black-bearded man, whose name was Calder, took hold of him roughly, and dragged him towards the idol. Touching a spring at the back, a sort of concealed door flew open, revealing a black cavity, the interior of the idol being hollow.

Into this cavity Mark was thrust, forced into it mercilessly by Calder, and the door closed behind him with a snap.

The sensation of finding himself shut up in this cramped, stuffy space was almost stifling. The interior of the idol barely allowed him room to stand upright. How long he was to be kept confined in this strange prison he could not tell, but for the present it left him without the slightest hope of escape.

Looking out of the eye-holes he saw Calder talking to the hunchback. The latter nodded his head by way of reply, grinning in his evil manner as he did so. Then, with a glance towards the idol, where he could see Mark's eyes watching them, he took out a revolver and placed it in readiness on the mantelpiece. Mark concluded that the hunchback was to remain on guard in the room, the two others having business elsewhere.

This proved to be the case. Calder and Ralstone quitted the room, and presently Mark heard the throbbing of the motor-car outside. The two men were evidently about to start off upon some secret expedition.

No sooner were they gone than the hunchback prepared to make himself comfortable for the night. He lighted a fire in the grate, for the weather was chilly, and placed a pile of rugs before it. Then he brought in his supper, together with a black, square bottle, and squatted down to enjoy his meal.

He sat with his face towards Mark, who still watched him from the eye-holes. The deformed creature seemed to take a malicious delight in grinning hideously at the lad and taunting him in every way.

"Nice and snug in there—eh?" he chuckled. "Sleep as well, d'yo think, as if you were at home in your own bed? Wait till the morning, though. Oh, we'll make you snug enough then, my lad! We'll teach you to play the spy again, won't we, though?"

This sort of thing was trying enough to bear, but when Mark saw the spiteful little wretch apply himself again and again to the bottle, he began to fear that he might proceed to more dangerous tricks. And so the hunchback did.

He twisted himself round suddenly, snatched up the stump of a poker from the hearth, and thrust it into the fire. Then he cocked his eye at Mark with an evil glitter.

When the tip of the poker was red-hot, he pulled it out, and hurried across to the idol. Mark saw him coming, and squeezed himself down just in time, for the fiendish creature jumped on the pedestal and tried to jab at him through the eye-holes.

"Ha! You'll come prying here, will you?" he shrieked. "I'll brand you, you cub. I'll leave you no eyes to spy with again. I'll—I'll—"

The half-drunken little wretch hopped about on the pedestal, shrieking and snarling, and vainly trying to reach Mark with the red-hot poker. In desperation, Mark pressed with all his might against the back of the idol, striving to force the door open. It resisted all his efforts.

The hunchback retired and thrust the poker into the fire again. Every time Mark ventured to peep out, the little wretch jumped up and made as though he would renew the attempt, chuckling maliciously when he saw how quickly the lad's eyes disappeared.

In this way he kept Mark on tenterhooks for nearly an hour. At the end of that time he seemed to grow tired of the sport, curled himself up on the rugs before the fire, and dozed for a while.

Even then Mark did not dare to relax his watchfulness. In his cramped position, sleep was out of the question; but it was fear of the hunchback, and of the diabolical trick he might play him if he caught him off his guard, that kept him on the alert all through the night.

In the early morning, when a faint streak of light was beginning to filter through the shutters, Mark heard the toot, toot of the motor-car on the road outside. It seemed to be a signal, for the hunchback sprang up at once and hurried from the room. Calder and Ralstone had evidently returned from their midnight expedition.

A minute or two later they came clattering down the basement stairs like men in a desperate hurry. The shutters were thrown open, the window raised, and the grating out-

side lowered. Then came the crunch of heavy wheels, and a van or dray drew up near the area.

Mark guessed what it meant. Fresh goods had arrived—the plunder of the night.

Peeping out through the eye-holes, he looked on in wonder as package after package was lowered into the area and hauled in through the window. Calder and Ralstone worked hard at the task. In a very short time the van was unloaded, and a fresh pile of stuff added to that which the room already contained.

No sooner was this done than the grating was raised, and the window and shutters fastened as before. Not until then did the men appear to think themselves safe.

"All's snug now," said Calder, looking round. "We've got the stuff safely housed. Not a bad night's work, either."

Here he caught sight of Mark watching them from the idol. In his hurry to get the plunder stored he appeared to have forgotten the lad; but now a black, threatening look came into his face as he observed him. He called out to Meaden, who had remained upstairs, and the hunchback hurried down to join them.

The three of them talked together in low tones, or, rather, Meaden and Ralstone listened while Calder impressed something upon them.

Their next move was to release Mark from the idol. Calder dragged him out with his own hands, and flung him down on the pile of rugs which had formed the hunchback's couch.

"Lie there, you young cub!" he said. "If you so much as squeal or utter a sound, I'll throttle you on the spot."

With that they took away the lamp and went out, locking the door behind them. Though it was broad daylight outside, the room was left in darkness, save for the feeble light which filtered through the closed shutters.

Thankful to be able to move his cramped limbs, Mark stretched himself full-length upon the rugs. As he did so, he heard a clatter of plates in a room at the back, and concluded that Calder and his companions were having breakfast.

Although he felt hungry himself, and desperately thirsty into the bargain, he gave little thought to either at the moment. His mind was busy with all sorts of schemes for making his escape. He must contrive to get out of this place somehow.

But how? If he attempted to raise an outcry in the hope of attracting the attention of anyone passing the house, he had little doubt that Calder would rush in and carry out his threat of strangling him.

While he was still debating the question, Meaden came back into the room with a mug of coffee in his hand, which he offered to Mark. As the latter looked up at him, he saw an evil glitter in the hunchback's eye, which warned him to be on his guard—in fact, the little wretch turned away to hide a cunning smile.

Instead of gulping down the coffee, as he would willingly have done, Mark only just put his lips to it. One sip was enough. It was drugged.

Quick as lightning he emptied the whole lot on to the rugs where he lay. Then he raised the mug to his lips again, and pretended to drain it to the dregs. The next second he let it fall from his hand with a crash, dropped heavily back, and lay like one dead on the rugs.

The hunchback gave a kind of whoop when he turned and saw him in this position. The whoop brought Calder hurrying into the room.

"Has he swallowed it?" asked the latter.

"Every drop."

"Good! He's as safe now as if there wasn't a breath of life left in him. He won't stir before night."

"What will you do with him then?"

"Take him out with us, and chuck him into the river!"

THE 4th CHAPTER. Mark's Escape.

"**C**HUCK him into the river!" The words kept surging through Mark's brain.

And this was really the terrible fate which awaited him. They would probably bind and gag him before leaving the house, so as to make doubly sure that he was in their power, and prevent all chance of his raising an alarm. In this helpless condition he would be hurried to his doom. He fancied he could see the black, swiftly-flowing stream, and feel its eddies closing over him as he was flung into it.

Left alone in the darkened room once more, he tried hard to think out some way of escape. He dared not

leave his position on the rugs, lest one of the three should enter suddenly and surprise him. He was compelled to lie there without being able to make the slightest attempt to help himself.

Once, when he had almost made up his mind to crawl across to the door on hands and knees, he only saved himself from discovery in the nick of time. Calder came back into the room with a candle in his hand. He crossed over to where Mark lay, held down the light, and peered closely into his face.

Twice he passed the light slowly before his eyes. Mark scarcely dared to breathe. The quiver of an eyelid would have betrayed him. He stood the ordeal, though, feigning to be insensible to all around him.

Calder grunted in a satisfied sort of way and withdrew from the room. The incident set Mark thinking. These men were fearful lest he should discover their secret. They intended to do away with him that very night in the manner proposed, so as to prevent the possibility of his betraying them.

What was the nature of this secret? That was the question which he set his wits to work upon, striving to solve it from the scanty facts that had come to his knowledge.

The river! Here was a clue, though a meagre one, for that the men had something to do with the river was certain. Then came the question of the white mice. For what were they required? That was the most puzzling point in the whole case.

And yet—yet—white mice! Surely he had read somewhere of these creatures being used for some special purpose? He was sure of it. Yet, strive as he might, he could not recall what that purpose was.

His cogitations were cut short at this point by the three men entering the room again. They brought in a lamp, and set about unpacking some of the cases.

Squinting from under his closed eyelids, Mark watched them as they dragged out one costly article after another, held it up for inspection, and then cast it aside on the floor. They hardly troubled to throw a glance in his direction, believing that the drug had taken its effect, and that a pistol might be discharged close to his ears without awakening him.

Lying there in seeming insensibility, he listened eagerly to the scraps of conversation that fell from them. He could make little of what they said, however. There was frequent mention of the river, it is true; also of the Thames Police, and of a place called Bunker's Wharf. One word— or portion of a word—cropped up more than once, and it struck him as odd. It was "sub"—"sub"—

When they had finished unpacking the cases, Mark hoped that they would retire from the room, for their very presence made him feel uncomfortable. In this, however, he was disappointed. Another and even more trying ordeal was in store for him. It was only his grit, his plucky determination not to betray himself that brought him safely through it.

For some reason, Calder fetched down a huge dog from the yard at the back. He held the brute on a leash, and allowed it to sniff at Mark, nosing him all over as he lay there on the rugs. It took all Mark's strength of will to remain still. The impulse to twist himself away from under that sniffing nozzle was almost irresistible. His very flesh seemed to creep whenever the brute touched him.

At last Calder, as if satisfied with the experiment, pulled the dog away, and dragged him, growling, from the room. Ralstone and Meaden followed them out, and Mark was able to breathe freely again.

Yet not for long. The wretched hunchback was back in the room presently, stealing in on tiptoe as if to make sure that Mark was really under the effects of the drug. Then Calder came in to fetch something he wanted, locking the door as he went out.

This sort of thing continued throughout the day. Mark had not a chance of getting free, even if he knew how to make his escape from the house. One or other of the three was constantly coming into the room, casually glancing at him in passing to see if he had stirred.

And the day was drawing to a close. Night was coming on; and then—then—the river!

He tried to think what he would do at the last moment. Should he jump up and make a dash for the door? He knew it would be useless. They were sure to overtake him and drag him back. They would be all the more enraged, too, when they discovered the trick he had played them.

Once more his thoughts turned to the secret of these men and the

mystery of the white mice. He puzzled over the matter, trying to piece together the few items he had learned. There was the river, Bunker's Wharf, the word "sub," and the—

Suddenly, like a flash, the meaning of it all broke in upon him. White mice! Yes, he had it now. Taken in connection with the word "sub," he saw for what purpose they were required. He had made a surprising, an astounding discovery.

Thrilled with excitement at having found the clue to the mystery, he raised his head from the rugs and looked around him. The room was almost in pitch darkness by this time, for daylight was rapidly fading.

Oh, if he could only make his way out from here! The tale he had to tell would set London ringing.

Little enough time remained to him, too. If he was to escape at all, the attempt must be made quickly. In another few hours he would be dragged off to the river.

Just then, while he was thinking desperately hard to hit upon some plan, he heard the gate leading from the road clang. The sound made him start. He held his breath and listened.

Footsteps approached the house, followed by a knock at the hall door. A wild hope sprang up within Mark. He fancied it might be the police. But no; he heard Calder's deep voice as he opened the door, and the tones were those of welcome.

Two or three other men appeared to have arrived at the house. The whole party entered the room overhead, where Mark heard them trampling about and moving chairs. Then someone came quickly down the basement stairs, and there was a jingling of glasses as he went up again.

Mark guessed what it meant. The party upstairs were about to enjoy themselves. Probably they would remain drinking in the room overhead until it was time to start off for the river.

Now was his chance. He raised his head and listened breathlessly for a moment or two. There were sounds of jollity overhead, but down here in the basement all was still as the grave. He had the lower part of the house entirely to himself.

He got up and stole across to the door. He groped for the lock, and a thrill of joy went through him as his hand encountered it. It was one of those old-fashioned box-locks, and all he had to do was to unscrew the socket with his knife in order to release the bolt.

Not daring to strike a light, although he had matches in his pocket, he set to work in the dark. The screws were rusty, and it was a difficult job to get them out. It took him some time to complete the task, but at last he was able to remove the socket and pull the door open.

Once in the passage outside, his first care was to close the door and wedge it with a scrap of wood. No one in passing would notice anything wrong, or guess that the lock had been tampered with. In this way he hoped to gain more time in making his escape.

He paused for a moment to consider his next step. Everything now depended on caution. To climb the basement stairs, no matter how gingerly he might tread, would be folly, for he might run right into the arms of one of the party above. No; he must contrive to get out in some other way.

Turning towards the back of the house he groped along the dark passage, every second dreading to hear the opening of a door overhead. He came to the kitchen, into which he peeped, and saw that the window was heavily barred. There was no chance of escape in that direction.

The passage ended in a small door, and to his relief he found that the key was in the lock. He turned it cautiously, and opened the door. Before him was a short flight of stone steps leading up into the yard.

The very fact of feeling the cool night air blowing in upon his face thrilled him with joy. His foot was upon the first step; in another second or two—Oh, horror!

A black, threatening shape suddenly appeared at the top of the steps, and there was a low rumbling growl. A chill of dismay smote to Mark's heart.

The dog!

The great brute barred the way. Mark's heart went down to his boots. If he ventured out he ran a fair chance of being torn to pieces, or else the dog would raise such a noise as would bring the whole party rushing down to see what was wrong.

He was in a desperate fix. What was he to do?

He slipped back into the passage and closed the door gently. For a while he stood there in the dark, trying hard to think of some plan for scaring the brute away. Then he had a sort of inspiration.

By chance he happened to have in his pocket a small bottle with a stick of phosphorus, which he often used at home. That gave him an idea.

He knew that dogs, even such great brutes as this, are easily frightened by anything they do not understand. For this reason, as he was well aware, they cower and whine when they see what they think to be a ghost.

In an instant his mind was made up. He determined to play the ghost himself.

He smeared his face and hands with the phosphorus until they glowed in a ghastly manner. Then he slipped back to the kitchen, picked up a tablecloth, and wrapped it around him. He could well imagine that he must have looked an awful sight.

Softly opening the door at the end of the passage, he stepped out. As he mounted the steps one by one the dog caught sight of his glowing face and ghostly figure. The brute gave a whine of fear, turned tail on the instant, and scurried off into his kennel.

Mark stalked slowly past him though his heart was in his mouth all the time. The next minute he was clear of the yard.

Flinging off the tablecloth, he made for the wall at the back of the grounds. He only just waited to try and rub the phosphorus off his face and hands, then he clambered over and set out at full speed for home.

THE 5th CHAPTER.

Mark Returns to His Home.

IN the little bird-shop that same evening old Joe Tacker was listening with a half-distracted air to a big, burly man in uniform. The straight-peaked cap and the folded cape he carried on his arm showed that he belonged to the Thames Police. It was Sergeant Graydon, of the river force, who came from the same part of the country as the old man himself.

In London they had been friends and neighbours for years. The sergeant had dropped in for a chat on his way to night duty.

Old Joe was far too worried to fix his attention on what the worthy sergeant was saying. He hardly heard a word of it. He moved about the little shop, aimlessly fingering one cage after another, and looking as if he did not know whether he was on his head or his heels.

"I can't think what's happened to the lad," he kept on saying. "I've been out hunting for him all day. There's not a trace of him anywhere."

"Where did you send him?"

"To pay a small bill. I went to the place myself this afternoon. I was told he had been there, and started for home between seven and eight last night. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What could have become of him?"

"Oh, Mark is sure to turn up all right," replied the sergeant. "Don't worry about that. He's a sharp lad and well able to take care of himself. He's gone off on a bit of a frolic somewhere."

"It isn't like him to do that."

"You never can say. Boys will be boys, you know. But as I was telling you just now, these river robberies are the most puzzling thing that ever happened. They're a mystery to us. We can't make out how they're done. Our boats patrol the river every night, keeping a sharp look-out. Nothing suspicious is noticed. Next morning we are surprised to hear that a barge or warehouse has been broken into and plundered, and a lot of valuable stuff carried off. The thing must have been done under our very noses, as it were."

"Strange—very strange," murmured Old Joe, thinking of something else all the time.

"How the thieves manage to get away without being seen is the queer part of it," continued the sergeant. "A boat loaded with a heavy pile of stuff like that would make slow headway, and would be sure to be noticed before it could reach the shore."

"I suppose so," assented Old Joe. "They must have hit upon some very clever dodge, these river pirates, something entirely out of the common. They carry out the robberies in a way that gives us little chance of catching them. Upon my word, I sometimes think they must swoop down in an airship or something of the kind!"

"No; that's not how they manage it," came a voice from the door.

The sergeant and Old Joe started round; and there in the doorway stood Mark. Both gave a cry when they saw him, and for the first few seconds could only stare at him as if he were a ghost.

And a ghost he looked like in some ways. He was without a hat, his hair was all ruffled, and there were strange luminous patches on his face and hands.

He laughed a little at their surprised looks, and that brought Old Joe to himself. His kindly old face lighted up with relief at finding that the lad had come back safe and sound.

"Why, bless me, Mark!" he cried. "Why, you young scamp, what have you been up to?"

"I have had an adventure, a surprising adventure," replied Mark. "I was trapped by three men whom I had followed home."

"What made you follow them?" asked the sergeant.

"I'll tell you all about it later on. They got hold of me, and shut me up in an underground room. I had a terrible night of it, as you will understand when I tell you what I went through."

"In the morning they tried to drug me. I baffled them in that, though they fancied they had succeeded right enough. I had to lie there all day, pretending to be dead to all that was going on around me."

"Once they brought down a huge dog, and allowed the brute to sniff at me. That was a terrible time. I don't know how I stood it, but I did. I had not a chance of trying to escape until the evening. Then, when some others arrived at the house, and the whole party were drinking in a room overhead, I got out by unscrewing the socket of the lock."

"Good lad!" put in the sergeant. "I made my way to the back and opened the door at the end of the passage. There was a short flight of steps leading up into the yard."

"I was just about to spring up the steps, when the great brute of a dog appeared at the top and growled down at me. I had forgotten all about him."

"What did you do?" asked the sergeant.

"Scared him away by smearing my face and hands with a bit of phosphorus I happened to have with me, and playing the ghost. That is how I got free."

"But who were these men you talk of?" asked Old Joe. "You haven't told us that yet."

"That's where the surprising part of it comes in. One of them was the big black-bearded man who came here the other evening."

"To buy the white mice?" "Yes. You remember we wondered what on earth he wanted them for. Well, I know now."

"You do, lad?" cried Old Joe.

"I do," replied Mark, his eyes sparkling. "It's the most surprising thing you ever heard of. And, sergeant," he added, turning to the burly Thames policeman, "it's a matter that will interest you."

"In what way?" asked the sergeant.

"Well, I suppose you want to find out all about those river robberies, and how the thing was worked?"

"I should think so!"

"I can tell you, then; or, at any rate, I can show you a way of finding out for yourself."

"What!" cried the sergeant. "You can put us on the track, can you? You have got hold of a clue, you young scamp, have you?"

"I have; and an important one, too. The secret lies at a place called Bunker's Wharf."

"Bunker's Wharf! I've heard of it, but can't say exactly where it is. Somewhere down near the Marshes, I believe."

"We must make for it at once. There is not a moment to be lost, or they may get there before us. If they do, it will be too late. We would only find the place empty."

"All right!" cried the sergeant, who saw his chance and was in almost as great a hurry to be off as Mark himself. "Come along, lad. I've got the police-boat waiting."

They hurried out of the shop, leaving Old Joe staring blankly after them, and wondering if he had not been dreaming during the last few minutes.

THE 6th CHAPTER.
A Great Discovery.

ON the way to the riverside Sergeant Graydon tried to draw Mark out, in order to discover exactly what he had learned.

Mark kept his own counsel, however. He would not give his secret away yet.

"I may be right, or I may be wrong," was all he would say. "I can't tell for certain until we reach Bunker's Wharf. The chances are that I am right, though."

They found the police-boat waiting at the slip. They embarked at once, and dropped swiftly down the stream with the ebb tide. All the four river police who manned the boat gave way with a will, for Sergeant Graydon let them know there was important business on hand.

As he looked over the side and gazed down at the murky stream Mark could not help recalling what he had heard in the morning while a prisoner in the underground room, and how Calder had declared that he would chuck him into the river that night. He shuddered when he thought what his fate might have been.

The prospect of bringing the river thieves to justice, however, more than compensated him for all he had suffered at their hands. Sergeant Graydon, too, was equally keen on clearing up the mystery which had so long baffled the members of the Thames Police.

"We're making for a place called Bunker's Wharf," he said to his men. "Any of you know where it is?"

They rested on their oars for a moment, consulted together, and then shook their heads.

"It won't do to overshoot it," continued the sergeant. "We must get directions from some of the river men. Ahoy, there!" he called out to a passing tug-boat, which was puffing up the river with a couple of barges in tow. "Where's Bunker's Wharf?"

"Down by the Marshes!" was shouted back. "Opposite the Isle of Dogs."

"I was right, you see," said the sergeant to Mark. "Give way, men. You'll have to put your backs into it, for we've a good long stretch before us, and must get there in a hurry."

The boat shot away down the river. The tide being in their favour, and with four strong fellows at the oars, they made rapid progress. Rotherhithe was reached and passed, and then they entered on the long curve which sweeps round the Isle of Dogs.

Sergeant Graydon tried again to draw Mark out, questioning him closely as to what he knew. Mark put him off, merely telling him to wait and see. He felt sure he had hit on the right solution of the mystery. He could not help picturing the sergeant's astonishment when they reached Bunker's Wharf and found what was lying there. He felt convinced Sergeant Graydon would have one of the biggest surprises of his life.

On they swept through the darkness, picking their way in and out of the river traffic, passing tugboats, barges, and steamers which were groping their way up to the London Docks. There was silence now in the boat. Not a word was spoken. All were too intent upon what lay before them.

Deptford was passed. Swiftly as they shot on down the stream, it was all too slow for Mark. He dreaded lest Calder and his companions should have discovered his escape, and arrive at Bunker's Wharf before them.

When the twinkle of lights on shore showed that they were nearing Greenwich, his excitement almost got the better of him. They were approaching their destination at last. It was down here somewhere that they would find Bunker's Wharf; and, for all he knew, danger might await them there.

They were abreast of Greenwich lights now, and edged their way closer to shore. They swept on until the lights began to tail off behind. The blackness ahead told that they were nearing the lonely Marshes.

Sergeant Graydon at this point gave a whispered order to slow down. Bunker's Wharf must be somewhere near at hand, and it was necessary to use caution. He kept a sharp lookout on the shore side, questioning any stray boatman they passed, until at last the place was pointed out to them.

They pulled in towards it. Once in the shadow of the shore they glided silently along, the oars scarcely dipping into the water. The next minute they were abreast of the wharf.

From what they could see of it, it appeared to be a deserted-looking place, enclosed on three sides by high walls. The walls shut it off completely from its surroundings. A few old anchors, buoys, and chains were lying about, but there was no sign of any business having been done. The

only thing that looked anyway new was a long, low shed, the near end of which was flush with the river. There appeared to be no entrance to it from the water-side, but this did not seem to surprise Mark, who had his own theory as to what that shed contained.

The boat ranged alongside the wharf, and there came to a standstill. Sergeant Graydon rose, placed his hands on the coping above him, and prepared to clamber up. Mark made ready to follow.

Suddenly the sergeant ducked his head, dropped back on his seat, and pulled Mark down with him.

"Wait!" he whispered. "There's someone just leaving the shed. We mustn't let him see us."

They caught a sound as if the man was locking up the shed, and then they heard him walk away. The sergeant was up again in an instant. Mark jumped to his feet also, tingling with excitement.

Bringing their eyes to a level with the coping, they peeped over. They saw the man, who appeared to be a caretaker, moving towards the gateway which led out on to the road. He was carrying a lantern, and stopped to light his pipe, never dreaming that watchful eyes were observing his every movement.

"Now's our chance!" whispered the sergeant. "Here, Kellar," he went on, addressing one of his men,

was nothing more than a sort of miniature dock, to which the water was admitted through some concealed entrance below the surface of the river.

"Look!" cried Mark, pointing eagerly to a long, dark object floating in the water.

The sergeant did look; and, as Mark had surmised, what he saw constituted one of the biggest surprises he ever had in his life. There, just showing above the surface, was a queer-looking craft, shaped like a cigar, and built of some shining metal. It was secured by ropes to the narrow foot-space on either side of the shed.

"Great Scott!" cried the sergeant, carried out of himself, and almost dropping the lantern in his astonishment. "A submarine!"

THE 7th CHAPTER.
The Mystery is Solved.

A SUBMARINE it was, true enough. It was wonderfully constructed, with a sort of raised platform in the centre. This platform, as was afterwards found, could be moved at will, so as to allow bulky packages to be lowered into the interior.

For a long time Sergeant Graydon gazed at the strange-looking craft. It almost seemed as if he could not find words to express himself.



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"you come with us. The rest of you remain in the boat."

The sergeant, Mark, and the policeman named Kellar scrambled up over the coping and stood erect. They stole cautiously upon the man, who was so occupied in lighting his pipe that he did not hear them approach. The first intimation he had of their presence was when he was seized from behind, and found his arms pinioned on either side.

He was so utterly taken by surprise that the pipe dropped from his mouth and was shattered on the ground. He glanced stupidly from right to left, and when he saw that he was in the hands of the Thames Police his face darkened.

"Here, what do you want?" he growled. "Leave go! What right have you here on private property?"

The only answer he received was to have a pair of handcuffs slipped over his wrists. Mark noticed that he glanced back anxiously over his shoulder towards the shed. He thought he knew what that look meant, and plucked Sergeant Graydon by the sleeve.

"Never mind him," he whispered. "He's only a tool. The shed! The shed! Get the key and bring the lantern."

The sergeant searched the man for the key. Having got it, he relieved him of the lantern, left him in custody of Kellar, and proceeded with Mark towards the shed.

They unlocked the door and entered. The sergeant stopped short in surprise, for the lantern light gleamed on the smooth surface of water at his feet. The shed, in fact,

"Ay!" he said, at length. "I see now how the robberies were worked. They slipped out at night-time under water in this craft of theirs, and bobbed up alongside a barge or warehouse. Then, when they had secured the plunder, they sank out of sight again. No wonder we could never catch a glimpse of them. But how on earth did you know the thing was here, Mark?"

"The white mice first put me on the track."

"The white mice!"

"Yes. A man called at our place the other evening, driving up to the shop in a motor-car. He asked for three pairs of white mice. I suspected that he wanted them for some queer purpose. You know they always carry white mice on submarines, because they are the first to feel the effects of the poisonous gases. Whenever there is an escape of such gases, they give warning by scampering about their cage."

Mark rapidly filled up the blanks of the story he had told in his uncle's shop. He gave a full description of Calder, of Ralstone, and the hunchback Meaden; also of the house where they were to be found.

"Come along," said Sergeant Graydon, not a little excited by these particulars. "We have not a moment to lose. I'll send a wire to Scotland Yard at once. If the people there are quick, they may nab the whole gang at the house."

They hurried from the shed for this purpose. Scarcely had they emerged from it, however, than Mark stopped short and held up a warning hand. His quick ear had

caught the sound of a motor-car racing along the road in the direction of the wharf.

"Too late!" he cried. "Here they come!"

"Who?" asked the sergeant.

"Calder and the rest of them. Don't you hear the motor-car tearing along the road? It is sure to be the same men. They must have discovered my escape and set off for the wharf at once."

"We'll be ready for them, then." Sergeant Graydon quickly made his arrangements. The man they had already captured was locked into the shed, so as to be out of the way. Then the sergeant sent Kellar to call up three other men from the boat.

They posted themselves on either side of the gateway, and waited there until the motor-car dashed up. Someone sprang from it almost before it had come to a standstill, and commenced to thunder at the gate.

Sergeant Graydon proceeded to open it, taking care not to expose himself as he did so. He wanted the men to walk blindly into the trap.

Calder and Ralstone entered. No sooner were they inside than the gate was closed with a bang, and they were seized by the police.

Ralstone was captured easily enough, but it was a different matter in the case of Calder. He was not the man to submit tamely to arrest. Though taken by surprise, he fought fiercely to free himself. A desperate struggle followed, during which his black beard—which was false, as Mark had surmised—was torn off.

It took three of the police to bring him to the ground. Even then he struggled to his feet again, and for a moment Mark feared that he would break away from his captors. They overpowered him at last, however, and he was safely handcuffed.

The excitement was not over yet, as it proved, and Mark narrowly escaped injury at the last moment.

Calder stood there surrounded by the police, panting, gasping, and glaring savagely around him.

It was then that he caught sight of Mark. The fact of seeing the lad standing there, a witness to his capture, seemed to drive him to a perfect frenzy of rage. He knew that Mark had outwitted them and betrayed them to the police.

With a fierce cry he sprang forward, raising his hands above his head as if to beat the young fellow to the ground with his handcuffs. So quickly was it done that he very nearly succeeded in reaching Mark. It was all the police could do to drag him back and hold him in restraint.

In the meantime, the driver of the motor-car, hearing the scuffle inside, must have guessed what was taking place, for he drove off before the police could get out and lay hands on him.

"He's got the start of us," Sergeant Graydon said to Mark. "He'll dash straight back to the house and warn the others. Come along, my lad! We may be able to forestall him yet, with the help of the telephone."

Leaving the prisoners in the charge of his men he hurried away with Mark to the nearest police-station. There he got on the telephone, and rang up Scotland Yard. To make doubly sure, he also sent a message to the police in the suburb where the house was situated, urging them to take instant action.

This they did. A sufficient force was despatched to the house in hot haste. The motor-car had already arrived there, and Meaden was captured just as he was about to step into it. Three others also fell into the hands of the police, men who proved to belong to the same gang, together with all the plunder stored in the underground room.

"That little wretch of a hunchback had the brains of the whole party," Sergeant Graydon told Mark afterwards. "A cleverer rogue does not exist. It was he who hit upon the idea of using a submarine to plunder the barges and warehouses. Well, well! Who'd have thought that such a craft was moving about under the waters of the Thames without anyone being a bit the wiser?"

Sergeant Graydon got all the official credit for the capture, of course, but he did full justice to Mark for the smart way in which he had acted.

"You've got good cause to be proud of that lad," he told Old Joe privately. "He's plenty of brains in his head, and knows how to use them, too. He'll get on in the world, you'll see."

And Sergeant Graydon proved to be right.

THE END.

"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!" This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

YOUR DOG.

And How to Take Care of Him.

At the present day the dog is without a doubt the favourite pet, companion, and guardian of man, and so has it been from the most remote times.

As readers are always asking questions about their pets, I am sure a few tips will not be amiss.

The dog can hardly be compared with a child, but, nevertheless, the animal is subject to complaints or illnesses just as an infant has measles, ringworm, colds, and so on.

In the case of an animal, it is for you to find out what it is suffering from, because, unlike a child, it cannot say where or what the pain is. But you can, however, discover what the malady is by watching the signs the dog makes.

Now, in buying a dog, it is advisable to purchase a pup, and to know exactly what breed you are getting. Do not be afraid to pay a fair sum, and then you will not afterwards feel that you have got something not worth keeping. By having the animal practically from its birth, you will be able

to teach it cleanliness.

And, above all, you will be able to master the animal; whereas, in buying a dog, say, a year or two years old, it is likely to viciously attack you at any time, neither can it be trusted with children.

If you need a dog for the house, get something of the smaller breeds, because a large animal is likely to get in the way, and is liable to smell rather unpleasantly, simply owing to not having sufficient air supplied to its body. It is absolutely out of place to keep a big dog shut up in the house. Another point worth mentioning is not to have a dog for indoors, and let it sleep in one night and be turned out the next.

Do not pamper your dog. Let it wait for its meals until you have finished yours, and do not let it climb about people, or sleep on cushions. Give it a box with a piece of carpet to sleep in, and, of course, do not put its bed in a draughty place.

Pups are very deceiving little chaps for a novice to buy, and by going to a live stock dealer he may palm you off with a nice fluffy little ball for perhaps half-a-crown or three shillings, telling you it is a thorough-bred animal, and what a grand dog he will turn out to be, etc. Later on, as the dog gets a month or two old, you will find that it is only a cross-breed and a duffer. It is a far better plan to seek out somebody, by introduction or otherwise, who keeps dogs for breeding purposes, and book an order.

(Another splendid dog article next Tuesday.)

A BOY'S SUNDAY,

And How It Is Best Spent.

It is surprising what a number of letters your Editor receives regarding Sunday, and how boys can best spend the day of rest. In these times, when Sunday golf, Sunday football, and Sunday amusements generally are so common, there is little wonder that boys should think over the matter carefully and write for advice to one whom they can trust.

On account of these many inquiries, your Editor has asked me to write a short article upon the subject. In the first place, I am sure every right-minded boy will be willing to give some part of his Sabbath to religious pursuits. The church or chapel, Sunday School or Bible-class should claim some part of every boy's Sunday. It is not for me to go deeply into the religious side of the matter, but I think you will all agree with me that the healthy-minded lad should be prepared to devote a portion of his Sabbath Day to prayer and praise.

From my point of view, I consider the following a capital programme for a Sunday: Morning, church or chapel; afternoon, a long, brisk walk or cycle run; evening, a quiet time spent at home, a visit to friends, or something of that sort.

I am not one of those narrow-minded people

who say that a boy should sit at home and read a book on a Sunday. It is the duty of each one of us to fit ourselves as best we may for the work of the week. To do this, some fresh air and exercise is necessary, and I do not think it is wrong to take this on a Sunday, for, goodness knows, there are not too many leisure hours in the working week.

Nor do I think it wrong to travel on a Sunday, and a boy who takes a train to some country place a few miles out of town and walks home, is none the worse for the trip.

It is certainly wrong and ungodly to play football on a Sunday, or to sit under a hedge and play cards, as I have seen many boys do. A quiet cycling spin can do no boy any harm, but it is ungentlemanly, at least, for a cyclist to get tearing through the country-side on a Sunday evening jangling his way with his bell through people going to or returning from church.

When next you are undecided what to do on a Sunday, rely upon the above remarks, upon your parents' wishes in the matter, and also upon your conscience. Conscience plays a very important part, and I am sure every boy has a very keen sense of right and wrong.

Sunday should be a day of refreshment, in which one may prepare oneself for good work during the week to follow.

THE END.

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT.

Our Helpful Series That Will Interest All Boys, Whether Scouts or Not.

In Fig. 2 I've drawn a page in your notebook with all the things I mentioned last week put in, just as you would jot them down as you came to them. I think that will explain it to you more clearly than a lot of words.

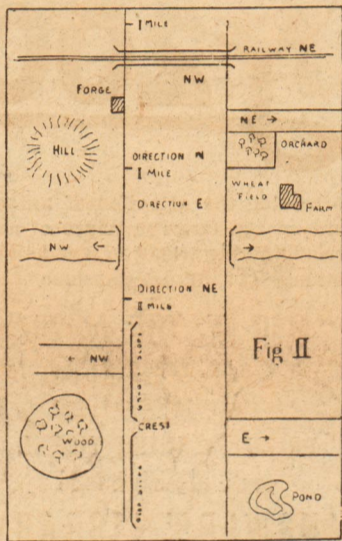
The Finished Map.

Now, when you have gone over the bit of road you are doing in this way, go back to headquarters, or home, and make your real map—the one you are going to show.

Take a good-sized sheet of paper. Settle what scale your map is going to be—say four inches to a mile, and take jolly good care that every mile you draw on that map takes up just four inches, however much or little it may have taken up in your notebook.

Put your north point in the top right-hand corner of the map, then you will get the direction of your roads right. For instance, if you have put down in your notebook that the road started north in the first place, then on the map you must start your road at the bottom of the map and draw it straight up towards the top until the direction changes.

For instance, if you have got it down that after a mile it turns north-east, then on your map you must



This is How You Put Down the Information in Your Notebook.

draw four inches of road going north, and then turn it towards the top right-hand corner of the map, and so on.

It is a little difficult to explain all this, but I think Fig. 3 will make it all quite clear to you. It shows you, too, how to put in the other roads and things.

That's the rough bones of your map. Now, there are all sorts of points you ought to report about the things you have drawn—the roads, rivers, railways, and so on. I'll tell you all about these next week.

Faintness.

Now and then you'll find that a chap will come over faint in the field.

Make him sit down on the ground, and put his head right down as far as he can get it between his knees. Make him sit like that till he feels fit again.

If he goes right off, lay him flat on his back and raise his legs slightly by putting something—a rolled-up coat does excellently—underneath his knees.

Loosen his collar, belt, and all tight clothing, and bathe his forehead with cold water.

In a case of faintness, you should always keep the chap's head low, because the blood has to a certain extent run out of his head, and you want to make it flow gently back.

Sometimes, though, it isn't faintness, but sunstroke.

You can easily tell the difference, because while in a case of faintness a fellow's face will be white and cold, in a case of sunstroke his face is flushed and red and his head hot.

This is because there is too much blood in the head. So if you think a chap has got a touch of the sun, lay him on his back in the shade, with his head propped well up.

If you can get some ice, put a lump of it on the nape of his neck. If not, use cold water or vinegar. Bathe his forehead, too, but the back of the neck is the important place.

If his hands get cold, rub and smack them briskly. If his body gets cold, put blankets on him.

These are all useful little things to know, and you may very likely get asked them in your First Aid tests.

The Scout and the Farmer.

Another poor chap wants advice. It is "Scotty" this time. He is patrol-leader of the Curlews, and got permission from a farmer for them to camp in his field.

Only "Scotty" didn't make it quite clear what he wanted to do, and he did not know that the farmer did not want him to light fires there.

So one afternoon when the Curlews were sitting snug and comfy at tea round the fire, down swooped the farmer in a rage, and cleared them off.

"I'm sorry I burnt a patch on his field," says "Scotty," "but I think he might have told me I mustn't light fires. And I want to get permission to use the field again, just to practise in. What ought a scout to do in a case like this?"

Well, "Scotty," I should say go to the farmer, tell him how sorry you are about it, and offer to do anything you can to give him a hand—

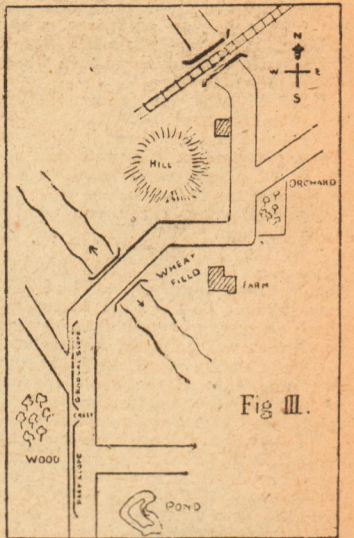


Fig. III.

This is the Finished Map Drawn from Fig. II.

carting root crops, mending hedges, anything your patrol can turn their hands to—and no doubt he'll be quite good friends again and let you overrun his fields as much as you like.

My chaps had a row with a farmer over much the same sort of thing, and we appeased his wrath by hedging and ditching one of his meadows, and he's been awfully decent to us ever since.

If any of you chaps are in any sort of fix, you won't forget to write and tell me about it, will you? I shall be only too glad to help you. If your question is a thing that will be likely to interest all scouts, I'll answer it through the paper. If not, enclose a stamped addressed envelope for a direct reply.

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"The Boy Who Never Had a Chance!"

This is the title of an Extra-Special, Complete Long Story that will appear Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Don't miss it!

By the Clever Author of "Sunken Millions," etc., etc.



Our Stirring New Poor Boy Serial.

FOR NEW READERS.

This is our superb new poor boy and railway story, in which you read of JACK POSTERN, otherwise "The Dodger," who, through lack of parents and home, has become a railway waif, hanging about stations, carrying bags, and doing any odd job to earn an honest penny. Mrs. BRISTOWE, the widow of an unscrupulous railway clerk, who lost his life under tragic circumstances. He was the accomplice of "RIP" KELLY, a real bad lot, who, with Bristowe's aid, attempts to rob the North Briton express of specie.

The Dodger is seized by Bristowe in a railway goods shed, and is convicted and sentenced to five years in a reformatory for loitering. While in the shed, however, Jack overhears a plot between Bristowe and Rip Kelly, and it is his intention to expose their villainy.

He escapes from the reformatory, and raises an alarm of the intended robbery, and Rip Kelly is captured with the specie in his bag.

Our young hero is offered a berth on the railway, and, there being few positions open to him at the time owing to his poor education, he becomes a van-boy.

He goes to live with Mrs. Bristowe (whose husband has since died), and is kindness itself to her—inducing the railway company to give her a stall at the station.

As time goes on Jack earns promotion, until he eventually has charge of a parcels office.

One day, however, an insured parcel is lost, and Jack, almost demented, goes in search of it. His quest takes him to a lonely moorland cottage, and there he falls into the clutches of Rip Kelly.

The Dodger receives fearful injuries in the wreck of the boat-train, and is not expected to live.

He recovers, however, and is sent by the railway authorities in search of the Duke of Dublin's daughter, who is missing. The girl is discovered.

Sir John Willet, the manager of the railway, blames Jack Postern for the lost parcel, and refuses to pay him the £1,000 for the recovery of the duke's daughter. Owing to this injustice and meanness, the Dodger claims the reward, and in consequence of this he is dismissed from the service, and Mrs. Bristowe is also removed.

This action causes a great stir among the railway workers, who set fire to the depot, and after the Dodger induces the men to accept the terms of the railway authorities.

Jack is taken back on the railway as traffic superintendent. There is a runaway excursion train, and the Dodger boards an empty passenger train, and sets off to meet the runaway in the opposite direction to which it is travelling. As soon as the excursion comes into view the ordinary train is reversed, and goes backwards.

Only a few yards now separate the two trains, and the panic-stricken passengers are hurling themselves from the doors.

And then a new fear suddenly seizes the Dodger.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Runaway Excursion.
(Continued from last week.)

THE Dodger saw the empty rolling-stock ahead creaking and bogging at the points. It is one thing to over-drive a train with trailing-stock; it is quite another to race it backwards, with the empty coaches ahead of the engine. In the one case the heavy locomotive may be trusted to keep the metals and negotiate their unevenness and irregularities, and to drag its load safely past difficulties. In the other it needs but a small imperfection in the lines to divert a light van or passenger coach and lead to a fearful wreck.

He dare not push her any more. "Lie down!" he sang out to his companion, and the man half-crouching, half-lying, obeyed. Jack took a firm grip on the handle of the cab and waited as inch by inch the runaway crept nearer, his disengaged hand upon the throttle. At the actual instant when the two engines appeared to meet, he threw open the throttle to its utmost capacity.

With a sudden jolt, a shock far

less than he had anticipated, the buffers touched. He saw the swinging doors of the excursion slammed to as the speed of the runaway was suddenly checked, whilst the empty train was shot still more rapidly ahead.

With delight he recognised that the force of impact had been divided between the two. Part of its energy had been expended in pushing the empty train on, and part in reducing the speed of the runaway. At once he commenced to shut off steam. When the empty train was being driven along by the momentum of the runaway, he gradually applied the brakes. They slowed down rapidly, until finally, after rattling over the home points at Calworth, he brought the train to rest just beyond the junction.

In a second the excited passengers swarmed from the excursion, whilst officials came rushing along the lines from the junction.

"Look after things here now, Mr. Thompson," the Dodger cried out to the station-master, as that individual approached. "Clear the line, and get these trains into a siding before the North Briton comes along. I want a light engine at once on the up local. Two wretched creatures jumped from the train. I must get back and see to them."

In a few moments he was speeding back to Thoston again. There he stopped and picked up a doctor, and then slowly pushed forward to the point where the two unfortunate excursionists had leapt from the train, only to find that they were both past any help that medical skill could render. Their bodies were put into the engine and taken back to Thoston, a dirty little township surrounding a group of mines.

It was too late for the Dodger to get back to work that day. On the following he knew his services would be early required at the inquest, so he telephoned to Calworth to say he should stay the night where he was.

The only accommodation the little place offered was a dirty, ill-kept inn, the Railway Arms. There was something repellent about its very exterior. Inside he found a small bar, smelling of stale drink and stale tobacco, divided into compartments by six-foot partitions.

Behind the bar a hunch-backed individual, with an enormously large head and goggle eyes, hobbled to and fro serving his customers.

"Can I have a bed here to-night?" Jack asked of him.

The strange figure looked him over a moment before replying.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Postern," the Dodger answered.

The innkeeper started visibly.

"Postern," he repeated—"Jack Postern, the Dodger?"

"The same," answered Jack. It was not unusual for people to know him by name, and he thought little of the matter.

"You wait a minute, young man," said the landlord uninvitingly, and hobbled off to a back room. He was gone for some moments, during which time Jack noticed that the only occupants of the bar were three rough-looking individuals who never ceased to eye him, and evidently to discuss him in undertones amongst themselves.

Presently the landlord limped back again, and, coming round the other side of the bar, said, "Yes, you can have a room. This way!" And he led the Dodger up a narrow flight of creaking stairs, down a long passage, up two or three more steps, round a corner, across a room, and finally opened the door into a

mean little apartment, untidy, evil-smelling, and badly furnished.

The landlord stood for a moment to survey him, whilst Jack looked around the room.

"Is this the best you can do for me?" he asked.

"If it ain't good enough," answered the other truculently, "you can go elsewhere."

"Oh, if it's the best you can do," the Dodger replied cheerfully, "I suppose I must put up with it!"

With some muttered sneer the landlord hobbled away. The Dodger went to throw open the one small window in order to let some air into the room, but to his disgust he found the window was tightly screwed up; apparently from the outside. It over-looked a disused yard, overgrown with weeds, and littered with old cans, rags, and refuse of every description. The yard was hemmed in on all four sides by surrounding buildings, and one broken door, hanging loosely upon its hinges, gave access from it to what appeared to be a disused washhouse.

"Not a very cheerful prospect," thought the Dodger to himself; "however, as it is only for one night, I must make the best of it."

So he made his way downstairs again. The bar was now deserted. From the back room came the sound of voices. He was about to rap on the counter when his hand was arrested in mid-air by a voice which was raised in sneering protest against some remark of the innkeeper.

There could be no mistaking those caustic, jeering tones.

"My brave Hepwick," the voice was saying, "do drop this exaggerated morality. How much will it take to buy your scruples? Name your own price."

There could be no doubt about it. The speaker was Captain King! And the answer came, not in the innkeeper's falsetto, but in the unctuous voice of the Rip.

"Steady, King!" he said. "We aren't millionaires. All we've got so far is the insurance-money and my lady's bag. Please remember that infernal boat train had nothing but a dummy on board."

"Possibly, my worthy Rip," rejoined Captain King; "but you seem to forget to put any valuation on your precious life, which to you at least is probably above the price of rubies. This little whipper-snapper is hot on your heels, and for you, at any rate, it's a hanging job!"

So eloquent was the silence that the Dodger could almost see the crafty little hunchback looking from one to the other, conscious that he had them in his power.

A Duel in the Dark.

AT that moment the outer door of the bar opened, and a group of noisy customers burst in. The Dodger rapped on the counter, and as soon as the landlord appeared he asked for some supper.

"You can have some bread and

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cheese," replied the innkeeper surlily.

"Very well; that will do," Jack acquiesced, not on the whole sorry to confine himself to the simplest food in that den of iniquity.

"Far less easy to doctor," he thought to himself.

In one of the compartments he sat ruminating over what he had heard whilst slowly eating his supper. He prolonged the meal to the utmost extent of which it was capable, hoping for another opportunity of gleaned information as to the fresh plot that was hatching in that sinister back room.

But from that moment onwards until closing time the bar gradually filled up. It was occupied by a mob of miners and ironworkers straight from their day's labour. At last he had reluctantly to make his way up to his uninviting room above.

One short piece of candle was all the illumination provided. He felt in no mood to trust himself to sleep, especially as on examining the door he found that it boasted no key. Once more he inspected the forbidding little yard at the back, and made another futile effort to obtain some ventilation. It was obviously impossible.

Whilst he was thus engaged, a curious conviction grew on him that he was being watched. He turned slowly round, and took in at a glance everything in the scantily-furnished room. There was no possibility of anyone being in hiding there. Yet the feeling grew and strengthened until it became a certainty; a pair of eyes somewhere was persistently gazing at him. He felt it; he knew it!

He thought of the empty keyhole. Keeping out of the direct line with it, he quickly approached the door. He got a firm grip on the handle, and then turned it suddenly and pulled. To his astonishment the door refused to give. It was firmly barred from the outside! He was a prisoner, and in the hands of his deadliest foe.

Violently he rattled and banged upon the door, but all to no purpose. As he ceased all was absolute stillness; he was shut far off from any other occupant of that forbidding establishment.

All the while he knew with absolute certainty that he was under observation. He blew out the candle, and depended on the dim glimmer of moonlight that penetrated the dust-begrimed window from the outside. Slowly and carefully he examined every inch of the walls and ceiling. Here and there the paper had peeled off and was hanging in long, loose strips. In other places the plaster was cracked and broken, showing the naked laths underneath. In one place a length of cornice, between the wall and ceiling, was missing. As his gaze reached this spot, he fancied for one instant that far back in the dark hole revealed he caught the glimpse of a pair of glistening eyes. If it were so, they were instantly removed or covered.

He knew that his safety lay in not revealing the fact that he had noticed anything. For what seemed to him an eternity he sat on the edge of his bed, wondering what the next step would be. The suspense was intolerable. His one anxiety was to precipitate events, to meet his enemies face to face. So long as he was up and awake, they would probably make no attempt. His best plan was to make a show of going to bed. Without more ado he undressed and clambered between the grease-stained sheets.

Scarcely had his head touched the pillow ere a strange rustling outside the window attracted his attention. Little by little he saw the whole window frame move. At first he thought that his overwrought imagination was playing him some trick. But inch by inch the whole window, in one solid piece, was slowly withdrawn. He felt the cool, sharp night air striking in. Little by little, bit by bit, the window swayed outwards, and was then silently and carefully drawn upwards.

There was a pause of several minutes, which seemed hours to him. During all the time he knew that he was still being watched. He lay absolutely quiet, like one in a heavy slumber. Presently, first one foot and then another appeared at the top of the opening where the window had been. Gradually they were followed by a pair of legs, which swayed and dangled for a moment, treading to find a foothold on the sill. At last they did so, and then, laboriously, cumbrously, the body of Captain King was lowered into view, block-

ing up the opening of the window. Jack could hear the man's irregular breathing; noticed his uncertain movements as he clawed at the edge of the window opening, and then half crept, half fell through it.

With sudden delight the Dodger saw that the wretched man had been bracing himself up to whatever dastardly work he was engaged in by strong drink. He was far from sober.

For a moment, as he gained the ground, he stood swaying, trying to accustom his eyes to the gloom of the room. Then he lurched across to the bed on which Jack lay. As he reached it, the Dodger slipped noiselessly out on the other side and crouched on the floor. Against the empty window opening he could dimly discern Captain King, feeling uncertainly over the bed. Then he saw him draw himself up in obvious astonishment, and stand for a moment holding the foot rail, swaying to and fro, as his addled brain tried to take in the situation.

Leaving the bed, the scoundrel staggered with uncertain steps across the room, colliding with the rickety washstand, knocking over the one chair, and clawing at the empty air with outstretched hands as he lurched here and there.

Presently he gave vent to a subdued drunken laugh.

"I know 'y' are here somewhere, you crafty P' beggar!" he mumbled half under his breath. "'Y' carn' give 's th' slip this time. I'm in no hurry; take 'y'r time. I'll find you 'fore morn'!"

He lurched back to the bed, and sat down heavily on it, in drunken confusion, his feet within an inch of the Dodger's face.

"Don't 'y' hurry, m' friend," he rambled on. "You come on 'when 'y' are ready, my clever P' genius. I'm wait'n' 'f you!"

Gradually his words became less and less coherent, his breathing more and more stertorous, and finally he rolled over with a drunken sigh on to the bed.

For several minutes the Dodger sat motionless, the heavy silence broken only by the irregular snores of the sodden creature lying just above him. Then between the snores a new sound riveted Jack's attention.

Crafty footsteps were approaching the door; a whispered colloquy took place outside.

The Dodger crept across the floor to the doorway.

"The chap's so drunk," he heard the Rip saying, "that I should not be surprised if he has fallen and broken his neck."

"Serve him right if he has," came the innkeeper's voice with a low cackle. "You'll have to stump up for him, that's the only thing. It's cash down before you leave the place."

"Oh, that's all right, you fool!" retorted the Rip. "Shut your noise; I'm going to do the job myself!"

And then the Dodger heard the bolts being stealthily withdrawn, and slowly and silently the door was opened inch by inch; and, inch by inch, Jack moved backwards with it. So that when at last it was wide enough for the Rip to creep in, Jack was completely hidden from view behind the open door.

He saw Kelly tiptoe across to the bed, and stand for a moment considering, and then raising what appeared to be a heavy iron chisel, strike savagely at the sleeping figure on the bed. Kelly had mistaken the drunken form of his accomplice for the sleeping Dodger!

Jack could wait no more. The sight sickened him. If he was to make his escape, now was his only chance.

With an ear-splitting yell he sprang from behind the door, and leapt upon the hunchback just outside. Startled by the sudden onset, the little man swayed and drew back. Jack struck out blindly, and the innkeeper went sprawling on his back.

Trusting solely to memory, the Dodger darted across the adjoining room, through the door, and, closing it behind him, shot the bolt that he found outside. Then, without pausing, he turned, darted down the passage, jumped the steps that he remembered came just round the corner, raced along the next passage, and went at breakneck speed down the narrow flight of stairs to the bar, pulling to behind him the doors as he ran. That he would have at least some seconds delay in unbaring the door to the inn he had foreseen. With feverish energy he drew the bolts, pulled back the latch, and turned the handle, but the door refused to give. It was locked, and the key was nowhere to be found.

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It was not a time to hesitate. Something desperate must be done. The capture of the Rip, his own life itself, depended on prompt action. He caught up a bench and hurled it with all his force through the square-paned window. At that very instant the inner door of the bar burst open, and the Rip came headlong after him. The Dodger vaulted the counter, and almost with the same movement leapt through the broken window, tearing his hands and his face on the broken glass as he jumped.

In an instant Kelly was after him. The Dodger was in a strange town, hatless and undressed. Which way to turn he knew not. One thing, and one thing alone was obvious to him—the Rip, with boots on, must soon overtake him, barefooted as he was, on those cobbled streets. Guided by instinct, he made a dash for the railway-station. He well knew a little local station would be shut up at that time; but also he knew the station-master's quarters would be at hand. There was no time to think of searching for a police-station. His one object was to find someone easy of access, who, at least, would give credence to his tale. He scrambled over the palings of the station, ran along the platform, dived across the line, and reached the door of the station-master's house. After him, reckless now and desperate to any point, came the Rip. Jack heard his feet clatter along the platform. With both fists he banged upon the door. But all was silent within.

In another second the Rip would be upon him; he would stop at nothing now. There was no time to consider matters. Long before the door could possibly be opened, Kelly would be upon him.

He darted round the corner of the house, snatched at a step-ladder against the wall as he ran, and flung it down behind him. Hot on his heels came the Rip. The Dodger yelled at the top of his voice. A window was opened above him.

"What is all the trouble?" a voice shouted out.

"Quick!" yelled back the Dodger. "I am Postern; I have got Kelly if you are sharp!"

The words were words to conjure with throughout the length and breadth of the G.P.R. system. Picking himself up, the Rip made a furious lunge at Jack with the iron bar he still held in his hand. The Dodger dived below the blow, and doubled back towards the door. As he reached it, it opened. The next second he saw the Rip racing for dear life across the rails.

In a few hurried sentences, Jack explained to the station-master what had happened.

"Who have you got with you?" he asked.

"I am all by myself," the station-master answered, pulling the door to as he spoke. "Come on, we'll go to the police-station; it is close by."

It was obviously useless to pursue the Rip, who had already disappeared round a corner down one of the tortuous streets of the sordid little town.

It was not many minutes before they had aroused the police. With three constables, they made their way back to the Railway Arms, only to find, however, that the place was deserted. The till and the safe had obviously been hurriedly emptied. The door of the room adjoining Jack's had been battered down, clearly with the instrument that Kelly had carried. On the bed in the Dodger's room, horribly mauled and battered, lay the lifeless body of the wretched Captain King.

No time was to be lost. Two constables were left in charge, whilst the other returned to the station. At once the entire force was turned out to track Kelly and his ally.

"We sha'n't have much difficulty in catching Hepwick," the inspector exclaimed. "There'll be no mistaking him anywhere. He could not disguise himself. We have got a long score up against him. We have only been waiting the opportunity of catching him. We have suspected things ever since he first had the Railway Arms, but we have never been able to prove anything definite against him."

"It is Kelly you must get," replied the Dodger; "he must be within a few hundred yards of us at this minute."

"I will do my best, Mr. Postern, you may be sure of that."

When at last he felt that nothing more could be done, Jack returned to share the station-master's modest dwelling for the rest of the night. One thing Jack had been thankful to

learn—the miscreants had not yet been able to turn to account the contents of Lady Helen's bag. Up to the present no trace of it had been found, and all hope of ever recovering it had been practically abandoned. Dr. Neville's body had been recovered from the Quaking Bog weeks before, and a verdict of wilful murder, principally on the Dodger's evidence, had been brought in against Rip Kelly. But what had become of Lady Helen's bag remained a mystery.

There was now a fresh count of murder recorded against the Rip. From the conversation Jack had overheard, it was obvious who had been the Rip's accomplice in robbing the company over the bogus insured package. That, at any rate, was the only benefit the two scoundrels had so far derived from all their villainy.

The inquest next day resulted in the only verdict possible—accidental death in the case of the two poor creatures who had lost their lives in the runaway train, and a verdict of wilful murder against Kelly in the case of Captain King's death. At the request of the police, no more evidence was given in connection with the latter than was necessary to prove the facts, and so the world was left in darkness as to his intimate connection with Kelly's villainies on the one hand, and with reputable society on the other.

All that day passed and the next, and still no trace of the Rip came to hand. He appeared once more to have vanished as completely as if he had been spirited off the earth. The Dodger, with his usual scorn of police methods, heaped caustic abuse on the combined intelligence of the constabulary of the country.

"They are quick enough in arresting innocent people," he commented; "but lead a murderer bound hand and foot into a police-station, and they won't lay a finger on him, except to let him go. Oh, a bright lot the police of the Midlands are! A fine body of men, and look so well in their uniforms, too!"

It was obvious to everyone that so long as Kelly remained at large, the Dodger's life was in eminent jeopardy. None realised it better than Jack himself, and to guard against the possible consequences of his own death, he took the precaution of making a statutory declaration of all the facts connected with Kelly, so far as he knew him, in order that if his lips were silenced for ever in death, there should be some testimony on record of Kelly's crimes. Then he settled down once more to the busy routine of his office.

The Great Aeroplane Race.

THE Dodger's duties were of extraordinary complexity. With his natural bent for acquiring information of every kind, he deliberately set himself to learn all he could of every branch of the great department in which he was employed. In this the traffic superintendent encouraged him. The consequence was that his work was of a most diverse character. One day he would be engaged working out the way sheets for the making-up of trains on some distant section of the company's lines. Another day the movements of specials and excursions fell to his lot. He was sent here and there, supervising and inspecting.

During all this time he never lost sight of the main problem to the solution of which he had set himself—namely, the catching of Rip Kelly and the recovery of Lady Helen's bag. Close watch had been kept constantly on the hut on Bramley Flat. It was certain that if the bag had not been removed from there on the occasion of Dr. Neville's murder, it still remained there. But up to the present it had not been discovered.

All trace of Kelly had disappeared. Gradually the public interest in the matter. Even the railway officials showed signs of letting it drop. But not the Dodger. Whatever his duties might be, wherever they took him, this one subject was uppermost in his thoughts, though he had little time to devote to it.

Gradually winter gave way to spring, and spring ripened into an early summer, and with the return of fine weather the attention of the world became occupied once more with aviation.

The keenest interest was being aroused by a great money prize that had been offered for a continuous flight from London to Liverpool. Up to the present, although the air was full of rumours of attempts to be

made, no one had come seriously forward to try to win the prize.

The Dodger sat one day in his office busy working out the Chinese puzzle of the movements of rolling stock, when a caller was announced—Mr. William Sparks.

The stranger was visibly astonished at the youth of the company's representative.

"What can I do for you?" asked the Dodger.

"May I inquire," the other replied, "whether I am speaking to a responsible official of the company?"

"Certainly, you are," the Dodger rejoined.

"Then I take it that anything I say will be regarded in the strictest confidence. I want the company's help in a matter in which secrecy is of the first importance."

The man paused for a moment, but as the Dodger made no remark, he resumed again.

"You have heard, no doubt, of the £10,000 prize for a London to Liverpool flight." The Dodger nodded. "I have been engaged for years on perfecting a flying-machine on entirely new principles. That machine

for a share in the prize if I am successful."

Mr. Sparks stopped speaking abruptly. The Dodger could see at a glance his keen and nervous anxiety. He told his story with a simple directness that had the hallmark of truth. There was something so unusual, almost impudent in the request, that it appealed directly to the Dodger's sympathies. He felt in his heart that it was the course he himself would have taken in similar circumstances. The man made no attempt to argue that the company would gain anything, did not refer to the splendid advertisement, or to the kudos that would attach to being connected with success, and he made use of none of the arguments that the ordinary cadger, with whom the Dodger had become so used to dealing, resorts to.

"I know nothing of your machine," the Dodger answered, after a slight pause. "I know nothing of you, but I like your manner, and I believe you are speaking the truth. When do you intend to make the attempt?"

"The first moment possible. To-night, if it can be arranged," the



A terrible catastrophe seemed imminent. In an instant Sparks had been caught in the vortex of his rival's machine. "The cur!" exclaimed the Dodger. "He did that on purpose!" (For this incident see next Tuesday's splendid chapters.)

is now complete, and I have not the smallest doubt of my ability to fly, not only from London to Liverpool, but from John O'Groats to Land's End, if I want to. But here comes my difficulty. In building my machine I engaged as an assistant a Belgian engineer named Van Germee. The scoundrel remained with me only a fortnight, and then, as soon as he had learnt my secret, bolted, and, as I afterwards learnt, started to build my machine on his own. I have just heard that his machine is ready, and he is going to make an attempt to win the £10,000 prize in the course of the next few days. I have spent my life and every penny I possess in the building of my machine. I haven't even the capital necessary to arrange for my flight—above all, to engage a special train to pilot me. Your line is the most direct route to follow, and I want to know whether the Great Provincial will help me by placing a pilot train at my disposal, giving me passes over the line to learn the route, and providing me with the other facilities necessary, in return

other answered. "Every hour's delay gives Van Germee a chance. The moment he hears that I am going to try, he will be on my track. He has been spying on me for months past, and I have no doubt that he knows I have come to see you today."

"We'll lose no time," the Dodger answered. "There will be a special at your disposal to-night. I will take charge of it myself. You know the road?"

"Slightly," answered the other. "Is it possible for me to run over it first?"

The Dodger looked at his watch. "You can just catch the 11.5 to London, and return by the 1.10. That will take you direct to Liverpool, but the bother is that you would not be able to get back to London till nine to-night. What time do you want to start?"

"If I get off by midnight it will be time enough. Everything is ready at my garage near Pentonville. I am absolutely single-handed, but if I am in London by ten, I can start by midnight."

"Right you are," said the Dodger. "Here is a pass which will enable you to travel where you want to on the company's system. I cannot come with you now, but I will steer you over the road in your flight. You had better travel on the engine in your journey to and from Liverpool in order to be able to see landmarks, and pick out points where there will be lights at night; also make a careful note of branches and junctions on the line, so that you do not mistake the track."

With a few further injunctions, the arranging of a code of signals, and other details, Mr. Sparks started on his study of the G.P.R. line between London and Liverpool, whilst the Dodger promptly gave the necessary instructions to have an express engine, guard's van, and two passenger coaches made up in readiness and waiting for him at the London goods terminus.

Scarcely had he finished giving the necessary orders, when a service telegram was handed to him from the company's London office.

"Traffic Inspector, London, to Traffic Superintendent, Calworth."

"Specials ordered to-night." And first on the list came the item, "London to Liverpool, to pilot flying-machine for Van Germee starting midnight."

The Dodger stared at the announcement in astonishment.

"Oh, ho!" he commented to himself. "So our Belgian friend has lost no time. Young Sparks was right. It is to be a race, is it? Well, they shall have fair play, at any rate."

Late in the afternoon, the Dodger travelled to London. On his arrival he found the papers full of the announcement of Van Germee's attempt. The company's terminus was besieged with reporters and inquirers. But not a word anywhere of William Sparks.

"Just as well," thought the Dodger; "that young gentleman knows how to keep his mouth shut."

One problem confronted him; it was easy enough to run two specials out of London at the same time, seeing that the terminal approach was an eight-track road. It was quite another thing to run them neck-to-neck the whole way to Liverpool. On no account must the ordinary services of the company be disorganised, and even one special necessitated careful arrangements to avoid this. To run two simultaneously on separate pairs of metals was impossible. Whichever was behind at Bushey, must follow the other the rest of the journey. Everything, therefore, would turn upon who got the lead at the start.

The Dodger was sitting checking over the arrangements at a quarter-past nine, when Mr. Sparks was announced again. Briefly they discussed the situation.

"My sympathies are with you," Jack said; "but you will understand it must be a fair race and no favour. If you should get the lead at the start your pilot goes ahead and takes the lead on the line. If the other man is ahead at Bushey, his train gets the lead."

"That's only fair," answered Sparks. "I'd like to know how that blackguard found out I was going to try to-night."

"Well, we can't help that now," answered the Dodger. "I will be outside the goods yard approach at 11.40. Your train will carry three strong acetylene lamps, one on the roof of each coach. Van Germee's is carrying three lamps across the roof of the middle coach, so don't get muddled. As soon as I see you coming up towards the line I will start and keep as directly under you as I can. You will be coming up from the east. Van Germee is starting from Wormwood Scrubbs, and will be coming up from the west. His driver will pick him up as soon as he approaches."

As they spoke, the Dodger and Sparks left the former's office, and walked together along the platform. Suddenly Sparks clutched Jack's arm.

"There he is! There's the scoundrel!" he exclaimed, and the next moment resumed his ordinary attitude as if he had seen nothing. Following Sparks's glance, the Dodger made out the person to whom he was referring—a tall, black-bearded foreigner, wearing a motor-cap and a long, loose overcoat.

(Another grand instalment of this splendid serial next Tuesday. Please do not forget to tell all your friends about the opening chapters of "Yorkshire Grit," the great new mill serial.)