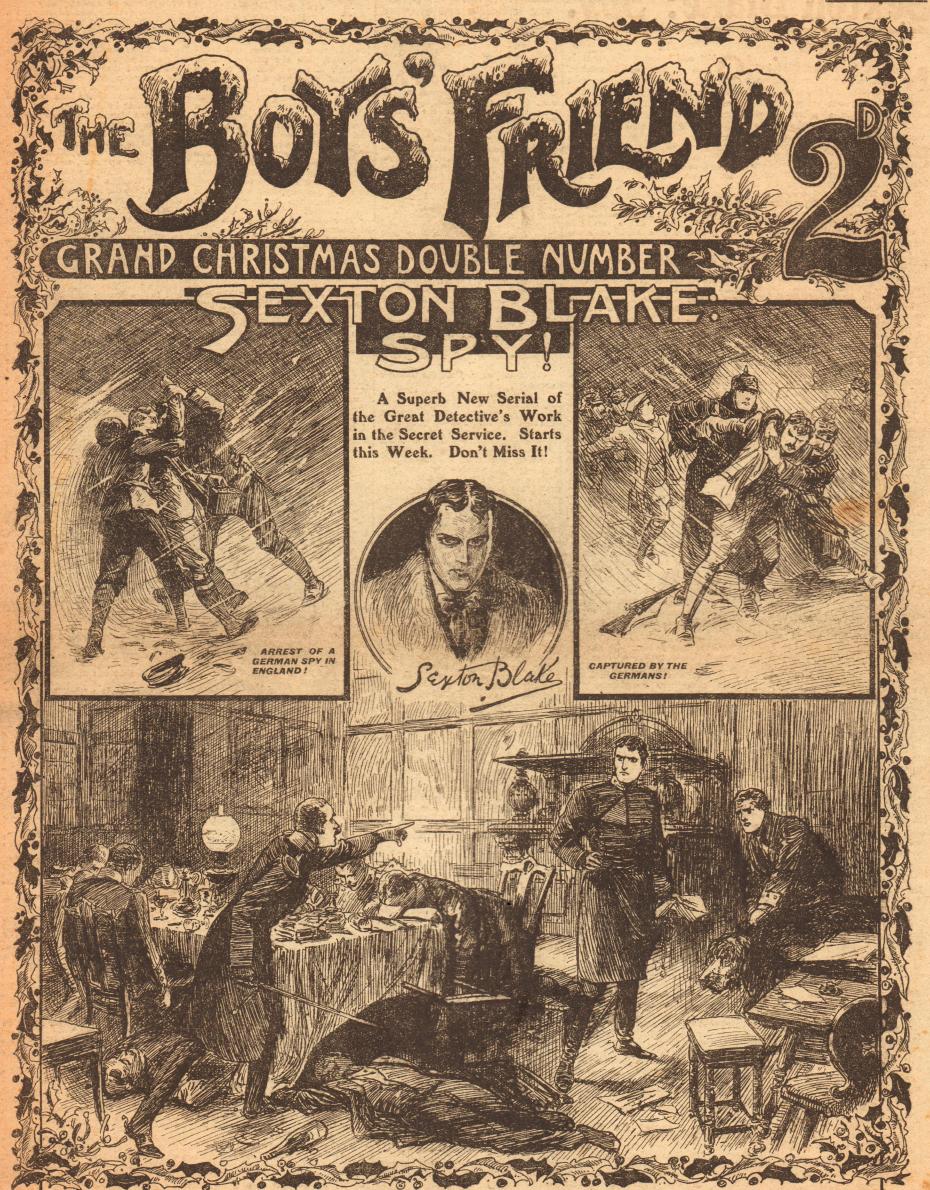
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Sexton Blake: Spy.

THE PROLOGUE.

gone wrong that morning, and really nobody particularly cared to know; but all who were connected with the palace, from gentlemen in-waiting to the stable grooms, were in a rather uncomfortable frame of mind, for it had come to their ears that their Royal master was vexed about something, and each and everyone was devoutly hoping that he might not be a victim of Royal displeasure, which was apt to fall as unexpectedly as lightning strikes.

It was nothing serious, as a matter of fact, that had curdled the Royal temper. Indeed, the Kaiser was by no means as irate as he had been reported to be. An offence of lesemajeste chronicled in a provincial journal having ruffled his usually complacent spirits, and the demon of indigestion having gripped him while he was inwardly fuming over the said article, he had declined to see one of his Ministers, and had got rid of his private secretary by sending him to look for some missing papers; and now, with a slight frown on his Imperial brow, he was standing by a window that overlooked the Lustgarten and the mighty bulk of the cathedral, and a large part of the splendid city of Berlin.

A company of soldiers marched down the Linden, and filed into the palace enclosure; the band played and the guard was changed. But the war loud paid no heed to martial music, or to martial tread. His indigestion was gone, but the other grievance still rankled.

"Father!"

The Kaiser, his reflections cut short, swang round on his heel. The

OBODY knew just what had gone wrong that morning, and really nobody particularly cared to know; but all who were connected with the palace, from Battalion of Brunswick Engineers— Battalion of Brunswick Engineers—
and wore it with an air of distinction
—was pacing to and fro within the
fortifications that were on the south
side of the Island of Tarkum, which
belonged to Germany, and lay a few
miles out on the North Sea. It was
a small island, situated in the wide
estuary of the River Hems, and connected by a steamer service with the
town of Hemsden, on the mainland—
a dreary place, where sea-birds
nested, and a few herds of cattle
found coarse pasturage, and a few
score of seafaring men dwelt with
their families in a small village that
bore the same name as the island.
In clear weather the inhabitants
could mark the course of passing
vessels, and could look over in one
direction to the coast of the Netherlands, and in another to the
Hanoverian coast. But to-day, owing
to the mist, it was difficult for one
to see even the lighthouse and the
signal-tower near by, and the brick
beacens that were a little farther off.
The young man in the uniform of
Engineers was Prince Gunther, and
he had been practically in imprisonment here, by the command of his
Royal father, for the past month.

He had pretended all day to be in
low spirits, and he was certain that
so far he was not suspected of any
unlawful intentions. As he glanced
across the island in the direction in
which he knew England to lie, a
tense, wistful look crept into his
eyes.

"Only a few more hours!" he murmured a smile bricktening his face. and wore it with an air of distinction

and the guard was changed. But the war load paid no head to marial maste, or to martial tread. His included greater than the other "Father!" The Kaiser, his reflections cat short, swang round on his heel. Gor had opened, and there had entered the room a tall, straight youth, twenty-three years of age, fair haired and blue-eyed, with features the contended of the contended of the polar hair dark of the contended of the contended

A Superb New Serial of the Great Detective's Secret Service in Britain and Germany. STARTS IN THIS NUMBER.

prisoners, consisting of notebooks, photographic negatives, and a telegraphic code, his face grew dark, and a hard light glittered in his eyes.

"There appears to be no doubt that this is a case of espionage," he said, in an angry voice. "These men are probably in the British Scoret Service, and they must be held for trial. I am surprised that they were able to get into the fortifications so easily," he added, frowning at the commandant. "There has been gross neglect, Colonel Wenzel, and the responsibility lies with you. Be assured that you will hear more of this, sir. I will see that precautions are taken hereafter, and I will put a stop to the habit of tourists coming over to the island from the mainland. You may take these men away now. They are under arrest, and must be sent to the civil authorities at Hemsden."

"Your Majesty's orders shall be obeyed," replied Colonel Wenzel.
He and the sentries marched off with the two prisoners, who were protesting their innocence, and the young prince was left alone with his father. "You have done well," said the Keiere "You have made an im-

father.

"You have done well," said the Kaiser. "You have made an important capture, and I am greatly pleased with you."

"I thank you, sir," Prince Gunther

"I thank you, sir," Prince Gunther answered.

"But I have other matters to speak of, my boy. I have been cruising in the neighbourhood, and I put in at Tarkum to ascertain if you have come to your senses yet. Do you realise how foolish you have been? Are you prepared to abide by my decision and the decision of my Ministers in regard to what you have chosen to call your love affair?"

"I am afraid I am in the same mind, father. I love the Princess Hilda, and I will not give her up until I have heard from her own lips she does not want to marry me."

"Not another word, Gunther! I will break your unruly spirit, you may be sure. I know how to deal with you. Until you are ready to how to my will, and have sent me an intimation to that effect, you shall remain here!"

With that, his eyes flashing wrath-

low to my will, and have sent me anintimation to that effect, you shall remain here!"

With that, his eyes flashing wrathfully, the Emperor turned, and strode away, while his son looked sadly after him.

"I wonder how it will end?" the prince said to himself. "I shall be unhappy for the rest of my life if I don't marry the girl I love."

Between nine and ten o'clock that night, while the two mysterious prisoners were awaiting their transfer to Hemsden Gaol and the Kaiser's yacht was ploughing along the coast, Prince Gunther walked calmly out of the fortress, unperceived by the sentries, his uniform concealed by a cloak that fell to his heels. Having made his way to the village, and thence to the harbour, he hastened to the end of the little quay, and lowered himself to a fishing-craft that was lying there. He was expected by the three men on board, but his identity was known to only one of them, a grizzled old fisherman who was the owner of the craft.

"I saw your signal this morning, Hans," said the prince, "and here I

craft.

"I saw your signal this morning, Hans," said the prince, "and here I am. Are you ready to start?"

"We soon will be, sir," old Hans replied. "It won't take me long."

"And what about my clothes?"

"You will find them down in the cabin, sir. I bought them at Hemsden yesterday."

"Ah, that's good news! How is the weather?"

Hemsden yesterday."

"Ah, that's good news! How is the weather?"

"It couldn't be better," said the old fisherman. "The wind is from the right quarter. But I wish you would let me off my bargain, sir," he added, in a lower tone. "I am doing a foolish thing, and if it should be discovered—"

"It won't be," interrupted Prince Gunther. "Don't worry about that."

In high spirits the young man went below to discard his uniform, and when he ascended to the deck, twenty minutes later, neadly atfired in tweeds, the lights of the village of Tarkum were fading into the gloom of the night. The little vessel had left the harbour, and was scadding rapidly along, under full sail, fowerds the wide waste of the North Sea and the distant coast of Britain.

(Next Tuesday THE BOYS' FRIEND will contain 16 pages. One Penny.)

"OU do really love me, Hilda, don't you? Tell me again." "How many more times must I tell you?"

must I tell you?"

The subdued light of the November afternoon was fading, and would soon melt into the purple dusk of evening. The red ball of the sun had just gone down, and in the golden glow that lingered on the horizon, and filtered softly across an avenue of fir-trees. Prince Gunther and the Princess Hilda stood by an open gateway that led to a large and splendid estate. It was a sccluded wicket-gate, seldem or never used, that was some distance from the main entrance to the grounds; and Morvenstowe, the estate to which it gave access, belonged to the Royal Duke of Saxenby, and was situated amid charming country on the East Coast of England, within three or four miles of the populous town of Carnmouth.

Having safely crossed the North Sea in the fishing-smack, and landed in a quiet cove near the abovementioned town, the daring and impulsive young German prince had trudged inland on foot, knowing that the duke and his family were at that time in residence at the country seat. After scaling a high wall, and venturing two or three hundred yards into the park, he had, by good luck, encountered the Princess Hilda, taking a solitary stroll—greatly to his delight, and much to the surprise of the young lady, who had at first been shocked by such a breach of Royal ctiquette.

"You must go now," said Princess Hilda, gently but firmly. "We have been talking for nearly an hour, and if we were to be caught the consequences would be dreadful."

The two were silent for a moment, and then, with courtly grace, the young man bent towards the duke's daughter, and slipped his arm around her, and pressed his lips to the beautiful face that was blushingly lifted to his.

"Good-bye, dear Gunther! May"

her, and pressed his lips to the beautiful face that was blushingly lifted to his.

"Good-bye, my sweet Hilda!"

"Good-bye, dear Gunther! May you have a safe voyage back!"

The next instant the lovers had parted, and the space between them was widening. Princess Hilda closed and locked the wicket-gate, and hastened towards the Royal residence that lay deep in the wooded park, and Prince Gunther disappeared in a fir plantation, from which he presently emerged on to a road, where he perceived approaching—within a distance of no more than a couple of yards—a tall, lean gentleman, who wore a tweed jacket and knickerbockers, and was swinging along at a brisk stride, with a pipe in his mouth.

The two exchanged brief glances as they passed. The Kaiser's son crossed the road, and struck into a footpath that led to the coast, while the gentleman, who had been on the point of stopping, walked on at a slower pace, with a puzzled expression on his shrewd, kindly features. He was no other, as it happened, than Sexton Blake, the famous detective. He had been spending several days with a friend who lived in the neighbourhood, and on the morrow he was to return to London.

"I wonder who that young fellow is?" he said to himself. "His face was strikingly familiar to me. I have seen him before, I am certain, but I can't remember when or where. I wish I could recall him to my mind."

And he tried to do so as he followed the road towards the hospitable

And he tried to do so as he fol-lowed the road towards the hospitable old manor-house where tea awaited

Twas a distance of a little more than three miles from the gates of Morvenstowe to the cove where the German fishing-smack was lying, and the time passed quickly for Prince Gunther.

The sunset glow faded entirely, and the November night fell dark and chill as the young prince strode along the narrow, winding footpath across lonely country that was sparsely timbered. He was not afraid of losing his way, for he was acquainted with the neighbourhood; a year ago he had spent a week at Morvenstowe, as the guest of the Duke of Saxenby, and while there he had enjoyed several rambles over to the coast with the Princess Hilda.

But to-night, probably because he was so wrapped in his thoughts, he must have taken a wrong turning somewhere, for when he had walked briskly for an hour, paying no heed

to his surroundings, he came out of a sandy hollow, and stopped abruptly by a clump of bushes, having just perceived that he was no longer on the path. From in front, whence a salty breeze from the sea blew on his face, loomed the murky shape of a road. Close to his right, within a couple of yards, ran a low stone wall, and beyond that a hill mounted to the skyfine, against which bulked a row of buildings of some kind, their black outlines relieved here and there by twinkling lights.

"I have blundered from my course somehow or other." Prince Gunther muttered, in a tone of chagrin. "I ought to be about a mile to the left, instead of where I am. That must be Fort Ridley up there, and the town of Carnmouth lies on the other side of it. What a nuisance! I shall have to take the road now, and follow that until I come to—"

His reflections were interrupted by the sound of stealthy footsteps, and the next instant there appeared, over by the wall, the dusky figure of a man. The prince gave a slight start, and remained motionless in the shadow of the bushes. For a few seconds the man stood there quietly, fumbling with several things that he had in his hands; and then, as he suddenly discovered that he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was being watched, he uttered a sharp exclamation, dropped what he was first upon Prince Gunther and seized him by the throat.

"Make no noise," he snarled, "or I will kill you!"

The words were spoken in the German tongue, but the significance of that fact did not occur to the

I will kill you!"

The words were spoken in the German tongue, but the significance of that fact did not occur to the prince, so bewildered was he by the attack. He made a desperate resistance, and after a brief struggle, during which his efforts were frustrated by superior strength, he was tripped and thrown; and as he lay on the ground, still resisting, he recognised, in spite of the darkness, the face that was pressed close to his, "Otto!" he panted, as he partly broke the hold on his throat. "It is surely you, Otto!"

"Who calls me Otto?" gasped the other, peering closely. "I know your you are Gunther!"

"Yes, that's just who I am!" was the husky reply. "Let me up, you fool!"

They rose slowly to their feet, and stared at each other is a market.

They rose slowly to their feet, and stared at each other in amazement, as well they might. They had at one time been schoolfellows, and then brother-officers, and gow they had met thus strangely on the coast of England. The prince's assailant, a clean-shaven young man in tweeds, held a lieutenant's commission in a regiment that was stationed at Potsdam.

"I have made a terrible mistake," said Otto Wolfenstein. "I beg your highness's pardon. I hope I have not hurt you."

"You might have choked me," grumbled Prince Gunther, "from the way you squeezed my throat!"

"I am very sorry. I took you for a sentay, and I jumped at you because I was afraid you were going to shoot. You are the last person I could have expected to find here. What does it mean? I thought you were on the island of Tarkum in disgrace."

"I left there without permission,

"I left there without permission, and came to England on private busi-

and came to England on press."

"I can guess what the business is. I wish you luck, Gunther. I heard in Berlin that you were determined to marry the—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted the prince. "It is a subject that I don't care to discuss. Tell me about yourself. What are you doing here?"

"You are a plucky chap," Prince Gunther told him. "I admire your

"It is good of you to say so," replied Otto Wolfenstein. "But we mustr't stand here talking. Where are you bound for?"
"Nowhere in particular. I am

"Nowhere in particular. I am coming along with you, to help you with your work. This is the sort of an adventure that appeals to me."

"You can't share it, Gunther. Our positions are different, and I shouldn't dream of letting you come with me. If you were to be caught, there would be a frightful row, and I should get the blame."

"I won't be caught. You said

with me. If you were to be caught, there would be a frightful row, and I should get the blame."

"I won't be caught. You said yourself that there was no risk, and I am taking you at your word. I mean to come, and you can't prevent me."

"It is madness. I won't have it!"
For a few moments they hotly argued the question, and in the end Prince Gunther prevailed over his friend, who yielded with an ill grace.

"You may be sorry for this," he said, as he picked up the articles he had dropped.

"I am not afraid," answered the prince. "Why should I not serve my country as well as you?"

He had won his point, and he did not care whether or not there was any danger. Animated by a purpose that he felt to be patriotic, forgetting the beautiful girl whose lips he had so lately pressed, he followed his companion, who had been over the ground before. Having scaled the wall which admitted them to the enclosure of the fortifications, the two young men made their way forward, stealing through the murky gloom.

They were on forbidden soil, within the grounds of Fort Ridley. They went slowly and warily on, peering keenly around them, now and again pausing to listen; and at length, when they had come two or three hundred yards, they saw a black mass rising in front of them within a short distance.

"Here we are," whispered Otto Wolfenstein. "Those are the masked guns, and there is nobody about. I'll have a shot at them, and then we'll whip off like streaks of lightning."

"Can I help you?" asked Prince Gunther.

"You can hold the camera while I get the flashlight apparatus ready."

You can hold the camera while I the flashlight apparatus ready,"

"You can hold the camera while I got the flashlight apparatus ready," was the reply.

"Hark! What was that, Otto?"

The prince had heard footsteps, and he had no more than uttered the warning when four dusky figures rose from the gloom to one side, and sprang at the two spies, who at once took to their heels. It was a case of each for himself, as they knew. Otto Wolfenstein bounded ahead, and quickly vanished in the darkness, followed by two of the four soldiers; but Prince Gunther tripped and fell, and as he scrambled to his feet, with the betraying camera in his hand, he was seized by the two other men. He struggled to escape, but his efforts were useless.

"We've got you, my fine fellow,"

He struggled to escape, but his enerts were useless.

"We've got you, my fine fellow," said one of his captors, as he took possession of the camera. "Who are you? Give an account of yourself."

"Let me go!" panted the prince.
"I am a tourist! I have not been doing any harm!"

"You are a German, from your accent," declared the soldier. "Is it not so? Come, tell me the truth."

There was no answer. Prince

There was no answer. Prince Gunther shook his head, declining to say anything more.

End of the Projoque.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

Mrs. Bardell and the Germans—
The News—"Hallo!"
T Was nine o'clock in the morning,

and while the swelling tide of traffic rolled along Baker Street,

and while the swelling tide of traffic rolled along Baker Street, and the pavements grew more crowded, a preternatural silence reigned in a certain house situated in that prominent London thoroughfare, a house wherein dwelt several persons whose doings were frequently of great interest to the people of Great Britain, and to the inhabitants of other countries as well.

Nine o'clock, and all serene. At five minutes past the hour a clatter of dishes ascended from the kitchen, telling of activity on the part of Mrs. Bardell, the worthy landlady; at seven minutes past, a commotion on the staircase heralded the arrival of Tinker and Pedro, who burst open the door of Sexton Blake's consulting-room, and rushed in as if their very lives depended on haste; and just one minute later Sexton Blake himself appeared from an adjoining bed-chamber, with his feet in slippers, and his lean figure clad in a dressing-gown, and on his usually colourless face a faint tinge of colour that was

due to the cold tub from which he had recently emerged.

The great detective was not in the best of tempers. Being only human, like the rest of us, he was inclined to be irritable; and yet he had nothing in particular to be irritable about, save that he had returned on the previous day from a country house where he had enjoyed himself very much, and that he had awakened this morning to find the metropolis in the grip of a drizzling rain and a clammy mist. He regretted the country, and wished that he had not come back.

"I don't see the morning papers," he said. "Where are they?"

"I'ad them in the kitchen, sir," said Mrs. Bardell, who appeared at that moment.

"Indeed! And what husiness had

and Mrs. Bardell, who appeared at that moment.

"Indeed! And what business had you to carry them off before I had even looked at them? Kindly fetch them as quickly as you can."

"But, sir—" "Don't answer me back. Obey, and be silent."

The landlady was silent, but she did not obey. Leisurely, and with an offended air, she arranged the various contents of the tray upon the breakfast-table; and when that had been done to her satisfaction, and she had sighed heavily, she produced the missing journals from under her apron, and handed them to her fuming master. fuming master.

fuming master.

"Tere you are, sir," she said, in a truculent tone. "I'm sorry for my default, which ain't to be blamed on me so much as on them pesky Germans."

"What Germans?" snapped Sexton Blake.

me so much as on them pesky Germans."

"What Germans?" snapped Sexton Blake.

"Them villains. Them I was reading about, what 'ave been spying down on our coast."

"Spying—ch? I hope they were shot, or caught."

"Which is a cruel, bloodthirsty thing for a Christian to say of anyone," declared Mrs. Bardell, suddenly shifting her ground. "I'm surprised at you, sir. Britishers are just as bad, as you can read for yourself. There's two of them been doing of the same thing over in Germany, and I'm sure you wouldn't want them to be shot. Be fairminded, sir. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

Tinker laughed, and Blake, though he was still in an irritable mood, had to smile as he seated himself at the table. Both went on with their breakfast, giving their whole attention to it, and by the time the detective was finished and was enscenced in a big chair with his pipe alight and the morning papers in his hand, his ill-temper had vanished, and he was his amiable self again. For some minutes he was absorbed in the journals, and then he put them aside, and glanced at the lad.

"Have you seen these?" he inquired.

"Not yet," Tinker answered. "I'll

ot yet," Tinker answered. read them at another time. But was Mrs. Bardell right? Is there any-thing in the papers about German spice?"

thing in the papers about German spies?"

"Yes, there is," said Blake. "On the island of Tarkum, which is in the North Sea and belongs to Germany, two Britishers were caught the other night inside the enclosure of the fortifications with certain things in their possession which make it clear, to my mind, that they are connected with our Secret Service Department. They are now lying in gaol at Hemsden, on the mainland, and it is stated that they will be charged with espionage, which is far more serious than trespassing. And on the other hand, oddly enough, two young Germans were discovered the night before last within the grounds of Fort Ridley, which is close to Carnmouth. One of them succeeded in getting away in the darkness, and no trace of him has yet been found. The other was seized and arrested, and there was taken from him a camera, in which were some undeveloped plates that had been used for photographing parts of the fortifications. He has declined to give any information about himself beyond admitting that he is a Ger-

developed plates that had been used for photographing parts of the fortifications. He has declined to give any information about himself beyond admitting that he is a German subject and that his name is Herman Traubach. I imagine that he is an officer, and that he has given a false name."

"Isn't this news rather late in getting into the papers, guv'nor?"

"It is, my boy. But such things are not usually divulged at once—not until they have been inquired into by the authorities. The affair at Tarkum occurred five or six days ago, and it was the night before last that the German was caught at Fort Ridley. And that very night, come to think of it, I slept within three of four miles of the fort at my friend Elverson's place."

He was silent for a moment while he refilled his pipe and set it alight, and then, having settled back in his chair and blown a cloud of smoke, he continued in a grave and quiet voice:

"It is a contemptible, underhand game, this Secret Service business. But at the same time it is indispensable, by which I mean that if it is an institution in one European country, it must be so in others, so that matters may be equalised as far as possible."

"It is a game I shouldn't care to play,' observed the lad. "I don't mind helping to put men in prison when they deserve it, but I don't want to go there myself. By the way, you were talking a bit ago about European countries equalising things. That isn't quite true, is it?"

"It is certainly not in one case."
Blake answered grimly. "I refer to the very two nations whose spies have

THE 2nd CHAPTER. A Curious Summons—The German Attack—Suspicions.

SEXTON BLAKE stepped to the telephone, and when he had conversed for several minutes in a strain that roused the lad's curiosity, he dropped the re-ceiver on its hook, and turned round. His listless expression had vanished, and it was evident that he had found some fresh interest in life.

Who called you up? asked

Tinker. "The War Office," Blake curtly

replied. "My word! What do they want with you?"

"They wish to see me in regard to an important matter. They did not tell me what it was."
"I'll bet it has something to do

Free Coupons for the Picture Theatres.

HOW TO VISIT THE CINEMATOGRAPH SHOW AT HALF-PRICE.

In these days when picture theatres are so popular, and when even the smallest of our towns has one or more cinematograph palaces, it is only natural that boys should flock in their thousa ds to such places of entertainment. A bright programme of serious, comic, and sentimental films is indeed an attraction, and Your Editor has decided to help his readers by securing them ADMISSION AT HALF-PRICE to a great many of the best picture theatres.

On the front page of this number you will find a coupon, and below there is a list of theatres: By presenting a BOYS' FRIEND Coupon at the booking-office of any theatre mentioned you will be admitted at Half-Price to any part of the house at the performances specified.

This week's coupon is available only until December 19th, but another coupon will appear in THE BOYS' FRIEND next Tuesday.

List of Theatres Where BOYS' FRIEND Half-Admission Coupons are Accepted. Palace Theatre, West Hartlepool Boro' Theatre, North Shields New Picture Palace, Gateshead Tivoli, Laygate Gircus, South Shields Picture Hall, Sundarland Picture Hall, West Nartlepool Tuesday Evening. Any per-formance excepting Saturdays and Bank Holidays. Empire Theatre, Coventry Cromwell Hall, Lancaster Picturedrome, Longridge Temperance Hall, Preston Picturedrome, Preston West London Theatre, Church Street, Edgware Road,
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London, E.
Central Hall, Peckham
Arcadia and People's Picture Palace, Lewes Road,
Brighton
Theatre Royal, Darwen, Lancs.
Appolonian Hall, Snargate Street, Dover
Co-operative Hall, Sheerness
The Empire, Wharf Street, Leicester
People's Picture Palace, Penzance
Electric Empire, Woking
The Empire, Wigan
Holloway Hall, Holloway Road, N.
The Universe Picture Palace and Skating Rink, Great Any day excepting Saturdays and Sundays.

The Universe Picture Palace and Skating Rink, Great Harwood

Rarwood

Electric Theatre, Sutton, Surrey
Electric Theatre, Epsom
Brinkburn Picture Theatre, Brinkburn Street, Byker,
Newcasile-on-Tyne
Tyne Picture Theatre, Station Road, Wallsend
Royal Animated Pictures, High Street, E. Wallsend
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over 16 yrs.
Mon. and
Thurs.
Tues. and
Friday.
Wednesday
Any evening

Any evening excepting Bk. Holidays

Any per-formance except Christmas Day.

been caught red-handed—our own country and Germany. The Prussian Government make to their Secret Service bureau an annual grant of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, while Great Britain devotes to the same purpose the paltry sum of twenty-five thousand pounds. It is a deplorable thing that it should be so. Cunning should be matched with cunning, force with force, in equal proportions. The day will come when Britain will wake up to the folly of her niggardly, parsimonious allowance to her Secret Service Department. And it will be a terrible awakening, I am afraid, unless—"

"Hallo! There goes the telephone-

unless——"
"Hallo! There goes the telephonebell!" interrupted Tinker.
"I wonder who wants me at this
hour of the morning?" murmured the
detective, as he languidly rose from
his chair.

with this spying business, guv'nor! Don't you think so?"

"I should not be surprised if you were right, my boy. I can't imagine any other reason. I told Lord Dorrington that I would call shortly—it was to him I was speaking—and I had better go at once."

"I hope there will be something for us both to do. We have had a lazy time of it for a couple of weeks, and it will be a nice change to be in harness again, and—"

The lad paused abruptly, for the door had just been opened by Mrs. Bardell, behind whom could be seen a visitor.

a visitor.

"Mr. Bong Noflox!" announced the landlady, in a tone of awe.

"E 'as a title, sir, but it 'as slipped my mind."

With that Mrs. Bardell withdrew in a state of trepidation, leaving in the room a tall man of perhaps forty,

who wore a monocle and had a black moustache turned up at the ends. A faint smile, indicating that he had a sense of humour, hovered at his lips as he took off his hat and threw back the folds of the heavy overcoat in which he was muffled.

"Good-morning, Mr. Blake!" he said.

"Good-morning, Count von Knobloch," said the detective, with a courteous bow. "What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"My business is of a private

"My business is of a private "My business is of a private "And the count glanced

"My business is of a private nature—" And the count glanced at Tinker.

"This is my assistant," Blake said blandly. "He shares my confidence in all matters, and is discreet and trustworthy."

"Then I will speak freely, sir. To come to the point at once, I wish you to search for the youngest son of the German Emperor, who has disappeared."

"The Emperor's son!"

"Yes; Prince Gunther."

"What are the facts?" asked the detective, concealing his surprise.

"They are brief and simple," replied Count von Knobloch, who was an attache of the German Embassy in London. "About a month ago, in consequence of the breaking off of the contemplated marriage of the Princess Hilda of Saxenby to Prince Gunther, the latter had a bitter quarrel with his father, against whose decision he rebelled, vowing in strong terms that he would not give the princess up until he had heard from her own lips that she did not wish to marry him. As the result of his folly, the young prince was sent to the fortress on the island of Tarkum, and last week he escaped from there under mysterious circumstances. It is supposed that he got over to the mainland in a fishing-boat, and then succeeded in making his way fo England."

"For the purpose of having an interview with the Princess Hilda?"

"It is to be assumed that such was

England.
"For the purpose of having an interview with the Princess Hilda?"
"It is to be assumed that such was him to be assumed."

"It is to be assumed that such was his purpose."

"You have, of course, seen the princess, count?"

"I have, sir. The chief of the embassy, acting on instructions from Berlin, entrusted the matter to me yesterday morning, and I at once went down to Morvenstowe, the residence of the Duke of Saxenby. I saw the Princess Hilda in the presence of her father, but neither he nor I could obtain any information from her. She obstinately declined to say whether or not she had seen Prince Gunther. Our efforts to make her speak openly were of no avail."

"Do you believe that she has seen the young man?" inquired Sexton Blake.

"I was convinced that she had,

Blake.
"I was convinced that she had, from her demeanour," answered the

count.

"Did you make any inquiries in the neighbourhood?"

"No; I felt that it would be useless to do so. The duke and his family were on the point of returning to London, and I came up with them. I then sent a telegraphic despatch to Berlin, and at a late hour last night I received a reply from last night I received a reply from

despatch to Berlin, and at a late hour last night I received a reply, from the Kaiser himself, to the effect that I should call upon you on his behalf, and ask for your assistance. It is not feared that Prince Gunther will come to any harm, but for diplomatic reasons, as you will understand, it is advisable that he should be sent home and put under restraint again."

again."
"Yes, naturally," assented the

detective.
"He is probably now in London,
"He continued County of the continue "He is probably now in London, hiding somewhere," continued Count you Knobloch, "and I imagine that he will attempt to get into communication with the Princess Hilda. It is not likely, however, that he will venture near the Duke of Saxenby's town residence. I trust that you will do your best to find him, sir. On previous occasions you have rendered valuable assistance to my royal to the my high valuable assistance to my master, and he has the hi opinion of your discretion ability."

ability."

"I am honoured by his approval," said Sexton Blake, "and it would be a pleasure to me to assist him again. I would willingly search for the young prince, but I am not sure that I will be free to take the matter up at present. I cannot give you a positive answer, at all events, until I have—"

have——"
Blake left the sentence unfinished, and gave a quick start that was observed only by the lad. Something had suddenly occurred to him, bringing a slight flush to his face. As he recalled the individual he had met on the road two days ago near the gates of Morvenstowe, the young man whose features had seemed

资格特特特特特特特特特特特特特特特 Sexton Blake: Spy. (Continued from the previous page.)

THE SEASON SEASON SEASON AS AN AREA SEASON AND AREA SEASON AS AN AREA SEASON AND AREA SEASON AS AN AREA SEASON AND AREA SEASON AS AND AREA

familiar to him, his memory told him what had puzzled him at the time of the encounter, and a startling theory flashed to his mind. Having picked up one of the morning journals and glanced at the description given of the young German who had been arrested at Fort Ridley, his suspicions became almost a certainty. Excitement gripped him, and for a moment he forgot that he was not alone.

moment he forgot that he was not alone.
"I should like to have an answer as soon as possible," said Count von Knobloch.

as soon as possible," said Count von Knobloch.

"An answer?" murmured the detective, in an absent tone. "Oh, I begyour pardon! I fear I have been inattentive. I have decided what to do," ha went on, having now regained his self-control. "I am at the Kaiser's service. I will search for his son, but I cannot say how soon I shall find him."

A few more words brought the interview to a close, and Mrs. Bardell was summoned to show the visitor out. Several minutes later Count von Knobloch was spinning along Baker Street in a hansom, and Sexton Blake was pacing the floor of his consulting-room with quick, nervous steps, and biting hard on the end of his pipe.

"Ah, little did I think that the day would turn out like this!" he said, rubbing his hands. "I have an idea, Tinker, that we are going to engage in a game of strategy that will throw our previous achievements into the shade. I may be wrong, of course. It depends on what they want with me at the War Office."

"What are you talking about?" asked the lad. "What made you stop

"What are you talking about?" asked the lad. "What made you stop speaking to the count, and pick up that paper?" speaking to the count, and pick up that paper?"

"I had suddenly remembered some-

thing."
"You looked as if you were ex-

"You looked "."

"I had good reason to be," replied Blake. "I believe I know where Prince Gunther is."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Tinker.
"Pon't I?"
"Where is he, guv'nor? Tell me."
Sexton Blake did not answer. He stepped to the telephone, and called up the War Office; and then, after carrying on a brief conversation, he hastened into his dressing-room, and emerged almost immediately with a cap on his head, and a heavy overcoat on his arm.
"I wish you wouldn't be so provoking!" grumbled the lad. "Why won't you take me into your confidence? You have just made an appointment with Lord Dorrington for five o'clock this afternoon."
"Yes, that's right!" said Blake, with a smile.

"Yes, that's right!" said Blake, with a smile.

"And where are you going now? It isn't much after ten o'clock."

"I am going to drive my car down to Fort Ridley."

"To Fort Ridley! What on earth for, guv'nor?"

"To prove or disprove my suspicions," was the reply. "Do you understand now, my boy? I can't tell you more at present. Hold your tongue, and have patience until I come back."

The next instant Tinker was alone,

come back."

The next instant Tinker was alone, his eyes big with dawning amazement, and Blake was hurrying down the stairs, on his way to the garage round in the Marylebone Road.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Appointment — Behind the Scenes—Blake's Plan.

T twenty minutes past five o'clock that afternoon, while a damp grey mist still hung over London, a large motor-car came dashing along Whitehall, and stopped of the new War Office, The car was thickly spattered with mud, and so was the man who jumped out of it and hastened into the building, pulling off his motor-goggles as he ascended the steps.

It was not necessary for him to

ascended the steps.

It was not necessary for him to show a card, his shrewd, clean-shaven features were a sure and speedy passport. 'He mounted the stairs at the heels of an attendant, who ushered him into a large room on the first floor, where Lord Dorrington, who was a famous old soldier, and the Chief of the General Staff, was waiting for the visitor.

"Well, Blake, here you are at last,"

"I hardly know myself," replied the chief, with a gesture of despair. But, tell me, is there any way in which this disaster could be retrieved?" asked Blake.

"There is one way," answered Lord Dorrington, "but it would be a waste of breath to speak of it."

"What is it, sir? How could the desired end be accomplished?"

"Only by somebody doing what our best men have failed to do—by our

he said brusquely. " And nearly half

an hour late."

"I could not help it," replied
Sexton Blake. "I was delayed by
business of a serious nature."

"It cannot have been as serious as
my hypiroses."

my business."
"I won't dispute that point, sir."
"You have been in the country.
That is not London mud on your

"You are quite right. Your lord-ship should have adopted my profes-sion instead of going in for a military

sion instead of going in for a military career."

There was a brief interval of silence, while a secretary who was present gathered up a sheaf of papers, and withdrew to an adjoining room. It was evident, from his expression, that the chief was very greatly perturbed, his bronzed face was sternly set, and there was a look of care in the eyes that had seen many a victory won on British battle-fields.

"We can speak freely," he said. "We are alone now, and I have given orders that we are not to be disturbed. You are aware, of course, of what has occurred at Fort Ridley and on the island of Tarkum."

"Yes, I have read all about it—all that appeared in the Press," Blake replied.

"Ah, the Press don't know everything! The printed facts are cor-

that appeared in the Press," Blake replied.

"Ah, the Press don't know everything! The printed facts are correct, but they don't give any idea of the true situation."

"The affair is grave, then?"

"It is more than grave, Mr. Blake, as I am going to reveal to you in confidence. On the one hand, we have lost the services of two of our best Secret Service men, and lost also the fruits of their labours, consisting of minute information regarding the fortress on the island of Tarkum; it, occupies a strategic position of great importance, and we have been anxious to know all about it. On the other hand, the attempt on the part of Germany to get information concerning Fort Ridley has been a success."

"Indeed! The papers gave me a

many to get information concerning Fort Ridley has been a success."

"Indeed! The papers gave me a different impression. Did not the young German who was caught have in his possession a camera containing plates that had been used?"

"Yes, that it true. But the man who escaped took with him—he was distinctly heard to say as much to his companion—took with him a quantity of photographs, notes, and plans. He had been at work for several days, and I have no doubt that he got all he wanted."

"I had no idea," said the detective, "that the situation was so serious. I judged, however, that there was more in it than I was aware of from what I had read."

"It is most unfortunate," declared Lord. Dowington.

more in it than I was aware of from what I had read."

"It is most unfortunate," declared Lord Dorrington. "I thought I should surprise you. Now that you have learned the truth, you can understand my feelings. The fortifications at Tarkum and at Fort Ridley are of equal value. We have failed to get the plans of our rival's stronghold, and have lost two fine men in the attempt, while Germany is—or soon will be—in possession of all that she wants to know about Fort Ridley. It is a menacing, crippling state of affairs," he went on, his keen eyes blazing as he paced the floor. "It is a blow to our country, a loss to our defences. It gives Germany a tremendous advantage, and deprives Britain of one. There is quite a ferment over it in the War Office, and most of my colleagues seem to have lost their heads."

There was another short silence, while Sexton Blake pendaged what

most of my colleagues seem to have lost their heads."

There was another short silence, while Sexton Blake pondered what had been disclosed to him. His foresight had not been far wrong. He had shrewdly guessed that morning, after the summons to the War Office and his interview with Count von Knobloch, that there was something of this nature behind the newspaper accounts. A vague idea had occurred to him then, and he had since outlined it more clearly in his mind. But he was not yet ready to divulge it. He was waiting for a certain statement—he meant to pave the way to it—that would give him an opportunity of making a proposal.

"I am at your service, Lord Dorrington," he said at length, as his companion still preserved silence. "But you have not yet told me why you sent for me."

"I hardly know myself," replied the chief, with a gesture of despair. "But, tell me, is there any way in which this disaster could be retrieved?" asked Blake.

"There is one way," answered Lord Dorrington, "but it would be a waste of breath to speak of it."

department getting a complete set of the plans of the new fortifications on the island of Tarkum. That would counteract the loss we have sustained at Fort Ridley, and balance the scale. It would give Germany and Great Britain an equal advantage. Each country would possess valuable information concerning the other's strongest fortress."

"I understand. I thought you would say that."

"But a strict watch will be kept at Tarkum hereafter. It will be impossible for what I have suggested to be done."

possible for what I allowed be done."

"I don't regard it as impossible.
On the contrary, I believe I can get what you want."

"You can! How? What do you mean, Mr. Blake?"

"User patience, and I will ex-

mean, Mr. Blake?"

"Have patience, and I will explain," replied Sexton Blake. "Do the newspapers state correctly that the military works on the island of Tarkum are not quite finished?"

"Yes, that is correct," assented the chief

And where would the construction

"And where would the construction plans be?"

"They would be in the possession of the commandant of the fortress, who is Colonel Wenzel."

"Thank you, Lord Dorrington. That is all I want to know. I will take this case with the understanding that you leave it solely to me, and that no one but yourself shall know what I propose to do."

"You can rely on that certainly. But you have not explained your purpose, as you said you would. Surely you don't expect to get those papers from the German commandant?"

"I would rather not tell you any more, sir. I shall start work without delay, and I trust that I shall succeed within a comparatively short time; and meanwhile you must see to it that the proceedings against the prisoner at Fort Ridley are held in abeyance. I don't want him to be brought to trial until I have completed my task."

"Why not?" asked the chief.

"For a very sound reason," Blake said calmly. "Because that prisoner happens to be Prince Gunther, the youngest son of the Emperor William."

The detective had sprung his surprise, and it may be imagined what

The detective had sprung his sur

The detective had sprung his surprise, and it may be imagined what sort of an effect it had on Lord Dorrington. His types bulged out, his face flushed hotly, and he gasped for breath. He stared incredulously at Blake, speechless with bewilderment. "That spy is the Kaiser's son!" he cried. "Le you expect me to believe such a tale!"

"You must believe it," Sexton Blake answered. "It is quite true. I have seen him to-day."

"By heavens! What is to be done with him?" ejaculated the chief.

"You must put him at my disposal," Blake replied. "His capture, I believe, is going to work to your advantage and mine. Listen to me, Lord Dorrington, and note carefully what I say. In the first place, the secret of the young prince's identity must be preserved, and it will not be difficult to do so. With the exception of ourselves and my assistant, no one in England or Germany knows where the young man is, and probably nobody will know until I am ready to take action in regard to him."

"His accomplice must know that he is under arrest at Fort Ridley."

the young man is, and probably nobody will know until I am ready to take action in regard to him."

"His accomplice must know that he is under arrest at Fort Ridley."

"That is true. I did not mention the accomplice, but he had not slipped my mind. I have reckoned with him, and I don't think he will interfere with my designs. It is possible that he is hiding somewhere in England, waiting for a chance to escape. On the other hand, if he has got over to his own country, and secretly disclosed the whereabouts of the prince, the German Government will certainly ignore the matter for the present, realising the consequences that might ensue if it were to be made public. They will keep quiet, in the hope that the identity of your prisoner will not be discovered, and that he will either be acquitted or get off with a light sentence. Therefore, to sum up, I am of the opinion that nothing will occur to spoil my project.",

"And what is your project?" said Lord Dorrington. "You have not yet told me."

"I will tell you now, in a few words," the detective answered. "I am going to Tarkum with the intention of getting the entire set of plans from the commandant of the fortress, and thus giving you an advantage equal to the one that Germany has gained in regard to Fort Ridley."

"It is madness, Mr. Blake. You are bound to fail."

"Don't be too sure of that. I have an idea that I will succeed. If I fail, however, I will have another string."

to my bow. In the event of my being captured, I will demand and obtain an interview with the Kaiser, and bring him to terms."

bring him to terms."
"How will you do that?"
"By threatening to let all the world know that it is Prince Gunther of

"By threatening to let all the world know that it is Prince Gunther of Prussia who has been caught spying on English territory, and is awaiting trial on a charge of felony."

"By heavens, that might stir up all sorts of trouble!"

"No; it will avoid trouble, and put Britain and Germany on an equal footing in their Secret Service work. That is my double object, and I shall do my best to achieve it."

"Then go!" cried Lord Dorrington, his voice quivering with emotion. "My best wishes will go with you!"

Half an hour later, after leaving is car at the garage, Sexton Blake Half an hour later, after leaving his car at the garage, Sexton Blake walked into his consulting-room, and startled Tinker by bidding him prepare at once for a long journey, and during the time that it required to pack a couple of bags, and to eat a cold supper hurriedly served by the landlady, Blake explained everything to the lad. Between seven and eight o'clock they left the house, accompanied by Pedro, and an hour afterwards they were gliding out of Liverpool Street Station in a luxurious express-train, bound for the Continent by way of Parkeston Quay and the Hook of Holland.

THE 4th CHAPTER

Crossing the Rubicon—In Snug Quarters—The Old Wine.

"OW soon do we start, my good fellow?"

"Almost at once, herr. Time is nearly up, and there are no

more pasengers to come.

"And how long will it take us to

"And now long will it take us to cross?"

"A little more than three hours, herr. But it may be less than that to-day, for we shall have the wind behind us."

It was early in the afternoon of a bleak, cold November day, and the speakers were standing on the deck of a small steamer called the Charlotte, which piled at regular intervals between the island of Tarkum and the town of Hemsden, and was now lying alongside of the landing-stage at the edge of the above-mentioned town.

The individual to whom the questions had been put was the captain of the vessel—a thick-set, elderly man, with weatherbeaten features—and the other speaker was a tall gentleman with a bristling moustache, who wore a long dark overcoat trimmed with expensive fur, and a cap with a glazed peak. His bearing and attire suggested that he was of some importance, and colour was lent to that theory by the fact that he had come on board accompanied by a huge bloodhound, and by a plainly-dressed youth, who appeared to be a servant.

"He might have been more polite, instead of calling me 'My good fellow' in such a patronising tone," reflected Captain Smols, who had a sense of his own importance. "Still, there is no telling who he may be. I shouldn't wonder if he were an official from Berlin, and if he is that, I can guess why he is going to Tarkum."

The little vessel moved away from the landing-stage, gathering speed as it left the twinkling lights of Hemsden I feather behind it. Rapidly it ploughed across the wide estuary of the river, and between six and seven o'clock in the evening, after a run of twenty-six miles, it swung alongside the quay at the village of Tarkum, and the few passengers, who had been keeping warm and comfortable in the cabin, went ashore and dispersed in the darkness.

There were no officers awaiting the arrival, much to the relief of Blake and the led, who, with the dog at their heels, trudged into the village and inquired their way to the Hotel Kronprinz, which was within a short distance of the quay. Though hardly worthy of the name it bore, it was quite a pretentious house for so small a place as Tarkum. The landlord, Christian Schmidt, was standing in the doorway, and his plum

"Yes, herr, the very best."
"Thank you. I shall want one for yself and one for my servant ritz."

myself and one for my servant Fritz."

"You shall have them, herr. But I must tell you that you cannot expect the attention you would get at another time, for I have sent my waiter away for the winter, and my wife and daughter are visiting relatives at Hanover. There is no one to look after the place but myself."

"That will be all right, my good man," said Blake, who was pleased by the statements that had just been made to him. "I am sure we shall have nothing to complain of. I am here on business, and my stay will be a brief one. And now, to speak of my dog. He is rather an ill-tempered animal, and I should prefer to keep him in my bed chamber."

"Certainly, herr," assented Christian was a should be a brief one.

"Certainly, herr," assented Christian Schmidt. "Just as you like. Do you wish to go to your rooms at once?"

Do you wish to go to your rooms at once?"

"No, we will have something to eat first, if you can provide us with a good meal."

"I can do that, sir."

"And have you any choice wines?" asked Blake.

"Ah, herr, choice is not the word for it!" replied the landlord. He chuckled, and his face flushed with pride. "As it happens," he went on, "I have some wine which the Kaiser himself might be glad to have in his cellars. Three dozen of old Johannisberger Cabinet, which I bought at a bargain many years ago. Three dozen left out of seven, and worth their weight in gold."

The detective rubbed his hands and smiled. He had put the question with a certain object in view, and the answer had been more satisfactory than he had expected.

"I am surprised that you have any left," he remarked. "Perhaps the officers at the fort are not aware that you have it."

"They know all about it, herr," said Christian Schmidt, "but it is

the officers at the fort are not aware that you have it."

"They know all about it, herr," said Christian Schmidt, "but it is very seldom that they drink it. The price is too high for their purses."

"Well, it is not too high for mine. I will have a bottle with my supper, and the sooner that is ready the better. You can put my servant at that small table in the corner."

"Very good, herr. I will not keep you waiting long. But—but—"

keep you waiting long. But—but—"
The landlord paused for a moment, with an air of confusion.
"I beg your pardon," he continued, "but would you be so obliging as to fill out the usual form? As you, of course, know, herr, I must report your arrival to the police without delay. I dare not wait until morning, for they have been more strict since those British spies were—"

wait until morning, for they have been more strict since those British spies were——"

"So I must conform to the law, eh?" interrupted Sexton Blake, with a hearty laugh. "I forgot about that. You are quite right, though. You must treat me as you would anybody else. But I sha'n't take the trouble to fill out a form, my good fellow. Here is my card, which is all that is necessary."

And he handed a slip of pasteboard to the landlord, who, when he had read the name that was engraved upon it, gave a slight start, and bowed very low.

"I am honoured by your presence under my humble roof, herr baron." He said, "and you may be assured of my best attention."

He bowed again, and left the room, and when the door had closed behind him Tinker and the detective glanced at each other.

"Well, most noble baron, you've done it," said the lad. "Don't you feel like wriggling in your chair?"

"I'll make you wriggle if you give me any of your impudence," snapped Blake. "Everything has gone smoothly so far, and I believe we shall pull through without a hitch. That old Johannisberger will be a capital bait for the hook."

"But what if there should be an officer at the fort who knows the real herr baron?"

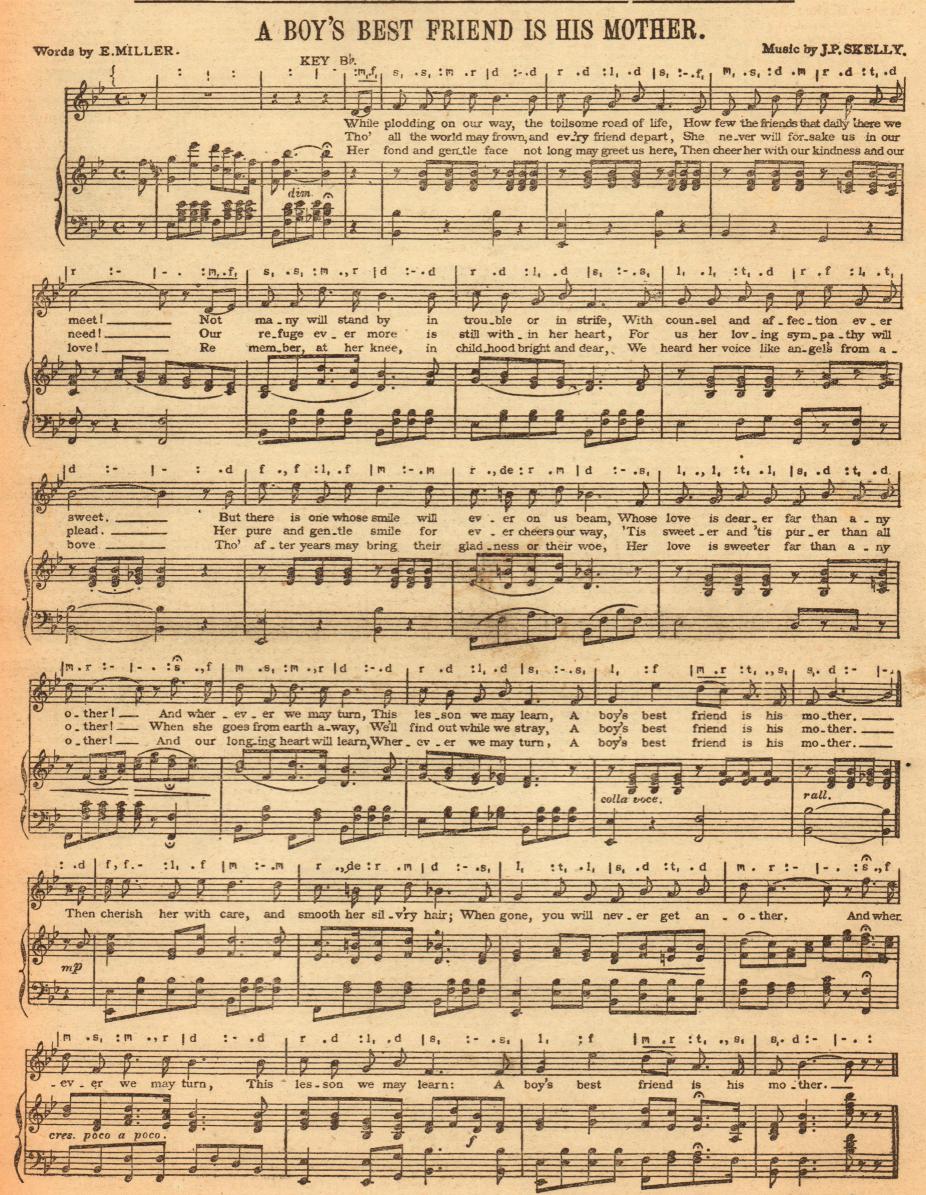
"I doubt if there is, my boy. I must take the risk, at all events."

As he spoke the door opened, and Christian Schmidt appeared with a large tray, on which were various cold dishes and a tall bottle thickly crusted with cobwebs.

THE 5th CHAPTER. Cool Nerve—Luncheon at the Fort—The Invitation.

ETWEEN nine and ten o'cleck on the following morning, after a hearty breakfast, Sexton Blake left the Hotel Kron-(This stirring new serial is continued on vage 454.)

This Grand and Popular Song Should be Learnt and Sung by Every Boy.



Why is a doctor who has given up his practice like a man in a temper?

Because he has lost his patients.

Sexton Blake: Spy. (Continued from page 452.)

prinz, where Tinker had been in-structed to remain with the blood-

prinz, where Tinker had been instructed to remain with the bloodhound.

He knew that he was in the shadow of a peril that might put him behind prison-bars for long years, but you would have looked in vain for any sign of trepidation on his impassive features. At a brisk stride, with buoyant step, he walked straight on to the gateway that gave access to the fortifications enclosure, and handed a card to the sentry who was on duty there; and when the sentry had summoned another soldier, the latter took charge of Blake, and conducted him on to the fort, and into a cold and cheerless room. Here the detective was left alone, and after he had waited for a few moments, and was beginning to feel slightly nervous, Colonel Wenzel appeared, followed by several other officers.

"I have the honour, I believe," said the commandant, glaneing at the card that had been brought to him, "of addressing Baron Rudolf Steiner, Chief of the Prussian Secret Eureau."

"That is right, herr colonel," Sexton Blake blandly replied.
"And your business with me?"

"It is his Majesty's business, not mine. I am here by request of the Kaiser, who wishes me to inspect the fortifications, and inquire into your system of guarding them, and report to him whether or not, in my opinion, further precautions should be taken to prevent espionage."

"Have you nothing in writing from the Emperor?"

"Nothing, herr colonel. Surely my card is sufficient!"

There was a brief interval of silence, fraught with keen suspense for the daring Britisher. The eyes of the commandant were upon him, and ho fancied he could read doubt and suspicion in them. But he was equal to the emergency. He had not relied solely on the power of the name he had assumed. By a subtle movement, apparently unintentional, he caused the folds of his overcoat to swing open, and there was revealed underneath, clasped on

had not relied solely on the power of the name he had assumed. By a subtle movement, apparently unintentional, he caused the folds of his overcoat to swing open, and there was revealed underneath, clasped on to the front of his jacket, a splendid decoration that glittered with jewels. It produced the effect that was to have been expected. It was at once seen and recognised by all of the officers, who well knew that this blazing order had been a gift from the Kaiser—such a gift as he was wont to bestow only on those who were high in his favour.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Colonel Wenzel, his cold expression melting as if by magic to a cordial smile.

"I regret to trouble your hear."

"I regret to trouble you, herr

"I regret to trouble you, here colonel."

"It is no trouble. I have been expecting his Majesty to take some such step as this ever since that affair of the British spies. But allow me to introduce you to my brother-officers. This is Major Wolff, this Captain Webber, and this Dr. Helwig."

The officers bowed and smiled, and offered their hands to Blake, who was careful to preserve an attitude of slight superiority.

"I hope that you will have luncheon with us?" continued the colonel.

colonel. "With pleasure," assented the disguised detective.
"And meanwhile, no doubt, you would like to look at the fortifica-

would like to look at the fortifications."

"I' you will be so kind. I am compelled to return to Berlin tomorrow."

"I will be your guide," said Colonel Wenzel. And he linked arms with his guest and led him away.

Two or three hours later, after a walk that had covered nearly every square yard of the fortress enclosure, the pseudo Baron Steiner, of the Prussian Secret Service Bureau, was seated at luncheon with his new friends in a mess-room that displayed many regimental trophies.

"I suppose your duties often take you to London?" said Major Wolff when cigars had been lighted.

"And in secret?" put in Dr. Helwig.

"In secret. of course." assented.

"And in secret?" put in Dr. Helwig.
"In secret, of course," assented Blake, "Yes, I am very familiar with London."
"You are perhaps acquainted with Sexton Blake, the clever British detective?" said Captain Webber.
"Few people know him better than I do," replied the supposed baron.
"Your men are at present on the watch for him, are they not?"

"On the watch for Sexton Blake? Why should they be?"
"Because we have received an intimation from Berlin to the effect that Sexton Blake has disappeared suddenly from London, and that there is reason to suspect that he has been engaged by his Government to get plans of our fertifications. The warning to us must have emanated from your department."

"Yes, quite right. I have some knowledge of the matter, but I don't know how much truth there is in it."

"Sexton Blake is a marvellous man, to give him full credit," declared the colonel, "but there are some things that he cannot do. For instance, I should like to see him try to steal that set of plans from my desk."

"So should I, herr colonel," murmured Blake, with an unobserved twinkle in his eye.

He had finished his cigar, and now, having glanced at his watch, he pushed back his chair and rose to his feet.

"I have some writing to do, if you will excuse me," he said. "I am indebted to you for your hospitality, and I beg that you will let me return it. Will you dine with me to-night, at seven o'clock at the Hotel Kronprinz?"

"All of us?" asked Colonel Wenzel.

at seven o'clock at the Hotel Kronpring?"

"All of us?" asked Colonel Wenzel.

"Yes, the more the merrier."

"I am afraid we cannot all come."

"Those who do not will miss a treat, for I have requisitioned two dozen bottles of the landlord's old Johannisberger Cabinet. Will not that tempt you?"

It did more than tempt them. There was a chorus of delighted exclamations, and each and every officer shouted his acceptance of the invitation.

"Very well," said the colonel.

"We will all come. But you must absolve us from blame, herr baron, if anything goes wrong at the fort during our absence."

"Certainly," replied Blake, with a smile. "I promise to grant you full absolution."

His popularity had increased by leaps and bounds and the German

smile. "I promise to grant you full absolution."

His popularity had increased by leaps and bounds, and the German officers accompanied him to the gateway, where he left them, and walked back to the village. He had an interview with Tinker, and then he summoned the landlord, and told him of the dinner he proposed to give.

"But I have no waiters, herr baron!" Christian Schmidt exclaimed, in dismay.

"Never mind about that," said Blake. "My servant will do the waiting, and uncork the wine. You will have nothing to attend to but the cooking."

"Your guests will not complain of it, he assured."

"Your guests will not complain of it, be assured."
"I hope not. That is all, I think. You can submit the menu to me later. By the way, Schmidt, have you ever tasted your Johannisberger?"
"Never, herr baron. Can a poor man afford to drink melted gold?"
"You shall do so to-night. I am going to send a half bottle out to you."

going to send a manyou."

"Thank you, herr baron!" cried the landlord. "Thank you!"

And as he withdrew, with a look of rapture on his fat face, he smacked his lips in anticipation of the promised gift.

"The fortress of Tarkum is my oyster," Sexton Blake remarked to the lad.

"The fortress of Tarkum is my oyster," Sexton Blake remarked to the lad.

"Be careful how you open it," said Tinker. "You may get your fingers squeezed."

"Not if the drug does its work."

"You can depend on that, guv'nor. Where are you going now?"

"To have a talk with Captain Smols, my boy," was the answer, "and arrange with him to have his vessel with steam up to-night, in case I should receive a telegram calling me back to Berlin on urgent business."

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THE 6th CHAPTER.

Blake's Dinnor-party—In the Lion's Den—Ail Well.

T was nearly mine o'clock, and most of the inhabitants of Tarkum, who lived as do people who dwell out of the world, had already gone to bed. In a large apartment on the ground floor of the Hotel Kronprinz, an apartment with panelled walls from which hung generals, the light cast from a shaded lamp shone on a long table littered with china and glass, and on the uniformed officers of the Tarkum garrison, who were, with one exception, in a state that might be described as dead to the world.

The party had sat down shortly after seven o'clock, and the dinner had from the first gone swimmingly, with merry laughter and sparkling.

The norm of the many farmingly, with merry laughter and sparkling.

The norm of the many farmingly drugsed, the left the Hotel Kronprinz, and beauther that might be detective observed with satisfaction, for it was likely to prove to the sack and his farmily, and of several famous Prussian generals, the light cast from a shaded lamp shone on a long table littered with china and glass, and on the uniformed officers of the Tarkum garrison, who were, with one exception, in a state that might be described as dead to the world.

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The norm of the many farmingly drugsed, the left the Hotel Kronprinz, and beauther that were closed, and the dinner had been given was a large, flat-topped desk, and Blake, and the dinner had been given was a large, flat-topped desk, and Blake and the lad vere soon seated at this, side by side, each with a fine-pointed pencil can be provided to the were closed, and the l

conversation. Tinker, as the servant Fritz, had been here and there and everywhere, filling glasses and fetching steaming dishes from the kitchen, and carrying off empty ones; and he had found time, in addition, to uncork more than a dozen bottles of the priceless Johannisberger Cabinet, and to drop furtively into each bottle a small quantity of a narcotic drug that was tasteless and colourless, and harmless in its results.

Eight officers in all had accepted the invitation of the pseudo baron, and one by one, by gradual degrees that had roused no suspicion in the minds of the others, they had yielded to the insidious effects of the narcotic, and lost all interest in their surroundings, some sliding helplessly to the floor, and some collapsing in their chairs, where they lay slumbering heavily. The single exception was Colonel Wenzel, and he, too, was nearly gone.

"We owe you many thanks, herr nearly gone.

"We owe you many thanks, herr baron," he said thickly. "It has been an honour and a pleasure to know you, and to enjoy your hospitality. Very good of you indeed. Won't forget it."

"The pleasure has been on my side, herr colonel," Sexton Blake answered, with a feigned yawn.

Colonel Wenzel tried to rouse himself, but the effort was futile.

"Very quiet," he continued. "Where's everybody? Why don't somebody talk? Too warm in hereno air—makes me feel as if I wanted to—"." It was all that he could say. The

The was all that he could say. The glass that he was holding dropped from his limp clutch to the table, and the next instant he lurched forward, slid from his chair to the floor, and lay there breathing stertorously. Blake rose to his feet with a glint of satisfaction in his eyes, and when he had glanced at the inert form of the officer for a moment he stepped towards the door, which, before he had reached it, was cautiously opened by Tinker.

"All right here?" inquired the lad.

by Tinker.
"All right here?" inquired the lad,

by Tinker.

"All right here?" inquired the lad, in a whisper.

"Yes, the colonel has gone off at last," Blake replied. "They are all unconscious. And what of Schmidt?" "He is in the same condition, guv'nor. He is sprawled out on a rug by the store."

"Good, my boy! The coast is clear, and I must make the most of my chance. Come, lend me a hand. Be quick!"

As the detective spoke he stooped over Colonel Wenzel, and began to unbutton his jacket. Five or six minutes later the transformation had been effected; the colonel's tall figure was arrayed in the serge suit worn by his host—they had been put on so that he should not catch cold—and Sexton Blake had got into the officer's brilliant uniform, which fitted him to perfection. He now adjusted a heavier false moustache for the one he had been wearing, and then, opening a small make-up box that Tinker handed to him, he looked at himself in a tiny mirror while with deft fingers he altered his features by touching them with a stick of grease-paint.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

touching them with a cook paint.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked, as he tightened a buckle of the sword that hung at his belt.

"Splendid!" declared the lad.

"You are the image of the commander, and I believe you will pull the thing through. Have you got the keys?"

"Yes, here they are," said Blake, as he thrust a hand into a pocket of the trousers. "A whole bunch of them."

pacing, and a lamp was burning dimly.

dimly.

There was no challenge from the sentry. He stiffly saluted, not doubting that it was Colonel Wenzel he saw before him; and Sexton Blake, admirably disguised as the commandant, passed through the gate. He had taken it for granted that no one would presume to question him concerning his return, that it would be supposed he had come back to attend to something he had forgotten. He could have laughed as he reflected that he was again in the lion's den, and this time in the role of the guardian of the place. With increasing confidence, his nerves as firm as steel, he went straight on to the fort itself, and boldly entered under the nose of another saluting sentry.

He knew just where to go, having gained that knowledge on his previous visit. Without hesitation he traversed several corridors, passing by the guard-room where soldiers were chatting; and then, stopping by a door, he took the bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried them one by one. In less than two minutes he had let himself into Colonel Wenzel's private apartment, switched on the electric light, and unlocked and opened the big desk that stood in a corner; and when he had made a brief search, ransacking drawers and pigeon-holes, he found what he wanted.

He held in his hand the coveted object of his quest, and as he realised

pigeon-holes, he found what he wanted.

He held in his hand the coveted object of his quest, and as he realised its value he was thrilled to the heart. Here were a roll of blue-prints, which, as he perceived by going quickly over them, contained plans of all the fortifications on the island of Tarkum. That there was nothing missing Blake was aware, since he had mentally noted everything he had seen in the enclosure that morning.

missing Blake was aware, since he had mentally noted everything he had seen in the enclosure that morning. What he had discovered would, if put in possession of the British War Office, counterbalance the information gleaned at Fort Ridley by Prince Gunther's companion.

"It is a rich prize," he murmured, "and well worth the risk. What a blow to the colonel's security!"

Blake had not oveflooked the danger of being pursued and caught, even if he were to get a fair start. On the contrary, he had reckoned with that from the first, and he meant to take a certain precaution which, he trusted, would ensure the ultimate achievement of his object, whether or not he should be able to escape. For an instant a vague, chilling fear gripped him, and he wondered if it was a premonition. He banished it from his mind, however, and when he had helped himself to a choice cigar from a box on the desk, and had set it alight, he extinguished the electric light, and withdrew from the room, locking the door behind him.

He departed from the fort and the enclosure as coolly as he had come,

locking the door behind him.

He departed from the fort and the enclosure as coolly as he had come, the two sentries saluting him again as he went by; and at a quarter past ten o'clock, after an absence of less than an hour, he walked into the Hotel Kronprinz, and found that all was well there. Landlord and officers were in the same condition, dead to the world.

"What luck?" asked Tinker.

"Here they are," replied Sexton Blake, as he took the blue-prints from his pocket. "I obtained them without any trouble. And now to get to work, my boy," he added. "I will change clothes with the colonel after we have finished our task, which is more important than anything else."

of Baron Steiner, tempted by the old Johannisberger Cabinet, they had played blindly into the hands of the shrewdest and bravest Britisher that ever did a service for his country.

"How long should the drug hold good?" inquired Tinker.

"If it was not injured by the seaair," the detective replied, "the
effects of it ought to last for a couple
of hours yet. We can't be sure of
that, however, so we must lose no
time."

"And what about Captain Smols, guv'nor? Can we rely on him?"
"I think so, my boy. As I gave him a couple of twenty-mark coins, I have no doubt that he has kept his promise, and that steam is up on the Charlotte."

"I hope so. If it isn't—"
"Don't talk any more, Tinker.
Keep your mind on what you are
doing."

"Don't talk any more, Tinker. Keep your mind on what you are doing."

All was quiet without, and within there was no sound but the scratching of the pencils and the heavy breathing of the sleepers. England was far, far away, across the North Sea; the flag of Prussia waved over the island of Tarkum, and yonder on the mainland stretched the mighty German Empire. Seldom had Blake and the lad been in a position of greater peril, and certain it was that they had never risked their liberty in a bolder or more reckless undertaking; but they worked steadily on, with deft and rapid fingers, as calmly as if they were at home in Baker Street, and at length, when half an hour had elapsed, their task was completed. The plans of the fortifications had all been copied, in much reduced size, on to a number of the slips of onion-skin paper, and these, when they had been compressed into as small a bulk as possible, made a tiny roll that was less than two inches long, and no more than a quarter of an inch in diameter.

With a sigh of relief Sexton Blake took this, and calling the dog to him, fumbled at his neck for a moment. There was a faint click, and the next instant, as another one was heard, the little roll of copies disappeared. They were in a secret receptacle—it had been used for similar purposes before—that was concealed in the interior of Pedro's collar, and was so ingeniously constructed as to defy discovery.

"I'm glad that's done and over with," said Tinker. "There will be one thing we won't have to worry about, if we should be caught."

"It is only a precaution," the detective told him, almost fiercely. "We are not going to be caught. Our work is only half done. We must elude capture, for Britain's sake."

"And for our own sakes, guv'nor. My word, wouldn't they give it to us hot if we were to be laid by the heels! We had better be off while we have the chance."

"I must change clothes with the colonel first."

"Rather!" assented the lad. "You

"I must change clothes with the colonel first."

"Rather!" assented the lad. "You don't want to go back in that rig. But where is your Baron Steiner moustache? You are not disguised

without it."

"I am going to put it on," replied Blake, who had a moment before taken off the moustache he had used in impersonating the commandant of the fort. He had the blue prints in one hand, and with the other he was fumbling in his pockets. "But I can't find it," he continued. "What could I have done with it? Do you remember where I—"

He paused abruptly, startled by a scraping noise that Tinker also had heard; and as the two swung round and looked behind them, their hearts heard; and as the two swung round and looked behind them, their hearts seemed to stop beating, and consternation held them dumb and motionless. Either because he had drunk less than his comrades, or because the drug had been less potent than it should have been, Major Wolff had recovered his senses, and scrambled to his feet. For a couple of seconds he appeared to be dazed, unable to collect his thoughts; and then, as he perceived the blue prints in Blake's hand, as he saw the clean-shaved features of the man who had played the part of Baron Steiner, a gleam of intelligence flashed to his eyes. A glance at the colonel's civilian dress told him all there was to know, and as he turned again to the uniformed detective a mighty oath burst from his lips.

"You scoundrel!" he roared, as he

"You scoundrel!" he roared, as he whipped his sword from his scabbard. "You are an imposter! By himmel, you must be Sexton Blake, the British spy!"

(Another splendid instalment next Tuesday, , 16 large pages—Id. as usual.)

TO CENTRAL

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

HEN my friends have read this number, I want them to send me a few words as to what they think of it—to tell me their candid and honest opinion of the new serial stories, and all the other features which appear. I have made such a special effort to put together for them this time a real, good Christmas number that I sincerely hope they will be thoroughly pleased with it. All the same, when they write to me I want them to tell me the honest truth—to let me have their candid opinion of the issue. to send me a few words as

FUTURE EVENTS.

In a few weeks' time the 500th number of The Boys' Friend—since it was first made into a penny paper—will appear, and, hard as I have worked on this Christmas number, I and my staff are working still harder to make our 500th number a gigantic success. I do not propose to say much about what I am going to do for that issue now, but it will contain, among other attractive features, a new serial by Malcolm Dayle, the author of that very popular story, "The Odds Against Him."

So much for the moment for our 500th number, but I want to impress upon my friends that in the new year THE Bors' Friend is going to make a very great bid for still wider popularity. Every week it will contain bright, attractive, clearly-written articles on topics of interest to lads, dealing with sports, hobbies, games, indoor and outdoor pastimes, and everything that can possibly appeal to them.

Not only this, but I have in hand a number of other features which I feel

Not only this, but I have in hand a number of other features which I feel certain will enable us to say before very long that The Boys' Friend has three times the circulation of any other boys' paper in the country.

EARLY DAYS AT WORK.

other boys' paper in the country.

EARLY DAYS AT WORK.

One of my lads writes me an extremely interesting, and, at the same time, a rather pitiful little letter about his early days at work.

He says he is only fourteen, and has been working for about seven or eight weeks, and during this period he has been very unlucky—getting into scrapes, doing things wrong, and sometimes forgetting to do things which he has been ordered to do—and then he mentions one special incident on which he wants advice from me. This is what happened to my young friend "Harold B."

One busy Friday, when he was full of work attending to the mail, one of the partners of the business told him he had to go to the library, take his book, exchange it for another one, and bring it back. Being much occupied, "Harold B" forgot all about the library, which seemed to him not a very important as the mail—and it quite slipped out of his mind.

In the afternoon, when he was hard at work reckoning up his book to see that the stamps were correct, that all the letters had gone off, and that everything was in proper order, the partner came to him and asked if he had been to the library. Thereupon "Harold B" replied "No," and the partner rather angrily inquired, "How is that?" to which poor "Harold B" had to confess that he had forgotten all about it. The partner then said sternly, "Be off to the library at once, and remember this, that a person who forgets is no good." Crushed and disheartened, poor "Harold B." went to the library, feeling, as he himself said, "properly miserable."

In the evening, when he was at home, his mother noticed that he was looking depressed and unhappy, and forced him to tell her his trouble. On hearing about it, his mother said, "Well, write to the Editor of The Bors' Fairen, and ask him what he has to say on the subject."

My dear "Harold B," I don't want you to disregard the warnings of your employers—it is because I think you have already taken sufficient notice of

My dear Harold B, I don't want you to disregard the warnings of your employers—it is because I think you have already taken sufficient notice of what this gentleman said to you that I now say don't worry any more about it. The incidents which you describe to me I think you will find have hap-

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A Christmas Greeting to My Boys.

FOR the sixteenth year in succession it is my fortunate and happy lot to send, through the medium of our dear old paper a greeting to my chums, not only in the United Kingdom, but all over the world our dear old paper a greeting to my chums, not only in the United Kingdom, but all over the world—
to far-off Australia and New Zealand, to America, to Canada, to South Africa, and to every spot on
the earth's surface where the British boy is to be found. My friends know that I am not exaggerating in
the least when I say that THE BOYS' FRIEND finds its way into the furthermost corners of the world,
and it numbers among its readers British boys who have emigrated, boys born of British parents in our
Colonies, and even native soms of some of the great Eastern races. The family circle of THE BOYS' FRIEND
is indeed a wide one, and peace and good will should reign in the hearts of us all at this season of the
year, as I send forth once more the old, hearty wish: "A very, very happy Christmas."

I have often said in this chat that I would like to take each one of my readers and friends by
the hand at this season and wish them personally the best of good health, fortune, and happiness, but
such a feat is I fear impossible, the number of my friends being, I am glad to say, legion.

Yet, although I am denied the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with most of them, yet it does
not in the least lessen the heartiness nor the sincerity of the greeting which I send to them on this page
when I wish them one and all a most enjoyable and merry Christmas.

pened to pretty well every boy when he first started out in life. The only way to avoid them is to be constantly on your guard, and if you are told to do a thing, to do it promptly. Had you asked the partner whether you should go to the library, at once, or after you had finished the mail, you would have avoided the trouble into which you fell; because, had he insisted upon your going at once, the job would have been done, and you would have returned and gone on with your work of attending to the mail. But the partner, probably a busy man, did not say when he wanted you to get the book, only just that he wanted it, and so the matter was left to your memory.

In future, when you find yourself in a similar case, pick up a scrap of paper and scribble on it "Book—library," or whatever the job may be which you have to do after the one you have in hand, and place it in front of you so that you cannot possibly forget. The little reproach which the partner administered will not be carned again.

Be assured of one thing, my lad—

partner administered will not be earned again.

Be assured of one thing, my lad—every boy starting out in life has to encounter a certain amount of criticism and a certain amount of rebuke. It is never given to any lad to go straight away and do everything perfectly—we all have to learn by experience.

straight away and do everything perfectly—we all have to learn by experience.

I remember once being in an office with a gentleman when an office-boy came in. He had done some thought-less thing which had worried his employer, who turned upon him very sharply, and said, "Good gracious, lad, why don't you think? Do you want to be an office-boy all your life?" Now, that phrase struck me as being a very telling one, and I happen to know that that particular office-boy took it so much to heart that his employer very seldom again had to rebuke him—indeed, now he regards that one-time office-boy as his right-hand man, and practically the whole of the business is in his charge.

The little rebuke on the part of your employer should not be taken too much to heart, but it should always be remembered, because, after all, criticism by our seniors always has something in it to which we should give heed, even if occasionally it may seem unjust criticism.

So, "Harold B.,"

unjust criticism. So, "Harold B.," go pluckily on your way; try to do your best, and you will find that the scrapes you get into and the omissions you make will become fewer week by week. unjust criticism. So, "Harold B.,"

MATTER OF OPINION.

W. A. O. puts two questions to me which I have a very great deal of very great deal of pleasure in answering. The first one is "Is it right to use the terms 'old wife' in connection with one's mother, and 'old fellow,' in connection with one's father?"

I do not think it is quite proper to use these phrases when referring to one's parents to others, but as terms

of endearment or affection to the mother or father I see nothing very objectionable in them. Certainly I should not like to hear boys speaking about the "old man" or "old wife" when talking of their parents to other people.

when talking of their parents to other people.

The other question is as follows: "Should a member of The Boys' Freend League stand about at the street corners gossiping, and so forth, in the evenings, when he might find something more useful to do?"

I certainly think the sensible member of the League when he has any spare time, should spend it to better purpose and greater personal advantage than in idling it away at a street corner in friendly chatter. In the winter-time there are surely evening-classes for the improvement of one's knowledge either in the trade one follows or in some other direction, such as the acquirement of a language, or the deeper study of some particular topic in which one is interested. Or there is the gymnasium, where health and strength may be stored up to fit one to fight the keen battle of life.

FROM TEN STONE TO SIX STONE.

A friend of mine asks me to tell him how he can reduce his weight from ten stone to six, and also which horse regiment he should join.

In the first place, let me tell my young friend that if his present weight is ten stone—although he does not tell me his age—I think it would be extremely indiscreet to attempt to take off the difference he mentions. It is possible that, in trying to do so, he would do himself a vast amount of harm.

As for the best horse regiment to join, here again comes the question of height and weight: Crack regiments like the Life Guards require tall, broad men of substantial weight. I should think that a man between nine or ten stone could find a place in one of the Lancer or Hussar regiments. Of the Lancers, perhaps the most famous are the 5th, 17th, and 21st. Of the Hussar regiments, I think the 10th is one of the smartest.

My young friend can find all about the weights of the various cavalry regiments in a pamphlet which is given away at any post-office, entitled "The Advantages of Joining the Army." As for the best horse regiment to

AN OUT-OF-WORK.

One of my old friends writes to me after many years to say that, at twenty-four, he finds himself out of work, and utterly unable to obtain

work, and utterly unable to obtain any.

He tells me he is a draper's assistant, and that he has spent pounds in writing after places, but without success. He asks me if I know of anyone to whom I could recommend him for a billet.

I am sorry to say I do not, but I certainly think that if my friend were to make personal application to the heads of the various departments in some of our large drapery establishments which are to be found all over London, it would not be long before he found himself filling a post. He may say, "But these men won't sce me!" Don't believe it, my friend. Go on calling until the man does see you, and then tell him that you want work—that if he will give it to you, you will make it worth his while by giving your whole heart and soul to the interests of the business. I have rarely known a man who showed real will and interest in his job to be to the interests of the business. I have rarely known a man who showed real will and interest in his job to be out of work for very long. What I have found in many cases is that when men are offered work and told their duties, they begin to turn up their noses and say: "Oh, I'm not used to doing that! That's not my work."

ments in all the big drapery houses until he succeeds in getting a post, and when he gets it to make himself so useful that he will earn promotion. It may take him some time to achieve this, but he may take my word for it that if he shows himself intelligently interested and enthusiastic in his business, it will not be long before that intelligence and enthusiasm meet with a proper reward. This season of the year is the draper's busy time, and therefore my friend should not have very much difficulty in getting a job, and if he makes himself useful he will be kept on after the rushtrade is over.

GOING TO CANADA.

"Constant Reader," of Leeds, is one of my chums who is going to Canada in March or April next as a farmhand, and it is his earnest wish to get into communication with one of my Canadian readers of about nineteen years of age with a view of striking up a friendship.

In the first place, I offer my reader all possible good wishes on this important step he is taking, and hope he will meet with the greatest possible good-fortune in the new country. He could not possibly choose a better time to start than the early spring months, for he will arrive in Canada and get settled down by the time the ice has broken up.

As for some friends, I am sure many of my readers in Canada will write to my correspondent and give him some good advice. They should address their letters to "Constant Reader," of Leeds, care of the Editor, The Bors' Friend, 23, Bouverie Street, London, E.C., England, and their missives shall be immediately forwarded.

In the meantime, let me repeat my

In the meantime, let me repeat my good wishes to "Constant Reader."

EVADING A BLOODHOUND.

"X Rays," an Irish boy, who is evidently a keen student of Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro, writes to me regarding the powers of bloodheunds. "Can a bloodhound be stopped from tracking a man if the man cuts himself, and putting some of the blood on a stick, plants the stick in his tracks? If this is not so, is there any way of putting a bloodhound off the trail except walking in water?" These are the questions I am asked to answer. water?" These are am asked to answer.

am asked to answer.

In reply to this inquiry, the bloodhound is one of the most clever dogs in existence, and it is exceedingly difficult to put him off the scent when once he has made a good start and the trail is fresh. In my opinion the fact of putting up a stick spotted with blood would not check a bloodhound effectively. He would no doubt stop and quiz the stick reflectively, but so long as the scent held beyond the stick its presence would not foil him for long.

So far as I know, there is nothing but water that will foil the scent of a

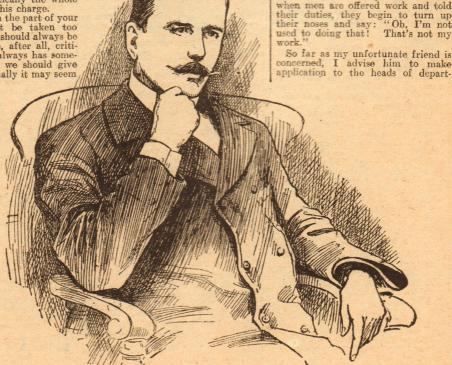
but water that will foil the scent of a keen bloodhound on a trail that is not too old—unless, of course, one counts motor-cars and aeroplanes. The many clever devices of the escaping negroes in the days of slavery invariably failed when a trained bloodhound was put on their trail.

THE HEIGHT OF THE PYRAMIDS.

W. J. is a Cardiff reader who asks me how many pyramids there are, and the size of the largest.

to this query, there In reply to this query, there are something like seventy pyramids of varying sizes to be found in Egypt. The largest is the famous Pyramid of Cheops, which is 755 feet in length at the base, 481 feet in height, and of such vastness that it covers 13 acres of ground. The Pyramids were in reality the tombs of the ancients ancients.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).



I wish each one of my boys a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous
New Year.—YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

Panorama with Moving Pictures

A VERY CLEVER "HOW-TO-MAKE" ARTICLE BY GEO, P. MOON.

HE panorama I am about to describe is rather different from the generality, for it preents a series of pictures wherein novement is seen. For example, we hay represent a scene in which one of the features is a windmill or a justic flour-mill with waterwheel, the ails of the one and the wheel of the ther being shown in motion.

cheap and handy. Nearly all the joints are those known as "halved joints," one of which is illustrated in Fig. 5. As you notice, each lath is reduced one-half in thickness to make the surfaces of both lie flush.

I am supposing that the "theatre" is placed upon a table for the show, in which case if the proscenium be made 2ft. high and 3ft. long, it will be large enough. sents a series of pictures wherein movement is seen. For example, we may represent a scene in which one of the features is a windmill or a rustic flour-mill with waterwheel, the sails of the one and the wheel of the other being shown in motion.

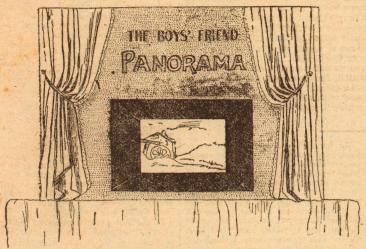


Fig. 1.-The Completed Panorama,

Or we may show a portion of a railway line—say, a bridge crossing a river or hollow, over which presently steams a locomotive and a number of carriages. The subjects for the pictures are, as you will see, almost inexhaustible.

First, let us arrange about the frame for our panorama—the proscenium behind which we stand hidden from the audience while changing the scenes and manipulating the moving parts. The framework is shown in Fig. 2. It is made of roofing laths, which are

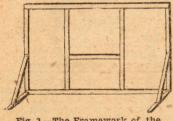


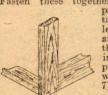
Fig. 2.—The Framework of the Panorama.

These dimensions, then, will be the lengths of the outer horizontal and all perpendicular laths. The supporting laths may be 1ft. 3in. long, and the struts 1ft. 8in. Fig. 4 shows that screws are used to secure the former.

and the structure that screws are used to secure the former.

The inner perpendicular laths are situated lft. 4in, from each other, and that joining them is lft. from the bottom.

Next cut out four pieces of stout cardboard, shaped as Fig. 5 shows you, all being 6in, wide. Two are lft. long, and the others are lft. 4in, long, the short edge being 6in, less. Fasten these together with glued paper to form a tapering bottom-less box (Fig. 6), and secure to the framework.



and secure to the framework, in the opening provided for it, with tacks (Fig.

Then we may cover the outside of frame with

opaque paper of brown paper will do well. If you do well. If you aren't particular, you can let it remain at this. But a great improvement in the a p p e arance would be effected

provement in the a p p e ar an ce would be effected by arranging some cheap mustin or other stuff around the aperture. The covering the brown paper visible with wall or other paper of rich colour or design. But this is a matter which may be left to your inclinations.

I have used the word "aperture," for, of course, you must cut away the opaque covering which comes in front of the cardboard arrangement. Cut it neatly about ½in. from the laths. Blacken the inside surface of the card.

I have taken it for granted that our pictures are going to be about 10in. by 6in.; if they are larger or smaller, the cardboard must naturally be larger or smaller to correspond, as must also be the aperture between laths.

We come now to the stand which holds the pictures while they are smaller, the cardboard must naturally be larger or smaller to correspond, as must also be the aperture between laths. We come now to the stand which holds the pictures while they are under inspection. As you will see by looking at Fig. 8, it consists of two uprights nailed to two other pieces of wood, which have strips fixed to them to form grooves in which the pictures slide. The uprights are 1ft. long and 1½in. wide; the lower piece has the same length, and is,

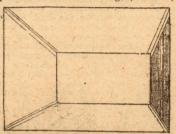


Fig. 6.—Showing the Cardboard Arrangement.

say, 6in, wide, to make a substantial base. All are of in wood. The strips are in square.

You will notice the grooves are two in number. Each picture is pasted upon a piece of stiff cardboard, which is large enough to fit between these

grooves. Two are necessary, because before one picture is withdrawn, another must be inserted, either before or behind the other. The stand is placed opposite the opening, an inch or two behind the cardboard, so that the light from a candle at each side may illuminate the pictures (Fig. 9).

If you are anything of an artist you can paint the picture is with the picture of the pi

If you are anything of an artist you can paint the pictures yourself. If you are not, coloured pictures must be collected from different sources—books, magazines, &c. Black-and-

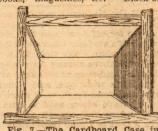


Fig. 7.—The Cardboard Case in Position.

white sketches also may be turned into suitable pictures for our show, if they are smartly coloured, which doesn't call for any great amount of skill. But you must, of course, bear in mind when making your selection that the movement of the object you wish to give mction to is always across the line of vision—that is to say, never to you or away from you. As an illustration, think how impossible it would be to represent a water wheel turning if the view of it were any but a side view.

wiew of it were any but a side view.

The pictures must be large enough to have their borders well out of sight; they should extend an inch on all sides of the cardboard aperture.

Test this detail—indeed, all details—before throwing your show open to the company.

Now for a few hints with regard to the mechanical part of the show—the movement of the features in

movement of the features in the picture.

If you want to represent a turning windmill, the sails must, of course, be separate from the picture. Should you not have produced the picture yourself, the sails must be painted out, and others similar be drawn on card and coloured. A disc of cork, sin. thick, is glued to



Fig. 9.—Showing Top View of the

the back of the cut-out sails in the middle and another piece to the back of the picture where the sails are pivoted. A short length of hairpin should be driven through the picture cork into that of the sails, and the rear end be bent at right angles, by means of which the sails of the mill are made to revolve (Fig. 10).

This is the manner in which all revolving features are arranged.

If the moving object is a steamer, or a ship crossing an ocean scene, the steamer or ship—cut out of thin card—is made to slide along a little channel fixed to the picture below the part visible to the audience. This channel is formed of



Fig. 11.—The Slide for Moving Objects. the card beard beard beard the picture (as

Slide for neath the Moving picture (as s hown in Fig. 11). The model (Fig. 12) has a depth of lin. below the painted part, and it is prolonged so as to form a handle by which it is drawn across the seascape. All other models that cross the field are worked in a similar fashion.

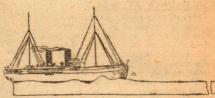


Fig. 12 .- The Model Steamer.

A SCOUTING CHRISTMAS. PLENTY OF GOOD FUN FOR THE BOY SCOUT IN SPITE OF SHORT DAYS.

THINK Christmas is about the most awkward holiday of the year to the scout—because he generally doesn't quite know what to do with it. At Easter and Whitsun and August he can camp and sham to his heart's and so on, to his heart's

centent.

But at Christmas it is too cold for camping, too wet for crawling about the fields in a sham-fight; there is too little daylight for much outdoor work at all. So I find most scouts asking: "How on earth is a fellow to scout at Christmas-time?"

Here are a few hints which you may find handy:

Good Turns.

good plan to let people know, either by a notice in the local newspaper, or a few small bills stuck up in the shop windows, that we are going round carolling for the benefit of such-and-such a charity. Then we find that everybody "stumps up" liberally.

Or if you can't sing, there are lots of other good turns you can do. Find out some poor people who haven't much firing to keep them warm over Christmas. Go and cut a good stack of firewood, and take it round to them.

a good stack of firewood, and take it round to them.

Or if the weather is frosty, go out and scatter gravel on the roads. The horses have a job to get along on the slippery roads, poor beasts, and there is often no one to give them a lift.

And here's a tip. Take some pieces of old sacking with you. Then, if you find a horse still slipping about, get the carter to tie the sacking over his hoofs. It gives a splendid grip on the ground, however slippery it is, and the old nag will be able to get along splendidly.

A Fine Snow Came.

Good Turns.

First of all, Christmas should be a time when scouts devote themselves extra specially to good turns.

And if I were you chaps I'd get my good turns done right at the very beginning, on-Christmas Eve. Duty first, pleasure afterwards, you know. Then you can enjoy the rest of the holiday with a clear conscience.

If you can sing at all decently—and I know lots of troops where several of the fellows are in choirs and things—go round singing carols on Christmas Eve. If you have a band, take that too.

My fellows, you know, have a drum-and-fife band, and they have been busy for a couple of months past learning to play hymns and carols. But, as you may imagine, we don't take any bugles, and we have to be very gentle with the drums.

All the money we get in this way we give to a local hospital, or something, to help give the poor inmates a merry Christmas. We find it a

They have to get clear away, and try and find a good spot where they can ambush their pursuers. If they can, of course, they lie low, and pelt the other with snow-balls as soon as they come within range.

The others have to follow the tracks, and try and eatch the first lot up before they can take cover. If they do—well, there's no need to tell a scout what to do with snow-balls!

The Convoy Game.

Another good game is with a

Another good game is with a convoy.

Divide your troop into two, as before. Let one side have as many sledges, etc., as you can get together. They have to form a convoy with these, and get them through from one point to another—give them three or four miles—without being captured.

The others, of course, have to try and capture the convoy en route. They must endeavour to ambush the force protecting the convoy, and, with a fire of snowballs, drive them away from the sledges, and seize the attackers themselves.

The men who pull the sledges should not really take part in the fight, so the side with the convoy ought to be stronger than the attackers.

attackers

If There's No Snow.

If there's No Snow.

If there is no snow I would get up a good, brisk paperchase, or a team race, point-to-point, across country.

Don't make it too long, or you'll have half the fellows "blown" before they've gone far, and they'll walk most of the way, puffed and shivering.

A short, brisk run which gets you all into a healthy glow is the thing. Then a change of togs, a rub down, and indoor games in your headquarters for the rest of the day.

Indoor Games.

Boxing, wrestling, quarterstaff,

cock-fighting, tug-o'-war—if yo room—draughts, dominoes, "K Game," map games, are all indoor Christmas amusements

amusing tricks you can try among yourselves.

amusing tricks you can try among yourselves.

Here's one:
Stand in the doorway, with your toes against one side of the doorframe. Lean back until your shoulders touch against the other side. Then try to stand upright without moving your feet.

It sounds easy, but try it!

Here's another:
Lie flat on the floor with your arms folded.

Then get up on your feet without unfolding your arms or rolling over.

arms or over.

Another good game is "chalking the mark."

Draw a chalk line along the floor. Each fellow in turn "toes" in turn "toes" this, with a piece of chalk in his

of chalk in his hand.

He has to stretch forward on one hand only, and make a mark (Referred to in "Boxin with the chalk on Notes" this week.)

the floor, as far in front of the chalk line as he can possibly

front of the chalk line as he can possibly reach. And then he has to get back to his feet without losing his balance.

His knees and his right hand must not touch the floor—only his feet and his left hand. If they do, or if he overbalances when he is getting to his feet, his mark is rubbed out. The fellow whose mark is furthest from the chalk line, of course, wins.

THE SCOUTMASTER.

BOXING NOTES.

N extremely valuable blow, and one which is not particularly difficult to deliver, is the left hook. This may be sent either at the head or the body; but, generally

head or the body; but, generally speaking, it is most effective if you direct it towards your opponent's head, or, rather, his jaw.

It should always be remembered when beginning to learn a blow of this kind, that you should have mastered all the straight blows first, for these are always the most important, the most effective, and are less liable to leave you open to your opponent's attack. To deliver the left hook on your antagonist's jaw, step well in with the left foot so as to get as close to him as possible. Bend the left arm at the elbow so that your hand is at right angles to your body, and shoot the left hand across at

the side of his jaw.

the side of his jaw.

As you hit, swing the body to the left from the hip's upwards, so that as much of your weight as possible comes behind the blow.

When it has been delivered step back quickly out of reach. If you have been successful, however, and have brought in the blow with your full power, there will be no need to step back, for the fight will be over.

The left hook should never be confused with a "swing," which is an entirely different blow. Remember that accuracy in timing your blow and in landing it in the right place to an inch are the most necessary things for the success of this hit. The place to aim for is from an inch to an inch and a half upward from the exact point of your man's jaw. If you hit him even rather lightly here he is apt to be dazed. A hard blow there will knock him out.

Gan-Waga's Christmas Revels.

A Merry Long, Complete Yuletide Story. By SIDNEY DREW.



The musicians stopped short. A wild and terrifying figure rushed out of the darkness into the warm light that streamed from the open door.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

How Three Merry Mariners Sailed Down the Chute.

HE graceful monoplane rested on the gently-sloping bank of a long shallow pool. The pool was factor and the dark glossy in was frozen, and the dark, glossy ice reflected the white planes and framework of the machine perfectly. The work of the machine perfectly. The owner of the monoplane was tightening up one of the stays, while his solitary companion, a short, stout gentleman dressed in a suit of thin fiamel, smoked a large cigar.

"It's a wonder to me you're not frozen hard, Gan," said Ching-Lung, drawing on a pair of fur-lined gloves. "I find it jolly cold down here, and it's like the North Pole when we start moving."

Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, uttered a disdainful snort.

"It never too colds enoughs fo' me, Chingy," he answered. "I likes him

"It never too colds enoughs fo' me, Chingy," he answered. "I likes him all coldful. I tink I heards a bloater-car sing 'Pip-pip-ip!' somewheres, Chingy. P'r'aps dose raggermuffins insider her, Chingy."

No road or path could be seen. It was a desolate place, shut in by low hills.
"Yes, they're about there" said

was a desolate place, shut in by low hills.

"Yes, they're about there," said Ching-Lung. "Pitch that cigar away, and get on your perch!"
Gan-Waga was rather a weighty passenger. He climbed carefully into his seat.

"Now, minds yo' not pushes me out, Chingy," he grinned, "'cos I left my parachute at home."

With a loud, rattling hum the aeroplane ran down the slope, and skimming across the ice for thirty or forty yards, rose gracefully in the air. Making a wide curve, it mounted higher and higher like some gigantic insect, the clear sunlight gleaming on its pinions.

"I see de merry bloater-car all right, Chingy!" bellowed Gan-Waga above the roar of the engine. "I wishes we brought a few bricks to drop on de peoples insider her. Ho, ho, ho!"

Ching-Lung also saw the car. He

ching-Lung also saw the car. He headed the monoplane towards it. The car looked like a toy. There were three passengers in it. One of them held a telescope to his right

"Kape your shoulder still, Tom!" said the man with the telescope. "How can Oi see wid you wobblin' about? Bedad, there's two of 'em aboard the insect. The prince is steerin', and Oi belave ould Gan-Waga's the ballast. Yes, ut's Gan! There's no mistakin' his earthquake of a face!" "Kape your shoulder still, Tom!" said the man with the telescope. "How can Oi see wid you wobblin' about? —Bedad, there's two of 'em aboard the insect. The prince is steerin', and Oi belave ould Gan-Waga's the ballast. Yes, ut's Gan! There's no mistakin' his earthquake of a face!"

The three passengers stood up and cheered as only lusty-lunged sailors can. A handkerchief fluttered from the noisy aeroplane.

"By honey, we'll race 'em!" cried Mr. Thomas Prout, who had been acting as a rest for Barry O'Rooney's dinct as house.

"By honey, sir, you've picked a lonely spot this time!" said Prout.

"You don't want a crowd when you're experimenting with aeroplanes, Tom," answered Ching-Lung, "and that's how I've been amusing myself lately. You'll find snug quarters, and if you don't have a pleasant Christmas you can only blame yourselves. Though it's lonely, it's cheefful!"

There was a roaring fire in the raftered dining-room — a pleasant thing to see after their long, chilly drive. Festoons of scarlet-berried

telescope. "Make her hum, you in the gold buttons! Clap on all sail, my hearty!"

The chauffeur had an open road. Ching-Lung seemed to understand that he had been challenged, for the monoplane's speed increased. He sank lower and lower, until the aeroplane, was barely sixty yards above the ground, and barely a hundred from the road. For several exciting minutes the car crept ahead foot by foot.

minutes the car crept ahead foot by foot.

"Put on more sail, souse me!" roared the third passenger. "Don't let that insect lick us!"

There was a long and almost straight incline before them. The three tars who had come to spend Christmas with Ching-Lung howled with delight, for they were rapidly gaining. The car seemed to be absolutely falling through space. They placed their thumbs to their noses.

"Why don't you give your silly old fowl more corn?" yelled Mr. Benjamin Maddock, boatswain of the vessel Lord of the Deep. "It can't fly for nuts, souse me! It's moulting, ain't it?"

"Put ut in a cage and teach ut to

vessel Lord of the Deep. "It can't fly for nuts, souse me! It's moulting, ain't it?"

"Put ut in a cage and teach ut to sing!" bawled O'Rooney. "Give ut a bit o' groundse!!"

But they were cheering too soon. The monoplane, clattering like a Maxim gun, drew up level and passed them. It rose over a belt of trees and vanished. When they sighted it again, it was a couple of furlongs ahead of them, and moving with tremendous velocity.

"We may as well slow down afore we break our necks, boys," said Prout, "for it ain't much use chasin' that bumble-bee! Fancy Gan-Waga on a flyin' machine, and the machine not bustin' up!"

When the motor-car stopped the monoplane had been wheeled into the hangar. Prout and Maddock dutifully saluted Ching-Lung, and Gan-Waga grinned until his little beady eyes became invisible.

"Ho, ho, ho, hoo!" he laughed. "How yo' do, olds funny faces? I tink yo' grow more ugliful every minute. Excuser me not kissing yo'. 'cos de doctor he say de shocks would kill me! Ho, ho, ho, hoo!"

He shook hands with them, and led the way to an old-fashioned red-brick house.

"By honey, sir, you've picked a

holly hung from the walls. The three mariners smiled as they saw the massive sideboard on which stood a fine sirloin of beef and a huge

a fine sirloin of beef and a huge turkey.

"If you feel inclined for a cold snack, help yourselves, lads!" said Ching-Lung. "Gan will show you your berths. You're at home, and don't forget it. Everything here is your own!"

"Then, bedad, that lobster's moine," said Barry O'Rooney; "so don't spake to me till Oi've left nothin' but the shell! Look at the lovely colour of ut. Arrah, ut's a dream of a fish!"

Presently they were seated round

lovely colour of ut. Arrah, ut's a dream of a fish!"

Presently they were seated round the fire, Barry with the whole lobster, and the others with plates of roast beef and turkey. Gan-Waga squatted on the floor with the drumstick of a turkey in each hand, from which he took bites alternately, varying the monotony with mouthfuls of strawberry tart and an occasional pickled onion, for his tastes in the matter of food were peculiar.

"Yo' feel betterer now hunk, yo' ugly faces?" he inquired at last.

"By honey! I wouldn't change places wi' the Emperor o' Tartary, Gan!" answered Prout. "I might have been 'appier if you'd fallen off that airyplane, seeing as 'ow I'd like to attend your funeral, but I'm not grumbling. If it's the same to you, blubberbiter, I'd like a look at my quarters and a wash."

Gan-Waga drank what vinegar remained in the pickle-jar, and escorted Prout up a wide staircase. He pointed to a door marked with the figure seven, a very easy number to remember.

Prout shot out a hand the size of

figure seven, a very easy number to remember.

Prout shot out a hand the size of a boxing-glove, and grasped the Eskimo firmly by the shoulder.

"By honey, no tricks this time, Gan!" he said fiercely. "We won't stand 'em; we've swore not to stand 'em. Me and Ben and Barfy has swore to tar and feather you, and we'll do it! By honey, you be careful!" areful

He closed the door behind him. Gan-Waga winked one beady eye, and put his ear to the keyhole, quivering with inward laughter. Prout glanced round his alloted quarters. He could hardly have imagined anything snugger or cosier. The blinds had been drawn, a fire was burning in the grate, and a kettle singurered on a trivet. Two candles in silver candlesticks revealed a decanter of whisky, soda-water, lemons, sugar, and a box of cigars. And drawn up near the table, but within the full warmth of the fire, was a large saddle-bag easy-chair that made Prout sleepy to look at.

table, but within the full warmth of the fire, was a large saddle-bag easy-chair that made Prout sleepy to look at.

"By honey, this ain't comfort, it's luxury!" said Prout. "Only a single bed, so the room's all for me. And the kettle nice and 'ot, and the sugar and the lemons, and that chair! By honey, I'm in clover!"

It was a magnificent chair, large and roomy, and as soft as satin. Prout mixed himself some hot grog and stood admiring it. The other chairs were hard oak affairs, with carved backs and twisted legs.

"By honey, if I sit in that two minutes I shall be asleep!" he thought. "It's a waste o' money buying a bed when you've got a chair like that. But I must try it; I can't help trying it."

Prout threw himself into the downy embrace of the chair. He uttered a yell, a long, loud yell that was immediately changed into a squeal, and then into nothing at all. The chair had suddenly tilted back with a vicious jerk. It slowly righted itself, and looked as soft and enticing as ever. And the astounded Mr. Prout found himself with his heels where his head ought to have been, gliding down, down, in pitchy darkness, whither or why he did not know. And as he glided he roared.

"By honey! Belay! Whoa! Where am I? Stop it! Lemme wake up! Ow! What a norful nightmare!"

For a fraction of a second he stood on his head, taking an upside-down view of the seenery, which consisted of an old dog-kennel and a lot of sky. Then he crawled a little and stood up. He discovered that he was at the back of the house, and that he had come there down a canwas chute. His mouth worked, as if, like Gan-Waga, he had been drinking vinegar. He spat on his hands, seized a mop that lay beside the dog-kennel, and thirsted for Gan-Waga's blood.

"By honey," he growled, "I'll kill that Eskimo! I'll go for him! By honey, Till—"
"Souse me! 'Elp! 'Orrors! Ooh! Chuck a line! Murder-r-r!" cried a muffled voice.

Prout looked up, and it was quite plain, by the way the chute was bulging, that someone else was coming down inside it. The voice informed him that Maddock was making the journey. Two hands appeared at the bottom, and were followed by the purple visage of the bo'sun. Prout helped that astonished and angry mariner to his feet.

"A-a-a-a-a-a-ah!" spluttered the bo'sun. "Wha-wha-wha—"Ere, souse me, who am I? Wha-wha-what's me name and address? Is—is that you, Tommy, or ain't I awake yet? Stick a pin in me."

"Room number seven—easy-chair—Gan-Waga—sudden death!" said Prout, in jerks. "Come on!"

Maddock clutched his ruffled hair, and as he glared at the chute, the truth soaked into his bewildered brain. He tore a board from the roof of the dog-kennel, one with several nails in it.

"Lemme get at him! Lemme get near him!" growled the bo'sun. "Lemme only just——"

The bo'sun paused abruptly as a shower of coppers and small silver came pattering down round their feet. The chute was bulging again. Strangled howls found their way through the tough canvas.

"Hilp! Oi'm fallin' down a coalpit! Swate Ballybunion, home of me youth, ut's a dead man Oi am! Ow! Oi've fell clean through the flure! Oi'm going to bump and break mesilf! Police! Hilp!"

They hauled the Irishman out. He stared round in a vacant sort of way while Prout collected the scattered coins and absent-mindedly put them into his own pocket.

"Room seven—easy-chair—Gan-Waga—sudden death! Kill him, souse me!" bawled Maddock.

Barry remembered. He also ripped a board from the roof of the dog-kennel.

"Charge!" he shouted. "We'll skiin the spalpeen aloive! We'll

Barry remembered. He also ripped a board from the roof of the dog-kennel.

"Charge!" he shouted. "We'll skin the spalpeen aloive! We'll have justice and that Eskimo's skin!"

This was not a nice temper to be in on Christmas Eve, when every-body ought to be smiling and happy. Gan-Waga, at any rate, was supremely happy. He stood before that mysterious chair, his fat cheeks and plump ribs shaking with laughter. The clever young engineer who looked after Ching-Lung's motors and acroplanes had arranged the contrivance for him, and it had been a huge success.

"Ohmi, ohmi, ohmi! Ho, ho, ho, hoo! He, he, he, hee!" laughed the Eskimo. "Oh, butterfuls—butterfuls! I kills myself ifs I grin much morer. Heigho, heigho! Down dey sits and down dey go! Ohmi! Dey squeal awfulnessfuls, and den dey slither down de pipe. Ha, ha, ha, haa! Ho, ho, ho, hoo! Ones, twos, threes, and slap down de spouts! Old Chingy-Wingy he drop deads wid joyness when I—— Ho, ho, ho, hoo!" Gan doubled himself up with mirth. At that moment Ching-Lung stepped noiselessly from behind one of the heavy window-curtains. He lifted one foot, and drove Gan-Waga headlong into the chair. A piercing shriek of wee rang through the room. Gan-Waga's heels disappeared from

view, the panel closed, and the chair settled back.

Then the door was burst open, and Prout, Maddock, and O'Rooney, howling for the Eskimo's blood, dashed in. They were seconds too late, for the room was untenanted.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Gan-Waga Falls Headlong Into the Soup.

"Y dear Prout," said Ching-Lung, "I don't want Gan-Waga maimed or crippled, but otherwise you may do what you like to him. Surely three grown-up men like you are more than match for one guileless, untutored Eskimo? I want you to have a good Eskimo? I want you to have a good time. Were I you, I'd take jolly good care not to allow forty Gan Wagas to upset me. I can't hold my self responsible for that Eskimo's delings?

"But you admit, sir, by honey," said Prout, "that when a tired man sits down to drink a glass o' warm grog it ain't kind and pleasant to be shoved down a dusty fire-chute on your face?"

"Well, well," said the prince, with a smile, "it's Christmas time, Prout. Shake hands, and make it up."

Prout was not altogether satisfied. He reported the result of his interview to O'Rooney and Maddock.

"Sure, boys," said Barry thoughtfully, "we can do a lot to our Eskimo widout breakin' any bones or layin' him up in hospital. Oi've brains in my head, and, bedad, and Oi'll foind a way! Kape a brisk oie on the spalpeen, and laye ut to me."

The teuf-teuf of a motor-car announced another arrival. It was Herr Schwartz, who acted as chief cook when they were afloat. He burst into the dining-room like a human bombshell.

"Ar-r-r-r!" he yelled. "How vas you all, is ud? Tom Brout und Parry and Penjamin. Ein merry, merry Gristmuss, mein poys! Shake mit me der haads! Ja, how I am bleased! How you vas, rasgals?"

They greeted the cook joyfully. The frosty air had coloured his nose till it resembled a little ripe tomato.

"Und vere is dot Esgimo? Vere is dot derrible Gan-Waga?" he asked.

"You haf gill him alretty, yes?"

"No; we're going to, souse me! We ain't had time yet," growled Maddock. "He's been at us, Shorts."

The cook spat on his hands, and grinned as he listened to the story of the chair and the chute.

"Ha, ha, ha! Dot vas funny!" he chuckled. "I lofe der merry rasgal, but ve must gill him! Ach, I see peef und I see durkey! I vas gold und I vas hungry. I eat und den I help to gill dot Eskimo."

Altogether, Gan-Waga's future prospects looked rather gloomy. Then Ching-Lung entered.

"The compliments of the season, Schwartz!" he said. "It's freezing gloriously, lads, and the ice is in rare condition, so we hed better make the best of it before any snow or thaw comes. We'll have a little skating carnival to-night. You'll find

(Continued on the next page.)



Ignorant of the danger that menaced him, Gan-Waga pre-pared to blow the top note. On tiptoe Sir John Falstaff and Cold-Sago-Pudden stole towards him, carrying a sack between them.

Why is a man who has had his eye put out like the majority of schoolmasters?— Because he has a vacancy for a pupil.

學學學學學學學學學學學 Gan-Waga's Xmas Revels. (Continued from the previous page.) 家語語語語語語語語語語語語語

skates and fancy costumes in the next

skates and fancy costumes in the next room, so bustle along."
Ching-Lung's tenants and retainers had already gathered in the hall—lusty farmers, gamekeepers, lodge-keepers, and hands. Ching-Lung, in an evening-dress suit, sat in a raised chair. There was a knock.
"Sir John Falstaff, your highness," announced the butler.
Sir John strode in and the on-

announced the butler.
Sir John strode in, and the onlookers put down their steaming
glasses, and cheered. The make-up
was excellent, and Tom Prout,
padded, wigged, and bearded, looked
Shakespeare's fat knight to perfec-

padded, wigged, and bearded, looked Shakespeare's fat knight to perfection.

"Bill Sikes, your highness."
The famous burglar entered, with his bludgeon under his arm and a ferocious-looking bulldog at his heels.

"Mab, Queen of the Fairies, your highness," said the butler.
The jolly farmers cheered and the yokels guffawed as the beautiful Queen of the Fairies danced in on one toe. She wore skirts of gauze, pink tights, a flowing red wig, and wings. She kissed her fair hands to them, turned a graceful somersault, and helped herself to a churchwarden pipe and a stiff glass of grog.

"Ach, vat peautiful viskers!" she said, stroking Sir John Falstaff's flowing beard. "Vat you cut dem mit ven dey are using der lawnmower, yes? Ach, I dink ve haf sossidches vor preakfast!"

"Cold-Sago-Pudden, the Pawnee chief," announced the butler gravely. Uttering a wild, blood-curdling war-whoop, the terrible redskin bounded in. Drawing his scalping-knife, he immediately scalped the shrieking fairy queen.

"Birraburro! There's 'air!" he remarked.

"Slinganbangem, the world's

marked.
"Slinganbangem, the wo champion wrestler," called out-butler.

butler.

Ching-Lung's guests roared with merriment. Gan-Waga waddled forward, with his legs wide apart and his arms dangling down. His calves were padded out to three times their normal size, and his forearm muscles bulged like two footballs. Round his waist he wore a leopard-skin, and his chest was covered with medals. At the sight of this terrible figure, Bill Sikes tried to escape out of the window, and the dauntless chief, Cold-Sago-Pudden, took refuge under the table.

Cold-Sago-Pudden, took refuge under the table.

"Ifs yo' want anybody killings, Ching, fore we make a starts," said the wrestler, "I kills dem at onces, and den dey not axes fo' a Christmas presents. Ho, ho, hoo! I de scrampion wrestler of de worlds. He, he, hee! I justs killed two policemans and a lamplighters. Anybody else want killings, hunk?"

As no one seemed eager to die just then, a move was made. Coats and wraps were seized. The ground was as hard as rock. Lamps and torches gleamed round the frozen lake. A marquee had been erected, and fires were blazing. Overhead shone a clear, frosty moon. In the marquee the busy attendants were ready to serve all comers, and the village band was there to discourse merry music.

"If anybody wantses killing, justs send fo' me," shouted Gan-Waga.
"Where dat olds fairy queens? Yo' nots ready, hunk? Come alongs, Ginger-Wig, and we shows de sillies how to skate."

The little cook was a splendid skater, but Gan-Waga, outstone him.

Ginger-Wig, and we shows to how to skate."

The little cook was a splendid skater, but Gan-Waga outshone him. Skate-blades rang merrily, the band played rousing airs, the waiters bustled about, and Gan-Waga, with an admiring crowd round him, performed amazing antics. Suddenly there was a shout that emptied the marquee.

there was a shout that emptied the marquee.

"The prince is going to 'fiy.'"
There was an immediate rush to the far end of the lake. Bandsmen and waiters alike joined in the rush. Gan-Waga circled round several times, and then made for the marquee. Aeroplanes were no novelty to him, and he thought a pound of butter on the wing of a turkey would do him good. He waddled up the bank on his skates.

"I tink I haves some 'freshments while dey look at de silly nairy-planes," he gurgled. "Ohmi! Where alls de butterfuls butter, hunk? Ah, dis all niceful and quietness. What I eats first, hunk?"

It was rather a problem to decide,

It was rather a problem to decide, as there were so many things. The Eskimo had curious tastes.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I make myselfs some butterfuls soups," he grinned, and proceeded to make it.

He put some butter into a quart jug, and added a thick slice of Christmas-pudding. Then he half filled the jug with coffee from the steaming urn. Then he added a mince-pie and some jelly and a small jar of cream. Beating up this odd mixture with a fork, he smelt it, and smiled.

jar of cream. Beating up this odd mixture with a fork, he smelt it, and smiled.

"It would be betterer wid some pickle cabbages," he murmured, "but it smell nicefuls. How it taste?"

Gan took a sip, smacked his lips, and rolled his eyes. It was so nice that he thought he would have a little music with it. He took another sip, seized a cornet, and, sitting down on the ground with the jug beside him, got ready to play something sweet and soothing.

"Br-r-r-!" shrieked the cornet.
"Ur-r-r-! Skr-r-r-!"

The shrill, jarring, ear-splitting sounds were enough to crack the ice, but Gan thought them lovely.

Three distorted faces rose above the counter, and six eyes glared at him. Gan was looking the other way. He drank some more of the mixture, patted himself, and puffed out his cheeks.

"Br-r-r-oosh!" shrieked the cornet. "Br-r-r-oosh!" shrieked the cornet. "Br-r-r-osh!" shrieked the cornet. "Br-r-r-I Ar-r-r-! Ur-r-r-! Br-r-r-oosh!" shrieked the cornet. "Br-r-r-oosh!" shrieked the cornet. "Br-r-r-oosh!" shrieked the locks, and Cold-Sago-Pudden, the noble redskin, thrust his fingers into his ears. Then they ducked down and wanished.

"Butterfuls, lovelifus!" chuckled for Wester writing the ing the live.

locks, and Cold-Sago-Pudden, the noble redskin, thrust his fingers into his ears. Then they ducked down and wanished.

"Butterfuls, lovelifuls!" chuckled Gan-Waga, raising the jug to his smiling lips. "Ho, ho, hoo! I take dis homes wid me and play in beds. Ohmi! Now for de great fat top notes. I take ones big longs breff, and blow de roofs off de tent. Ho, ho, hoo! I pinch dis musicful tings and play in bed."

Ignorant of the danger that menaced him, Gan got ready for his top note. On tiptoe Sir John Falstaff, Cold-Sago-Pudden, and the ravishing fairy queen stole towards him. Between them, Sir John and the redskin held a large sack. Down it came over the musician's head, nipping that top note in the bud. The fairy queen flung her sinewy arms round the Eskimo's legs, and helped to shoot him into the sack, and Sir John Falstaff promptly sat on him.

The roar of the engine and cheering voices told that the aeroplane had risen.

"Ar-r-r-r! Get dot rope, und gif

ing voices told that the delegation risen.

"Arr-r-r! Get dot rope, und gif it me!" cried Schwartz. "So you vill squeal und you vill kick, is ud! Rasgal of ein Esgimo, ve haf you, yes! Har, har! Der vill for you be no sossidches for preakfast."

"Ow! Chingy! Bad 'nuff, awfuls! Help, Chingy! Dey gotted me, Chingy! Help!" wailed Gan-Waga.

"Ow! Chingy! Bad 'nuff, awfuls! Help, Chingy! Dey gotted me, Chingy! Help!" wailed Gan-Waga.

"And we have and all, by honey," laughed the voice of Prout. "Yank him along, boys."

They lifted the sack, carried it out, and dumped it down on the ice. The sack sat up, rolled over, and jerked about in a lively way, and a voice from within threatened them with horrible punishments.

"Whisht, whisht, darlint," said Cold-Sago-Pudden, in a rich Irish brogue. "Sure, ye must be nice and cosy in there, and aren't we savin' ye the throuble of walkin'? We'll give ye a lovely roide, Gan avic."

Then, grasping the rope tied to the sack, they skated away, towing their captive behind them. The aeroplane was soaring up in the breezeless air, and Gan's wails were unheeded. Bill Sikes, otherwise Mr. Ben Maddock, was waiting with a hurdle. They removed their skates, tied Gan to the hurdle, and bore him away. They did not pause until they had deposited him on the carpeted floor of bed-room No. 7.

"Souse me!" chuckled Bill Sikes.
"That's the best bit o' burglin' I've done for a long time. I notice the kettle's still singin'. We'll have the grog the thief robbed us of to start wi'."

"I kills yo' alls! I knock yo' faces offs!" moaned Gan-Waga. "Ohmi,

grog the thief robbed us of to start wi?"

"I kills yo' alls! I knock yo' faces offs!" moaned Gan-Waga. "Ohmi, ohmi! Lemme out! Oh, awfuls!"
Sir John removed his wig and beard, and cut up a lemon. They clinked their glasses together.

"Bedad, here's luck to the Eskimo's funeral!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Ut's not noice to be buried on Christmas Eve, for ut manes losin' a Christmas dinner; but he's brought ut on himself. We've sworn to do ut, boys, and we'll show no marcy. Schwartz, you're the grave-digger."

"Ach, dot vill be ein bleasant

task," said the cook. "Ja, ja! I vill mit choy dig der vicked rasgal's grave. Ve vill bury him darkly at dead of night ven der Gristmas pells ring ting-tong, ting-tong."

The sack rolled over, and the person inside it began to hammer the floor with his heels.

"Sit on him, by honey!" said Prout. "I'll be back in a minute or two. He dies at exactly one second afore midnight. That'll give him time to hear the carol singers. Come on, Cooksie!"

"Ow! Helps! Where ares yo', Chingy? Yo' bad 'nuff villains! I kill yo' alls!" cried the Eskimo.

"Soilence, insect, soilence!" thundered Barry O'Rooney. "We're doin' the buryin', not you, so phwat are you worryin' about? Kape quoiet. Sure, we're not goin' to kill ye, only to bury ye alive, darlint."

"And I reckon, bein' a poet, you'll compose somethin' pretty for his tombstone, souse me," said the bo'sun.

"Sure Oi will, Ben. Oi'll wroite the swatest poem ye iver read, somethin' afther this style: 'Here loies an Eskimo, who didn't want to go. He wriggled about, but we put his loight out, and here he is below.' Of course, Oi can make it better wid a bit o' thinkin. Here's another: 'He was a blubberbiter, this oily Eskimo; he blubbed afore we killed him, but still he had to go. He lived on oil and candles, and thought he was a fighter, but we have snuffed his candle out, so farewell, blubberbiter.'"

"Very touchin', souse me," said the bo'sun, lighting a cigar. "He ought to be obliged to you."

"Ohmi, ohmi!" sighed the prisoner wearily. "I choking, Chingy! I stranglefying! Helps, Chingy, helps!"

Meanwhile, Prout and Herr Schwartz had descended to the

wearily. "I choking, Chingy! I stranglefying! Helps, Chingy, helps!"

Meanwhile, Prout and Herr Schwartz had descended to the kitchen. Schwartz was well known to Ching-Lung's cook, a little barrel of a man, who nearly laughed himself into a fit. While the fairy queen, like some-flaxen-haired witch, was mixing some-thing in a huge iron pot, Prout and the cook departed with a crowbar, pickaxe, spade, and lantern on their gruesome errand.

"You'll shove the stuff in about a quarter to twelve," grinned Prout.

"I'll see to it, sir," answered the jolly little man. "The waits will be here then, sir."

Herr Schwartz gazed into the pot, and gave it a final stir. Then he rubbed his hands.

"Dot was der grandest soup I efer make," he chuckled. "Ar-r-r! Ve laugh mit der loud, pig laugh. Ach, dot vas glorious, dot vas choyful. Ach, blubberbiter, I haf gook all dot for you. Ve laugh. Har, har!"

Prout glanced at the clock. It was growing late. They ran up to the bed-room. Maddock had cut a slit in the sack. Gan-Waga sat on one of the hard chairs, looking very dismal, but we had a form the sack to say the continue the continue of the hard chairs, looking very dismal, but was growing a form the sack was the continue the sack is a say the say of the

bed-room. Maddock had cut a sht in the sack. Gan-Waga sat on one of the hard chairs, looking very dismal, but resigned.

"Just to make sure we ain't disturbed afore the execution takes place, we'll stick that dressin'-table in front o' the door, souse me," said the bo'sun. "Give Prout a 'and, Barry. Now we're safe. We're all agreed that this insect ain't fit to live. He eats candles, and drinks oil, which ain't natural. His face is a night-mare, and his voice is wifful murder. In course, we ought to torture him, but bein' Christmas, and near suppertime, we'll let him off this. Prisoner, 'ave you got anything to say?'

Gan-Waga's eyes rolled, and he strained his ears. He fancied he heard a footfall outside.

"Chingy!" he shouted. "Helps, Chingy!"

"Stow it, prisoner!" said Prout. "You're too near dead to make that row. What's your dyin' wish?"

"Don't ttalk about did-did-dyin', Tom," said Barry, breaking down. "I—I know ut must be d-done, but ut makes me wape. Think how young he is, and how fat. Think o' the tons o' candles and butther he's eaten, and the gallons of oil he's dhrunk. Oh, Gan, me bouncin' bhoy, whoy are ye so wicked? Lave me wan lock o' your golden hair, and any property ye own. Oh, take his loife, but lave his smoile, and Oi'll make a penwiper of ut."

"Hush! The hour grows near," said Prout. "Dry your aves Barry.

smoile, and Oi'll make a penwiper of ut."

"Hush! The hour grows near," said Prout. "Dry your eyes, Barry. For that fat fiend, by honey, you plead in vain. Nothing can save him from his doom. Prisoner, speak! One minute only remains!"

"I like to knock yo' into the week of next middles, yo' ugliful old fossis!" said the doomed one.

Gan probably meant the middle of next week. Barry started up and raised his hand.

"Hark, hark!" he cried. "I hear

the bells, the merry Christmas bells. Whisht! The bells, the bells!"

"Then, by honey, it's time!" said Prout. "Victim, we'll eat your share of the pudding. Seize him!".

"Helps, Chingy-helps!" yelled Gan-Waga. "Ow! Yo' bad 'nuff cowardly custards! Help Chingy! Ow!"

"One, two, three—go!" thundered Prout.

"One, two, three—go!" thundered Prout.

They swung the sack three times, and then Gan went flying into the easy-chair. His howl was lost.

For an instant as they stood listening they heard the faint music of the chimes. Then, overcome with laughter, they held their sides, and tears of mirth poured down their cheeks.

chimes. Then, overcome with laughter, they held their sides, and tears of mirth poured down their cheeks.

Gan-Waga was laughing as heartily, if not as loudly, as anyone as he went gliding down the shoot.

That wily blubberbiter had not expected to get off so lightly. This was nothing at all.

He rolled out of the chute, chuckling, and reached up with his hands to try to widen the opening. Then he rolled into something with a gentle splash, something thick, luke-warm, sticky, horrible. As he got his head above the awful clinging stuff, he realised that his arms were free. His hends did not seem his own. They felt like leaden weights. Groaning drearily, he freed himself of the sack, and crawled through the warm, clinging, glutinous slime.

"Ohmi, ohmi, ohmi!" he groaned.

"Oh, bad 'nuff awfulness! Oh, Chingy, they've deaded me. Oh, norrible!"

He had not got rid of his skates.

Chingy, they've deaded me. Oh, norrible!"

He had not got rid of his skates. He saw nothing, heard nothing. All he longed for was water to dive into, acres of it, occans of it. The carol singers were at the front of the house. "When good King Wencelas looked out—" they began.

They got no further just then. A wild and terrifying figure, a figure that shrieked and yelled and tossed its uncanny arms, rushed out of the darkness into the warm light that streamed from the open door. They made way for the grisly spectre. It paused in the centre of the hall, a weird and terrifying apparition, and an anguished howl broke from it.

"Chingy, Chingy!" it wailed. "They've deaded me, Chingy. They've deaded me, Chingy. They've deaded your butterfuls Gan."

They've deaded your buttermis Gan."

The jolly tars had almost been as good as their word. They had not tarred-and-feathered Gan-Waga, but they had glue-and-feathered him, for it was a mixture of warm water, glue, and feathers that Herr Schwartz had so gleefully cooked in the kitchen, while Prout had been digging a nice hole to put it in at the bottom of the chute.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Christmas Thief, and What He Stole.

EN minutes under the shower-bath did Gan-Waga a great deal of good. At first he thought he would go to bed. His spirits were like elastic, however, and it was not in his nature to sulk for more than five minutes at a time. Besides, he could hear music and laughter, and the sound of merry

Besides, he could hear music and laughter, and the sound of merry voices.

"I tink dey get de besters ob dat jokes," he thought. "Ohmi, I nevers tink anyting could be so stickier. All rights, Mr. Sprouts and Mr. Maddocks, and Mr. Barry Lunatics. I laughs de next times. Oh, dears! Oh, dears! It awfuls stickifuls, and it tastes norfuls. I must have a tallow cangles to get de tastes out."

Gan reappeared attired in a suit of pyjamas and a tall-hat.

"By honey, here's the canary bird!" cried Prout. "Ain't he moulted quick? Merry Christmas, birdie!"

"Come and whistle to us a bit," said Maddock, "if you ain't off song. "Ow do you feel now, Cock Robin?"

"Und tell me, tell me how you like dot lofely soup, Gan," said the cook eagerly. "I make dot soup for you and for nopody else. You taste him, yes? He tickle der palate, yes? Dot was game soup, but I haf no bird to make him of, so I put in all der veathers. Arrr! It vas goot, yes? Har, har, har!"

Just then Prout happened to glance across the room. Ching-Lung was standing under an arch decorated with holly. He made a sign. Prout nudged Maddock, and picking their way through the revellers in their masks and gay paper hats, the two seamen joined the prince. Ching-Lung was standing on the lawn. The moon had waned, and the night was stil' and dark.

S for steaks (stakes),

"That fellow I told you of is lurking about," said Ching-Lung. "He has been haunting the place for a week or more. I know what he is after, but I want to know who is behind him."

after, but I want to know who is behind him."

"Let me get hold of him, by honey, and Pil soon squeeze the secret out of him," said Prout grimly. "It's a plan of your aeroplane engine the thief is after, I reckon, sir?"

"That and a sample of my new liquid fuel," said Ching-Lung. "He cannot get into the hangar without warning us. I learned about ten minutes ago by telephone that a man had been seen on the road. He was cycling this way. Wait here, Maddock. There is an electric lamp in the tree close to your head. It will light if anyone who does not know the secret goes near the hangar."

"I can feel it, sir, if I can't see, souse me!" grunted the bo's'un.

"And a switch below. If the lamp lights, turn on the switch, and that will warn Prout."

Maddock saluted. Telling Prout, who was still attired as Falstaff, to make no noise. Chizal

Maddock saluted. Telling Prout, who was still attired as Falstaff, to make no noise, Ching-Lung walked on. He paused in the shadow of another tree.

make no noise, Ching-Lung walked on. He paused in the shadow of another tree.

"You'll see Maddock's signal, Prout. Just in front of you there's a patch of white. That's a little mortar which throws a fire-ball. Should you hear a bell, pull the lanyard of the gun, and we shall be able to see whom we are chasing. Of course, it may be a false alarm, but the hound is sure to know of our little merrymaking, and such fellows will commit a crime on Christmas morning just as readily ou long enough to freeze, so keep wide-awake."

you long enough to freeze, so keep wide-awake."

Ching-Lung glided away into the darkness. Except for the faint sound of music and laughter, the night was silent and bitingly cold, so cold that Prout was glad of his pudding. He began to think that nothing would come of it except chillblains, and then suddenly the lamp shone out.

"Tr-ring, tr-ring!"

It was the bell. Prout seized the lanyard of the little mortar and pulled it. A quick report answered, and the next moment all around showed clear and cold in the dazzling white glare of a fire-ball. Clearer than all to Prout was the running figure of a man. Prout uttered a roar, and dashed in pursuit. Seeing the strangely-dressed pursuer cutting off his retreat, the runner fled towards the house and Ching Lange. strangely-dressed pursuer cutting off his retreat, the runner fled towards the house, and Ching-Lung came racing down a side-path.

"We've got him!" cried the Prince.
"There's a twelve-foot wall there with spikes on top. He's done!"

A shriek rang out, followed by grunts, gurgling cries, and a sound of splashing.
"Puller."

"By honey," shouted Prout, "I hall bust, I shall die! He's in the coby-trap—he's in the glue and pathers! By honey, sir, he's in Gan-Vaga's soup!"

feathers! By honey, sir, he's in Gan-Waga's soup!"

A lantern was brought, but before they could see the unwieldy mass of glue and feathers, the light was knocked out of Maddock's hand, and the man was running.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Let him go, let him go!" cried Ching-Lung. "He'll never come here again to steal plans or liquid fuel, I'll wager. Oh, what a Christmas-box! Ha, ha, ha! He can't run far like that, and I could easily have him stopped. No, it's Christmas morning. Cover up that hole, boys, and then we'll go in and wish joy to everyone, not forgetting our friend with the glue-and-feathers."

And so they went in their faces

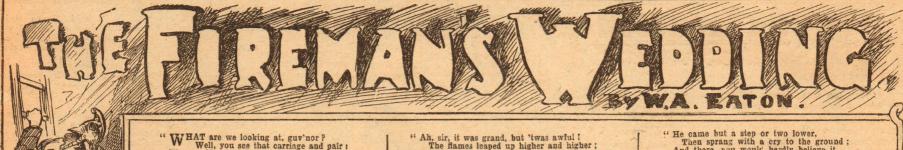
feathers."
And so they went in, their faces beaming with goodwill and jollity, to sing the old-fashioned carols and join in the old-time dances of Merry in the Christmastide.

THE END.

SANDOW'S BOOK

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book will be sent free. Address: No. 5, SANDOW HALL, BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C. This Grand Recitation is Reproduced for BOYS' FRIEND Readers with the Author's Permission.



- "WHAT are we looking at, guy'nor? Well, you see that carriage and pair:
 It's a wedding—that's what it is, sir;
 And aren't they a beautiful pair?
- "They don't want no marrow-bone music,
 There's the fireman's band come to play I
 It's a fireman that's going to get married,
 And you don't see such sights every day !
- "They're in the church now, and we're waiting
 To give them a cheer as they come;
 And the grumbler that wouldn't join in it
 Deserves all his life to go dumb.
- "They won't be out for a minute, So if you've got time and will stay, I will tell you right from the beginning About this 'ere wedding to-day,
- "One night I was fast getting drowsy,
 And thinking of going to bed,
 When I heard such a clattering and shouting—
 'That sounds like an engine!' I said.
- "So I jumped up and opened the window—;
 'It's a fire, sure enough, wife I' says I;
 For the people were running and shouting,
 And the red glare quite lit up the sky.
- "I kicked off my old carpet slippers,
 And was on with my boots in a jiff;
 I bing up my pipe in the corner
 Without waiting to have the last whift.
- "The wife, she just grumbled a good 'un, But I didn't take notice of that, For I oa with my coat in a minute, And sprang down the stairs like a cat.
- "I followed, the crowd, and it brought me In front of the house in a blaze; At first I could see nothing clearly. For the smoke made it all of a haze.
- "The firemen were shouting their loudest, And unwinding great lengths of hose; The 'peelers' were pushing the people, And treading on everyone's toes.
- "I got pushed with some more in a corner, Where I couldn't move, try as I might; But little I cared for the squeezing So long as I got engood sight.

- "Ah, sir, it was grand, but 'twas awful !
 The flames leaped up higher and higher;
 The wind seemed to get underneath them,
 Till they roared like a great blacksmith's fire.
- "I was just looking round at the people,
 With their faces lit up by the glare,
 When I heard someone cry hoarse with terror,
 'Oh, look! There's a woman up there!'
- "I shall never forget the excitement, My heart beat as loud as a clock, I looked at the crowd—they were standing As if turned to stone by the shock.
- "And there was the face at the window,
 With its blank look of haggard despair—
 Her hands were clasped tight on her bosom,
 And her white lips were moving in prager.
- "The staircase was burnt to a cinder,
 There wasn't a fire-escape near;
 But a ladder was brought from the builder's
 And the crowd gave a half-frightened cheer.
- "The ladder was put to the window.
 While the flames were still raging below.
 looked with my heart in my mouth, then,
 To see who would offer to go.
- "When up sprang a sturdy young fireman,
 As a sailor would climb up a mast;
 We saw him go in at the window.
 And we cheered as though danger were past.
- "We saw nothing more for a moment But the sparks flying round us like rain; And then as we breathlessly waited, He came to the window again,
- "And on his broad shoulder was lying
 The face of that poor fainting thing
 And we gave him a cheer as we neve
 Yet gave to a prince or a king.
- "He got on the top of the ladder—
 1 can see him there now, noble lad!
 And the flames underneath seemed to know it,
 For they leaped at that ladder like mad.
- "But just as he got to the middle
 I could see it begin to give way,
 For the flames had got hold of it now, sir,
 I could see the thing tremble and sway.

- "He came but a step or two lower,
 Then sprang with a cry to the ground;
 And there, you would hardly believe it,
 He stood with the girl safe and sound.
- "I took off my old hat and waved it; I couldn't join in with the cheer, For the smoke had got into my eyes, sir, And I felt such a choking just here.
- "And now, sir, they're going to get married—
 I bet you she'll make a good wife;
 And who has the most right to have her?
 Why, the fellow that saved her young life!
- "A beauty! Ah, sir, I believe you!
 Stand back, lads—stand back! Here they are!
 We'll give them the cheer that we promised,
 Now, lads, with a hip, hip, hurrah!"



Novel Christmas Cards. of the brush so that it is plashed or spattered over the face of the card like snowflakes. The result will be a novel and most artistic Christmas card, and as it will be the work of your own hand, your friend is cer-

HE Christmas card, instead little rough they will be becoming increasingly popuof being on the wane, is becoming increasingly popular as the years roll on, and nowadays most people have their own cards with their name and address neatly printed in fancy lettering.

Now, as all boys know, printing is

TU

a very expensive art, and private greeting-cards are not purchased for mothing, so that there are naturally few lads who can afford to send eards other than those selected from the penny or two penny basket at the local stationery depot

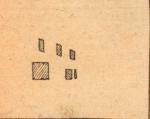


Fig. 5.—Showing the parts to fill in with red.

In this article, however, I am going to tell you how to make Christmas cards of your own, really novel ones, that I am sure will give the recipients far more pleasure and excite greater interest than many really expensive productions. interest than many really expensive productions.

If you will turn to Fig. 1 you will find illustrated

a very effective card,

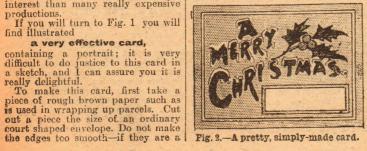
Now, on the right-hand side paste a portrait—any portrait will portrait will do; and if you have a few small photohave a few small photo-graphs of your-self they may well he used.

You will next need a small bottle of chinese white paint, which may be obtained for a few pence from any artists' sundriesman.

with water
in a saucer, and then with a broadpointed nib put in artistically any
lettering you may wish, afterwards
framing up the portrait in a suitable
style with a broad line.
The next step is to daintily

spatter the card.

Get an old tooth-brush, and, dipping it into the Chinese white, draw the blade of a penknife across the bristles





Mix a little of this paint rather thinly Fig. 3.—The Xmas card held to the light to obtain its full effect.

tain to appreciate it far more than an expensive card from the shops.

Fig. 2 shows quite another kind of Christmas card.

Christmas card.

Having cut a piece of brown paper to a suitable size, take a sheet of white paper—though black is equally effective—and from it cut a narrow edging as shown in the illustration; and also a panel. Paste this neatly in position. Now with a pencil faintly outline letters on white or black paper, and then with a pair of sharp scissors cut them out, and paste them in position, putting a cap of Chinese white to each to give a snowy appearance.

All that now remains is to cut out the holly leaves and berries, and to serve them in the same way, though a spot of red on the berries will heighten the effect.

Figs. 3, 4, and 5 concern another form of card you should not miss. It is one of those cards that you hold to

the light to obtain the full effect, an effect that is really charming, breathing of merry Christmas as it does.

To make this card, you must first of all obtain a small photo of a pretty country house. You will find one in almost any magazine or illustrated paper.

Take a piece of brown paper and trace on it in black or white a frame, and some form of greeting. What you have next to do is to get a snow effect, and this is the only tricky part in the making of the card.

Briefly, you have to cut out of the brown sheet (See Fig. 3) the parts of the picture upon which snow would lie. For instance, there is the ground, of course; then come the roof, porch, windows, tree branches, and so on. Above the house you must cut small holes to imitate

must cut small holes to imitate

falling snowflakes.

Each little piece must be truly and neatly cut out, and the best way to do this work is by first taking a tracing of the picture, and afterwards lightly transferring it to the brown paper before cutting.

Having got so far, and seen that the picture fits evenly on the brown mount so that when held to the light a sunny effect is given, you want to



Fig. 4.—The style of picture to select.

suggest warmth and firelight in the house itself.

To do this, hold the picture firmly against a window-pane, and with red ink lightly fill in the doorway and windows in colour on the reverse side. Fig. 5 shows how this is done. Paste your picture by the edges to the brown mount, and finish off neatly. Naturally, you will need to practise before you can become perfect. You will quickly get over the early difficulties, however, and not only will you be able to make you own Christmas cards, but, also, if you have the time, a supply for your friends.



Fig. 1 .- A very effective portrait Christmas card.

Opening Chapters of a Superb New School Serial.



THE 1st. CHAPTER. The Arrival of Cyrus A. Sharpe.

T was the empty skin of an over-ripe banana which caused all the trouble. It was lying on the edge of the pavement outside the North-Western station at Liverpool and, as ill-luck would have it, the cab pulled up exactly opposite the spot

pulled up exactly opposite the spow where it was lying.

The cab came from the direction of the docks, and contained two pas-sengers. One of these was a portly middle-aged Liverpool stockbroker named Wilson. The other was a slim, pale-faced, rather over-dressed American boy, named Cyrus A. Sharne.

American boy, "Sharpe.
"Where for, sir?" asked the porter who opened the cab door.
"Highfield," said Mr. Wilson.
"We have plenty of time?"
"Ten minutes, sir," replied the

"We have plenty of time?"

"Ten minutes, sir," replied the porter.

Mr. Wilson glanced at Cyrus, and signed to him to get out. Cyrus, who had a great idea of his own importance, and was much inclined to put on side, alighted in a dignified and leisurely manner. As he stepped out of the cab, however, he stepped out of the cab, however, he stepped on to the banana skin, and in the twinkling of an eye both his dignity and his leisure disappeared!

With the swiftness of a lightning flash his right foot started off on a skating tour across the pavement, his feft foot made a desperate effort to catch it up, but miserably failed. His arms flew up and his hat flew off, and after executing a weird and fantastic wardance, he finally sat down on his hat—a brand new topper—and squashed it into the semblance of a battered concertina.

Mr. Wilson sprang out of the cab with a cry of consternation, and alighted on the self-same malevolent strip of banana peel which had already caused the downfall of Cyrus A. Sharpe.

"Take care, sir!" exclaimed the porter.

But the warning came too late. If

"Take care, sir!" exclaimed the porter.

But the warning came too late. If Mr. Wilson's feet had been shod with roller-skates they could not have shot from under him more swiftly or more suddenly. In a vain attempt to save himself, he made a wild grab at the porter and flung his arms around the man's neck. Unprepared for this, the porter lost his balance, and the next instant he and Mr. Wilson were rolling in the gutter, locked in each other's arms.

"I shall write to my poppa about this!" wailed Cyrus, still sitting on his battered hat and wagging a reproachful finger at Mr. Wilson. "I guess he'll make somebody sit up!"

Mr. Wilson sevembled to his feet.

Mr. Wilson scrambled to his feet, picked up his hat and glared at

ordered Cyrus to follow him, and stalked off to the booking office. "This is where you get your ticket," he said. "You're over

ticket," he said. "You're over twelve, I suppose?"
"Yep!" said Cyrus.
"Then you'll have to pay full fare.
Ask the clerk to give you a third-class single for Highfield."
A look of lordly scorn came into Cyrus's face.

Cyrus's face.

"Third-class?" he drawled. "I guess not! I reckon Cyrus A.
Sharpe goes first-class every time!"
He booked his ticket, and paid for

"Now follow me," said Mr. Wilson. "The train is in the station, and is due to leave in five minutes."

While they are on their

while they are on their way to the train, it may be as well to explain that Cyrus A. Sharpe was the only son of a well-known American railway magnate and multi-millionaire. His mother, who was of English birth, had persuaded his father to send him to England to be educated; and his father, after discussing the matter with one of his English friends—Sir David Rendle, of Highfield—had decided to send Cyrus to Rayton College.

Being too busy to bring the boy to England himself, Mr. Sharpe had sent him over in charge of the captain of the Mauretania. The liner had arrived at Liverpool on the day our story opens, and Mr. Wilson, who was another of Mr. Sharpe's English friends, had met Cyrus on the landing stage. He had piloted the boy through the Customs, and had then, as we have seen, conducted him and his luggage to the North-Western station.

But if Cyrus was going to Rayton, the reader may ask why did Mr. Wilson instruct him to book to Highfield? This calls for a brief explanation.

At the time when Cyrus landed in

Wilson instruct him to book to High field? This calls for a brief explanation.

At the time when Cyrus landed in England, the summer holidays were not yet over, though they were rapidly drawing to a close. Such being the case, Cyrus could not go straight to the school, and it had been arranged that he should go from Liverpool to Highfield, in the first instance, and spend the last few days of the holidays at Sir David Rendle's house. Mr. Wilson was not going with him to Highfield. When Mr. Wilson had met him at the landing-stage, and had escorted him to the station, and had put him in the Highfield train, his duties were ended.

As already stated, the Highfield

about this!" wailed Cyrus, still sitting on his battered hat and wagging a reproachful finger at Mr. Wilson. "I guess he'll make somebody situp!"

Mr. Wilson scrambled to his feet, picked up his hat and glared at Cyrus.

"Get up!" he said savagely.

He jerked the boy to his feet, and thumped his hat into shape. Then, after giving the porter instructions with regard to the luggage, he

to opening his newspaper, when he saw Mr. Wilson coming down the platform, accompanied by Cyrus, and followed by a porter carrying a rug, a handbag, and a bandbox.

"Ah! Good-afternoon, professor!" said Mr. Wilson, coming to the carriage door. "You are travelling by this train?"

"Naturally," said the professor, with a smile. "Otherwise I shouldn't be here!"

"Are you going as far as Highfield?"

"Yes, and farther."

"Yes, and farther."
"Then may I beg a favour of you?" Certainly. What can I do for

you?"
Mr. Wilson introduced Cyrus to the professor, and explained who he was and where he was going.

was and where he was going.

"This is his first visit to England,"
he said, "and he is rather bewildered
by his strange surroundings. Will Ins is his first visit to England, the said, "and he is rather bewildered by his strange surroundings. Will you allow him to travel with you, and will you see that he gets out at Highfield, where Sir David will meet him?"

Little dreaming what he was let-

Highfield, where Sir David will meet him?"

Little dreaming what he was letting himself in for, the professor cheerfully agreed to this. Cyrus, accordingly, took his seat in the compartment, and a few minutes later the train departed.

It was hardly clear of the station before the trouble began. Cyrus wanted something out of his handbag, which the porter had placed on the rack. In reaching for the bag, Cyrus trod on the professor's gouty toe. The professor let out an anguished howl of pain, and pushed him away. Unluckily, at that moment Cyrus had just got hold of the bag. When the professor pushed him away, he dropped the bag, which fell on the professor's head, knocking his hat over his eyes and rebounding from there on to his knees.

"Say, you needn't make all that row about a little accident!" said Cyrus, in an aggrieved voice. "Besides, it was your own fault. You shouldn't have pushed me!"

"Sit down in that corner, and don't dare to move till we reach Highfield!" commanded the professor, rubbing his injured toe with one hand and his aching head with the other.

Cyrus sat down, and began to whistle.

"Don't whistle!" said the professor irritably. "It gets on my nerves!"

Cyrus muttered something under his breath, thrust his hand into his

nerves! Cyrus muttered something under his breath, thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out an elaborate cigarette-case.
"Boy!" thundered the professor.
"What—what are you going to do?"

"Boy N' thundered the professor.
"What—what are you going to do?"

"I guess I'm going to have a quiet smoke," said Cyrus coolly.
"Any objection?"

For a moment the professor glared at him in speechless horror.
"The idea!" he gasped at last.
"The very idea! A boy like you! Put that thing away at once. At once, do you hear?"

"Shucks!" said Cyrus. "I'm not to move, and I'm not to whistle, and I'm not to smoke! What in the name of goodness am I to do, then?"

"You're to sit still and keep quiet—that's what you're to do," said the professor.
"I'll write to my poppa about this," said Cyrus. "I guess—"

"Don't talk!" said the professor sharply. "I want to read!"

For several minutes Cyrus stared out of the window in disconsolate

silence.

"Say?" he said at last.

The professor looked up from his paper with a frown of annoyance.

"Well, what is it now?" he asked.

"I've got a book in that bag," said Cyrus. "May I got it out and read it?"

"Yes," said the professor shortly Cyrus fumbled in the bag, but th book was not there.

"It must be in that other bag," he said, "which Mr. Wilson told the porter to put in the baggage-car." "The guard's van, you mean," said the professor.

"Same thing," said Cyrus. "I'll have to stop the train and ask the guard to bring me the bag."
"You—you'll what?" gasped the stupefied professor.
"Stop the train!" repeated Cyrus calmly. "How do you do it? Oh,

calmly. "How do you do it? Oh, I see!"

Above the window was a chain, beneath which was the inscription: "To stop the train, pull this chain downwards. Penalty for improper use, £5."

"Don't you dare—" began the professor.

But it was too late. Cyrus had already grasped the chain and had given it a vigorous tug.

"You—you outrageous young ruffian!" gurgled the professor, as a sudden jarring of the train proclaimed the fact that the brakes had been applied. "You—you monster of depravity! You—you—"

Words failed him. He shook his fist at Cyrus, and opened and shut his mouth like a stranded codfish.

"What have I done wrong?" asked Cyrus innocently. "That's the way to stop the train, isn't it? It says so up there."

"But that is only to be used in the contraction of great was a contraction."

"But that is only to be used case of great emergency," said t professor.

rofessor.

"Well, I want my bag," said the professor.

"Well, I want my bag," said Cyrus. "I guess that's a great enough emergency for me."

The professor choked.

"You see what it says," he said, pointing to the notice. "Penalty for improper use, £5.' You'll be fined five pounds."

"Shucks!" said Gyrus. When I want a thing it isn't five pounds will stop me getting it. My poppa, I'd have you know, is a millionaire, and could buy up the whole of this one-horse railread if he wanted."

Meantime, the train was slowing up, and a moment or two later it came to a stop. Dozens of passengers thrust their heads out of the carriage windows.

sengers thrust their heads out of the carriage windows.

"What's wrong?" they shouted, as the guard climbed down from his van and hurried along the outside of the tagin

van and hurried along the outside of the train.

"Somebody's pulled the alarm chain," he answered.

There was a buzz of excited speculation. Had somebody been suddenly taken ill? Had one of the passengers violently attacked another? What had happened?

It was easy for the guard to ascertain in which carriage the chain had been pulled. He dimbed up on to the footboard and opened the door.

For a moment be thought he must have made a mistake. The only persons in the compartment were a white-haired old gentleman and an

innocent-looking boy. Nobody was ill, nothing was wrong.
"Who pulled that chain?" he demanded.
"I did," said Cyrus calmly.
"There's a bag of mine in the baggage-car—a cowhide bag, marked 'C. A. S.' Will you please bring it to me?"

The guard nearly fell off the foot-board in his rage and indignation.

board in his rage and indignation.

"You—you mean to say you stopped the train for that?"

"Just that," said Cyrus. "If there's anything to pay, my poppa will pay. Theodore K. Sharpe, Fifth Avenue, New York. Now, hurry up, and bring me my bag!"

The professor feared that the guard was about to have a fit. He hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"The boy is a stranger in Eng-

hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"The boy is a stranger in England," he said. "He doesn't understand our customs. He only arrived from America this afternoon. He's going to Highfield, to stay with Sir David Rendle."

At the mention of Sir David's name the guard's anger visibly cooled, for Sir David was one of the directors of the line and a personage of influence. If this boy was a friend of Sir David's—well, it might not be advisable to make too great a fuss.

"You knew he ought not to meddle with the chain," he growled, glaring at the professor. "You should 'ave stopped 'im."

"I hadn't time," protested the professor. "He had done it before I realised what he was going to do."
"He's rendered 'isself li'ble to a fine of five pounds," said the guard.
"Is Sir David goin' to meet 'im at Highfield Station?"
"Yes."
"Then I'll report the matter to

Highfield Station?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll report the matter to 'im when we get to Highfield," said the guard. "Meanwhile, you'd better keep a sharp eye on the lad, and see as he doesn't play any more of these monkey tricks."

The professor slipped half-a-crown into the guard's hand.

"Take him with you," he whispered, "and let him travel in the yan. He's too big a handful for me."

The guard pocketed the coin but shook his head.

"Sorry, sir, but it's against the regulations," he said.

Then he slammed the door to, readjusted the alarm signal, returned to his van, and waved his flag.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

"S AY, isn't he going to bring me my bag?" asked Cyrus, as the train resumed its journey.

"Of course he isn't!" said Professor Boyd. "And you may consider yourself very lucky that he didn't hand you over to the police."
"Gee-whizz!" said Cyrus, opening his eyes. "And do they carry a policeman on every train in England to arrest anybody who does wrong?"
The professor coughed, and wisely dropped the subject.
"Now just sit still," he said, "and don't let me have any more trouble with you."

To sit still was the one thing in the world that Cyrus could never do. He fidgeted in his seat, shuffled his feet on the floor, drummed with his fingers on the window-pane, and (Continued on the next page.)

Snow and Frost Photographs.

HOW TO TAKE AND FAKE THEM.

ON'T put your camera away because winter is here, as some of the most charming photographs can be taken between December and March. Of course, it is impossible to snapshot snow scenes th a little camera, but you can ways give a time exposure.

A convenient wall or railing, or even a low branch of a tree, may be found on which you hold the camera firmly while you give a time exposure. Even if your shutter will not work at time, you can exposure ten or a dozen times. However, no moving object must be in the photograph.

graph.

For winter photography, it is best to use a rapid colour sensitive plate, backed, especially if there is any mist about. Films are, of course, both colour sensitive and backed, but be sure you give a generous exposure, as films are slower than an extra rapid plate.

Exposure is a difficult quadrate

so much depends upon the light, the speed of the plate, and the lens. Scenes with no great contrast and no heavy foreground require less exposure than ones with buildings or trees close at hand.

On a bright sunny day, a photograph of an open landscape may be sufficiently exposed in 1-25th of a second at F8, but if there are any heavy shadows, or

the snow is much trampled

into deep holes, which show up almost black in contrast with the white, five or six times this exposure will be necessary.

Snow scenes always look brighter than they really are, and when photographing snow-covered buildings or tree-trunks, exposure must be generous, or you will get hard, chalky pictures, with no details in the shadows. pictures, shadows.

sure you give a generous exposure, as films are slower than an extra rapid plate.

Exposure is a difficult question, as shadows fall across it, trample it

about a little in order to break it up. But don't walk about aimlessly making a confused jumble of steps—walk to a gate or house, and give the track an object.

Trees covered with hoar-frost on a sunny day will not require so much exposure—1.25th of a second at F8 will probably be sufficient. Such photographs can be developed with your usual developer, but do not carry development too far.

Snow scenes require very careful development. Dilute your usual development woor three times, so that development takes some time. You can add three times the usual amount of water to your ordinary metol-hydrokinone developer, keeping the plate carefully covered, and rocking all the time. The negative will be thin, but will show plenty of detail, and should yield a good gaslight print. If necessary, it can be slightly intensified.

Before starting operations, take the temperature of your developer and

intensified.

Before starting operations, take the temperature of your developer and hypo. Put a thermometer for half an hour or so in the room in which they are kept, and if it registers under 60 degrees, place the bottles of solution and hypo on the mantelpiece over the fire for a few moments,

Do not make it too hot, however; about 65 degrees is best. If the temperature is very low—in the fifties, or, worse still, in the forties—the developer will not work properly, and a correctly exposed plate will seem to be under-exposed. If you are any length of time length of time

in a cold dark-room.

place some hot water in a big dish in which the developing dish can be placed.

Sometimes at Christmas-time you Sometimes at Christmas-time you may want a snow or frost photograph for a calendar or card, but do not possess one. Early in the previous spring you may have taken a picture of fresh foliage on a colour sensitive plate, using a screen, but the light was weaker than you thought, so you have under-exposed. You tried to remedy this by prolonged development, but when you came to make a print your photograph appeared as if it had been taken on a frosty day on which the grass was lightly sprinkled with snow.

with snow.

An under exposed photograph on a colour sensitive plate, which has been used with too deep a screen, will nearly always give a frosty result, and if you possess such a negative, a

little touching-up here and there with the pencil to darken a tree-trunk, or lighten a shadow, will give quite a presentable winter scene.

presentable winter scene.

If you have no such negative, and there is no snow about, you can load your camera with colour sensitive plates, take a deep screen with you, and choose a view that gives an expanse of grass looking towards a bare tree. Under-expose this slightly and develop strongly, and you will get a print with a dark tree-trunk, and grass apparently powdered with snow. Charge a thin brush with opaque colour, and run it carefully along one side of the tree, and you have an effect of driven snow.

Then you can take sham pictures

effect of driven snow.

Then you can fake sham pictures by your own fireside. If you have any of those little metal animals or figures, you can place them on a table, powder them with salt, and take a winter scene without going out of doors. With a little ingenuity in folding, you can make hills out of paper, and trees out of twigs brought in from the garden. These are stuck in the snow, and then powdered with salt. A generous exposure is necessary, experience alone telling you what is right.

THE END.

finally, struck by a brilliant idea, he thrust his hand into his hip-pocket and drew out a small silver-plated pistol.

The professor leaped to his feet with a cry of alarm The very sight of firearms filled him with abject

of firearms filled him with abject terror.

"Good heavens! What have you got there?" he cried, turning pale.

"My shooting-iron," said Cyrus.

"A regular peach, isn't she? Like to look at her?"

He held out the weapon for the professor's inspection. Trembling in every limb, the professor backed to the other end of the compartment.

"I thought I'd while away the time," said Cyrus, "by taking a few pot-shots at the telegraph posts."

"You don't mean to say the thing is loaded?" gasped the professor.

"In every chamber," said Cyrus cheerfully.

The professor snatched up his bag

cheerfully.

The professor snatched up his bag and held it in front of his face.

"Throw it away!" he cried hoarsely. "Out of the window immediately!"

"Throw it away!" repeated Cyrus, in genuine amazement. "A pistol that cost fifteen dollars!"

"Throw it out of the window!" screamed the professor, growing more and more agitated every second. "It—it might go off at any moment." "Shucks!" said Cyrus scornfully.

"Shucks!" said Cyrus scornfully.
"I'm not a kid! I've been used to handling a pistol ever since I could toddle. Watch!"

fe pointed the pistol at the open window behind the professor's head. At the top of the window there was a short blind, from the lower edge of which dangled a tassel.

"Bet you a stick of chewing-gum that I cut the cord of that tassel with—" he began.

But the professor waited to hear

But the professor waited to hear

But the professor waited to hear no more.

"Help! Police!" he bellowed, half demented with terror. "I'll be murdered by this young savage. I refuse to travel with him any longer! Let me out! Take him away! Stop the train!"

Dropping his bag, he made a grab at the chain of the alarm signal and gave it a frantic pull. Then he flung himself down on his hands and knees and crawled under one of the seats.

Again the brakes were applied. Again the train pulled up. Again the passengers thrust their heads out of the carriage windows. Again the guard came running up the line, storming and raving as he ran.

"Say! It isn't me this time!" said Cyrus, when the guard dragged

open the carriage door. "He did

open the carriage door. "He did it."

He pointed to the professor's legs, which were sticking out-from under the seat, and were all that could be seen of him.

"Here! Come out of that!" snapped the exasperated guard, grabbing hold of the professor's ankles and trying to drag him from under the seat. "Come out and explain what's 'appened!"

"Let me go!" howled the professor, kicking and struggling. "I refuse to come out until you have disarmed the miscreant!"

The guard spun round on his heel and glared at Cyrus.

"What 'ave you been doing to the old gentleman?" he demanded.

"I guess this must have frightened him," said Cyrus, showing the guard his toy pistol. "I was going to shoot that tassel off, when he pulled the chain and crawled under the seat. How was I to know he was such a coward?"

"Give that pistol to me!" said the guard sternly. "Now, sir, you can come out; he's quite safe now."

The professor crawled from under the seat.

The professor crawled from under

The professor crawled from under the seat.

"Take him away!" he cried, pointing to Cyrus. "My life isn't safe with such a savage. I absolutely refuse to travel with him any longer. Do what you like with him, but take him away from here!"

Cyrus drew himself up with a lordly air.

"If it comes to that," he said, "I'm as fed up with your company as you seem to be with mine. My poppa.—"

as you seem to be will mille. My poppa—"
"Oh, blow your poppa!" said the guard sayagely.
"My poppa," said Cyrus, "is one of the richest men in the States. When we travel by rail we have our private car. I'm not accustomed

"That's enough!" interrupted the guard. "I can't stay 'cre all day listenin' to your jaw. You've already delayed the train nearly a quarter of an hour!"

"If there's anything to pay, my poppa will pay," said Cyrus. "In the meantime, please find me another carriage."

carriage."
"Oh, yes, I'll find you another carriage," said the guard—"one where you'll be kep' out of mischief for the rest of your journey. Pick up your things. Now come along o' me!"

He marched Cyrus off to the guard's van, which was crowded with passengers' lugrage, and dumped him down on one of the trunks.

"Now, you just sit there till we get to Highfield," he said, shaking his fist in Cyrus's face, "and if you dare to wink an eyelid without my leave I'll flay you alive—so there!"

Then he waved his flag, and once again the train resumed its journey.

Near by the trunk on which Cyrus sat was a large hamper, from the interior of which came strange muffled sounds.

"Say, guard," said Cyrus presently, "what's in this hamper?"
"Never you mind," said the guard shortly.

shortly.
"But I'm curious," persisted

Cyrus. "Then stay curious," said the

"Then stay curious," said the guard.

But it was not in the nature of Cyrus to "stay curious," and presently, taking advantage of the guard's back being turned, he edged a little nearer to the hamper, the lid of which was tied down with string.

"I've got to see what's inside this hamper if I die for it," he muttered. Cautiously, with one eye on the guard, he untied the string, and was just about to raise the lid an inch or two and peer inside, when the guard turned round and saw him.

"Confound you! Leave that hamper alone!" roared the guard, striding angrily towards him.

But Cyrus, having gone so far, was not going to be baffied at the last moment. With a swift and sudden movement he threw up the lid of the hamper. And then he knew what it contained, for the moment he threw the lid open a lusty young gamecock flew out with a loud, triumphant crow, to be followed quickly by another, and three others!

Pandemonium is the only word to describe the scene that ensued.

Overjoyed at their release, the six gamecocks scampered about the van, flapping their wings and crowing lustily.

Cyrus, alarmed by what he had

Cyrus, alarmed by what he had done, tried to capture one of them, and received a peck on the back of the hand that made him dance and howl with pain.

The guard, in attempting to catch another, stumbled over a portmanteau and fell up against a couple of milk-pans, upsetting them, and flooding the floor of the van with milk.

milk.

Alarmed by the clatter of the falling cans, the gamecocks flew this way and that in panic-stricken confusion. One of them knocked the guard's lamp off its shelf, and smashed the glass to splinters. Another flew blindly into his face and clawed out a tuft of his whiskers. A third alighted on the ledge where

he kept his waybills and other papers,

he kept his waybills and other papers, and sent them flying in all directions. One of the windows of the van was open, and some of the papers, whirled away by the draught, floated through this window. This appeared to give the frightened gamecocks an idea, and before the dismayed and bewildered guard could stop them they flew through the window one by one, and were quickly lost to sight. "Prize birds—every one of 'em!" groaned the guard. "And all gone! Not a feather of 'em left!" He glared at Cyrus and then at the wreck around him. "Six valuable prize birds gone!" he said thickly. "If there's anything to pay," said Cyrus, "my poppa will pay." "Forty gallons of new milk destroyed!" moaned the guard. "If there's anything to pay—"said Cyrus. "My lamp smashed, and half my

destroyed!" moaned the guard.

"If there's anything to pay—"
said Cyrus.

"My lamp smashed, and half my
waybills lost," the guard went on,
ignoring the interruption, "and all
through you!"

"I'm sorry," said Cyrus. "It
sha'n't occur again."

"No," said the guard, "it sha'n't
occur again; I'll see to that. I'll
take jolly good care you don't get
into any more mischief!"

He stretched out his hand and
grasped Cyrus firmly by the coatcollar.

"What—what are you going to
do?" faltered Cyrus.

"I'm going to put you where I can
find you when I want you," said the
guard, dragging him towards the big
empty hamper from which the gamecocks had escaped.

"You're going to put me in the
hamper!" gasped Cyrus.

Then the lid closed down with a
bang, the guard put a couple of
heavy portmanteaus on the top of
it, and after that there was peace.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

The End of the Holidays.

I the station at Highfield a man and a boy were strolling up and down the platform awaiting the arrival of the train from Liverpool.

The man, a typical example of an honourable, upright British gentleman, was one of Highfield's leading merchant princes. His name was Sir David Rendle, and he lived in a handsome modern mansion known as the Beeches. He was a widower

Sir David Rendle, and he lived in a handsome modern mansion known as the Beeches. He was a widower, and his only child was an eight-year-old daughter named Elsie. The boy was Philip Ashley. Many of my readers have already made his actuaintance, but for the benefit of those who have not, it may be briefly explained that, six months before our

present story opens, Philip, who was the son of a widow in humble circumstances, had saved the life of Sir David's little daughter.

Out of gratitude for this Sir David had taken Philip's mother to live at the Beeches, and had sent Philip to Rayton College, a famous school in the North of England. Many of the boys at the school had resented the presence among them of a charwoman's son, and regarding him as a blot on the reputation of the school, they had christened him "The Blot."

woman's son, and regarding him as a blot on the reputation of the school; they had christened him "The Blot."

Foremost among those who had persecuted Philip at Rayton had been Sir David's nephew, Godfrey Mortimer, whom Sir David had practically adopted as his son. In conjunction with another boy named Heath, Mortimer had concocted a series of plots against Philip whereby it had been made to appear that Philip was a thief, a gambler, and everything that was bad.

Eventually, however, with the help of Dr. Paul, the head-master, Philip had triumphed over his enemies, their plots had recoiled on their own heads, and Mortimer and Heath had been expelled, while Philip, from being the most unpopular boy in the school, had become the most popular. Sir David, who was the soul of honour himself, had been terribly shocked by the revelation of his nephew's rascality. After Mortimer had been expelled, Sir David had disowned him and had packed him off to Canada with a sufficient sum of money to enable him to make a fresh start in life. And he had then announced his intention of adopting Philip in Mortimer's place.

"When Godfrey had finished his education at Rayton." Sir David had said to Philip, "I had intended to send him to Oxford and afterwards to take him into partnership. What I had intended to do for Godfrey, I will do for you. Henceforth my house shall be your home, and your education and your future welfare shall be my care."

This had happened at the end of Philip's first term—the summer term—at Rayton College. Since then—that is to say, during the holidays—Philip had lived at the Beeches; and now, in a few days' time, he was to return to Rayton for his second term. "The train is late," said Sir David, glancing at his watch. "Nearly a quarter of an hour. I hope—Ah! Here it comes!"

The train clattered into the station and pulled up alongside the platform. As it glided past Sir

(Continued on the next page.)

HOW CAN THE A Fascinating Christmas Puzzle. Brawn by Yorick.

One Dozen Pairs of Winslow's **Famous Extension Roller** Skates and Fifty of Our Renowned Printing Outfits Offered for Correct Solutions.

You will find on this page a very clever Maze Puzzle that has been specially drawn for our Christmas Number by the gifted "Yorick." As you will notice, there is a Boy Scout in a maze of lanes, and he has to find his way out. his way

CAN YOU HELP HIM?

When you have found the correct exit from the Puzzle Maze, take a fine nib and some red ink, and trace the proper route from the centre to the point of exit.

the proper route the point of exit.

There are one dozen pairs of Winslow's Famous Extension Roller Skates and fifty of our Renowned Printing Outfits offered for the correct solutions to this Puzzle Maze.

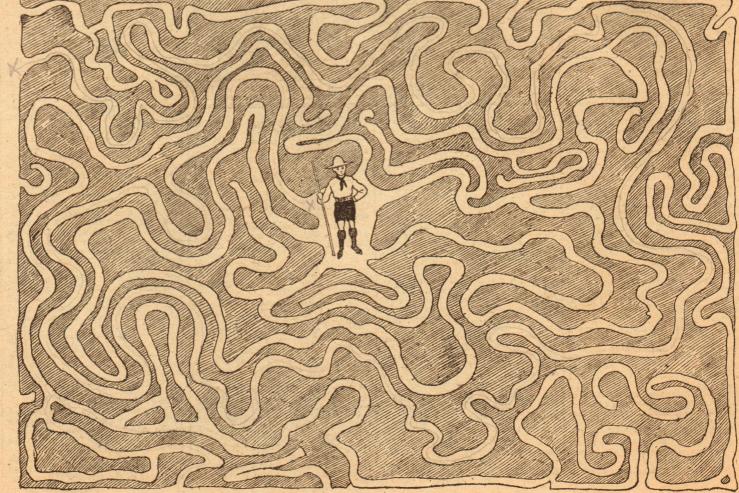
The Skates and Printing Outfits will be awarded in order of merit to the readers from whom we receive the most correct solutions. In the event of more than sixty-two readers being correct, the prizes will be

event of more than sixty-two readers being correct, the prizes will be awarded to the senders of the neatest correct solutions.

Friday, December 23rd next, is the latest day for receiving solutions, which should be addressed to "The Competition Editor," THE Boys' FRIEND, 7. Waithman Street, London, E.C.

The Editor's decision on all points must be final, and readers may only enter the competition on this understanding.

Competitor's Name..... Address, in full.....



THE NEW BROOM.

(Continued from the previous page.)

David and Philip they glanced into each compartment, but failed to see any sign of the boy they had come to meet. As a matter of fact, the the only person they saw whom Sir David recognised was Professor Boyd, who thrust his head and shoulders out of a first-class carriage and beckoned to Sir David.

"You're looking for Mr. Sharpe's son, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes," replied Sir David.

"Yes," replied Sir David.

"Hasn't he come by this train?"

"Yes," said the professor.

"You'll find him in the guard's van."

"You'll find him in the guard's van."
"In the guard's van!" exclaimed Sir David.
"Yes," said the professor. "Mr. Wilson asked me to allow the boy to travel with me as far as Highfield, but he led me such a dance that I was compelled at last to ask the guard to remove him."

There was no time to question the professor, and, after a hasty apology for any inconvenience to which he had been put, Sir David hurried off to the guard's van, with Philip at his heels.

heels.

"Yes, I've got 'im, sir!" said the guard grimly, in reply to Sir David's question. "I daren't let 'im out till you were ready to take charge of 'im. 'Ere he is."

He removed the two portmanteaus from the top of the hamper, and threw open the lid.

"Now then, Buffalo Bill, out you come!" he said.

Cyrus, covered with dust and

come!" he said.

Cyrus, covered with dust and straw, crawled limply out of the hamper. Sir David gazed at him in stupefied amazement. As for Philip, he had to bite his lip to keep from bursting out laughing.

"Cyrus!" gasped Sir David.

"What—what is the meaning of

"What—what is the meaning of this?"

"I guess you'd better ask the guard," said Cyrus sullenty. "He put me in the hamper."

The guard reeled off the list of Cyrus's misdeeds. Sir David tried to look severe, but his sense of humour was tickled, and it was as much as he could do to preserve his recritic.

much as he could do to preserve his gravity.

"I'll speak to you about this later," he said to Cyrus; then he turued to Philip. "Take him to the car," he said. "A porter will bring the luggage, and I'll join you as soon as I've settled with the guard."

"Say, who are you?" asked Cyrus, as he and Philip left the station together. "Old man Rendle's nephew?"

"No," said Philip. "I'm no re-

of Sir David's, though I live lation of with him

"Are you at Rayton College?"
"Yes. You and I will go there together next Thursday. I hope we'll be friends."

"I guess we will," said Cyrus.
"What's your poppa?"
"My father is dead," said Philip

sadly.
"Was he very rich?"

"Was he very rich?"

"No; he was very poor."

"My poppa's a millionaire," said Cyrus proudly. "One of the richest men in New York. He could buy up Sir David to morrow, and never miss the money. We have twelve automobiles. How many has Sir David?"

"Two," said Philip. "This is one of them."

He pointed to Sir David's car.

of them."

He pointed to Sir David's car, which stood outside the station with the engine still running.

"Shucks! I don't think much of that for an automobile!" said Cyrus contemptuously. "Where's the contemptuously.

"We didn't bring him," said Philip. "Sir David drove himself to-day."

Philip. "Sir David drove himself today."

Cyrus examined the car, and climbed into the chauffeur's seat.

"Do you ever drive?" he asked.

"Sometimes," said Philip. "But look here, I say, don't you go mucking about with those levers, or you'll be starting the thing off!"

"Rats!" said Cyrus. "I'm not a kid. I guess—"

The sentence ended in a startled gasp, followed by a cry of dismay from Philip and shouts of alarm from the bystanders. As Philip had predicted, Cyrus had started the car, and Philip had barely time to leap in beside him ere the car shot forward and dashed away on its top speed.

speed. Quick as thought Philip threw the ongine out of gear and clapped on the brakes. His prompt action un-doubtedly averted a serious catas-trophe; but the car had gained a

considerable amount of momentum, and before he could bring it to a standstill it butted into a coster's handcart, toppled it over on its side, and littered the roadway with a fine assortment of apples, oranges, and bananas!

and littered the roadway with a fine assortment of apples, oranges, and bananas!

Roars of laughter burst from the spectators when they saw that no serious damage had been done. But the coster saw nothing to laugh at. Foaming at the mouth with rage, he danced and raved in front of the car, and would probably have ended up by assaulting the two boys but for the timely arrival of Sir David.

"Pon my word, the guard was right!" said Sir David, when he had compensated the coster. "The only safe place for you is inside a hamper. I'm afraid I undertook more than I bargained for when I invited your father to let you stay at my house."

During these few days Philip saw a great deal of the American boy, and, in a way, learned to like him. There was much in Cyrus that was very objectionable, of course. He had been utterly spoiled by his fond parents, and had come to think that money was everything.

He was all too fond of referring to his "poppa's" wealth, and was very much inclined, as already stated, to put on "side." Also, he had not the same strict code of honour which obtains among British schoolboys.

Needless to say, during the four or five days which the two boys spent together at the Beeches, they had many talks about the school, Cyrus asking questions, and Philip answering them, so that by the time the end of the holidays arrived, Cyrus knew as much about Rayton College and its boys and masters as a boy could reasonably be expected to know who had never been there.

It was on a Thursday—five days after Cyrus's arrival in England—that he and Philip left for Rayton. Sir David gade Cyrus a few parting words of advice.

train, but as three of them were Paulites and the others were seniors, Philip made no effort to attract their attention.

At Elthorpe there were more Raytonians waiting on the platform, among them being the redoubtable leader of the Walkerite juniors and two of his chief lieutenants.

"There are three of our fellows."

"There are three of our fellows," said Philip to Cyrus. "That freekle-faced kid in the middle is Tubb. The one on his right is Rigden, and the other is Card. They're all in our House and in our dormitory."

He thrust his head out of the window and waved his hand.
"Hi! Tubb, Card, Rigden!" he cried. "There's plenty of room in here!" of the

The three boys made a dash for the carriage, and scrambled in.
"Who's the new bug?" asked Tubb, when the usual boisterous greetings had been exchanged.
"His name is Sharpe," said Philip.

Philip.

"He doesn't look it," said Rigden.

"Cyrus A. Sharpe," said Philip.

"He comes from New York."

"He comes from New York."

"Poor chap," said Card. "I perhaps he can't help it. Glad meet you, Mister Cyrus B Flat."

fruit, never drinks anything but water, and is always jawin' about the value of fresh air, and the beauty of the simple life, and the degradin' brutality of modern games, and the need for cultivatin' your mind, and all that tommy-rot!"

"Sounds pretty!" said Rigden.
"I only hope he won't try any of his fads on us at Rayton."
"He'll have a fine time if he does!" said Tubb. "But here we are at Barnby. We've five minutes to wait here. Who says lemonade and sandwiches? Right-ho! Come along!"

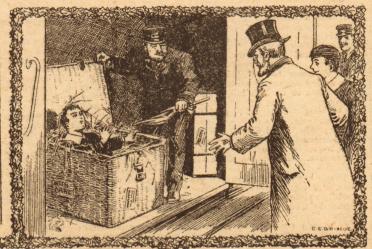
along!"
The five boys sprang down from the train and raced across the platform to the refreshment-room.
"My show," said Tubb. "Five bottles of lemonade and five ham sandwiches, please, miss. And quick as you can, for we've only five minutes."
The lemonade and sandwiches

minutes."

The lemonade and sandwiches were supplied and paid for. They were quickly consumed, and the five boys were about to return to the train when the door opened and another Raytonian came hurrying in. It was Holcroft, the leader of the Paulite juniors.

"Halle Tubb. I didn't bear were all the property of the parties of the property of the pr

the Paulite juniors.
"Hallo, Tubb! I didn't know you





Before Philip could bring the car to a standstill it butted into a coster's handcart, toppled it over on its side, and littered the roadway with a fine assortment of apples, oranges, and bananas.

"Many things will be strange to you at Rayton," he said, "and you may not get on with the boys at first, but stick to Philip and he'll pull you through.

"And now, Philip, my boy," he said, turning to Philip, "I hope you'll have a happier time at Rayton this term than you had last. You'll help Cyrus all yoù can, won't you?"

"I will, sir," said Philip, as he climbed into the carriage, for the guard was already unrolling his flag.

"I know you will," said Sir David. "You won't deceive me like Godfrey did. No, I can trust you, my boy. There goes the whistle. Good-bye, and God bless you!"

"Good-bye, sir!" "said Philip.
"Good-bye, mother?"
"Good-bye, fyrus!"
"So-long, sir! Same to you, Mrs. Ashley!"
Then the train steamed slowly out

shley!"
Then the train steamed slowly out the station, and a new chapter of the station, and a new chapter had begun in the life of Cyrus A. Sharpe—and also in the life of "The Blot."

THE 4th CHAPTER.

HERE were three stops between Highfield and Rayton, namely, at Balbrook, El-and Barnby.

thorpe, and Barnby.

At Balbrook there were half a dozen Raytonians waiting for the

"Cyrus A. Sharpe," corrected

"Same thing," said Card. "A sharp is B flat, you know."
"Don't rag him," said Philip.
"Not for worlds, dear boy," said Card. "Wouldn't think of such a

Card. "Wouldn't thing!"
"My poppa is a millionaire," said
Cyrus, anxious to impress his new
Cyrus, anxious to impress his new

Cyrus, anxious acquaintances.
"Dear me !" said Tubb.
But mayb

"Dear me!" said Tubb. "How very dreadful. But maybe it isn't his fault. Anyhow, don't you worry. We won't tell anybody!"

Tubb plunged into an account of his holidays, the others followed suit, and then they fell to talking about the new head-master.

"I wonder what sort of a chap he is?" said Tubb. "I hope he's better than his name."

"What is his name?" asked Rigden. "I've never heard."

"Dr. Gandy," said Philip.

"Is there a goose as well as a gandy?" asked Tubb. "I mean is he married?"

"Dunno!" said Philip. "I know

he married?"

"Dunno!" said Philip. "I know nothing about him except that his name is Gandy."

"My guv'nor was talkin' about him the other day," said Card.

"He doesn't know him, but he's heard about him, and he says that Gandy is a regular crank—full of fads, you know—doesn't believe in irreat, lives on nuts and cheese and

To the amazement of Sir David Rendle, Cyrus was found in a poultry hamper.

were here," said Holcroft,

were here," said Holcroft, pulling up and warily eyeing his rival.

Tubb said nothing, but quietly stretched out his hand and picked up a large and ripe tomato out of a dish on the counter.

"No larks!" said Holcroft, backing towards the door.

Tubb grinned; then, quiek as thought, he raised his hand and flung the tomato at Holcroft's head. At the same instant the door behind Holcroft opened, and a tall, cadaverous-locking man, wearing enormous spectacles, strode in.

Holcroft ducked in the nick of time, and, to Tubb's dismay, the tomato crashed into the new-comer's face, knocking off his spectacles, and bespattering his face and collar with juicy, blood-red pulp!

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" cried Tubb. "I'm awfully sorry!"

"Sorry!" roared the man, beside himself with rage. "I'll make you sorry!"

Brandishing his umbrella, he bore

Brandishing his umbrella, he bore down on Tubb. Tubb easily dodged him, and as the man made another rush at him, Card stuck out his foot, and the man, tripping over it, went down with a crash that set all the glassware on the counter jingling. And by the time he had picked himself up and had collected his scattered wits, Tubb and his companions, after flinging twopence down on the counter to pay for the tomato, had fled from the room and had gained the shelter of their carriage.

"We're not out of the wood yet,"

"We're not out of the wood yet," said Tubb anxiously. "If he insists on searchin' the train—Hurrah! There goes the whistle, and the old johnnie hasn't come out of the refreshment-room yet!" The wheels of the train began to revolve.

The wheels of the train began to revelve.
"We're off!" said Tubb, with a sigh of relief. "Now we're all right!"
Suddenly Card uttered an excited

Suddenly Card uttered an excited shout.

"See! See! There he is!" he cried. The man, his face still plastered with tomato pulp, came running out of the refreshment-room.

"Wait! Wait for me!" he shouted, waving his umbrella.

But the guard merely shook his head, and a moment later the train was clear of the station.

The remainder of the journey to Rayton was devoid of incident. There was the usual crush at the station, the usual crowd of boys, and the usual row of flies and carrieges outside. But there was one familiar figure missing. Hogan, the school porter, was not there. The dray was there, to cart the boys' luggage up to the school, but the man in charge of it was not Hogan, but a strange man, in a brand new livery.

"Where's Hogan?" asked Tubb, addressing this man.

"Dead," replied the man. "Took ill and died a month ago."

"Are you the new porter, then?" asked Philip.

"Yes."

"Yes."
"What's your name?" asked
Rigden.

Before the new porter could reply. Merrick, the school captain, came

"How do, kids?" he said, nodding to each of the boys in turn; then he glanced at Cyrus. "Who's this?" he asked.
"His name is Sharpe," said

glanced at Cyrus. "Who's this?" he asked.

"His name is Sharpe," said Philip.

"Alias B Flat," said Card.
"He's the new boy from New York," said Philip.

"And his poppa is a millionaire." said Tubb, mimicking Cyrus's drawl.
"He's dyin' to tell you."

"I'm not," protested Cyrus. "But it's true, all the same. Theodore K. Sharpe—that's my poppa's name—and he's one of the richest men in New York."

Merrick laughed. Neither he nor the boys saw how the new porter suddenly started and gazed at Cyrus with a curious air. Nor did they hear him mutter to himself:

"Theodore K. Sharpe's son here! There ought to be money in this!"

"Well, I hope you'll have a good time here, Sharp," said Merrick. "But take my tip, don't swank too much about your father's wealth, or you'll get yourself disliked. Ta-ta!

"Shall we walk up to the school," said Tubb, when Merrick had gone. "or shall we hire a fly and drive?"

"Oh, let's walk," said Philip.
"I'm tired of riding."

"So am I," said Tubb. "What do you say, Rigden?"

"I vote we walk," said Rigden.
"I second that," said Card.
"Come along, then," said Tubb. Having handed their bags and rugs to the new porter—whose name they ascertained was Cruft—the five boys started out to walk up to the school.

Halfway down the village street.

hool.
Halfway down the village street
ley met Mr. Sopworth, one of the
asters, hurrying towards the

"Has the doctor arrived?" he panted. "I say, has the doctor arrived? Dr. Gandy, I mean."
"I don't know, sir," said Philip.
"Were you expecting him by this train?"

train?"
"Yes," said Mr. Sopworth. "He

"Yes," said Mr. Sopworth. "He went this morning to visit a friend at Barnby, but was to have returned to Rayton by this train. I intended to meet him at the station."

"I've never seen the doctor, so I shouldn't know him if I saw him," said Philip. "But I didn't see anybody get out of the train that looked like a head-master."

"Neither did I," said Tubb.

"I'm afraid he must have missed his train," said Mr. Sopworth. "I say I'm afraid he must have missed his train. But I must go and see."

A little farther down the street Philip and his companions perceived a group of their schoolfellows standing in front of the window of Jeremiah Wragg's, the village tuckshop.

"I wonder what Jerry has got in

shop.
"I wonder what Jerry has got in his window that's such an traction," said Tubb. "Looks a picture of some sort. Ah! Th Pritchard. What is it, Pritch? like

Pritchard. What is it, Pritch?" he shouted.

Pritchard came across the road.

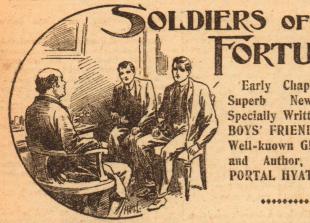
"It's a portrait of the new head," he said. "Old Jerry has cut it out of some illustrated paper, and stuck it up in his window. Come and have a look at it. You never saw such an owl in your life!"

One glance at the portrait was enough for the five boys. Philip and Rigden uttered startled cries of horrified dismay. Cyrus whistled. Tubb and Card groaned aloud.

For Dr. Gandy, the new headmaster of Rayton College, was the man they had seen in the refreshment-room at Barnby Station—the man into whose face Tubb had hurled the tomato and whom Card had afterwards tripped up!

(Another splendid instalment in THE

(Another splendid instalment in THE BOYS' FRIEND next Tuesday—16 large pages, id., as usual.)



Early Chapters of Serial. Superb New Specially Written for THE BOYS' FRIEND by that Well-known Globe-trotter and Author, STANLEY PORTAL HYATT.

Dudley and Marcus Scarfield, who are travelling northwards in Africa on the track of Mr. Douglas, a hunter, who is beyond the pale of civilsation, and who holds the papers referring to an invaluable invention their father has left to them.

By getting these papers they become immensely rich, whist if they fail to recover them they will remain poor, so that they are straining every nerve to reach their father's old friend.

Joseph Scarfield is their cousin, who by fair means or foul is also trying to find Douglas. Up to the present he has mostly employed foul means—in fact, he JUST TO INTRODUCE TO YOU

eaves no stone unturned

to gain his ends.

Amous is a native who has attached himself to the brothers, and he is a friend

himself to the protners, and he is a indeed.

Just at present Dudley and Marcus are in the hands of trek-Boers, who are illegally trading with brandy to the natives. The boys have come upon the party accidentally, and the Boers refuse to let them go. Indeed, it is the intention of these rascally white men to shoot down the boys without mercy.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

Escape from the Trek-Boers HEN Amous left the and dived into the bush, it was because he had recognised Bezedenhuit, and he did not want Bezedenhuit to recognise him. He could not stop Marcus, who was already well ahead, and he knew that

already well ahead, and he knew that Dudley would follow his brother; consequently, he did the best thing possible in making sure of his own freedom, which meant also his freedom to assist the boys.

He did not go far. In fact, when Collins was discussing the fate of the boys with the two Boers, Amous was lying in the scrub, well within earshot; moreover, he understood the Dutch language as well, or even better, than he did English, and he knew exactly what was afoot.

Bezedenhuit's proposal to shoot

better, than he did English, and he knew exactly what was afoot.

Bezedenhuit's proposal to shoot the boys in cold blood did not surprise him in the least. He knew the trek-Boers of old, knew that they are far more savage and callous than even the savages of the novelist, being really white men who have cunk below the level of the natives; and he had expected something of the sort the moment he saw that they boys were in the power of the Boers. He heard the whole thing—Bezedenhuit's proposal, Van der Byl's half-hearted protest at it, Collins's laughing assent; then he crawled away, full of bitter wrath. He seemed powerless to help Dudley and Marcus. If only he had had a rifle, it would have been different; but he had no weapon of any sort, and there seemed no chance of his being able to get one. He watched the two Boers were tying the boy's hands with bullock reins, and then he crawled away again, to think it all over.

"They've got us this time,

over.
"They've got us this tim
Marcus," Dudley remarked grimly.

"They've got us this time, Marcus," Dudley remarked grimly.
They were lying under the waggon, securely bound. Collins had ridden down to the river to have a wash, rather to the amusement of the Boers, who had never done such a thing in their lives; Van der Byl was asleep, and only Bezedenhuit remained on guard, smoking rank tobacco incessantly, and gloating in a dull, grim way over the idea of the deaths he was going to cause by-and-by. He did not even trouble to look round at the boys when he heard their voices. What matter if they talked? Soon they would be far beyond that stage. He had no sense of pity, no feeling of remorse. He had murdered three Englishmen before in the Northern Transvaal, and had flogged half a score of natives to death. Why not? He was a trek-Boer—which is another way of saying he was an irreclaimable brute.

"They have got us this time," Dudley repeated.

Marcus muttered an assent.

"It was my fault, old chap. I rode

on ahead, when I should have waited for you and Amous. Amous was wise in clearing off. I don't suppose he can help us at all."

"At least, he warned us," Dudley answered. "You remember what he said when we found the drunken bushmen?"

bushmen?"
Marcus sighed.

said when we found the drunken bushmen?"

Marcus sighed.

"I remember—now that it's too late. What do you suppose they mean to do with us?"

Dudley had a very fair idea as to their captors' intentions, but he did not like to put it into words; instead, he tried to speak hopefully, but without any great success. After a while, they both became silent, watching the sun slowly sink in the heavens, wondering whether they would ever see it rise again.

Bezedenhuit, sitting on his three-legged stool, puffing continuously at his pipe, began to take his rifle to pieces in order to clean it. He got a little tin of paraffin and put the falling-block into it to soak. His partner, Van der Byl, happening to awaken and to see what he was doing, called out:

"Is that the last of the paraffin, Bezedenhuit? Do my rifle, too, then, will you?"

The trek-Beer grunted, and took the second Martini to pieces. He became so intent on his task—a Boer loves tinkering with a rifle—that he never noticed a slight rustling in the bush; and even if he had heard it, he would probably have thought it was made by one of his own oxen, which were now feeding near by, preparatory to being inspanned for the evening trek; but Dudley heard it, and whispered to his brother:

"There's someone moving there. I wonder if it is Amous?"

Then suddenly they knew, for a score of natives, armed with assegais and knobsticks, broke cover, and came rushing down, yelling hideously, and amongst them,

rushing down, hideously,

stripped to his loin-cloth, and carrying a small battle-axe, was Amous. Even as they came, the boys recognised them; they were the same party which had sold their cattle for liquor that morning; only then they had been sober, and now they were absolutely mad with drink.

Bezedenhuit and Van der Byl knew them, too, knew also that their hour had come. It must be said for them that they met their fate standing up, with the grim, dogged courage of their race. They did not ask for mercy, knowing they would get none. Both their rifles were useless, so they fought with their three-legged stools as clubs, fought with a kind of splendid, brutal savagery.

Van der Byl went down first, an assegai through his throat. Bezedenhuit, with his back to the waggon, but a couple of feet from the boys he had intended to slay, fought on. One assegai was hanging in his leg, another had broken off in his left shoulder, yet every time he brought his three-legged stool down, it crushed a skull or broke a bone. Quite unconsciously, he was shouting now, calling down curses on his assailants, calling on Collins to come and help him. Then Collins came, galloping up from the drift, rifle in hand; but he had not come to help. He did not even stay to give one shot—did not even stay to give one shot—did not even appear to give one glance at the doomed Boer; but, stooping his head to avoid an assegai which was flung at him, drove his heels into his horse's sides, and disappeared round the bend.

"Rooinek traitor!" Bezedenhuit yelled; them, even as he spoke, an empty bottle, one of his own bottles, flung by a youngster on the edge of the fray, caught him on the forehead. He went down like a log, and, a moment later, his body had twenty assegai stabs in it.

The natives were absolutely mad with drink and the lust of blood; and it seemed as though the boys had escaped the one peril only to fall victims to those who had actually rescued them. A score of hands were thrust out to drag them from under the waggon, assegais and knobkerries were poised to

forward,

"Ho, you Bamangwatu dogs!" he cried to the natives. "Are you mad that you would kill my own little white men, and so bring down on yourselves the great wrath of Khama, your chief? Surely you have done enough evil already in getting drunk, and Khama will hardly forgive you."

give you."

He should at them, and, risking everything, thrust them aside fiercely, even felling one of them with a blow

from a knobkerrie which he had picked up. For an instant his fate, and that of the boys, hung in the balance, but his very boldness carried him through, and the natives drew back, whilst Amous cut the reins with which the boys had been bound. "There is liquor, much liquor full

him through, and the natives drew back, whilst Amous cut the reins with which the boys had been bound.

"There is liquor, much liquor, full bottles on the waggon," he cried to the savages; then he turned to the boys: "We will take your bicycles and rifles, and go quickly, whilst they will let us."

The local natives were so busy breaking open the cases of brandy that they hardly noticed the departure of the boys and the Basuto. Certainly, they did not see that Amous had picked up Bezedenhuit's rifle and the falling-block belonging to it. A few minutes later the little party of three was out of sight round a bend in the road; then Amous drew a deep breath.

"I thought it was all over with you," he said. "I heard that trek-Boer saying he would shoot you after the waggon had trekked away from the outspan. Then I heard the voices of those drunken folk, and went to see if they would help. I found that more than half their bottles contained water only, and I persuaded them to be revenged. Now they will get very drunk—drunk indeed!"

"And after that?" Dudley asked. Amous laughed.

"After that, bass? Well, Khama will send down and arrest them all, and they will be well flogged—flogged for getting drunk, and flogged for killing the white men. Still"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it is their affair, not ours."

Held Up in a Palapye.

O other incident occurred on the way into Palapye, which the boys reached two days later. Acting on Amous's advice, they decided to say nothing about the waggon-load of liquor and the

the waggon-load of liquor and the fate of the Boers.

"You would only be delayed over it, baas," the Basuto explained to Dudley. "You see, here Khama is chief, and the white men are really only his guests, and Khama would certainly say you must stay whilst he inquired into the matter. Then the schelm cousin would get well ahead of you, and all would be lost." Palapye was then the largest native town in South Africa—it is pretty well abandoned nowadays on account of shortness of water—a vast collection of grass huts, each of which had its own little fenced-in compound. The roads were heavy, loose sand, littered with filth of all sorts. In fact, there was filth everywhere—filth and flies. Nobody ever cleared up any-

thing if he could help doing so. There were, perhaps, ten thousand huts, and not one dustcart. Consequently, there was plenty of food for the flies, and when the latter were tired of feeding on offal, they turned to you for amusement. They got into your soup, into your tea, into your eyes. They crawled over you sluggishly, wearily, and made not the least attempt to escape when you proceeded to kill them.

The natives loafed about for six days in the week, watching their womenkind working, and on the seventh they sang hymns vigorously and very much out of tune. Water was very scarce, being obtained from some small springs well outside the town. There was seldom enough to drink, never enough to wash with. It was all very disgusting and very dreary and very tiresome, and how thing if he could help doing so. There were, perhaps, ten thousand

It was all very disgusting and very dreary and very tiresome, and no man stayed in the place an hour longer than was absolutely necessary.

Amous did not go into Palapye with the boys.

"It is wiser not to," he explained. "The Commissioner may make trouble, and that would mean delay. Rather, I will go to the Loisani Drift, ten miles out, and wait for you there."

you there."

The boys did as old Kerridge had instructed them to do—went straight to Watson & Co.'s store, a large galvanised iron place in the centre of the town. The mere mention of the old prospector's name was sufficient to secure them a welcome, though Watson himself—a small, haggard man, who scemed never to wear anything but pyjamas—shook his head when he heard that they intended going north. thing but pyjamas—shook his head when he heard that they intended going north.

when he heard that they intended going north.

"You can't do it," he said decisively. "The Matabele are fairly on the jump, and they may start fighting any day. Everyone who can do so has cleared out, yet you propose to go into the thick of it all. Kerridge ought to know better. I hear there's another lunatic staying at Mackay's store, who is also in a hurry to get up. He arrived in the Deputy-Commissioner's Cape cart."

The boys exchanged glances. So Joseph had not gone on yet.

"He asked me to get him carriers," Watson added, "but he won't pay enough. The Palapye niggers don't fancy going north, into the jaws of the Matabele just now unless they are offered a huge wage. Even then they would probably run away before they had got far."

"We're going to carry our stuff on our bicycles," Dudley said.

they had got far."

"We're going to carry our stuff on our bicycles," Dudley said.

"That just shows how much you know about it," the trader retorted.

"No machines ever made will carry you through, even if the Matabete would let you go, which they won't do. You had better make up your minds to stay here, or to turn back."

The information was far from being encouraging. Moreover, three or four

The information was far from being encouraging. Moreover, three or four white men who came into the store during the course of the morning confirmed it fully.

"The road to the north is practically closed," they said. "Lobengula himself doesn't want to fight—he's a black gentleman—but his people are out of hand. They'll wipe out every white man they can. Even some of the regular settlements, like Fort Salisbury or Fort Victoria, won't be too safe; whilst as for any outlying camps—""

Fort Salisbury or Fort Victoria, won't be too safe; whilst as for any outlying camps—"

And they shook their heads expressively.

Still, the boys were not to be turned back. Kerridge had assured them that he knew a safe route, and as soon as he should arrive, they intended to go on with him.

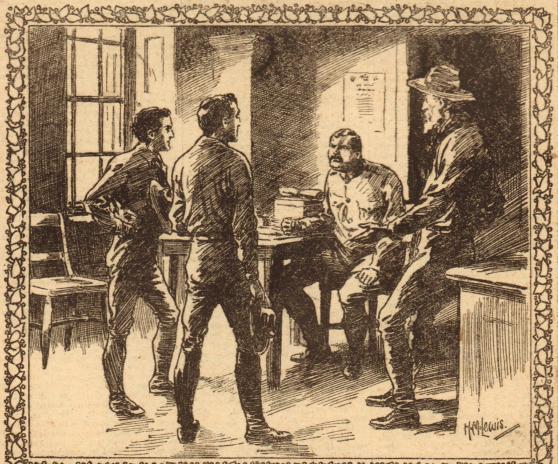
They saw Joseph several times during the next two days, but on each occasion he ignored them utterly. He understood now that it was no use lying to them about his intentions. It was just going to be a race who should find Douglas, the hunter, first, and the advantages were with Joseph, for he had plenty of money at his command, whilst the boys' supply was already getting low—so low, in fact, that every day's delay in Palappe made a serious difference to them.

The question of new bicycle tyres worried them as good deal. They

The question of new bicycle tyres worried them ap good deal. They searched all round the town—at least, the white part of it—and did not succeed in finding a single cover or tube for sale. There was nothing for it but to go on with rope tyres, represent them every day or two and

for it but to go on with rope tyres, renewing them every day or two, and trusting that the jolting would not destroy their machines.

It was very dull and very hot in Palapye, and the second afternoon they were there Watson suggested they should go out to the kloof, and try to shoot a buck.



He glowered at the boys. "Rubbish—rank rubbish!" he exclaimed. "I've a good mind to arrest you both." The two boys shrugged their shoulders at the threat.

"You've got good rifles," he said,
"and there's plenty of duiker and
klipspringer there. We shall be glad
enough of some fresh meat."

The kloof, a narrow valley running
up between some rugged granite
kopjes, was a delightful change from
the heat and dust and flies of Palapye.
Its sides were strewn with huge
boulders, whilst the vegetation consisted mainly of aloes and fevertrees, the latter being weird-looking
things, light yellow, with a greasylooking skin, which seemed always
to be coming-off in small flakes.

At first the boys saw nothing, save
a troop of baboons, which ran away,
barking vigorously. Then a couple
of rock-rabbits peered at them from
over the ledge of a boulder, only to
disappear as Dudley raised his rifle.

"It would have been a waste of a
cartridge, anyway," the boy remarked, "and we haven't too many
as it is."

as it is."

A moment later, however, they saw something worth shooting at, for a klipspringer, a little grey antelope about the size of a goat, jumped on to a boulder half-way up the kopje side, and gazed at them inquisitively. Marcus took the first shot, and missed, his bullet knocking a flake of stone off the rock just by the animal's fore-feet. The klipspringer jumped down lightly and disappeared, but a moment later a second one took his place. This time Dudley fired. The little chap sprang forward, and then place. This time Dudley fired. The little chap sprang forward, and then collapsed inertly, and rolled some feet down the hillside, finally lodging against another boulder. The boys ran forward eagerly. It was their first buck.

ran forward eagerly. It was their first buck.

However, when they reached the spot where they thought the klipspringer should be, they could see no sign of him, nor was there any blood. As a matter of fact, they had made the very common mistake of not keeping their eyes on the rock as they scrambled upwards, and they had gone to the wrong place. It was some little time before they finally discovered the buck, which was shot clean through the heart.

They took out the intestines; then, as the sun was still hot and the load would be a heavy one, they decided to wait in the shade of the boulder until it was cooler. They had been there half an hour, perhaps, and both were almost asleep, when the sound of voices below them made them sit up quickly. Two white men were coming up the valley, one leading a saddle-horse.

The boys had already had enough

The air was very still, and after a

Cousin Joseph.

The air was very still, and after a while the boys could hear almost every word which was uttered.

"I tell you we needn't worry about those young whelps," Collins was saying. "They can't get through to the north. Nobody will get through, except this party of Boers from the Northern Transvaal, and we'll go with them. I've arranged that already. You must get a horse and be prepared to ride over to my camp at any moment."

"But it's treason, man-show

be prepared to ride over to my camp at any moment."

"But it's treason, man—sheer treason! We could be hanged for it!" Joseph remonstrated.

Collins laughed unpleasantly.

"I'm an outlaw as it is, and I dare say you've done things for which they could hang you. Besides, who's going to know you went with this party of—what shall we call them?—raiders or freebooters? The thing is simple enough. Piet van Zyl, who is the leader of the trek-Boers, has been egging the Matabele on to fight the British. I dare say old Kruger knows all about it, too, and as soon as the Matabele are up, Piet and his party of about two hundred picked men are going to make a dash to the north up the Pioneers' Road, and seize the splendid stretch of country round the Victoria district. The British will be too busy with the Matabele to resist, and once the first lot of Boers has established itself, lots more will come. They've been wanting that country for a long time."

"It's treason, and it means war against, our own country," Joseph protested feebly.

Collins turned on him fiercely.

"I don't want to hear that again.

protested feebly.

Collins turned on him fiercely.

"I don't want to hear that again.
Remember, Scarfield, you're pretty
well in my hands. That note you
sent me yesterday would prove to the
Deputy-Commissioner, or to Khama,
that you were in league with us over
the coach robbery. You've just got
to do as I tell you."

The other man sighed.

"Won't they get warning—our people, I mean—and stop us?"

"Where could they?" Collins demanded. "The only place is Fort Busi, on the border. We must cross the drift by the fort, but we'll cut the telegraph lines, and we shall easily wipe out the detachment of police there. You see, they have a Maxim gun and a seven-pounder, and we want those badly."

"I suppose I must go with you," Joseph answered. He had been sitting on a boulder, but now he got up and began to walk back down the kloof. "I suppose I must go; still, I don't like it. I can't fight, you see, and besides—"."

The rest of the sentence was lest

and besides—,'
The rest of the sentence was lost, for the two were now sitting out of

earshot.
"What a villain—what a pair of villains, rather!" Dudley said.

Marcus nodded.
"Yes, and we've got to checkmate their villainy," he answered grimly.

Threatened with Arrest

THEN the boys got back to Palapye, carrying the klipspringer, they found old Kerridge waiting for them on the step of Watson's store.

The prospector pleased to see them.

pleased to see them.

"I heard some queer rumours from natives I met on the road," he said.
"A story about a waggon-load of Cape brandy, and an ugly fight. Then, last night, Amous strolled into my camp, carrying a Martini rifle I had never seen him with before; and he told me the whole yarn. You had a very lucky escape. I know Bezedenhuit well; so well, in fact, that I would have shot him on sight, and he would have done, or tried to do, the same to me. I have no doubt he intended to kill you. It was Amous's smartness in making use of those drunken niggers which saved your lives."

"There is something else afoot now," Dudley said. "Come here, to the end of the hut, where we sha'n't be overheard."

Kerridge listened to their tale with a very grave face.

Kerridge listened to their tale with a very grave face.

"Yes, I can quite understand the whole plot," he said. "The Boers have wanted that country all along, and they very nearly seized it once before, in 1890. They would have done so, but for Selous, the great hunter. You see, they are working with the Germans—or, rather, the Germans are using them as tools—and if they could get that territory, the Germans would practically join hands from South-West Africa to East Africa, and cut the British advance short."

The boys were listening eagerly.
"What must we do?" Marcus
asked. "It seems a tremendously
important affair."
"It is tremendously important."

important affair."

"It is tremendously important,"
Kerridge replied. "Very likely it
means a big war, unless it is stopped
in time. You must go at once, and
report it to the Deputy-Commissioner.
I had better go with you. He knows
me well."

I had better go with you. He knows me well."

The Commissioner shook hands with Korridge, but he merely nodded to the boys.

"I suspect you of having released a prisoner of mine," he said severely, "and if I had any evidence I should arrest you at once. I am surprised, Mr. Kerridge, that you should bring these boys here."

The prospector was, above everything, a blunt, outspoken man, and he had known the Commissioner when that great person was only a magistrate's clerk in Cape Colony.

"That's all fluffy nonsense, Billy," he answered. "These boys are going to tell you things which will make you jump."

The official frowned; he hated being called "Billy," especially by mere prospectors.

"I will listen to what they have to

The official frowned; he hated being called "Billy," especially by mere prospectors.

"I will listen to what they have to say," he answered severely.

Dudley told the story, plainly and baldly, but long before he had finished he saw that his hearer did not believe him. In fact, the Deputy-Commissioner could hardly restrain his impatience, and as the boy finished—
"Rubbish—rank rubbish!" he exclaimed. "It might have been taken out of some silly novel." He turned to Kerridge. "I am surprised that a man of your experience should waste my time in getting me to listen to a story of this kind. It is not only silly, but it is also dangerous—absolutely dangerous!" he snorted importantly. "At this crisis, when the Matabele are threatening us, we want the assistance of our friends, the Boers, and yet you dare start a story of this kind." He glowered at the

boys, and puffed slightly, being rather stout and out of condition.

"We did not start the story; it is absolutely true from start to finish!" Dudley's temper was rising.

"Rubbish—rank rubbish!" the Commissioner repeated. "You come here and accuse, not only the Boer Government, but also Mr. Scarfield, whom I know well. I suspected you from the moment I saw you at the mule-stable, and I warn you that if you repeat this story of yours, and make trouble between British and Dutch, I shall have you arrested at once!"

Dutch, I shall have you arrested at once!"

The boys shrugged their shoulders; they had already heard many stories concerning the Deputy-Commissioner. But Kerridge flushed angrily.

"I say, Billy, this is too thick. I know these boys are telling the truth; and if you let this thing go on unchecked, you deserve—"

"Mr. Kerridge"—the official cut him short—"when I want your advice I will ask you for it. Meanwhile, this affair with the Matabele occupies all my time, and so I have none to waste on yourself and these young impostors."

The prospector got up quickly.

on yourself and these young impostors."

The prospector got up quickly.

"Very well. Now we understand one another. If you were not such an egregious ass, Billy, I should think you were a traitor, like your friend Joseph Scarfield!" And he stalked out, leaving a very hot and angry Deputy-Commissioner behind him. For a moment the official was inclined to send for Joseph Scarfield, and tell him the story. Then he changed his mind; it would seem a lowering of his great dignity even to mention it. Should he tell Khama? He thought the matter over for fully five minutes, until the effort made his head ache, then he put the idea aside. Khama hated Boers even more than he hated the Matabele, and it was quite on the cards that he would believe the story, or at least send one of his regiments to test its truth. So in the end the Deputy-Commissioner did nothing and said nothing, though he determined that at the first opportuity those two boys, and old Kerridge as well, should feel the weight of his hand. He could not permit that sort of thing to go on unpunished.

Meanwhile, the boys were fuming with wrath, and Kerridge was trying to calm them down.

"It's shameful!" Dudley exclaimed.

"The man is mad, as well as being an insulting beast!"

The old prospector smiled sadly.

"My lad, I've-spent most of my life

"It's shameful!" Dudley exclaimed.
"The man is mad, as well as being an insulting beast!"

The old prospector smiled sadly.
"My lad, I've spent most of my life on the frontier, and I've seen many of his type. They learn nothing, and they forget nothing. They are always the petty-minded officials from Cape Colony. There was only one man, one real man, up here—John Mackenzie—and he was so big that they turned him out."

Marcus nodded. He had already heard much concerning that greathearted old Scotchman, the finest and the noblest servant the British Empire ever had in South Africa; and since meeting the Deputy-Commissioner he understood why the Service had lost John Mackenzie. Still, their concern was with the present and the future, rather than with the past.

"What are we going to do now?" he asked.

"There is only one thing to do," Kerridge answered. "We must warm Fort Busi, and try to get the raiders stopped there. They must cross at that drift, and the police might be able to hold them up."

"Isn't there a telegraph?" Dudley asked. "Why not wire to them?"

The prospector smiled.

"You forget that the telegraph is practically in the Commissioner's hands. They certainly would not send off a message like that without asking him first. Then, too, there is at least one Boer in the office, and the raiders would be warned at once. What we want is for them to ride into a trap at Busi Drift."

Just as they reached Watson's store they met Joseph. He was looking worn-out and anxious, and had lost the coast. He gave the boys and Kerridge a venomous look, and hurried on.

"Well, they haven't sent for him yet," Kerridge remarked. "Now wo'va got to make sne we're first. I

"Well, they haven't sent for him yet," Kerridge remarked. "Now we've got to make sure we're first. I must go and see about some horses."
"Horses!" Dudley echoed. "Why not our bicycles?"
The prospector smiled.
"Because our route from here is practically across the veldt, and you couldn't cycle ten miles of it. Fort Busi is on the eastern road, what they call the Pioneers' Road, ever so far away from the Palapye Bulawayo road. As for the horses, I'll go and borrow them from Khama. You get

the kit together—just blankets and food for two days. Watson will let you have whatever you want." And he strode off in the direction of the chief's house.

An hour later he came back, followed by natives leading four usefullooking horses.

"Khama understood," he said. "He and I are old friends. In spite of what the Commissioner said, I told him the story. He's going to send one of his best regiments up that way to guard his own frontier, and he's sending out in search of your friend Collins, whom he has wanted to catch for some time past on a liquor-smuggling charge. As for your cousin, he's going to stop him, too. Mr. Joseph hasn't got a permit yet, it seems."

The dull thud of a horse's hoofs on ne sandy road made Dudley look

The dull thud of a horse's hoofs on the sandy road made Dudley look round.

"I'm afraid he's too late," he remarked. "There is our beloved cousin galloping out of the town now. That means the raiders are ready to start, and he is joining them."

"We haven't a minute to lose, then," Kerridge said. "Never mind about your bicycles and other kit. I've arranged for Khama to send them all on. Hallo, Jack, what is it?" as Watson came hurrying up.

"The Matabele have started at last," Watson answered. "They killed a lot of whites last night, and there's a rumour that they captured Gwelo township. But we can't be sure. Most of the telegraph wires have already been cut, of course. The operator at Umchabeze reported that there were Boers with the Matabele impi which has started towards the Victoria district. It's no use your thinking of going on now, Kerridge. You're only taking these lads to their deaths. There is an impi coming south, full-pelt, one of Tobin's best regiments."

The prospector looked at the boys, and, for answer, they fetched out their rifles and blankets, and proceeded to fix the latter on their saddles. Watson shrugged his shoulders.

"You're mad," he said bluntly. "You boys are raw, and don't understand what a Matabele on the warpath is like. But you ought to know better, Kerridge. Anyway, why do you want four horses? There's only three of you."

"I've got a nigger waiting outside," he sheckoned to the trader. "Watson," he said, in a low voice, "the old gang is out again—Piet van Zyl and the trek-Boers. They're going to try and capture Fort Busi, and then make a dash for the north."

The storekeeper gasped.

"Is that so—is that really so?" he assked.

The storekeeper gasped.
"Is that so—is that really so?" he

asked.

Kerridge nodded, and the store-keeper held out his hand.

"Good-luck to you!" he said. "I understand now. But do you know that there are only twelve men left at Fort Busi, that they've shifted the rest to Mangwe? They can't stop a trek like that."

rest to Mangwe? They can't stop a trek like that."

The prospector's eyes flashed.
"At least, they'll try," he retorted. The little party rode rapidly out of Palapye, Kerridge leading the fourth horse. As they got to the Lotsani Drift they heard a loud whistle, and Amous came hurrying out of the bush. He saw they were on some urgent business, so he did not waste any time. He merely took the bridle from Kerridge, and got into the saddle. He was quite content for explanations to come later.

They rode on until dusk, when they camped for the night at one of Khama's cattle posts. The induna in charge, recognising Khama's horses, received them cordially, but he could give them little information.

"No, I have heard of no Boers," he said. "At least, not of very many lately. Still, there is so much trouble about, Matabele and other schelm like that trying to steal the cattle, that one has no time to think. I heard, however, that Cornelys Grobler and Jan van Zyl came down from Bulawayo last week."

van Zyl came down from Bulawayo last week."

Kerridge prieked up his ears. These were two of the principal men amongst the trek-Boers. But he could get no more out of the old induna, whose mind was full of the fear that the Matabele might swoop down on his cattle. He was, even then, sending them away in small droves, hiding them in the hills, and as soon as the last lot had gone, he himself intended to abandon the post. Amous listened to him with the lordly contempt which the Basuto always feels for all other native races.

"A fool indeed—a doddering old fool!" he said to Marcus. "Even a Zulu, a bragging, boasting Zulu,

would do better. We shall leave nothing here."

A couple of lions had followed the horses, and made the night hideous with their growlings. But the boys were now growing used to the ways of the miscalled "King of Beasts," and, knowing that their horses were kraaled safely, slept well.

Kerridge had them out of their blankets before dawn. It was bitterly celd—oh, how well I remember the savage chilliness of the nights in Bechuanaland!—and they could hardly feel their bridles or their rifles when they mounted. But they knew how much depended on their getting through to Fort Busi in time, and they stuck to it pluckily, never complaining.

through to Fort Busi in time, and they stuck to it pluckily, never complaining.

"I hope Joseph is as cold as we are," Marcus managed to say.
His teeth were chattering, and the words were not very distinct.

"I hope he's twice as cold—the traitor," Dudley answered. "He's a rotten horseman, I know, and he will get horribly stiff and sore,"
They stopped for breakfast at about nine o'clock, let the horses have a feed, then went on again, heading north-east. There was no road, no track even, but neither Kerridge nor Amous ever seemed at a loss, so far as direction was concerned. Kerridge explained the matter in a few words.

"We go by the sun just now, but if the sun was obscured we should go by the rivers and dongas. Roughly speaking, the rivers run east-southeast, and so it's easy to get your direction. Look there!" They were then on the crest of a rise. "That line of green scrub is a river-bank, and that river is going as straight as it can to the Indian Ocean. Only an idiot would get lost on this veldt."

At midday they were, according to Amous, in the neighbourhood of the Fort Busi road, and a little later they caught sight of a telegraph-wire strung from rough poles. Kerridge gave a sigh of relief.

"That's the Bust line. We'll soon see if we're in time."

The road was just beyond the telegraph-posts, and as they came to it Amous and Kerridge scanned it eagerly for spoor. Then:

"We're ahead of the Boers," the prospector said. "They haven't gone up yet."

A couple of miles farther on they came suddenly on a bullock-cart, outsnanned beside a water-hole.

A couple of miles farther on they came suddenly on a bullock-cart, outspanned beside a water-hole. The cattle were away feeding, but a rather weary-looking youngster, in a dilapidated police uniform, came forward to meet them.

"Hallo!" he said. "It's a fortnight since I've seen a white man. I'm out looking after the telegraphline, putting in new posts where the white ants have destroyed them. Have some coffee? It's all I've got."

Korridge, who had taken in every-

Kerridge, who had taken in ev thing at a glance, did not answer directly.

"Have you a telegraph instru-nent?" he asked instead. ment?

ment?" he asked instead.
The trooper yawned.
"Yes. Do you want to speak to
the Fort? I'll try them."
A minute later he got up with a
savage exclamation.
"The line is down, or cut, on both
sides. I can speak to neither the
Fort nor Palapye."
Karridge, however did not seem to

Kerridge, however, did not seem to hear his words. He was leaning for-ward in his saddle, listening intently. Suddenly—

Suddenly—
"We had better get into cover,
sharp," he said. "There's a crowd
of horsemen coming. It must be Van
Zyl and his raiders. Be quick!
There's not a moment to lose. They
would shoot us on sight."

(Another grand instalment of this stirring serial next Tuesday in THE BOY; FRIEND—16 Large Pages. 1d. as usual.)

BARGAINS BY POST.

Messrs Pain Bros.' advertisements are, as usual at this season of the year, appearing in The Boys' FRIEND. Readers should see their full-page offer in this week's number. Besides their well-known excellent value, they are now giving away, entirely free of charge, thousands upon thousands of Free Presents to all Customers spending only 1s. (and upwards).

This is to celebrate the TWENTY.

upwards).
This is to celebrate the TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY OF THEIR BUSINESS (established 1889). All should write for New Season's Catalogue of thousands of bargains for young and old of both sexes, to Pain Bros., The Presents House, Hastings, England.

Philip in Search of a father

A Magnificent Long, Complete Christmas Story.

By ALLAN BLAIR.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

"The mistletoe hung in the castle hall, The holly-branch shone on the old oak wall."

HE words were not spoken, but the immortal melody of "The Mistletoe Bough," to which

the immortal melody of "The Mistletoe Bough," to which they were set, floated along the street to remind the hurrying pedestrians that it was Christmas Eve.

Not that anyone needed reminding that it was Christmas. Least of all the fifteen-year-old lad who, having paused to listen to the cornetist till the "Mistletoe Bough" was finished, passed into Oxford Street, and turned slowly and wearily westward.

A merry, merry Christmas! There was to be no merry Christmas for the young Phil Renford, homeless orphan that he was. So the signs of the season of gladness that came to him through eye and ear served but to sadden him.

The boy walked on to Oxford Circus, and turned into Regent Street. Bright jewels glistened from the gay windows; warm, luxurious furs hung upon dummies snug as bears. The sight of them only made the ragged youngster shiver the more. He had never known what it was to spend a happy Christmas. Yet he must have spent a happy Christmas when the mother whom he had loved, and who had loved him, had been alive, But that was eyer so many years ago. He was but fifteen now, but ten long years—two-thirds of his young, yet weary, life—had passed since she had died.

As to his father, he did not even remember him. He had gone away—so his mether had always and

As to his father, he did not even remember him. He had gone away—so his mother had always said—on a long, long journey, and had never come back.

long, long journey, and had never come back.

"Oh, if my father is still alive! How I should love to find him!"

The words came up quaveringly from the poor lad's despairing heart. His brain worked quickly. Something amounting almost to an inspiration entered it.

His life had been empty—aimless. Why should it be so any longer?

He had been friendless and alone in the world. Why should he be so any longer? Surely if his father had really been dead, the news must have reached him somehow or other; how, he could not tell—but somehow. And such news had never reached him. The boy stopped in his walk, and lenched his fists resolutely. His eyes brightened and quickened with determination. They lifted upwards to the sky, all spangled with cold, clear stars, with a look in them as of prayer.

"Our Father which art in heaven,"

"Our Father which art in heaven,"
"Our Father which art in heaven,"
"Our Father which art in heaven,"
to quavered, "please tell me if my
other father is still alive. If he is,
show me, dear Lord, where I may
find him!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

A Motor-car Stowaway.

HIL RENFORD was in Park

Lane. How he got there

HIL RENFORD was in Park
Lane. How he got there he
hardly knew. Following that
minute of prayer, his brain had
seemed to become bemused.

Voices roused him out of his reverie—the voices of two men standing on
the path near to the gate of a great
mansion. They were dressed as
chauffeurs. The car, of which one of
them was in charge, stood close by.

A huge car—the car of a millionaire! A magnificent affair, luxuriously upholstered, and fitted with
every convenience that money could
buy.

The car belonged, as did that big mansion, to Sir Maurice Pilkington, the great financier whose name nowa-days was often breathed with the same reverent awe as that of Roth-schild or Cassel.

It was at this rich man's motor-car

It was at this rich man's motor-car that Phil Renford found himself look-

that Phil Renford found himself looking. It was to this rich man's chauffeur that the boy found himself listening.

"Nice sort o' thing," the man was grumbling, "to be called out for a journey on Christmas Eve!"

"Where are you off to, then, Ted?" asked the other chauffeur.

"Normanbridge."

"Oh, Hastings road?"

"Yes—a few miles this side. The

boss's country house is down there, you know—big place he bought a bit ago. He's took it into his head sudden to spend Christmas there. Noosance it is! I've been countin' on puttin' in my time at Crouch End wi' my gal's people."

"Pretty good road," observed the other. "You'll do it under the two hours. Remember the limit at Tubs Hill—the Sevenoaks coppers are hot stuff. But once by there you can send her along. When are you startin'?"

"Not for half an hour. He's just sent out to say so. Ordered the car for eight o'clock, and here I've been shiverin' ever since. Won't be startin' now till nine. Sha'n't be down at Normanbridge till eleven at the earliest."

startin' now till nine. Sha'n't be down at Normanbridge till eleven at the earliest."

Normanbridge! Phil Renford started and thrilled at the name. At Normanbridge—that little Sussex village a few miles from the coast—his mother had died. In the churchyard of Normanbridge all that was mortal of her lay buried.

He had not a friend in the world—no one living with whom he could spend his Christmas. Oh, if he could but spend his Christmas with his beloved dead—near to the mortal remains of his mother, who had been all in all to him, and whose memory ever provided the one bright ray in his life!

Why should he not go down to Normanbridge? The thought flew into his brain, and remained there to set it working.

The near-side door of the motor-car stood a little way open, showing an interior of soft and sumptuous upholstery. The chauffeur was standing with his back to the car. Neigher of the men had seen Phil as he stood shivering there in the shadow.

Why should he not go down to Normanbridge?

The thought ate into his brain and prompted him to action.

Stealthily as a cat he glided across the pavement. With a duck down, he passed with a creeping step into the car.

One hand dropped to raise the rugs spread over the seat, and hanging

he passed with a creeping step into the car.

One hand dropped to raise the rugs spread over the seat, and hanging down to the floor of the car. In armoment he had dived beneath, and lay curled up quite out of sight in the deep recess.

Compared with the icy streets, this place was paradise. The car was as warm as a firelit room. Its grateful warmth stole upon the boy's senses. He found himself dozing off. In three minutes he was asleep.

Presently, while he remained oblivious to it all, two men attired in heavy befurred coats, entered the car. The stout man with the black moustache and big, dark, prominent eyes, was Sir Maurice Pilkington. The tall, bent man, with the cadaverous face and eyes deep-set behind pincenez, was John Prance, his confidential secretary. secretary

secretary.

The car started off, and at that moment Phil Renford awoke. Wonder at what was happening filled him first. That feeling, however, gave way to one of vague dread. Supposing he were discovered! What would happen to him? Stowaways on ships were sometimes harshly dealt with. How would a stowaway on a motor-car be treated?

The youngster began to tremble.

motor-car be treated?

The youngster began to tremble, Still, he could not help contrasting his present warm and comfortable surroundings with the cold environment of the streets. The resulting comfort of his action made him feel anything but regret at it. Besides, he was being carried away from dismal and dreadful London, down to the place he had always longed to go to, and had only been to once—he had tramped it then—since his mother died.

The depth and darking tremble is treated to the contract of the

died.

The depth and darkness of his hiding-place, and the improbability of anyone being suspicious enough to look under the seat, presently allayed his fears. He could only see the legs of the two men seated in the car, but from their silence and the rustling of newspapers, he gathered that they were reading.

Where they were he had no definite

judged that they must have left London behind them. The car, in fact, was just then specding on towards Tunbridge

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a short, sharp cry and the crumpling of a newspaper as if by a convulsed hand.

vulsed hand.

"Sir Maurice!' came quickly in the voice of Prance, the secretary.

"What's the matter? You're ill!"

"There's a paragraph in this paper! A convict has escaped from Portland Prison!"

The financier's face was white and guivering.

The financier's face war quivering.
"A convict? Who? Surely

"Yes, he. No other."
"Good heavens! Let me see it!"
"Man alive!" exclaimed Prance,
as he ran his eyes over the
paragraph. "It is R.! He seems to
have escaped two days ago—on the
twenty-second! Why, that's the very
date—"

The financier shuddered, and seemed to shrink amid the folds of his

"Yes, the very date," he said huskily. "It is thirteen years ago

"Caleb Steen was killed. Curious that R. should have escaped on the anniversary of his—of the crime."

The financier's head flew up.
"Why did you correct yourself?"

his crime' to 'the crime'? You know that it was his crime, Prance—you know it—you know it!"

The secretary laughed. A harsh, grating laugh it was, though very low and subdued.

"Of course—of course."

iow and subdaed.

"Of course—of course!" he said soothingly. "How excited you get, Sir Maurice, over mere trifles, too! Of course it was R.'s crime!"

"Thirteen years ago!" The financier was murmuring half to himself. "Thirteen years—thirteen years! Men say that thirteen is unlucky."

Again the content of course in the said.

years! Men say that thirteen is unlucky."

Again the secretary laughed.

"A mere absurd superstition," he said. "You surely pay no attention to such rubbish. But it is curious that he should have escaped on the very night."

"Curious—yes." The financier's tone was hollow. "Curious—and alarming, too. After thirteen years' imprisonment, R. has escaped. He'll be desperate. It might be that—"He broke off with a cry. In his nervous agitation he had shifted about and had twined his feet beneath the seat until they had touched something!

He leapt up, shaking in every limb. "Something's there," he gasped—"underneath! Something that moved!"

"By Jove ves!" cried Prence who

"underneath! Something that moved!"

"By Jove, yes!" cried Prance, who had dropped to his knees. "There's somebody here! It's—it's a kid! Come out of it, you young villain!"
And without more ado, he dragged the stowaway into the light.

Very pale poor Phil was—as white as the snow that had begun now to beat against the car windows. He shook violently, as he looked for a way of possible escape.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Prance.
"Please, sir, I'm very sorry," began Phil; "but I crept into the car while it was waiting outside that great house in London."

he asked huskily. "Why change from this crime," to 'the crime'? You

ch? Please, sir, I heard the driver say that he was going to Normanbridge. I wanted to go there, too, sir, so

"To Normanbridge! Why do you

"Oh, you crept into the car, then, did you? What did you do that for,

"To Normanbridge! Why do you want to go there?"
Phil hung his head.
"Come, come, the truth—no lies! Why do you want to go to Normanbridge—eh?"
"To—to see the place where—where my mother is buried."
Sir Maurice Pilkington, now partly recovered from his fright, spoke for the first time.
"Who was your mother?" he asked. "What is your name?"
"Philip Renford."
"Philip—Renford!"
With a long-drawn gasp following the repetition of the name, Sir Maurice Pilkington sprang from the seat, clutched madly at the air, swayed and rocked, and then, with a low moan, pitched forward on the opposite seat in a dead faint.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. A Convict Among the Tombstones.

A Convict Among the Tombstones.

NOW on the rolling downs, snow on the trees and hedgerows, and snow in the air, driving wildly against Phil Renford as he trudged along the high, open road.

Half-frozen the boy was, as he battled against the whirling flakes—half-frozen and dazed. Cold and hunger and the things that had happened had numbed his faculties and made it difficult for him to realise exactly what had occurred.

He only knew, like one in a dream, that he had come a long way at a great pace while hidden in that motor-car; that he had overheard a strange and terrifying conversation concerning a murder of thirteen years before; that he had been dragged from beneath the seat; that Sir Maurice Pilkington had suddenly fainted on hearing his—Phil's—name, and that, after a few more questions, and while the financier still remained unconscious, the car had been suddenly pulled up, and Phil himself thrust out into the bitter night.

At present the bare facts were all he could grasp. For the time being he lacked altogether the power to understand what those facts might signify. All he knew was that he was in a most miserable plight, and that the only thing he could do was to press on.

An ancient milestone leant obligated the read.

was in a most miserable plight, and that the only thing he could do was to press on.

An ancient milestone leant obliquely heside the road. He bent down to it, and with frozen fingers brushed the snow from its face.

"Four miles to Normanbridge." His heart leapt!

"Only four miles! Why, I can walk it in an hour!"

He had no shelter to go to, and no money to buy food, yet the thought that he was within easy distance of his destination filled him with hope. He trudged on bravely. The snow ceased, the atmosphere cleared. The full moon shone and made the snow-clad downs sparkle as with diamonds. He reached the crest of a hill, and for the first time paused in his walk. In the valley below lay a village—Normanbridge!

He recognised it at once beneath its masquerade dress of crystal whiteness.

There beside the winding road.

whiteness

the recognised it at once beneath its masquerade dress of crystal whiteness.

There beside the winding road were the flanking cottages of thatch and tiles. There upon the right, its chimneys discernible among the white trees, lay the Priory, the greatest house in Normanbridge.

Over there to the left, its square tower standing up in bold grey majesty, was the church. In the ground near to that, dotted plentifully with old and new tombstones, rested the dead-and-gone sons and daughters of Normanbridge.

And in that sacred place, among those many tombs, was the grave of Phil's mother!

He descended the hill quickly, yet thoughtfully. He paused beside the lych-gate to stamp the superfluous snow from his leaky boots.

The sound of that stamping had an unexpected effect.

From amid the graves, over there near the south porch, where his mother's grave lay, a man suddenly jumped up, and, without a second's hesitation, dashed round the church and disappeared from sight.

Only a glimpse did the boy get of him, yet that glimpse made his heart beat wildly.

For beneath the long, shabby ulster which the man wore there was suddenly shown in the moonlight a flash of yellow and drab.



Where they were he had no definite idea; but from the fact that their speed was high, and that there was very little traffic about, he rightly

Down, down, from bar to bar he went, clinging on like grim death. Stacker and stacker the wire strands grew. Then of a sudden-snap: The fence had broken. And there he was—falling—falling!

********************************** Philip in Search of a Father

(Continued from the previous page.)

Yellow stockings and drab breeches, flecked with the broad arrow!

A convict! Perhaps the very, escaped convict whom the two men had discussed in the motor-car! Come to think of it, there could be very little doubt of it.

But how strange that he should have come to Normanbridge! How strange that he should be in that churchyard! He must have been kneeling beside a grave. What grave? And what had he been doing there?

grave? And what had he been doing there?

Just for a minute Phil stood irresolute. The startling appearance of the convict had distracted his thoughts. He wondered what he ought to do, whether he ought to give information.

But the man was out of sight. Not much use to give information. Besides, perhaps the poor fellow was really an object of pity—perhaps he had escaped from prison in order to visit the grave of some dear departed friend. Some such motive must have drawn him to this churchyard.

ran's thoughts softened. He himself had come to visit the grave of the best and truest friend he had ever had in his life.

His mother's grave lay over there, near to where the man had sprung up from. He would go over to it now.

With become Phil's thoughts softened. He him-

now.

With bowed head and reverent step he picked his way among the tombs. No headstone marked his mother's resting-place, but he knew quite well where it was. He had visited it once before, and had spent an hour beside it, plucking the weeds from the green mound and cutting the overgrown grass with his knife.

witting the overgrown grass with his knife.

Now he stood before it. All white the mound was—white with glisten-

Now he stood before it. All white the mound was—white with glistening snow.

But what was that lying upon the mound? A bunch of winter flowers—chrysanthemuns! White, almost as the snow itself they were.

Who had placed them there? Some unknown friend? His mother had had but few friends, and none living at Normanbridge, to which place she had come a stranger with her infant boy. Who, then, could have placed these pure white flowers upon her grave? Quite freshgathered they were—plucked within the last hour or so—so much was plainly discernible at a glance.

Phil touched them reverently. Among the leafy stems his fingers came into contact with something that rustled.

A piece of paper, attached labelwise to the bouquet! Wonderingly, the boy raised it close to his eyes. Writing—pencil words—came to his sight under the bright moon. His eyes were streaming tears. He brushed them away to read.

And this is what he read:

"To my dear wife Catherine, in

or read.

And this is what he read:
"To my dear wife Catherine, in ever-loving memory. Done to death by slanderous tongues!"

Something seemed to clutch at Phil's heart and to field it still. For a space of ten seconds he stood rigid. Those words—what did they mean? His mother's name was Catherine, and the man who had written those words spoke of her as his wife!

The writer, then, must be his father!

"My father—my father!" the boy moaned. "He is alive, then, after all! It was he who placed these flowers upon mother's grave!"

Gazing downward, his eyes fell upon two marks on the other side of the mound. Two dark patches in the snow, as if someone had knelt there quite recently.

At such moments the mind works with lightning rapidity.

"That man whom I saw spring up from here! Was he—is he—my father?"

His father a convict! If it were

His father a convict! If it were so, it would explain everything. His mother's silence about him, her periodical fits of grief, her everpresent burden of hidden trouble.

In a flash the truth burst in upon the hov

In a flash the truth burst in upon the boy.

"It was my father!" he cried.

"It must have been! Oh, heaven, tell me what to do!"

Once more he fell upon his knees.

A blinding torrent of tears poured from his eyes. He buried his face upon the snowy ground.

THE 4th CHAPTER.
The Convict's Midnight Escapade.
OOTSTEPS—running footsteps,
muffled by snow, along the

bordering road. Harsh voices from many throats belonging to dusky figures running this way and that.

One figure in velveteens loomed under the dusky canopy of the lychgate, and looked across the churchyard. Something dark, crouching upon the white ground, struck his

"Come on!" he shouted. "There's scme'un here!" And he led the

some un here!" And he led the way.

Springing erect, Phil turned to face the intruders. There were half a dozen of them in all. Labouring men they looked—outdoor servants at the Priory, as a matter of fact.

The leader—the man in velveteens—hurried up to him.

"Bah! It be but a boy!" he exclaimed disappointedly. "Fur a minnit I thowt it med be the feller we be searchin' arter. What be 'ee a doin' 'cre, boy?"

But before Phil could answer, John Glossop, one of the gardeners at the Priory, was darting forward with:

"Why, here be the flowers—the

with:

"Why, here be the flowers—the very chrysanth'ums the man picked! I'd swear to 'em anywheres. There's no sich fine blooms as them 'ereabouts bar them under our glass!"

The gardener stooped as if to snatch the bunch of flowers from the grave. But Phil was too quick for him.

"Hands off!" he cried, his eyes flashing. For that anyone should remove those flowers seemed like sacrilege.

move those flowers seemed like sacrilege.

"What d'ye mean by yer 'ands off?' Them flowers don't belong to you!" And the gardener snatched the bunch up.

Lettertly Phil flow at him. His

Instantly Phil flew at him. His two hands fastened on the gardener's arm to wrench the flowers away. "Drat thee for a young spitfire!" roared Glossop. "Thee'st hurt my arm. Take that!"

arm. Take that!"

His disengaged fist swung round. It caught Phil on the side of the head, made him release his hold, and sent him reeling.

Even then he would have returned to the attack had there been a chance. But in a second two menhad gripped him. Velveteens strode forward, planted his feet wide apart, and shook his ash stick in the boy's face.

"What sort o' goin's-on d'ye call these?" he demanded. "D'ye know as them flowers comes from a glass-ouse at the Priory? I'll warrant ye do, ye young gallus-bird. Thieved property they be, and thee knowst it."

do, ye young gallus-bird. Thieved property they be, and thee knowst it."

"I didn't know it!" Phil answered, ceasing to struggle need-lessly in the grip of his burly captors. "How was I to know it?"

"Becos ye've seed the feller as stole'em, I makes no doubt. 'Ave ye seen him? Man in long coat wi' Guvment suit o' drab and yeller and broad arrers? A convick 'e be—a 'seaped convick. Ye've seen him," the boy answered, and then set his teeth hard. He had told a lie, but if the escaped convict was indeed his father, how could he do otherwise? To tell the truth might lead to betrayal—might bring about the capture of his own father.

Everything had happened very quickly, and it was all so bewildering. But the boy, dazed though he was, saw clearly one thing. If that convict was his father, he must shield him and help him, no matter what the cost.

"The rip's lyin'!" said the gardeen viciously. "He must 'a' seen him, else how did these chrysanth'ums come 'ere? There's paper 'ere wi' writin' on it, neighbours!"

But the others were engaged in a council of war, with velveteens as president. They arrived at a decision in a minute.

"Bring 'un along," said the game—

president. They arrived at a decision in a minute.

"Bring 'un along," said the game-keeper—"bring 'un along to the 'ouse! Sir Maurice 'isself must decide what to do wi' un."

Without more ado, Phil was haled off. But in their purpose of bringing the boy before Sir Maurice Pilkington, the men were to find an obstacle. The financier had retired for the night—was, indeed, according to report, ill to prostration.

The report was true.

After recovering from his fainting fit in the motor-car, Sir Maurice had arrived home at the Priory in an extremely shaky condition. Restoratives being applied, and the baronet assisted to a couch, upon which he

sted for half an hour, brought about

some improvement in his condition.

Then, however, something occurred to throw him once more into a state of violent agitation. While he and his private secretary sat in the Then, however, something occurred to throw him once more into a state of violent agitation. While he and his private secretary sat in the library, a scuffling noise outside had suddenly reached them. John Prance had immediately gone out to inquire the cause. He found the gardeners, one of the gamekeepers, and some of the men who worked in the stables assembled near the gate of the big kitchen gardens deep in the discussion of something that had happened.

A man had been seen in the grounds—a man who, from his dress, was undoubtedly an escaped convict. Glossop had discovered him. Going to his greenhouses to bank up his fires for the night, the gardener had seen that one of the doors was open. Looking in to inquire the cause, he had been knocked over by the convict, who had dashed past him.

More frightened than hurt, Glossop had remained where he was for several minutes ere giving the alarm. In company with several of his fellowservants, he had searched the outside premises for traces of the robbery they suspected had taken place.

All that was missing were a few chrysanthemums, which Glossop had seen the man carrying in his hand.

Having learned this much and

All that was missing were a tew chrysanthemums, which Glossop had seen the man carrying in his hand.

Having learned this much and given rapid instructions that the park and grounds should be searched, John Prance had returned to his employer, and had given an account of everything that had occurred.

The effect on Sir Maurice Pilkington was pronounced. He shook violently where he stood, and for a minute or two it seemed as if a second fainting attack threatened. Declining the offer that a doctor should be sent for, the financier had retired, leaving his secretary to receive the report of the result of the search.

When, some considerable time afterwards, the search-party made their appearance, bringing with them Thil Renford, the secretary's astonishment was great.

At once he gave instructions that

Thil Renford, the secretary's astonishment was great.

At once he gave instructions that the boy was to be locked up in an outhouse. In the morning he could be brought before Sir Maurice, who, not only as owner of the greenhouse from which the flowers had been stolen, but as a magistrate of the county, would decide what was further to be done.

So it came about that poor Phil found himself locked up in an outbuilding which served as a sort of storehouse for fruit, though no fruit was there just now.

It might have been a prison. Phil,

storehouse for truit, though no fruit was there just how.

It might have been a prison. Phil, as he crouched there upon the floor, thought so. His first action, after the footsteps of his captors had died away, was to try and find a means of escape. No means offered. The door had been securely locked and barred from the outside. The small window, which commanded a view of part of the lawn behind the great house, was similarly safeguarded. Two stout iron bars were fixed perpendicularly across the window to preclude effectually any chance of escape that way.

Some twenty minutes after the boy's being brought there, one of his captors, with more pity in him than the rest, had come back to the place, and with only a mumbled word had thrust in a hunk of bread-and-cheese.

Starving as the boy was, he had blessed the man for his mercy, and had devoured the food eagerly enough. It satisfied his craving and served to warm him a little.

But the comfort of it was only small. Other circumstances still conspired to send him into the depths of depression. He was a prisoner, accused of complicity in a theft. To-morrow he would be taken to a police-court, and most likely sent to prison. He would probably be charged, not only with a share in the theft, but with having assisted a convict to escape.

That convict was his father! The

That convict was his father! The recollection filled him with a strange mixture of wild hope and shuddering dread. Hope sprang from the knowledge that his father was indeed alive, and dread from the knowledge of his father's desperate condition.

Oh, if he could but help his father, could but see him for a minute and make himself known to him! But there was no chance of that.

He crouched upon the ground, with arms folded over his doubled-up knees and his face hidden in despair.

ears with an echo of hideous mockery. This was his Christmas! To be shut up here in this improvised prison, alone with his own thoughts, and his father's plight was even worse than

alone with his own thoughts, and his father's plight was even worse than his own.

Christmas! Could this be Christmas? Could this be the season of peace on carth, good will towards men? Where was there peace for him? Who was there that bore him any good will?

A noise outside—low and subdued, a sound only to be heard because everything else was so still. A soft, shuffling movement in the snow, and the sound of a deep-drawn sigh.

What could it be? It seemed to come from close outside the shed, almost as if a man had been crouching under its walls.

Phil sprang silently up, and tiptoed to the window. Instantly his heart leapt into his throat, for beside the screen of shrubs which bordered a side strip of lawn he beheld the man he had seen before.

The moon was shining on his face. And then Phil knew for certain that it was his father.

The face was drawn and deeply lined, the hair close-cropped. Yet still there remained a likeness to the man whose photograph had ever been cherished by Phil's mother, and which the boy himself had often seen.

"Father—father! Dear, dear father!"

The words rose from the boy's

father-father!
father!"
The words rose from the boy's heart, framed themselves in his mind, but his tongue refrained from uttering them. Caution restrained him. To call out would surely lead to betrayal. Doubtless there were still people on the watch who would come to the spot at the slightest sound.

He would have needed to shout loudly, too, for the man was moving —moving with stealthy step and furtive, hunted glances to the right and

tive, hunted glances ...
left of him.

He was making towards the great

Through tear-dimmed eyes Phil could see him stealing forward, and could see the trail of dark footprints across the snow-covered lawn.

across the snow-covered lawn.

Now the convict was upon the terrace. What was he doing?

Wrenching softly at the French windows that gave on the terrace.

Breaking in! Was his father really then a—

The windows were open. The man passed in out of sight.

Phil watched, with his brain on fire. Five minutes passed. Then once more a figure issued from the window.

once more a figure issued from the window.

Was it his father? Yes! But how differently dressed!

A dark suit and an overcoat had taken the place of the betraying drab-and-yellow convict's dress.

Once more it was in the boy's mind to call out. Again, with an effort, he controlled himself. For a second time he watched the man glide across the lawn—in another direction now—until he disappeared among the trees.

the trees.

He was gone—perhaps for ever!
Phil's tottering legs gave way beneath him. He sank down on to the floor in a heap.

THE 5th CHAPTER. Philip Escapes From His Prison.

"PRANCE, we must let this boy go!"

The words came jerkily from Sir Maurice Pilkington, as he

sat with his secretary within a locked room of the Priory.

room of the Priory.

The room lay remote at the farther end of the oldest wing of the great house. Otherwise, the convict, who had entered that other room facing the lawn for the purpose of procuring a change of garments, might have been heard and detected in the act. For it was at almost the precise moment of his entry that the two men sat discussing the events of the past few hours.

The secretary smiled curiously at

past few hours.

The secretary smiled curiously at the financier's words.

"You have said that at least half a dozen times," he remarked.

"And I mean it, too. The boy must go!"

"Why—why so anxious to let him escape scot-free?"

"Because—oh, well, because I am!"

am!" Pretty am!"
"Pretty much of a woman's reason, isn't it?" The secretary was familiar, almost insolent, in his manner. "But you have a more definite reason than that."
"What do you mean?"
"You know perfectly well. You fear that if he is brought before the magistrates, inquiries may be made.

They might lead to his identification as the son of the escaped convict. That, in its turn, might mean that the whole story of thirteen years ago would be raked up. That wouldn't be pleasant for you, would it, Pilkington?"

on?"

In Prance's manner there was nothing of the deference usually shown by a secretary to his employer—only a none too subtle suggestion that the secretary had the other in his power. The great financier, at whose word half the City of London was wont to tremble, was himself trembling at the words of the man whom he employed. In the ordinary way he was a fighter, however, and he made some slight show of fight now.

"Prance," he said shar "you've made several insinuati to night. What do you mean

them?"

"Insinuations! Not I," the secretary replied imperturbably, again with that curious smile of his. "Only, since you learned the news of Henry Renford's escape from prison, your manner has been—well, of a kind that might make a stranger respicious."

prison, your manner has been—well, of a kind that might make a stranger suspicious."

"Suspicious of what?" The financier's face was working, his tone quavering.

"You don't want me to rake up all the 'old story. You know the details better even than I do. You know that Caleb Steen was killed thirteen years ago; you know that at the time of his death two clerks were in his employ, namely, yourself and Henry Renford. You know that old Caleb was an eccentric, with no relatives in the world, and that he made a somewhat unusual will."

"Yes, yes; I know all that."

"You know that by that will he left everything to his two clerks you and Renford. You were to participate equally, and upon the decease of either of you the other was to inherit the whole."

"What has all this—"

"There was another condition in the will. A clause provided that in

"What has all this—"
"There was another condition in the will. A clause provided that in the event of either of the joint-heirs being proved guilty of a crime, the other was to succeed to the whole estate."
"Prance, will you—"

"Prance, will you—"
"By a wonderfully fortuitous combination of circumstances everything worked out to your advantage. Not only was Caleb Steen found dead in his office before he had a chance of altering that will—which he had given some sign of doing—but the guilt of that crime was fixed upon Henry Renford. 'He was condemned to death, the sentence afterwards being commuted to penal servicude for life."
"Why are you going over all this

being commuted to penal servicude for life."

"Why are you going over all this again, Prance? Why—"

"Because it's interesting. It's always been a moot point whether Henry Renford was really guilty or not."

"There was no doubt about it. The jury said so."
"Juries are not infallible. They confessed as much in this case by retiring for seven hours ere coming to a decision."
"But they agreed at last."
"Unfortunately for Renford they did. By the light of after events I am convinced they made a mistake."
Sir Maurice Pilkington, perspiring at every pore, looked furtively at his secretary. He dropped his eyes again at once.

secretary. He dropped his eyes again at once.

"More insinuations," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I am coming to that. I entered your employment a few months after the crime and the trial. You had, meantime, started as a financier with the big capital inherited from Caleb Steen. I found you keen and alert—none more so—in your business. You worked early and late with such devouring energy as made it plain to me you were striving to forget something by keeping your nose to the grindsfone."

"What was there for me to forget?"

"You know better than—or, at least, as well as I. The fact was, however, plain to me, for in your rare moments of leisure you were nervous, moody, and apprehensive. You continued to try the one cure for worry—work, and you overdid the

worry—work, and you overlid the cure.

"You continued to work, work, work, till you could work no longer. Your nerves gave way, and you broke down. You were ill for months, and, at your own request, I remained always by your side. That was necessary because only I could carry on your big financial operations. During part of your illness you were unconscious—delirious. In your delirium you spoke of the past.

You spoke explicitly of many things. I was by your side, and I heard what you said."
The millionaire financier was taking more violently than ever. His face was ashen, his eyes seemed ready to bolt from his head.
"What did I say?" he asked haskily.

huskily.

"You spoke of your—of the crime; of the murder of Caleb Steen."

"What did I say?"

The financier had thrust out his head in a half-fearful way towards his secretary. Prance met the gaze unflinchingly—callously.

"Do you want me to tell you that?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Yes."
"Then I will tell you. In your delirium you said that—"
John Prance broke off suddenly, and turned his eyes towards the door suspiciously.
The financier had also turned, and with bated breath was listening with

The financier had also turned, and with bated breath was listening, with his hands convulsively clutching the arms of his chair. Three gasping words came in a voice with no strength behind it:

"What was that?"

Prance had risen, and with a toss of his head risen, and with a toss of his head tiptoed to the door and opened it suddenly.

"No one here," he whispered, as he gazed left and right along the

opened it suddenly.

"No one here," he whispered, as he gazed left and right along the corridor—"no one here; and yet I could swear I heard something."

"So did I. It sounded like someone gasping; and then there was a sound as of soft footsteps hurrying away. Prance, who could it have been?" away. been?"
"I don't know. Mortimer, may-

been?"

"I don't know. Mortimer, maybe."

"My valet? Impossible! Mortimer is the best servant I ever had. He went to bed hours ago."

"It may have been fancy, then. The wind has got up a bit, and is making the tapestry swish. It may have been that. I hope it was. It wouldn't do for us to be overhearded, Sir Maurice?"

The financier shuddered again.

"You shouldn't talk of such things, Prance," he remonstrated half pleadingly. "I—I don't know why you discuss this matter at all." He was trying to put a bold face on things, but it was a feeble attempt.

"Are you really very much surprised?" asked the secretary, with that half-mocking smile of his. "Welf, I won't discuss the subject any more now."

"Don't, Prance; there's a good follow! The contemplation of the

any more now."

"Don't, Prance; there's a good fellow! The contemplation of the past always gives me pain. But about that boy? I think we had better let him go. It will save us a lot of petty annoyance and trouble. Go out and release him, Prance. Pretend that you are doing it unknown to me, and tell him his only chance of escaping punishment is to clear out of this part of the country. You'll do what I ask?"

"Very well," said the secretary; "I'll do what you ask."

He rose and noiselessly left the room.

room.

In ten minutes he was back. His face was scared, his eyes excited-

looking.
"What's the matter?" the financier asked, in some alarm.
"The boy has gone!" gasped

"The boy
Prance.
"Gone! How?"
"I don't know. The door was locked and the window secure, but I found the shed empty. The boy has made his escape!"

THE 6th CHAPTER.

The Monotonous Search Eegins.

OW had Phil escaped?

To explain that we must go back a few minutes—to that moment when both Sir Maurice Pilkington and his secretary had heard the mysterious sound in the

heard the mysterious sound in the corridor.

There had been somebody there—a tall, spare, bent man with greyish hair, a solemn, set expression and a pale, clean-shaven face—Mortimer, the financier's valet!

He had been listening to the conversation of the two men inside.

At the crucial moment he had been seized with a sudden faintness that had made him gasp, and at the sound of Prance's footsteps had sent him staggering quickly away out of sight.

sight.
Straight for his own sitting-room he made. There he unlocked a cupboard, from which he drew out a cashbox. Opening this, he took out a handful of banknotes and gold, which he thrust into his pocket. Then, turning down the lamp, he moved stealthily from the room like a thief

a thief. Yet Frederick Mortimer was no

thief. The money—over a hundred pounds in all—was his own; the savings of years.

What was he going to do with it? We shall see in a moment.

With tight-set lips he stole up one passage and down another. Letting himself out by a side door, he skirted the kitchen, and made through the snow past the stables to some outbuildings beyond.

In one of these Phil, of course, was. - Weary, and utterly worn by his recent experiences, he sat there upon the floor in an attitude of deepest dejection. The idea that the escaped convict was indeed his father amounted now to a certainty. His features, his handwriting—Phil had seen other specimens of his father's caligraphy—made the man's identity certain.

catigraphy—made the man's identity certain.

The boy's feelings were easier to imagine than to describe. To have become sure that his father was alive was indeed a matter of great rejoicing. The knowledge, so strangely acquired, seemed to be an answer to the prayer he had uttered when he had set out on his journey. But the discovery of his father's condition; the knowledge that he was a fugitive from justice; the sudden sight of him, so near and yet so far away, under circumstances that made him incapable of assisting his flight—all these things served to sadden and depress the lad. So he crouched there upon the floor of the store-shed, given over utterly to grief.

store-shed, given over utterly to grief.

All of a sudden a fumbling at the door made him rise erect. He heard a key being turned in the lock, and then the door opened.

A man stood there whom he recognised. It was the same man who had shown his pity previously by bringing him food.

Why had he come now? The boy advanced a step, seemingly with the question upon his lips. But the man raised a hand to enjoin silence, as, softly closing the door, he stood with his car to it listening intently.

Satisfied that he had not been followed, he turned at length to Phil.

"What is your name?" he asked, in a whisper.

followed, he turned at length to Phil.
"What is your name?" he asked,
in a whisper.
"Philip Renford."
"I thought I'd caught it aright,
but I wanted to be sure. You know
why they locked you up here? They
say you helped a—a convict to
escape. Did you do that?"
Phil closed his lips resolutely. He
liked the look of this man—and certainly he had been kinder to him
than the others—but still, he was
doubtful how far he could trust him.
He kept silent then.
Mortimer read his thoughts.
"Have no fear of me, lad," he
said kindly. "I mean no harm to
you. Trust me with everything.
You'll know in a minute that I want
to be your friend. Did you see that
convict?"
"Yes; I saw him in the churchyard. He was placing some flowers

to be your friend. Did you see that convict?"

"Yes; I saw him in the church-yard. He was placing some flowers on—on a grave. But he ran when he saw me. I didn't help him to escape, though if I had known who he was I'd have—"

Phil broke off. He was afraid still to say too much.

"If you had known who he was," Mortimer said. "Then you didn't know? Do you know now?"

"Yes, I know now, but—"

"And I know, too. That man's name is Henry Renford. He is your father."

Phil began to tremble. If this man were an enemy, betrayal seemed very near indeed.

Again Mortimer broke the silence.

were an enemy, betrayar seemed very near indeed.

Again Mortimer broke the silence.

"You see, I know more about you than you think. But trust me, lad. I am going to trust you. Your father is my dearest friend—the best friend I ever had in the world. He did me a great service once. When we were both boys he saved my life. I hoped to be able to repay part of that service. I hoped to see your father. I arranged for him to meet me here, but I missed him."

"He has been here," ventured Phil.

"He has been here," ventured Phil.

"Yes, yes, I know he has, lad. I know that the change of clothes I left for him are gone. But there was money, too, I wanted to give. Money to enable him to get right away. And now he has gone without it."

Mortimer's voice was husky and broken. He paused for breath.

"I would follow him if I could," he went on, "but that's impossible. I can't explain everything to you now, but I may do your father better service by staying with Sir Maurice Pilkington, whose valet I am."

"What has Sir Maurice Pilkington to do with my father?"

"Don't ask me that now, lad, and don't waste any more time. I have

come to let you go free. I want you to follow your father. Look—here is money!" He drew the banknotes and gold from his pocket. "Take it! Follow your father, and help him to get away from his persecutors for a time—for a time!"

He thrust the money into the boy's hand. Phil gasped as he saw how much it was.

He thrust the money into the boy's hand. Phil gasped as he saw how much it was.

"I—I don't understand," he began. But Mortimer interrupted quickly.

"Ask no questions, only go—go and find your father! You ought to be able to follow his trail in the snow. I expect he will make for Tollport."

"Tollport?" asked Phil eagerly.

"How far is that?"

"Six miles, or a bit under. Now, don't waste any more time, but go."

It was plain that Mortimer was getting anxious. Cold as the early morning was, the perspiration was pouring down his face. He almost thrust the boy out of the shed. Nor would he listen to any further questionings, or to Phil's broken expressions of gratitude.

"Go," was all he said—"go, and do what I say. God bless you, lad, and your father, too!"

Tollport was, and is, one of the

Tollport was, and is, one of the Tollport was, and is, one of the most picturesque places on the South Coast. While its western portions have been developed into a popular, and even fashionable, watering-place, its eastern end—known as the Old Town still remains pretty much as it must have been two or three hundred years ago. It is built between two

then to cry out. He checked that impulse for a minute, but then gave

impulse for a minute, but then gave way.

"Father—father!" trembled out of his throat at the top of his voice.

Useless, however, to shout. For the wind, blowing upward from the south-east, carried the sounds backward instead of out to sea.

"Father—father!" he cried again. But the man, creeping over the rocks, and now and then waving a hand towards the incoming boat, never once turned his head.

But if the sounds failed to reach the man for whom they were intended, they had another startling effect.

effect.
Chancing through some instinct to turn his gaze inland, Phil of a sudden beheld two men hurrying towards him. Two well-dressed men—two men whom he had seen before.
Sir Maurice Pilkington and John

France.
And they had seen him. That was plain, for they were making straight towards him. In the moonlight he could even see the evil expression upon their faces.

Dread of recapture seized him. He turned to dash away to the left. Instantly the two men separated—Pilkington making direct for him, and Prance running wide to cut him off in his flight.

A glance at the winding coast-line showed the boy that escape that way would be difficult. He stopped. The two men came closer and closer.

"I must descend by the cliffs—it



The motor-car suddenly pulled up, and Phil was thrust out nto the bitter night. The only thing he could do was to battle against the blinding snow for the rest of the journey.

huge flanking hills, lying at their base like a town in a raying

like a town in a ravine.

On to the East Hill had come Phil
Renford. Hither had he been led by
the trail of footprints left by his
father, and plainly discernible in the

Now he was at the end of that trail. It had brought him to the very edge of the cliff overlooking the sea, and there had come to an end. The briefest examination made it plain that

there had come to an end. The briefest examination made it plain that further progress on the part of the fugitive must have been made by way of the cliff itself to the boulder-strewn beach below.

But how to follow? The cliff was quite two hundred feet high. It dropped sheer down. Any attempt to descend the precipice must be attended, in the slippery state of the rocks, by the greatest danger.

Yet, since his father had gone, he must needs follow. Now that he was so close upon his parent's track, every instinct within him urged him onward. He began to look about for a place to descend. Hardly had he commenced his search when a movement in the sea below attracted his attention. Upon the foam-crested waves, white as the world about him, a small boat, rowed by one man, was coming. Quickly the boat turned inshore. More than once the man rowing paused, and turning his head, seemed to be looking for someone.

Following the direction of his eyes, Phil found his heart suddenly give a leap.

Out of a hole amid the rocks the

is the only way!" Phil exclaimed to himself, and looked about him

himself, and looked about him desperately.

He felt desperate, too, for here-abouts the precipitous nature of the cliffs seemed to make a descent im-possible.

possible.

Closer and closer the men came; closer and closer Phil moved to the cliff-edge. How could be get down? He asked himself the question a dozen

rie asked himself the question a dozen times in as many seconds. And suddenly he saw a way.

Fringing the cliff for a great distance was a fence made of twisted steel wire, intersected by transverse rods of perforated iron, through which the wire strands ran

the wire strands ran.

At a distance of a few yards from him a recent landslip had uprooted this fence for a considerable way. It dangled down over the cliff, one end of it being firmly fixed in the rock above.

above.
Without an instant's hesitation, Phil dropped first to his knees, then flat down. Wriggling forward, he clutched one of the transverse rods, and swung

to descend. Hardly had he commenced his search when a movement in the sea below attracted his attention. Upon the foam-crested waves, white as the world about him, a small boat, rowed by one man, was coming. Quickly the boat turned inshore. More than once the man rowing paused, and turning his head, seemed to be looking for someone.

Following the direction of his eyes, Phil found his heart suddenly give a leap.

Out of a hole amid the rocks the figure of a man crept. One glance was sufficient. In an instant Phil recognised the man as his father.

Such an impulse came upon him

A sudden great shaking made him look upward, and then a terrible dread filled him.

No wonder! For overhead, right on the very cliff-edge, his two pursuers were tugging and straining at the railing, trying to tear it free from its fastenings, and so send him plunging down to certain death.

Would those fastenings resist their efforts sufficiently long to enable him to reach the beach in safety? It seemed hardly likely; but he prayed that they might.

His descent was perilous in the extreme. For Pilkington now was leaning face downward over the cliff, and, with a firm grip of the dangling railing, was moving it about in a frantic endeavour to shake Phil off.

How that railing twisted and writhed! Now the boy would swing outward with a twisting wrench; now he would find himself being dashed against the cliff-side, as the swinging ladder rebounded.

Down, down, from bar to bar he went, clinging on like grim death.

Slacket and slacker the wire strands grew. Then of a sudden—snap!

The fence had broken even while he was still some fifty feet from the beach.

And there he was—falling—falling!

beach.

And there he was—falling—falling!
Bump!
He had stopped, with all the breath
knocked out of his body, almost before
he had realised his fearful peril.
For two or three minutes he lay
there dazed. The first thing of which
he became clearly aware was that he
was lying on an unprotected ledge of ne became clearly aware was that he was lying on an unprotected ledge of rock apon a thick bed of seaweed and wet creepers.

Gratitude filled him that these things had been there to break his sall.

things had been there to break his fall.

With his brain growing clearer, he looked up the face of the cliff. He could see the place from which the railing had been torn up. The railing itself lay in a tangled heap upon the beach, thirty feet below him.

But of the men who had wrenched it from its hold he could see no sign. They, as a matter of fact, were st this moment flying inland, in the belief that what they had done had sent the boy to certain death.

Now for the first time the thought of his father recurred to Phil. He looked out to sea. Dimly in the distance he could descry a small boat with two figures in it. It was approaching a fishing smack which, with her brown sails bellying out, was rapidly approaching the smaller craft. In two minutes the boats were alongside each other, and one man—Phil had no doubt that it was his father—was being hoisted aboard the smack.

A brief interval, and then plainly to

smack.

A brief interval, and then plainly to his sight was shown the smack putting out to sea, and the smaller boat being turned and rowed in towards the

turned and rowed in towards the shore.

With straining eyes, dimmed now with blinding tears, Phil watched the outward-bound craft until he could see her no longer.

That his father had made good his escape he could not be sorry for, but his feeling of gratitude for this was combated by another. His father had gone—had cluded him when a meeting between them had seemed so near.

meeting between them had seemed so near.
"Gone—gone!" the boy moaned.
"And this is Christmas Day! Oh, shall I ever see my father again?"
Across his sight came the small boat, now rapidly nearing shore at a point near the town.
Phil sprang to his feet with a sudden resolve.
"I will see him again!" he ex-

den resolve.

"I will see him again!" he exclaimed. "I will find my father if I have to search the world over!"

From his resting-place on the rocky ledge he scrambled down on to the beach. Then, with all speed, he ran to meet the incoming boat.

THE 7th CHAPTER

The Convict is Recaptured.

HIL RENFORD stood in an open space at Top-hana, a well-known district in Constantinople.

Near to the gate of the splendid palace of Dolma-bache he was near to the very brink of the Bosphorus. The air was heavy and stiffing, being scarcely moved by the faint breeze

that blew across the broad river.

It was July. Over six months had passed since the events with which this story has dealt. Hither Phil had come after all those months of weary.

It was from the boatman at Toll-port that he had learned something of his father's movements and inten-tions. In that boatman he had con-fided, and had told him of his

What is that which is often brought to the table, always cut, and never eaten?—A pack of cards.

%000000000000000% Philip in Search of a Father

(Continued from the previous page). & accococococococo &

relationship to the man he was follow-

ing.

In return, the boatman had told him of his reason for helping the escaped convict. He—the boatman—had in the past himself been a convict at Portland. Since his discharge, a completing his sentence, he had vict at Portland. Since his discharge, on completing his sentence, he had carried on a secret correspondence with some of those who still remained in the great prison. By these means his address had become known to Henry Renford, who had, in his hour of necessity, come to seek his aid. This had been promptly given, the fugitive having been taken aboard a fishing-smack which was to land him at Dieppe.

at Dieppe.

With plenty of money at his command—the sum given him by Mortimer amounted to upwards of one hundred pounds—Phil had resolved to

He took boat from Newhaven to Dieppe. Inquiries there showed that ais father had departed to Paris. The search at Paris was equally ineffectual. His father had proceeded to Marseilles. There, at a house in the Quai de Rive, hard by Fort St. Nicholas, he learned that his father had taken passage by steamer to Leato Marseilles. There, at a house in the Quai de Rive, hard by Fort St. Nicholas, he learned that his father had taken passage by steamer to Leghorn. From there he had gone to Vienna, then to Trieste, from which

place he had taken a boat to Con-

stantinople.

To all these places and many other than the phil had followed his father. From the period of the property of the Phil had followed his father. His search had been ceaseless, his inquiries innumerable. Boy though he was, he had displayed an acumen and an ability to ferret out information that was only equalled by his untiring energy.

But to persevere, and persevere still without attaining your object, is apt to stagger even the most indomitable will. So at last, with his money all but exhausted—careful in the extreme though he had been—

money all but exhausted—caretui in the extreme though he had been—even this plucky lad had grown weary and discouraged.

and discouraged.

The last clue he had obtained pointed to his father having come to Constantinople. Here Phil had arrived several days before. He had landed on the southern bank of the Bosphorus, and had set himself to explore that part of the Turkish capital known as Stamboul.

Vain his carable, Provious clues

Vain his search! Previous clues had taught him that his father was likely to seek employment as an English clerk in some office or warehouse doing business with Western

For hours and hours the boy had pursued his inquiries in this direction, but for several days entirely without

that he might find an Englishman answering his father's description at the gun factory at Top-hana, a dis-trict in "Christian Constantinople."

So the boy had crossed the river in furtherance of his search.

But now it was night, and the fac-tories were closed. Anything like definite inquiries would have to be deferred until next day.

Tired though he was, Phil chafed at the delay. He paced the streets, buoyed up with a vague hope that good fortune might reward him at last, and that he might meet his father.

Under ordinary circumstances, he would have been interested in the cosmopolitan crowd which he met in the Grande Rue de Pera. It was indeed a miscellaneous crowd. There were, of course, Turks in baggy clothes and red fezzes, and there were Bulgarians, Greeks, Spanish Jews, Armenians, Germans, Italians, Bashi-Bazouks, and Zeibecks. There were Britishers, too, with whom he longed to talk as he heard words spoken in his own tongue amid that babel of sound.

But the Britishers were for the

But the Britishers were for the nost part of the well-to-do tourist lass, with whom Phil had little in ommon.

An hour or two of wandering, and he found himself in the Rue Yildiji, one of the lowest streets in the Greek quarter. Homeless dogs whined and howled all about him, and sniffed at his heels until some native pedestrian,

armed with a big stick, dispersed them in all directions.

them in all directions.

At the entrance to another street of distinctly uninviting aspect, Phil paused beneath a low arch approached by a dirty flight of stone steps.

As he stood there, uncertain what to do, he suddenly became conscious of a pair of eyes fixed upon him. He started, for those eyes seemed familiar.

"I—I beg pardon!" he began stammeringly.

"But are you—an English—"

English-

He said no more, for in a second the man whom he had addressed was gripping his hand and whispering ex-citedly:

bridge? I'm—'"

"Mr. Mortimer!" gasped Phil.
"You here—in Constantinople!"

"I am travelling with Sir Maurice
Pilkington. We have been travelling
for weeks all over Europe—going
backwards and forwards in such a
trange way that my master's movestrange way that my master's move-ments have puzzled me. But you-why are you here, lad?"

Because I have traced my father

"What! Your father here in Con-stantinople?" the valet exclaimed, with a sudden pallor. "Where is he

Phil shook his head.
"That I don't know. All I have been able to find out is that he is employed as a clerk in some place

where they make cannons. But what is the matter, Mr. Mortimer?"

The valet had swayed backward, then forward, as he clutched Phil's arm for support.

"The cannon factory!" he re-peated. "Then that explains why

"Explains what?"
"Why Sir Maurice and his secreary have gone to the house of Abdulferedjullah."
"Who is he?"
"A rich Turk. The director of the big gun factory."
"Good heavens!" Phil

"A rich Turk. The director of the big gun factory."

"Good heavens!" Phil gasped.

"Then you think—"

"I think that my master has got on the track of your father. I know that he hates him—or, rather, fearshim. But I did not know that he was so near to getting him into his power. Now I see it all. This journey of ours—those mysterious goings backwards and forwards—have been all part of a plan. Ever since your father's escape from prison last Christmas time, Sir Maurice Pilkington has been trying to find your father. And now—and now perhaps he has found him!"

"And if he has," choked Phil, "whet will he do?"

"And if he has," choked Phil,

what will he do?
The valet gulped hard.
"He will deliver him up to the olice," he said, in a hollow tone.
Phil stared forward with blazing

eyes.
"Where does this Abdul live?"

(Continued on the next page.)

Saved by a Collier Lad.

A SPLENDID PLAY FOR BOYS SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

CHARACTERS., a short boy, with a high

CHARACTERS.

Mrs. Jones, a short boy, with a high voice, dressed as an old woman.

Mr. Jones, dressed in old clothes, with black face and hands, and grey hair.

Clunn, a big lad, in his best clothes.

Jack, a shorter lad, in his working clothes, with a coal-pick in his hand, and black face, as if he has just come from work.

Susie. Can be either a young boy, dressed as a girl, with a sunbonnet on, or the sister of one of the other boys. She should wear skirts just to the ankles.

boys. She should wear skirts just to the ankles.

Scene.—Interior of a cottage. When the curtain rises, an old woman (Mrs. Jones) is laying the table for two people. While she does so she talks out loud.

Mrs. Jones: Dearie me, my man's late to-night. He's always up from the pit before this. (She opens the door and looks out.) There'll be a fine old to-do when he finds Susie isn't at home. He can't abear her going to singing class since young Mr. Clum, the mine-owner's son, has taken to going there too. (Sleps are heard outside.) Ah, here he is at last! (Door opens, and a well-dressed young man enters. He has a shifty, evil expression.) Why, it's Mr. Clum! Come in!

Clunn: Thank you, Mrs. Jones. Have you heard about the—er—accident at the pit?

Mrs. Jones (starting up very anxiously): No. Has there been an accident? Is that why John is late? Is he helping to get out the injured?

Clunn (walking up and down with short, quick steps): Most of the men were up when it happened. I was coming up, too, when just as I passed the new gallery—

Mrs. Jones (putting her hand to her heart): Why, that's where my man is working!

Clunn: I heard a tremendous

CLUNN: I heard a tremendous ash, as if the roof had fallen in. Mrs. Jones (screams): Oh, don't seep me in suspense! Tell me nobody

keep me in suspense! was killed!

was killed!

CLUNN (very gravely): Prepare for a shock, Mrs. Jones. I'm sorry to say one man was killed—crushed under many tons of rock and coal.

Mrs. JONES (staggers, and says with difficulty): My husband?

CLUNN: Yes.

Mrs. JONES: Oh, my man—my man! (She drops into a chair, leans her arm on the table, and sobs.)

CLUNN (with a deceitful air): I'm very, very sorry about this, Mrs. Jones. I always had a deep respect for your husband.

Mrs. JONES: Oh, my beart with the control of t

Mrs. Jones: Oh, my heart will

CLUNN: I mean to say, you need not want for anything.

Mrs. Jones (looks up fiercely): What

d'you mean?
CLUNN: Only that you won't need
to go to the workhouse if Susie marries

me.
MRS. JONES (almost mad with grief, storms at him): What! You wed my

Susie! Son of the man whose murder-trap has killed my husband, wed his only child, Susie! CLUNN (crestfallen): I only thought

Mrs. Jones: I'll give you something to think about. I'll tell you what my poor man said about you and your father. "They're selfish brutes, both of them!" he said.

both of them!" he said. "They don't care about other men's lives so long as they can profit!"
CLUNN (furiously): Ha! He said that, did he?
MRS. JONES: Yes, he did! "While I live," he said, "that young jackanapes sha'n't marry my Susie!"
CLUNN (triumphantly): Yes, but he doesn't live now!
MRS. JONES (fumps up, and points at him with sudden suspicion): Wretch! I believe you've killed him!
CLUNN (in terror): Hush! You're mad!

Mrs. Jones (in a loud, angry voice): I won't hush! My poor man said you and your father thought nothing of men's lives!

men's lives!

Clunn (in mortal terror, tries to gag her): Hold your noise!

MRS. JONES: Help! Help!
(Enter Jack Toll, in collier's clothes.)
Jack Toll: What's up, Mrs. Jones?
MRS. JONES: Oh, Jack! My man—
my man! (She collapses on the ground in a swoon.)

Jack (running to lift her up): For pity's sake, what's the matter?
CLUNN: Her husband's been killed

CLUNN: Her husband's been killed in the pit.

JAOK: Killed? Impossible!
(CLUNN makes towards the door.) Hi! stop! Help me to carry Mrs. Jones

(CLUNN makes towards the door.) Hi! stop! Help me to carry Mrs. Jones next door.

(Between them they lift her up, and carry her off the stage. In a moment the door opens again, and Jack comes in, pulling Clunn after him.)

Jack (fiercely): Now, then! I heard Mrs. Jones crying "Help!" What were you doing to her?

Clunn: She was hysterical.

Jack: And so will you be when I've done with you. Take that! (He knocks Clunn down.)

Clunn: You dare to touch me! (He jumps up, and rims at Jack. They

clunn: You dare to touch me! (He jumps up, and runs at Jack. They fight hard, and Jack knocks him down again. Then, continuing to sit on the ground, Clunn says, in a quavering voice): I don't want to hurt you, Mr. Toil!

JACK: No, I'm the one that's going to do the hurting. (JACK takes him by the scruff of the neck, and drags him to his feet, shaking him all the time). Now, then, what's this about Mr.

Clunn: I—er—happened to go along the gallery where he works just after the men came up, and I saw there was a fall. So, hearing groans

JACK: You heard groans? CLUNN: Yes, hearing groans—

JACK (gladly): Then he's not CLUNN: Yes, hearing groans——
JACK (gladly): Then he's not ead?
CLUNN (sees he has made a mistake):

CLUNN (sees he has made a mistake):

area.

A suitable mark shall be made opposite the centre of each goal 12 yards from the goal-line; this shall be the penalty-kick mark. dead ?

Oh, yes, he's quite dead. er—heard him die! er—heard him die!

JACK (scornfully): Did you try to get him out?

CLUNN: No; it was impossible.

CLUNN: No; it was impossible.
JACK (seizes him, and shakes him
hard): You're telling lies, you cowardly
wretch! I'm going down the pit to
see for myself.
(The door opens, and
JONES, still

wretch! I'm going down the pit to see for myself.

(The door opens, and in comes Mrs. Jones, still weeping.)

Jack: Cheer up, Mrs. Jones: I'll save your husband yet!

Mrs. Jones (joylully): Oh, do you think there's hope?

Jack: Yes. I don't work in that pit, but the owner's son can give me a permit to go down.

CLUNN: Certainly not! It's—it's too dangerous.

Jack (fiercely): You won't?

CLUNN: (backing into a corner): No. It's too dangerous, I tell you.

Jack (putting up his fists): You'll be in danger in a minute!

(CLUNN hits at him desperately, Jack rushes at him, and they roll over and over on the ground, fighting hard.

Jack at last spreadeagles Clunn, who begins to scream! Help! Help! Help!

Jack: Hold your row, will you? Fetch me a duster, Mrs. Jones!

Jack: gags him.) Now get me a clothes'-line!

Mrs. Jones: You're not going to injure him, Jack?

MRS. JONES: You're not going to injure him, Jack?

JACK: No; only tie him up.

(MRS. JONES fetches clothes' line, and

(MRS. Jones fetches clothes' line, and between them they raise him and tie him into a big chair.)

JACK: Now, then, you sha'n't budge from there until you've written that permit, if you stand out for a week. Will you give way now, or must I start on you again?

(CLUNN is terrified, and gives way. He writes on a scrap of paper with his hands still bound.)

JACK: Good! Keep a close eye on him, Mrs. Jones; and keep up your spirits until I come back.

THE next rule of importance we come to is about the measurements of the

and you must all be

"pitch," and you must all be careful to remember that circumstances alter cases, and that a field is not necessarily bad because it is on the small side. It is the same for the other fellows as it is for you. Here is the rule:

RULE.—Lines shall be marked six yards from each goalpost at right angles to the goal-lines for a distance of six yards, and these shall be connected with each other by a line parallel to the goal-lines; the space within these lines shall be the goal-area. Lines shall be marked 18 yards from each goalpost at right angles to the goal-lines for a distance of eighteen yards, and these shall be connected with each other by a line parallel to the goal-lines; the space within these lines shall be the penalty area.

Explained and Simplified for the Boy Player.

Mrs. Jones: Heaven bless you, lad! (She goes out with him.)
Clunn (gets rid of the gag, and makes desperate efforts to get free. He is evidently very frightened): Oh, I wish I hadn't done it now. But he wouldn't let me have Susie, and it was so easy to push the rock over on to him. Supposing the old man isn't quite dead, and lives long enough to tell them how it happened? (Desperately) I must get free! I must! (He is struggling hard when Mrs. Jones comes back, weeping.)

(Ark: Yes, Mrs. Jones. There was a fall all right, but instead of trying to help your husband, that secondred deliberately prised over a big mass of rock, so that it fell on him. (To Clunn) You meant to kill him, didn't you?

(Mrs. Jones rushes at Clunn, but Jack holds her back.)

Mrs. Jones: You villain, you!

The judge shall sentence you for it!

weeping.)
MRS. JONES: No, you don't! You bide still, you villain! (She scolds him vigorously, and ties him up lighter as she does so.)

CURTAIN.

CURTAIN.

(When the curtain rises, Mrs. Jones is sitting at the table; weeping, with her head on her arms. Clunn is looking sulky and terrified. Suddenly the door flies open and a girl rushes in.)

Susie: Mother, dear mother, run to the door quick!

(Mrs. Jones runs to the door and looks out.)

Susie (shakes her fist at Clunn):

Oh, you wicked wretch!

Mrs. Jones (turning back from the door): Oh, Susie, what d'you mean?

Susie: It's all right, dear mother!

Mrs. Jones: Oh, child, what's all right?

Susie (joyjully): Why, everything's all right. Father's not killed. He's only a teeny bit bruised. Dear old Jack has saved him.

(JACK enters, carrying Mr. Jones, who groans as he is put down. Mrs. Jones takes her husband in her arms tenderly.)

Jack (waving his cap in the air):
Hooray, Mrs. Jones! Hooray, Susie
darling! Hooray! I found him as
jolly as a sandboy, a bit cooped up,
but otherwise all right.

Mrs. Jones (laughing happily): Oh,
John, you're not dead, after all! (She

unsatisfactory.

To the rules given the International Board have added two important rulings—the first being that the touch and goal lines shall not be marked with a V-shaped end, and the second being that clubs may, during the present season, mutually agree to use a ball other than one with an outer casing of leather, provided the law is otherwise complied with.

(Another of these articles acreed.

(Another of these articles next

you?
(Mrs. Jones rushes at Clunn, but Jack holds her back.)
Mrs. Jones: You villain, you!
The judge shall sentence you for it!
Jack (still struggling with her): He'll go to prison for five years!
Clunn (piteously): Spare me! Spare

JACK: No fear! I'm off for the

Mr. Jones (weakly): No, let him by It was for love of Sue he did it. Sue: Wretch!) But he must leave

e country.
Mrs. Jones: Let him off scot-

free?
MR. JONES: Yes, so long as he leaves the country.
JACK (reluctantly): Very well, Mr. Jones, if you say so, (Suddenly brightening up.) I'll go and see about it. (He goes out, and comes back.)
CLUNN (jearfully): Where have you heen?

been? Jack (pleasantly): Just to arrange for some of the lads to see you to the station. There are fifty of them coming. They're mostly bringing whips. (He begins to untie Cluwn.) whips. (He begins to until CLUNN, CLUNN (weeping): Oh, they'll kill

me!

Jack: No. At least, I don't expect so. But you'll certainly get a warm send-off.

(A knock at the door. Several big sticks and whips are thrust in.)

VOICES: We're ready for him, Jack, when you are!

VOICES: We're ready for him, Jack, when you are!
CLUNN: I won't go!
JACK: Oh, won't you? Hold that door open, Susie!
(SUSIE holds the door open, and cries "Hurrah!" as JACK flings CLUNN through it. The sound of beating is heard.)
CLUNN: Oh! Ow! Ough! Help! THE RULES OF FOOTBALL. heard.)
CLUNN: Oh! Ow! Ough! Help!
You're killing me! (His cries grow
less and less in the distance.) The circumference of the ball shall not be less than 27 inches, nor more than 28 inches. The outer casing of the ball must be of leather, and no material shall be used in the construction of the ball which would constitute a danger to the players.

Comments: Although, as stated, there can be proportionate reductions in the figures given, the temptation to do without a plainly-marked penalty area should be avoided, because its absence will lead to many disputes, and the referee will have to make the awarding of a penalty-kick a matter of guesswork, which is very unsatisfactory.

To the rules given the International

less and less in the distance.)
(Mr. Jones sits up painfully.)
Mr. Jones: Jack, lad, you've saved
my life. Another hour with that rock
on my chest and I'd have been—
Mrs. Jones and Susie (together):
Don't talk about it!
Mr. Jones: Jack, lad, how can I
ever reward you?
JACK (merrily): Why, that's easy
enough! (He steps over by Susie's
side, and takes her hand.)
Mr. Jones: Bless you, lad, take
her!

her!
MRS. JONES: You'll make her a brave, true husband.
JACK (drags Susie towards the door): Come along, Susie: we'll go and tell the parson, so's he can read the banns to-morrow!
SUSIE: Oh, Jack! (She goes with him.)
MR. JONES: He's a good lad, worth five score of that worthless Clunn!
MRS. JONES (looking towards the closed door): Ay, but they'll make a pretty couple!

THE END.

What coins are doubled in value by deducting the "half"?—Half-crown, half-sovereign, and half-penny.

"In a big house on the outskirts of the city."
"We must go there, Mr. Mor-

timer!"
"Yes," agreed the valet, with a snap of his teeth, "we must go there. Heaven grant that we may be in time!"

The house of Abdul Feredjullah was situated rather more than a mile away. It was a big place of imposing architecture, all domes and minarets like an Eastern palace. Entry was by way of a brightly-painted archway.

As Phil and the valet approached this archway, they beheld a closed vehicle standing outside. At that moment the high gates were thrown open, and the clatter of many footsteps came from the courtyard beyond.

Across a patch of light a group of en moved. They were six in

men moved. They
number.
"Stand back!" whispered Morti"Stand back!" whispered Morti"Stand back!" whispered Morti-

"Stand back!" whispered Mortimer, shrinking into the shadow, as he caught sight of Sir Maurice Pilkington. "My master is just coming out. He had better not see you—it might spoil all!"
Out through the gateway came the six men. John Prance walked by his employer's side. Behind them came three officers of the native police. In the midst of them walked a manacled man.

A light over the archway fell full upon the prisoner's face. Phil saw that face, and instantly his heart was in his throat.

"Father!" he cried out, and

"Father!" he cried out, and jumped forward.

Sir Maurice Pilkington swung round, his face pale as he caught sight of the boy. For a moment he stood nonplussed.

"Father!" Phil cried again.

The prisoner half turned, looked at the boy like one dazed, then gave a sudden cry, and threw out his manacled hands.

But that was all he could do, for, at

manacled hands.

But that was all he could do, for, at a whisper from Pilkington, the police-officers closed about the prisoner, and, bundling him into the closed vehicle, locked the door fast.

One of them sprang on to a step behind, the driver whipped up his horse, and in a moment they were off at a gallon.

horse, and in a moment they were off at a gallop.

Recovering from the stupor into which the unexpected meeting had thrown him, Phil made a movement to follow the police-cart. Instantly, however, Mortimer, who had not as yet been seen, dragged him back be-hind the archway.

"Quick!" whispered he. "Get away from here, or—"

"Quick!" whispered he. "Get away from here, or—"
"But my father—my father—I must follow him! They have captured him! He will be sent back to prison! I must try and help him!"
"You must wait before you can help him," the valet said quickly. "Do as I bid you, lad. Get away quickly and hide somewhere in the city. Here is money in case you have none."

He thrust some gold coins into the

boy's hand.

"Go away and hide yourself, or Sir Maurice may give you in charge of the police. A rich man such as he can do anything in a place like this. Write to me at the Central Postal Depot, telling me where you are staying. I will call for your letter there to-morrow afternoon, and then we will arrange a meeting."

"But my father—my father?"

"Leave that to me. Believe me, I am acting now for the best. Wait but a little longer, and I will see that your father is set free. Now go!"

THE 3th CHAPTER.
Justice At Last.
HE charge-room at Bow Street
police-court on a November 1 night. Again there had been an interval of four months. During that time Henry Renford had lain in the Constantinople prison while the

involved processes for his legal extradition had been put into effect.
Duly, detectives from Scotland
Yard had gone to the Turkish capital
and had brought their prisoner to
England.
An inspector sat at a desk. Near

England.

An inspector sat at a desk. Near to him were officials from Portland Prison. Near to him also were Sir Maurice Pilkington and John Prance.

The word was passed to bring the prisoner in. Henry Renford was led in between two police-officers.

A lengthy document was read over to him.

That is the charge." the inspector

That is the charge, the inspector said. "It has been made on the information of Sir Maurice Pilkington. You are not obliged to say anything, Henry Renford, and I give you the formal warning that anything you may say will be used as evidence

against you. The charge is as you made it, Sir Maurice?" he went on, turning to the great financier.
"Everything is in order," returned

"Everything is in order,
Pilkington.

"You hear that?" the inspector said. Then he turned to the officials from Portland. "You identify this man as an escaped convict?"

"We identify him as Henry Renford, who escaped from Portland while serving a life sentence for the murder of Caleb Steen, fourteen years ago." That will do, then. Take the stop!"

years as

The one word came like a pistol-shot as the door opened to admit a man and a boy.
"Who are you?" demanded the in-

spector.
"My name is Frederick Mor-

"My valet!" gasped Pilkington, half to himself. "What does he want here?"
"Yes, what is your business here?" said the inspector, who had caught the words.
"My business is of the highest importance. Henry Renford is innocent of the crime with which he was charged!"
"Innocent? But it

charged!"
"Innocent? But he was tried and found quilty!"

found guilty!"
"On false evidence! It is true
that Caleb Steen was murdered.

staggered back and fell to the ground in a faint. John Prance, with a wild look about him, made a sudden dart for the door. Instantly two police officers pounced upon

"John Prance," said the inspector strenly, "you had better not resist. You have heard the charge against you, and you are now a prisoner!"

The delay in bringing the financier The delay in bringing the financier and his secretary to trial was not a long one. Early in December they were arraigned in the dock at the Old Bailey. Into the details of that trial we shall not enter. It was a long and involved case, but the evidence, after all these years, was remarkably clear.

Circumstances that had made the case look black against Henry Renford at the previous trial were now, in the light of after events, to point to the guilt of the man who had been his fellow-clerk and co-heir to Caleb Steen's fortune.

his fellow-clerk and co-heir to Caleb Steen's fortune.

Added to that, Frederick Mortimer's detailed account of conversations overheard between Pilkington and Prance went far to bring about their conviction.

When, in a moment of wild despair, John Prance made a last attempt to save himself by turning King's evidence, the case was indeed complete.

King's evidence, the deed complete.

He told of how in a time of

Many of the people were there already, and dozens of others kept trooping in at every minute.

What a collection of guests! Never before surely had such a number of the rag, tag, and bobtail of London been brought together under one roof. There they all were —men, women, and children—all ready to do more than ample justice to the roast beef, geese, turkeys, plum-puddings, and mince-pies which were to be provided for them. The highways and byways of

The highways and byways of London had been scoured to bring in everybody who cared to participate. Homeless wanderers, out-of-work labourers and their families, street arabs—everybody had been invited, and all had come.

And if these were the guests, who

were the hosts? No others th Henry Renford and his son Phil!

A regiment of waiters entered with the steaming dishes. At the head of the central table, Henry Renford

the central table, Henry removerses.

"Friends," he said, in a voice which, though husky with emotion, could be heard in every corner of the hall, "I am not going to make a speech. We are all too hungry to appreciate a delay of that sort. So all I'm going to say is this:

"You are here as my guests for a particular reason. Last Christmas I was a fugitive from justice. Last

Xmas Greenery. THE BOYS' GUIDE TO HOME DECORATING.

HE majority of boys are handy, useful, and ingenious, and all lads should bear their share of decorating at Christmas-time. There are evergreens to be hung up, nails to be driven home, besides a

There are evergreens to be hung up, nails to be driven home, besides a good deal of work with the step-ladder, and no boy should neglect his obvious duty in this direction.

Of course, there will be a large number of my readers who dwell in the densest parts of our busy cities and who will have to fall back upon the local greengroeer for their supply of holly and evergreens. To the boy within reach of the country, however, there is always an opportunity of getting Christmas greenery on the cheap. A visit to the neighbourhood of some large estate a few days previous to Christmas should bring about the needed supply, and usually all that is necessary is to interview a keeper and get from him permission to obtain an armful of evergreens.

In most coverts there are holly, ground ivy, laurels, and yew, and you may be so fortunate as to find in an aged orchard an apple-tree bearing just

the sprig of mistietoe

the sprig of mistletoe

you require. Do not be afraid to ask for permission to get a little suff, and when this permission is accorded, act in a gentlemanly manner, and do not abuse it. Folks are wondrous kind at Christmas-time; particularly to boys who put forward a manly request.

request.

I will assume, however, that you have laid in a goodly stock of just the evergreen material you require, and that, with a ball of twine, hammer, and nails, you are ready to

hammer, and nails, you are ready to commence operations.

You will probably find the hall of your house—the entrance passage—the best place upon which to commence. Let it simply shout a Christmas welcome, so that the moment the door is opened, the spirit of the season cries aloud its gladsome message. Make it your first task to run streamers of holly-leaves from corner to corner and criss-cross according to the size and shape of the hall.

To make these streamers, take

according to the size and shape of the hall.

To make these streamers, take some thin twine, and upon it thread about twenty holly-leaves; then put half a dozen berries, followed by another batch of leaves, then further berries, and so on. Do not crowd either leaves or berries, and use a darning needle for the purpose of threading.

Another plan is to write out some bright and merry greetings on tinted eard or paper, and to frame them with holly-leaves and berries, suspending them in such a way that they are easily seen as one enters the hall.

Behind the pictures, hatrack, and

Behind the pictures, hatrack, and hallstand also arrange

sprigs of holly,

ter which the man wore three was suddenly shown in the moonrab brecches, flecked with the broad arrow. It was the escaped

delirium Sir Marriee Pilkington
had actually confessed to the murder,
and given details of how it was done.
The verdict brought in was one of
"Guilty!" Pilkington was senteneed to death, and duly suffered
the extreme penalty of the law.
Prance was sentenced to ten year:
penal servitude.
A few formalities, and not only
was Henry Renford set free, but his
claim to Caleb Steen's fortune
clearly established.
"Free, old friend," said the exconvict brokenly to Mortimer, at the
moment the good news was brought
to him, "I owe all this to you!"

"You have another friend who is
more to you than I carr ever beyour boy! Phil, I won't keep you
from your father any longer. I
will leave you two together."

THE 9th CHAPTER.
Conclusion.

HRISTMAS Eve again! A
great hall in central London,
HRISTMAS Eve again! A
great hall in central London,
About the hall were set long tables
covered with show-white cleths, and
laid for the mesl of many hundreds
of people.

THE 9th CHAPTER.
Conclusion.

About the hall were set long tables
covered with show-white cleths, and
laid for the mesl of many hundreds
of people.

TEE EED.

TEE EED.

TEE EED.

Christmas my dear boy here was a
homeless wanderer in the streed so
homeless wande



Beneath the long, shabby ulster which the man were there was suddenly shown in the moon-light yellow stockings and drab breeches, flecked with the broad arrow. It was the escaped convict!

But the deed was not committed by Henry Renford!"
"Then who did commit it?"
"That man!" cried the valet, throwing out his arm. "Sir Maurice Pilkington!"
The financiar staggard hack

The financier staggered back, while Prance went deathly pale. The inspector recovered from the start which the words had given him. "What mad charge is this?" he demanded. "What justification have you for making it?"

demanded. "What justification have you for making it?"
Another man had just previously entered the room.
"The evidence is here!" he said,

"Mr. Oldville, the solicitor!" the inspector said in surprise. "What is the evidence? On what do you base your charge against Sir Maurice Pillrington?"

the evidence? On what do you base your charge against Sir Maurice Pilkington?"

"On the sworn depositions of Frederick Mortimer," returned the solicitor, tapping his sheaf of papers. "These documents contain a full account of conversations held between Sir Maurice Pilkington and his secretary, John Prance. They amount to a confession of murder. On this evidence we charge Sir Maurice Pilkington with the murder of Caleb Steen fourteen years ago, and we charge John Prance with being an accessory after the fact."

The effect of the words were electrical. Sir Maurice Pilkington

What is the most effectual way of keeping water out of a house?—Never pay the water rates.



and pies, parties and dances,

will be all the rage again.

Christmas

Party Fun.

How to Make Things Go With a Swing.

formance, but it is not so simple as HRISTMAS is upon us once again, and in a few days cards and presents, puddings

it looks.

Another trick, on similar lines as the one above, is to get two boys to kneel on the floor, facing one another, and at a short distance apart. Both lads must be provided with a candle, one with candle lighted, and then each must kneel on their left knee, and grasp the right foot with the right hand. Then, balancing on the left knee, they must endeavour to light the one candle by means of the other. At the best and liveliest of Christmas parties things are liable to run a little tame at intervals, and in such cases the guests usually look for the host to make suggestions, and keep the pot boiling. Even a guest, however, will be thanked if he makes a few rattling good suggestions, and that is the purpose of this seasonable article. Together with the splendid tricks and games I am going to describe, and the glorious song, "A Boy's Best Friend is His Mother," the recitation, entitled, "The Fireman's Wedding," and the other features included in this Grand Christmas Number, I see no reason why you should not be able to conduct a thoroughly enjoyable Christmas party concert in your own parlour.

The first game I am going to deal

The Line Competition is another little trick which needs some practice. Each member, in his turn, must stand on a given line, then, stooping down, he must place the left hand upon the left knee. Then, without support of any kind, and without moving the feet from the line, he must put his right hand through his legs from the back, and endeavour to draw a long, straight line in front of himself without toppling over. This trick is also very simple in appearance, but not so easy to accomplish as it looks.

Another really good game is:

Consequences.

In fact, I have known people to laugh so heartly at the funny reports read from the papers that they have made their cheeks and sides fairly ache.

The members of the party must take their seats round a table, and each be supplied with a half sheet of ordinary notepaper and pencil. One

lad must act as leader, and it is his duty to direct the other members what to do, and as each lad writes out the reply to the leader's directions, he must fold his paper over, and cover up the writing. Then the paper must be passed along to the next member of the party, and in each case the paper must be folded over, and no one who partakes in the game is allowed to see what the previous member has written.

The leader gives out the following directions: Write out a gentleman's name; next, is in love with; next, write a lady's name; next where they met; next, what he said to her; next, what she said to him; and, last of all, the consequences. You will see the result of this game when the leader reads all that is written down on each paper. It is more than funny, I can assure you.

LTHOUGH I do not claim that they are strictly original, two

they are strictly original, two funny games are "Pinning on the Donkey's Tail," and "Drawing a Square through a Mirror."

The first is carried out by pinning a sketched tailless donkey on the wall, with numbers figured all over him. Then the tail must be cut from a piece of cardboard, and a drawing-pin stuck through the top. Each member of the party, in his turn;

must be blindfolded, and, standing about three yards away from the donkey, must turn round three times, and then proceed to where he thinks the donkey is situated, and push the pin of the tail as near as possible into its proper position. The one scoring the highest marks, of course, wins the game; but I doubt if anyone succeeds in pinning the tail in the right place.

The drawing of the square is carried out in this manner: Place a piece of paper before a looking-glass of fair size, then let each member draw a square on the paper by looking at the paper through the mirror, and, taking a line diagonally from corner to corner. It looks simple enough, but you try to draw a square with the diagonals in this manner, and see what a fine job you can make of it.

Please understand that the paper

of it.

Please understand that the paper
must lie flat on a table with the
mirror erect, like the letter L, as it

were.

The next trick is one that immensely amused a party of youngsters at my house last year. It is called:

Find Your Nose.

Each boy must hold his nose with his right hand, and his right ear with his left hand. Then he must reverse this position as quick as lightning, and catch hold of left ear with his right hand, and his nose with his left hand. Try it with your brothers first, and see how funny it is!

Another game which my young friends enjoyed was:

The Bow! Dance.

Eight or a dozen lads can take part in this game, and they are divided into equal numbers, four or half-adozen to a side, as the case may be. A bowl, containing peas or hazel nuts is placed upon the ground, and the members of the party taking part in the game arrange themselves around the vessel. The game is for one side to pull any member of the opposing side, and make him turn

out the contents of the bowl with his feet. If the bowl is not too large, you can get a great deal of fun out of this game.

Another of these "tom-boy" games is to pass a broomstick through the handles of a clothes-basket, and rest the ends of the broomhandle on the seats of two chairs. Any member of the party is asked to get in the basket, and stand up, with one leg at each side of the broomstick. The one trying the party is a side of the broomstick. up, with one leg at each side of the broomstick. The one trying the trick is only permitted to seek support by holding on to the broomhandle, touching neither basket nor chairs. This may appear very simple, but it will be found that the basket topples over as soon as any pressure is placed on one side of it.

The last trick is an experiment which I learnt at school, and, apart from being very clever, is most instructive. It is:

Passing an Egg Through the Neck of a Bottle.

To demonstrate this very clever experiment to your friends, you must obtain a fair-sized bottle, with a narrow neck. A decanter is most suitable. Then procure an hardboiled egg, and shell it. Put a piece of burning paper, into the suitable. Then procure an hardboiled egg, and shell it. Put a
piece of burning paper into the
bottle, and immediately place the
egg upright on the mouth of the
neck of the bottle. The burning
paper will expand the air in the
bottle, and consequently the pressure
of air upon the egg from the outside
becomes so great that it is forced
down into the bottle with a tremendous report.

becomes so great that it is forced down into the bottle with a tremendous report.

Another way of passing an egg through the neek of a bottle, is to place the egg in vinegar until the shell becomes quite soft, and supple. Then put a piece of burning paper in the bottle, and place the egg on top. The egg will pass through the neek of the bottle in exactly the same way as in the former experiment. In the latter case, however, cold water is put into the bottle when the egg has passed in. This causes the shell to resume its usual hardness.

How Boys Can Start and Run One.

WENTY years ago nigger minstrel troupes were all the rage, and people flocked in their thousands each night to see the various shows provided in our great towns. And a healthy, wholesome entertainment it was, too, enjoyable alike to old and young, a constant round of laughter with an occasional sentimental song thrown in by way

parlour.

The first game I am going to deal with is a very tantalising trick,

Can't Get It.

A chair is placed upon the floor, resting on its front legs. A tempting sweet is then placed on the top rail of the back of the chair. Now a member of the party is permitted to kneel on the back legs of the chair, and to obtain the great the sweet her ware

and to obtain the sweet he must place his hands at the top of the side rails of the chair, and pick the sweet up with his mouth. Every-body will rush to do this easy per-

of variety.

The fact that professional nigger minstrels have gone rather out of fashion except at the seaside, should not prevent a troupe of boys from getting up such an entertainment during the winter months, especially at Christmas-time. Its very novelty will make it all the more acceptable, and it should commend itself to the performers for the simple reason that the cost is very trifling, far less so than is the case with amateur theatricals.

than is the case with amateur theatricals.

For an amateur troupe of boys, I should say that seven performers would be ample, and make a very happy little party; if there are nine, well and good, but seven or nine are the most useful numbers. A football club, workshop group, bevy of school chums, or office friends should in the ordinary way furnish

all the talent necessary,

and if the entire party enters into the spirit of the thing with enthusiasm, the amount of rehearsal need not be

extensive.

In making up the company, you want to remember the following points: The centre man is, as it were, the captain of the troupe, and usually occupies the position by virtue of his ability as a banjoist. He should wear orthodox dress, but with a black tie, and should be the least eccentric of the party.

and should be the least eccentric of the party.

Next in importance are the corner men, otherwise the performers who occupy the chairs at the end of the crescent. It is advisable that they should wear check trousers, dresscoats, and very large collars and cuffs, the latter being made from stiff paper. If they can wear rising wigs, so much the better. These appliances are obtainable of any theatrical costumier for a small sum,

and are operated by means of an invisible black thread. The corner menusually play upon the bones, and the tambourine, and though they do not supply much of the music, they are called upon to provide a good many of the jokes.

The next in the crescent—viz., those sitting beside the corner men, should wear black trousers and coats, and white shirts with crimson bands across the breasts like sashes, or they may be worn after the fashion of cummerbunds. They should both play tin whistles or some such instrument, and it is an excellent plan for them to wear exaggerated shoes about a couple of feet in length.

It is not a difficult matter for the amateur to construct such shoes. First take a long, narrow piece of thin board, and sketch out upon it the outline of an enormous foot. Cut the wood to take this shape either with a fretsaw or a spokeshave, and then blacken it with paint or enamel. Now make the upper part of the shoe with cardboard, also blackening it and affixing a smart

bow of coloured ribbon

for the sake of effect. Inside this goliath shoe fasten strong loops of tape so that the wearer may first insert his ordinary shoe in such a way that he can walk in more or less comfort.

The two performers on the right

that he can walk in more or less comfort.

The two performers on the right and left of the centre man should be selected for the quality of their voices so that they may be called upon for a solo. They may wear ordinary evening clothes, but to exaggerate them slightly, it would be a good plan if one of them carried a motor-horn with which to interject impromptu "honk honks"; the other could have a monster watch and chain, and any ingenious boy could make this by taking the lid of a tin and painting on it to imitate a watch, affixing hands by means of wire threaded through a hole in the centre. As for the chain, a length of dog chain covered with silver paper should serve the purpose well.

Each of the performers will, of course, wear woolly nigger wigs, which may be hired or purchased outright from a costumier, and their faces and hands should be blackened with burnt cork. Flash jewellery is

highly advisable, and anything of this kind that will raise a laugh can be introduced with good taste. As for the actual programme, much, of course, depends upon the abilities of the players. The follow-ing is a fair sample: Open with

a rousing plantation song

a rousing plantation song
in the chorus of which all can join.
The moment the applause has died away, follow this up with some jokes or riddles. Put a banjo solo next, then more jokes. A solo-song may well follow, and then a stump speech. Another song by the entire troupe may come next, and so on. Never let the "business" flag for an instant, so that your performance is one round of items, each hurrying on the tail of the other. Make everything go with a swing, and keep your audience wide awake all the time.

You will find some excellent riddles among the footlines of this number of The Boys' Friend. Stump speeches and nigger songs may be obtained quite cheaply from any music dealer, or from Messrs. Francis, Day, & Hunter, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C. As for jokes, these may be culled from any comic paper, but here are a few by way of samples:

Uncle Sam (corner man): "What

Uncle Sam (corner man): eeps the moon in its place, Ez?"
Ez: "Why the beams, old hoss!"

"How the trees moan, sah!"
"So would you if you had to carry
so many green apples!"

"Hallo, grandad, where you goin'?"
"Ain't goin' nowhere, sah. I bin where I'm goin'."

"Describe the route to Madeira,

"I proceed to Liverpool, sah."
"I proceed to Liverpool, sah."
"Well, and then?"
"Then I go aboard the steamer, sah, and leave the rest to the captain.
He's sure to know the way."

End off the jokelets so that they lead up to the next item on the programme, and never have a dull moment or a stage wait of a second's duration.

duration.

A nigger minstrel troupe can give immense pleasure to an audience, whether they perform in a drawing-room or on the stage of a hall, and it is a form of entertainment I can thoroughly recommend to boys as being inexpensive, easy, and a certain winner for public favour.

THE END.

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

our weekly talks I wish to ask all of my readers to make a hobby of the science of physical culture. No matter what



(Which is described this week.)

bodily health and strength in front

Health as a Hobby

It need not take up much of your time—certainly not more than half an hour a day—but I want you to go about it as if you meant business.

Choose any time of the day most convenient to you—provided it is not within two hours of a full meal—although you will find the best results if you devote the first half hour of the day to the hobby of health.

You will find it more interesting than stamp collecting, more productive of pleasure than photography, and more lasting than any of the hobbies of youth.

Strength as a Sport

The advantage of physical culture is that it can be a sport as well as a hobby, and will give you more permanent benefit than any other sport you or I can name.

If you could see the thousands of

OW we are nearing the end of our weekly talks I wish to ask all of my readers to make a hobby of the science of physical culture. No matter what hobby you are now attached to, I want you to place the hobby of your

Output

Description:

Outpu

To Boy Scouts.

In particular, I would like to say a few words to my readers who are Boy Scouts. For one reason, I know they are very enthusiastic in any subject they take up; and for another, they will find the acquisition of health and strength obtained by physical culture of immediate and lasting assistance.

lasting assistance.

Scouting calls for a good constitution, a perfect muscular system, a steady nerve, and plenty of pluck. It also demands the ability to undergo considerable physical fatigue without injury to health.

All these necessary qualifications can be quickly obtained by regular performance of the exercises here given.

given.

In later years, when they—as I hope—join one of the Territorial Forces, the benefit of their early practice will be doubly apparent, for the perfect command they possess over their muscles, and their strong constitutions, will enable them to ride, or march, or shoot with the pick of the regiment.

The following is this week's exercise:

EXERCISE 14.—READY POSITION. Extend both arms in a line with the shoulders, palms of the hands upper-

most.

MOVEMENT: Flex both arms until the dumb-bells are immediately over the shoulders, and straighten again until the triceps are thoroughly in the strain, pushing well outward, and raising the shoulders as the arms are extended. The head should be thrown back as the arms are extended, and bent forward as the arms are contracted. Muscles: Biceps, triceps, deltoid, and nock muscles (anterior and posterior).

Why is shoemaking the easiest of trades?—Because the goods are always soled before they are finished.

CHRISTMAS CHORISTER'S

A Ripping Complete East-End Story. One of Our Grand "LADS O' LONDON" Series.

OW, Trent, we will take your pools." The Rev. John Wales, better known in the East End as "Fighting Jack Wales," touched a note of the big church organ, and the next moment a sweet, clear treble rang through the dimly-lighted

the next moment a sweet, clear treble rang through the dimly-lighted church.

It was Christmas Eve at St. Sepulchre's, and fifty bright-looking lads filled the choir-stalls, practising the Christmas anthems for the last time. Though they were all very poor, there was not one choir-boy missing. Fighting Jack, ex-heavyweight champion of Oxford University, was the kind of parson whom even the toughest roughs respected. He was just as much at home with boxing-gloves on in the institute as he was in the pulpit of his crowded church on Sundays.

Some folk did not at all approve of Parson Wales' ways. Instead of living in the Vicarage, he presided over a building which had once been a brewery, where even burglars were welcome to stay the night whenever they felt inclined.

The evening service being over, St. Sepulchre's was very dimly lighted. All the same, it was possible to see that the altar was loaded with massive silver candlesticks and other valuable objects. The Rev. John Wales was proud of these things. All of them were thankofferings from "wrong uns" who had turned straight through his influence and prospered. "Very good indeed, Alfred Trent!" exclaimed the clergyman heartily, when the boy had finished his solo. "You sang that almost as well as it could be sung."

"Thank you, sir," said Alfred.

He was not a good-looking boy, for semi-starvation and ill-usage had marred his face. He carned his living as a bootblack, and was as happy as a king since Fighting Jack Wales had rescued him from the brutal uncle who was slowly killing him.

Now, then, we'll take the anthem— Halle! What's that?"
The clergyman thought he heard a sound from the body of the church. Only the chancel was lighted—the aisle was in pitchy darkness. Rising from the organ, he peered into the blackness.

Who is there?" he demanded, in a vibrating voice. No answer. Absolute stillness pre-

"Well, that's funny!" he said.
"Did none of you lads hear anything?"

thing?"

"No, sir."

"Well, perhaps I was mistaken. I felt sure I heard stealthy footsteps."

Thinking no more about it, he settled again at the organ. The passers-by stopped to listen as a glorious anthem swelled to the roof, sung by boyish voices in perfect harmony.

sung by boyish voices in perfect harmony.

"Gosh! If it ain't like angels singin'!" murmured a man who lay flat beneath one of the pews in the dark aisle. "If I wasn't so stonybroke, I do believe I'd leave this crib alone."

The clergyman's ears had not deceived him really, for the sound he had heard was made by Bill Bowker, bully and thief, who was after the altar ornaments. Bill got a pretty bad fright when the loud voice challenged him, and afterwards he lay quiet as a mouse till the choir practice was over.

At last the voices ceased. The last vibrating notes of the organ died away in the vaulted roof, and the boys went

home.

"Good-night, lads!" called the parson cheerily, as they filed out by the vestry door into the falling snow.

"Good-night, sir!" they echoed

back.
Only Alfred Trent remained with the clergyman, and helped him to put out the lights. This only took a minute or two. Then they also withdrew, and the church was left in pitchy darkness.
"I'm going down to the gym., Alfred. Would you care to come?"
"Rather, sir! Shall you be boxing?"

"Rather, sir! Shall you be boxing?"
"Yes. I expect some fun. Who d'you think the men have brought to put the gloves on with me?"
"Don't know, sir."
"Why, Fireman Pete, the Navy heavyweight. They haven't told me who he is. They mean it as a playful surprise, but a little bird whispered to me what was up."
The chorister gave vent to a startled exclamation.

He knew that the Fireman was a professional bruiser, as hard as nails, and a very rough customer.

"And you won't fight him, will you?" he inquired anxiously. "It's only supposed to be light sparring at the gym. The Fireman slogs like a prizefighter. It's a dirty trick for the men to play on you."

The parson chuckled happily.

"It's a trick I rather appreciate," he said mirthfully. "I've felt for some time that my muscles would get out of condition if I didn't have a good old rough-and-tumble. That's the Fireman's complaint, too, I expect. We shall both enjoy the evening."

the Fireman's complaint, too, I expect. We shall both enjoy the evening."

Just then they arrived at the parish institute, one big room of which was fitted up as a gymnasium. Round the door was clustered a big knot of the roughest-looking men. Many of them had been in prison in their day, but the Reverend Wales could do anything with them. At the same time, they were not above playing tricks on him.

There was a hoarse laugh among

There was a hoarse laugh among the crowd as the clergyman said:

"Well, are we going to have a little light sparring?"

"Yus, guv'nor," responded a one-eyed docker, with a villainous-looking face. "I've brought along a pal o' mine. He's jest spoiling for a little light sparrin', if you'd oblige him"

him."

There was a twinkle in the eye of Fighting Jack Wales as he glanced at the stranger. The Fireman was well over six feet in his socks, and tremendously thick-set. A heavy scowl seemed frozen on his features.

"Pleased to meet you!" said the Fireman, stepping forward and gripping the clergyman's white hand in a grip like iron.

With quiet good-humour Fighting

grip like iron.

With quiet good-humour Fighting
Jack began to prepare for the fray.
Just as he was drawing on his gloves,
however, a sudden thought struck

however, a sudden thought struck him.

"Bother!" he said. "I say, Alfred, I quite forgot to see if the main doors at the church were locked. You remember I thought I heard a sound during choir-practice? I don't suppose it was anyone, but you might just cut along and make sure that the doors are all fast, will you?"

"Certainly, sir," said the young chorister willingly, though he was secretly disappointed to miss the commencement of the fight.

Running for all he was worth

mencement of the fight.

Running for all he was worth through the snow, which lay quite thickly on the road, he reached the main doors of the church within five minutes. As he passed the east window he was astonished to notice there the faint gleam of a light. Peeping through the keyhole of the main door, he confirmed the fact that some person with a dark lantern was standing inside the chancel, close to the altar.

the altar.
"There's someone stealing the altar ornaments!" he whispered, in a horri-

As he peered through into the church, Alfred's brain was busy.

What ought he to do?

It was quite certain he could not tackle the intruder single-handed.

Yet if he ran to the gymnasium the thief might have got away before help

Yet it he ran to the gymnasium the thief might have got away before help came.

"I saw a bobby just outside the church," he said to himself. "I'd better call him."

But on second thoughts he changed his mind. He felt sure that his friend the parson would rather not have the police called in. Fighting Jack would always rather save a man from prison than send him to it, the chorister knew. What, then, could he do?

"I must fix it somehow so that he can't escape till I get help," said the lad. "He's got this door locked on the inside. I must nip in the other way and sneak the key, I suppose. I hope to goodness he doesn't spot me!"

It wanted some pluck to do what Alfred did. He had the key of the vestry door. Fortunately it was well-oiled, and did not make a sound as he stole softly in and locked it behind him. Once inside the vestry, he slipped off his boots. Then he crept softly into the body of the church. He was within a few yards of the sacrilegous marauder, and had a good look at him.

"He'd throttle the life out of me if he caught me," was the chorister's shuddering thought.

Nevertheless, he did not turn back,

infinite caution, till he reached the

infinite caution, till he reached the great door.

"This rusty old lock will give me away," he thought.

But no; the burglar had himself oiled the lock, and it turned without a sound. Never dreaming of what was toward, the thief had his back turned as the door was opened, and locked outside. A minute later Alfred was speeding hot-foot to the institute, with the key in his pocket.

A hoarse roar of cheering met his ears as he darted into the gymnasium.

"Well done, Fireman!"

"You've outed the parson!"

These and other shouts showed clearly that the stranger's backers were confident of victory.

Just before the boy's arrival the bruiser had got under the clergyman's guard, and dealt him a terrific upper-cut. As it was merely a friendly match, Fireman Pete had no business to give so severe a blow, but he was of the type who lose their tempers and slog for all they're worth instead of sparring.

To Alfred's consternation the

tempers and slog for all they're worth instead of sparring.

To Alfred's consternation the clergyman lay prostrate on his back while the referee counted the seconds.

"He's done!" the Fireman's backers jeered.

"No, he's not. He's a game 'un, he is!"

A burst of all.

A burst of cheering greeted the parson as he sprang suddenly to his feet.

For a moment Alfred had forgotten the burglar, but now he forward. Fighting Jack stepped forwards at him.

"Everything all right, Alfred?"
"No, sir," said the chorister, in a low voice. "There's a burglar in the church. He's stealing the silver candlesticks."

The clergyman's face went deadly

pale.
"What have you done?" he hissed.
"Locked him in, sir. Here's the
key. Shall you send some of the
men to collar him?"
Fighting Jack Wales thought for a

moment.

"No," he said decisively. "They'd kill him. I must see to this myself Not a word to anybody."

To the amazement of the onlookers, the clergymen drew off his boxing-gloves.

gloves.
"Sorry, I'm called away," he said
to Fireman Pete. "I'll be back in a
minute, and we'll go on with our

"The parson's funking it!"
"Oh, yes, mealy-mouth, you'll come back, I warrant!" sneered the Fireman. "Why can't you say you're beat, like a man, you canting humbug!"

beat, like a man, you canting humbug!"
The clergyman's eyes blazed, but he made no angry retort.
"I'll be back inside half an hour," he said steadily, "and I'll make you eat those words. See that he doesn't leave, men!"
There was that in his tone which gave fresh heart to his rough friends. They knew that he was sometimes

called away to see sick people, and waited confidently for his return.

"You have done right to come for me, Alfred," said the parson, as he ran beside his chorister to the church. In a very short time they were at the church doer, and the boy's eye was at the keyhole.

"I can see a gleam of light coming from the vestry," he said. "That means he's trying to force the strong box in there. He hasn't found out he's locked in."

"Good! That makes matters

"Good! That makes matters simpler. Can we replace the key?"
"Yes, sir, if I go in and lock myself inside," said Alfred, with a little hesitation.
"Are you afraid to?"
"Not me, sir."
"Right! In you go, then. You're a man, Alfred."
As noiselessly as before, Alfred unlocked the door, slipped inside, and relocked it.

relocked it.
Just after he had done so, the burglar emerged from the vestry and tiptoed down the aisle with a full sack on his back. He must have heard the boy move, for suddenly he hissed:

hissed:
"Who's there? Speak up! Who's

"Who's there? Speak up! Who's there?"

Alfred trembled for his life as the beam of the lantern passed within a few inches of his recumbent form. The church door was locked on the inside, and his parson friend would be unable to come to his help quickly if he were caught. He held his breath to check the loud beating of his heart against his ribs lest that should give him away.

"Funny! I could 'a' swore I heard something!" the thief murmured.
"Must have been a rat."

Then he went straight to the big door. For a moment he listened intently to make sure that nobody was passing. Then he turned the key, and stepped outside.

Like a panther the parson leapt at him.

Like a panther the parson leapt at him.

There was a clear moon, and as he ran to the door Alfred witnessed a terrifying spectacle. Quick as Fighting Jack Wales was, the burglar was prepared. The sack on his shoulder was full of heavy metal. Like lightning, he swung it in the air and brought it down on the clergyman's skull. The sound of the impact was terrific, and the Rev. John Wales went down like a log.

Like feathers from a pillow, the snowflakes covered his recumbent form.

snowflakes covered his recumbent form.

But for the plucky chorister, the sacrilege would have been complete.
St. Sepulchre's candlesticks and silver vessels would have been melted down within an hour or two. But there was still Alfred to be reckoned he sprang on the burglar's back.

Like a ninepin the thief went down, and his head struck the flagged court-yard with a thud. But it did not knock him senseless, for the white carpet which covered the ground took

off the worst of the concussion. With a swift movement, his hand went to his hip-pocket.

Harry guessed what that meant. Still kneeling on the prostrate man's back, he bent over the hand as it emerged, and bit it savagely.

"Ow!"

Alfred's teeth were evidently sharp, for the man gave a shrill yell, and

Alfred's teeth were evidently sharp, for the man gave a shrill yell, and dropped the weapon. In a moment the chorister seized it.

"A six-chambered revolver, you brute!" he cried. "Well, as sure as you try to get up, I'll fire a bullet into your leg!"

The lad meant every word he said, and the burglar realised it.

"All right, it's a fair cop," he said resignedly. "You'd better call the peelers."

Alfred looked round in surprise to

see that Fighting Jack was on his feet. It took a pretty hard blow to crack his skull.

He shook the gleaming white snow crystals from his clothes like a great

He shook the gleaming winter crystals from his clothes like a great retriever.

"Keep an eye on him, Alfred, till I come back," he said.

Then he picked up the sack and went into the church with its contents. Two minutes later he emerged, and locked the door.

"You can put that in your pocket," he said to Alfred. Then, turning to the thief, he ordered: "Get up, will you, please?"

Taking a strong grip of the man's arm, he hurried him along unresistingly.

Taking a strong garp of the harmarm, he hurried him along unresistingly.

"I s'pose it means quod, guv'nor?"
Bill Bowler whined. "But I am plaguy hungry and fair starved with the cold. You wouldn't stand us a feed first, would you?"

The parson did not utter a word till they were nearly at the institute. Then he said:

"This is the season of goodwill, so I shall not give you in charge, but I advise you to hold your tongue."

Next minute he propelled him into the midst of the other men.

"Just see that this chap doesn't get away!" he said to those near the door. To another man he added:
"Take him into the canteen, and let him eat as much as he likes, at my expense."

Finally, he swung off his damp

expense."

Finally, he swung off his day
coat, and reached for his boxis

gloves.

"Let me see, we were having a little friendly bout, I think," he said amicably to Fireman Pete.

A hurricane of cheering welcomed this short speech. The parson's return sent up his popularity with a bound, and the applause was frantic when they saw that he no longer sparred, but gave as good as he got. Inside five minutes a deadly, smashing left-hander, with beef and skill behind it, broke the Fireman's guard, and landed on the exact tip of the chin.

"Well, blow me, guv'nor, that's a fair knock-out!"

"Well, blow me, guv'nor, that's a fair knock-out!"

It was the burglar himself who broke in with this admiring exclamation when the Fireman rose no more. He probably expected to appease Fighting Jack with this subtle flattery. The reply surprised him.

"Put on the gloves!" the parson commanded curtly.

With some hesitation the man did as he was bid. He had a good notion of fighting, and was game enough, but he had a very bad five minutes before Fighting Jack had done with him.

before Fignting ones him.

"That's for breaking into my church," explained the clergyman afterwards. "So now we're quits. Now, then, to-morrow's Christmas If you've nowhere better to go, how would you like to spend it with me as my guest? You can stop as long

would you like to spend it with me as my guest? You can stop as long as you like."

The burglar looked about him in a dazed way.

"Why, guv'nor, I don't know what your little game is," he said, "but I'll be proud to stop with you. I haven't kept up Christmas since my old mother died. It'll feel quite like 'ome."

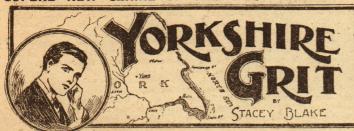
"Alfred, my lad," said the clergyman, three months later, "you not only saved my life that night at the church, you did a great deal more than that. You helped save from his evil courses a man who had never really had a chance. Our burglar friend has not only kept straight, but he's working at a trade and is happy as a king at it. He'll never go back to crime. And what d'you think I've found out?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Why, he's got a splendid voice. He'll be a capital acquisition in the choir."



SUPERB NEW SERIAL OF THE WEST RIDING.



New Readers Start Here.

This is a grand serial of Yorkshire life, written by a Yorkshireman, and whether you are a native of our largest county or not, you are certain to thoroughly enjoy

you are a native or our largest process of age. Mr. Trimble dies, and his nephew, James Ackroyd, inherits the property.

property.
It is now a duel between Dick Allen and James Ackroyd, and as the latter has money, power, and position, the odds are greatly in his favour. He has in Widdop an underhanded working lad,

an underhanded working lad, a faithful toady and supporter.
And Dick is in hot water again. Ill-treated by Ackroyd to such an extent that he faints, he recovers only to find the mill closed and himself locked in for the night. In trying to make his secape, he frustrates the work of a couple of burglars, driving his foot into the face of one with great effect. Then, so that he may creep away from the burglars and to give the alarm, he wraps his feet in some old sacking.
Just then a powerful light falls upon him, and he is gripped by a policeman, who takes him for the burglars' accomplice. 'Now read this week's splendid chapters.)

Now read this week's splendid chapters.)

Dick in Bad Company



O I tell you I had been left locked in the mill. I heard the noise, and went up and found them
opening the
sale. And then
I tried to get
out to give the
alarm, only they
found me. and I
couldn't!"

couldn't!"

"Oh, by gum, take your gruel, lad!" said one of the burglars, whose mouth was bleeding. "You want to leave us in the lurch!"

"You ran after me, and I kicked you in the mouth on the stairs!"

The thief laughed a twisted-mouth laugh, and one of the policemen interposed gruffly:

"Stop your talk! Stow it! You can make your explanations after."

"I tell you I am one of the workers here."

"More shame to you, then. There's the boss been sent for, any-how—Mr. Ackroyd. You talk to him. Just now you're arrested for burgling. If you take my tip, you'll reserve your defence—if you can have such a thing when you're copped red-handed."

In an astonishingly short space of time James Ackroyd appeared on the

such a thing when you're copped redhanded."

In an astonishingly short space of time James Ackroyd appeared on the scene. He rapidly inspected the burgled office.

"Seems we just dropped on 'em in time," said the sergeant in command. "We'd seen a light flashing a time or two in that window up there, so we kept watch a bit. We just got 'em nicely. The money's all safe. They'd got their pockets choked up with it. There's three of 'em. We've got 'em below in the yard. You'd perhaps like to have a look at 'em. And there's one—a young 'un—a regular cunning one, who's got his feet wrapped in sacking so he can

A NEW WATCH FOR CHRISTMAS.

The "Boy's Best Friend is His Mother," as the old song has it, but "the boy" would probably say that his mother is a relation, and that he would like to have as his "best friend" this Christmas a really good

friend" this Christmas a really good watch.

Many a successful business man has looked back to his watch and punctuality as his best friends and chief factors in his success. Our old advertisers, J. N. Masters, Ltd., 10, Hope Stores, Rye, supply the "Veracity" Watch, which will last 20 years, for 30s., on very easy monthly payments, so many of our boy readers should make good and lasting friends with new watches this Christmas for the New Year.

walk quietly. He says he's a hand here, and he's got a yarn about being fastoned in the place. We've got him handcuffed with the others. Perhaps you'll have a look at him, sir. Maybe you know him yourself, and his character as well."

"By Jingo, you surprise me! But you may take it from me that no one would be locked in the place. If it is one of our hands, you can bet he's at the bottom of the whole affair. He would know about the cash in the safe. It's the only night in the week we have any. It's for wages in the morning, you know."

Ackroyd hurried along into the yard, where the prisoners were in custody, with a wicked smile of exultation on his face. He did not need to be told who this third was. It seemed that fate was playing into his hands. Events could not have fallen out in better order if he had carefully arranged it all himself.

He surveyed the two men with a swift glance, and then his eyes rested on Dick with all the assumed surprise that he could summon up.

"By gad, so it's you, Allen!" he exclaimed. "You've fallen low enough for this! This is how you've taken advantage of my trust in you!"

The police-sergeant, who was looking out for tips, nodded his head, and murmured that he never had come across such an instance of ingratitude.

"To think what I've done for you," resumed Ackroyd, half-sorrowfully, half-indignantly, "in spite of your bad character."

"What you've done for me," cried Dick, stung to indignation by this dastardly perversion of fact, "has been to try to hurt and ruin me at every step! You fastened me in there and left me yourself last night!"

"By Jove, sergeant, I hope you're noticing what he's saying!"

"My lad, if you want to tell lies, you should tell lies that have a chance of being believed," said the officer sagaciously.

"That's true," persisted Dick.
"He thrushed me with a rope, and left me down in the cellar! I tried to get out, and then I ran into these burglars!"

"How you managed to be there doesn't matter much. If you did not technically break in, you stopped

to get out, and then I ran into these burglars!"

"How you managed to be there doesn't matter much. If you did not technically break in, you stopped behind and secreted yourself when the whistle went, and so managed to get locked in. And then, of course, you let in your accomplices when all was quiet."

"Look at that man's mouth!"

was quiet."

"Look at that man's mouth!"

cried Diek. "He ran after me, and
I kicked at him on the stairs, which
is why he wants to bring me into this
to pay me out. Should I have done
that if I had been helping them?"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled the man.
"Take your gruel like a man!
We're fairly copped, so it's no good
struggling."

We re fairly copped, so it's no good struggling."

"If you will allow me, sergeant, I will speak to each of these men separately, to see if there is anything more I can find out. They can't escape out of this yard."

"Right, sir; there's no harm in that."

Ackroyd first of all took aside the man who had hitherto taken no part

man who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation.

"The lad had nowt to do wi' it," he said, in answer to Ackroyd's question. "I've never seen him in my life as I knows on. Bill says so because t' lad landed him a kick on t' jaw that's loosened some of his teeth."

To the second man, who occasionally lifted up his manacled hands to soothe his painful jaw, Ackroyd spoke quite differently.

"I can't do anything in this matter," he said, "because you are in the hands of the police; but if you like to stick to that tale about the lad, you shall have a tenner."

"When?"

"Now. It will be a note. It's folded small in my hand. I'll climit.

"When?"
"Now. It will be a note. It's folded small in my hand. I'll slip it into your fingers, and you must watch your chance to get it into your pocket."

He took Dick on one side to treat him the same as the others, but his conversation was short.
"You've got in my way," said Ackroyd, in a low voice. And then

aloud, so that he could be overheard:
"I am hurt beyond measure at your callousness. It is dreadful in a boy your age. All right, sergeant, I don't think we need wait any longer."

It was late that night that

your age. All right, sergeant, I don't think we need wait any longer."

It was late that night that Ackroyd, after entertaining the bar at the George Hotel with a lurid account of his own courageous part in the capture of the three burglars, went along to the town-hall to get some report of the moneys found upon the burglars after they had been properly searched in their cells. "Here's the whole lot, Mr. Ackroyd," said the inspector in charge. "On one of the men we found a ten-pound-note—that one with his mouth knocked up. He says it's his own property, and that he came by it honestly; bût as there happens to be an endorsement of your name on the back of it—I expect you endorsed it because you were going to pay it away somewhere and then didn't—well, his tale sounds a bit improbable. I've no doubt he got it out of the safe."

"Of course he did!" exclaimed Ackroyd promptly, immediately scenting danger for himself; for his small transaction with the burglar was not a thing he desired known. It had slipped his memory that in Huddersfield, the day before, he had tried to cash it at a hotel where he was not known, and for that reason he had written his name and address on the back of the banknote in the customary fashion. Then at the last moment it was discovered that there was not enough cash in the house to accommodate him, so he had kept the note.

"That's my note, of course," he said "I want it in the safe only this

"That's my note, of course," he said. "I put it in the safe only this afternoon. He took it with the

said. "I put it in the safe only this afternoon. He took it with the rest."

"It sounded like a cock-and-bull tale," said the inspector. "Well, they'll all be brought before the magistrates in the morning."

"I shall be along," said Ackroyd.
Now, the man with the hurt jaw had his eye on that ten pounds as a useful sum wherewith to buy a smart lawyer to try to help him in proving that he was really quite innocent, or, if not quite, very nearly, so that he was active in making claim after it.

"As a matter of fact," said the inspector in charge of the case the following morning, "you'd better give up that lie, and stick to a better tale. Mr. Ackroyd was here himself last night, and he claimed the note. He said it was in the safe, and that he put it there himself only yesterday afternoon. He says you got it out with the rest of the money."

"He said that, did he? He said that, by gum!" exclaimed the burglar. "Then, blow me, I'll tell the truth!"

"I should have a try," said the in-

burglar. "Then, blow me, I'll tell the trath!"

"I should have a try," said the inspector sarcastically. "Do you want to tell it now?"

"No, I don't. I'm going to tell it in court. If that Mr. Blooming Ackroyd thinks he can do me, he's mistaken! Yes, I'm going to tell the truth all right, and it's something about that lad—him what landed me in the jaw."

Ackroyd In The Toils.

"Guilty, your Worships!"
"Guilty, your Worships!"
"Not guilty, sir!"
The last pleading was Dick's. He was in the dock with the other two prisoners. They pleaded guilty because it was not much use doing otherwise. The magistrates' clerk glared up at Dick.
"What did you say? Not guilty!"

glared up at Dick.

"What did you say? Not guilty!"

"Yes, sir."

He had managed to communicate with Mr. Sylvester junior, who at this moment jumped up at the solicitor's table, and intimated that he was for the defence.

The police told their tale. They had watched Trimble's mill, suspecting that burglars were at work, as was subsequently proved. This prisoner who pleaded not guilty had been captured with the other two, who had acknowledged their guilt. They all seemed together. No stolen money was found on the boy, the men carrying it all; but it was suggested that the boy was an active coworker with the men—that he had secreted himself in the mill after work, had managed to get himself locked in, and that he had then let in the elder prisoners, and guided them in their attack on the safe.

James Ackreyd bore out this statement in so far as the known facts were concerned; and he also bore testimony to the boy's bad character. He was loth, of course, to say anything against him, but he

was bound to admit that, judging from his past behaviour, the boy appeared capable of anything.

Then the young solicitor his feet. was on

his feet.

"You dislike Dick Allen, Mr. Ackroyd?" he asked.

"No; not at all. Why should I?"

"Don't ask me questions. I am asking you. Do you swear you have no grudge against this boy?"

"I have none at all. I have no reason to have a grudge against him."

"By the terms of your late uncle's will, this boy is to be given employment at the mill until he is of age, when he becomes owner or proprietor of a certain share in the mill?"

mill?"

"Yes."

"Which fact has caused you to hate him, to persecute him at every point, and to injure him whenever there was a chance?"

"That is not true."

"When the terms of your late uncle's will were read to you, and you learned in what position this boy stood, did you, or did you not, threaten to give this young lad, as you expressed it, a dog's life?"

"Certainly not."

"Now, remember, you are speaking on oath, Mr. Ackroyd. Did you not in a certain solicitor's office in this city, make that threat concerning young. Allen? Shall I remind you—in the office of your uncle's executors, in the office of Messrs. Sylvester & Son?"

"Your own office, confound you!"

Son?"

"Your own office, confound you!"
snapped Ackroyd. "Well, if I did
I didn't mean it."

"And did you try to destroy the
document which gave Dick Allen the
claim I speak of?"

"Now, you're making it up," said
Ackroyd sullenly, with his face going
red.

"Did you, or did you not?" thundered Sylvester.
"Perhaps I did. I don't know. I can't remember," Ackroyd blurted out. "Anyhow, if I did I was agitated and upset with grief."
"It was your agitation and grief that made you savagely attack the boy last night in company with a youth in your employ named Widdop?"
"I gave a bit of rope-end to both.

Widdop?"

"I gave a bit of rope-end to both. They had misbehaved."

"Do you swear that you did not leave him in the basement, after throwing the contents of a fire-bucket over him? That you did not, in point of fact, fasten him in the building yourself, so that, in trying to get out, he would quite naturally come across these burglars at work?"

work?"

"No; I did not."

"And, in bringing this charge against him, it is not with the idea of doing him an injury?"

"No."

"I see. That will do. I wish to put one of the other prisoners in the box, your Worships—the one with the injured mouth."

Ackroyd watched, with eyes shrunk to a pin-point, this man go into the witness-box.

The testimony of the new witness was short and drastic.

"You heard the evidence of the last, witness?" asked the young solicitor.

"Yes, sir."

"When you were arrested last."

"Yes, sir."
"When you were arrested last night, did he take you on one side and make a proposition to you concerning the boy Allen?"
"Yes; he gave me a ten-pound note to say the lad was in at the job with us."
"I see And you took the note."

"I see. And you took the note, and I suppose the police relieved you

and I suppose the pelice relieved you of it?"

"Rather. And he collared it again, and said I'd taken it out of the safe, which ain't true."

"You aren't saying this because you feel particularly friendly towards the boy?"

"Not likely. Look what he did to my mouth. Only it was a fair land out—a fair bang—but that other fellow's wasn't. That lad ain't had owt to do with us. We cracked the crib ourselves. He was in the mill, of course—that's why he found us on the job. We copped him spying on us, and I ran after him, meaning to fasten him up till we'd done. When I galloped after him up the stairs, he landed me this beauty on the mouth with his foot, and he got away. That's all there is about it, and my mate'll say the same."

"Thank you. That will do."

same."
"Thank you. That will do."
There was a buzz in court, instantly suppressed. The magistrates consulted in whispers behind their hands, one among another.
"The two men, Starkey and

Smith, will go to the assizes; the boy Allen is discharged. We find no evidence against him; and such evidence as has been tendered seems, in our opinion, to have been of a most unsatisfactory character. We think that the charge chould never have been brought against the boy."

Then there broke a cheer out in court that no efforts of the bigvoiced sergeant could suppress. The dock gate was opened, and Dick was bidden step out. He paused a moment, and turned to the man who had just spoken for him.

"Thank you," he said. "I am sorry I kicked you so hard. I hope your mouth will soon get better."

There was a crowd waiting outside in the street—a crowd of mill-hands, for it was the dinner-hour. A yell went up when Dick appeared, for the result had gone in advance of him—not only the verdict, but that James Ackroyd had suffered practically a magisterial censure.

One or two, led by Bulgy Fry, seized him. He was hoisted on to four individual shoulders, and, amid a bodyguard of boys, with not a small sprinkling of girls among them, was borne in triumph round the square in front of the town-hall. Ackroyd left the court, suffering the pains of the defeated. Here was a serious check in his systematic persecution of Dick Allen that might well lead to serious consequences. He had been shown to be a liar; and, although that did not trouble his conscience, which was getting tolerably hardened by now, he readily saw that such a reputation was not going to be to his advantage—either in business or in his dealings with Dick.

The boy had triumphed. He hated him the more for that. He felt evilly towards him. Not one whit of his determination to roun him, or worse, had abated. Only it must be done more cunningly. There must be no more failures.

He took some drinks at a bar in Market Street; and then, when he

failures. He took some drinks at a bar in Market Street; and then, when he felt he had got his courage back again, he went out and made for the mill. Someone followed him—a tall, thin, shabby figure, who only spoke when they were within the mill-

yard."

"Here, what the dickens do you want to follow me for, Scrimshaw?" demanded Ackroyd angrily.

"No offence, I hope," gurgled Scrimshaw, in a voice that always sounded like liquid coming out of a bottle. "I am here, of course; but quietly and hunhostentatiously. Just a word with you, Mr., Ackroyd."

"Confound you, I don't owe that bloodsucker, your master, anything!"

"I believe heverything was honourably disarged," said the moneylender's tout, slowly rubbing his dirty hands together.

"Yery well, then; I don't want to see you. You're known. It'll ruin my credit if I'm seen with you."

"And it would, perhaps, ruin my reputation if I was seen with you," leered the man, "considering the way you chucked yourself away in court this morning. Are you goin' hup into the hoffice?"

"Yes; but you aren't coming."

hup into the hoffice?"

"Yes; but you aren't coming."

"Of course I am. My business is too particular to talk out here."

"Look here, I haven't any business with you."

"No; but I have with you. And you can't afford to offend, me, Mr. Ackroyd," he said, with a sudden new note of menace in his voice and in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" cried Ack-

What do you mean?" cried Ack-

"What do you mean?" cried Ackroyd roughly.

"I know too much, that's all. I want to talk to you about it."

James Ackroyd went up to his office, the other following, dimly conscious that he was up against another element of danger. He shut the office door, and turned and faced the shabby man.

"Now, what's your game?" he demanded.

"I thought it was time I put it to you how we stood—just quietly and hunhostentationsly. As a matter of fact, it's just a trifle of fifty pounds I want, and dirt cheap at the price!"

I want, and dirt cheap price!"

"What's dirt cheap at the price, you scoundrel?"

"My silence. I'm just asking a beggarly fifty pounds to keep me from talking—that is, for a bit. I know my value, but I'm not greedy."

"Look here, my lad," rasped out Ackroyd, "do you think I'm a

Ackroyd, "do you fool?"
"I know you're a murderer!"
"I know you're blackmailing

came a whisper.
"It is a lie!" you blackmailing

If a man carrying two lamps drops one of them what does he become?—A lamp lighter.

scoundre!!" whimpered Ackroyd

weakly.

"Do you think, because you did not give your uncle any blow, that you didn't kill him any the less? And don't you think I didn't see it—see you withhold the medicine that would have revived him when he had a heart seizure? That stuff had saved his life half a dozen times. Just at the critical moment, when he wanted it, you poured the stuff on the floor. I was there, and 'eard the last word he said. Do you remember what it was? It was 'Murderer!' Now you know."

"Call it what you like," said Acknoyd hoarsely: "only, if you went to the police, they'd call you an accessory after the fact. You'd be put in the dock with me."

"D'you think I'm a fool? D'you think I should go and tell 'em that I was there and saw it, and that I had kept it dark to make a bit out of it?"

"That's what you have done."

"Yes, but I shouldn't make a song about it. If, in the interests of justice I 'ave to go and let on the truth about you, I shall do it in a roundabout way—a letter to the police, mebbe, or something like that. It could be done all right without me gettin' myself into trouble, Mr. Ackroyd. Now, what are you going to "You know, it isn't all mine reactly. I've got to he a hit careful."

"You know, it isn't all mine exactly. I've got to be a bit careful, or I'll have those confounded lawyers on me. There's someone likely to make a claim on this mill in a bit."

"Oh, I know all about that—the lad you've been 'aving a go at. He'll 'ave a share some day, if he lives and can make his claim good. Only accidents 'appen," said the shabby man slowly.

man slowly.
"Accidents? What sort of acci-

dents?"
"You know. You've tried one or "You beggar! What are you try-

"You beggar! What are you trying to put on to me?"

"It's wonderful what a let I get
to know—quietly and hunhostentatiously. But you ain't clever enough.
You ain't get brains sharp enough.
Look here! Suppose when the time's
ripe he comes along and claims his
portion, what's it going to be worth?
Every penny of twenty thousand
pounds?"
Ackroyd nodded.

pounds?"
Ackroyd nodded.
"So that if you paid a thousand pounds for an accident to appen to that lad, so's he wouldn't be in a position to come along with his claim, it would be a good deal!"
"A good deal!" gasped Ackroyd fearfully. "What do you mean?

"A good deal!" gasped Ackroyd fearfully. "What do you mean? Would you—"
Their heads came together. Minutes of whispering passed between them.
"Gimme some money," said Scrimshaw at the finish, "and not in paper either. I'll have it in gold, the stuff you can't trace. If you haven't got it, I'll come along later. And look here, you've got to play straight with me, or I'll put the rope round your neck before you can wink your eye." Ackroyd did not appreciate the pleasantry.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that. How much do you want—twenty pounds?"

"Look here, Mr. Ackroyd, don't you make jokes of that sort. That isn't a bit my kind of humour. I want five hundred made up in little hags, with a hundred in each."

"I'll see you incinerated first, you beggar!" ripped out Ackroyd. "Do you think you're going to bleed me dry?"

"I can squeeze you if I like," said

"I can squeeze you if I like," said Scrimshaw, with an ugly smile, "but I won't, because I ain't greedy. Only you've got to do the straight thing. If you don't, I shall squeeze, I shall squeeze you like a horange." And he imitated the process of extracting the juice from that succulent fruit.

ook here," said Ackroyd, under

"Look here," said Ackroyd, under his breath, "you can push me too far! You know what I have done. By ginger, if you drive me too far, I'll silence that gurgle of yours!"

"Do you imagine you would be safe then?" said the moneylender's tout through his teeth. "Do you imagine settling me would put you in a safe place where no one would know anything about what you had done? Do you think finishing me would destroy all evidence against you? That shows what a fool you are, my boy. Sithee, knowing I was coming into property over this deal I've made a will, and I've put it somewhere where it will be found if I die sudden-like. And with this will, in a big sealed envelope, what do you think I've put? I've put down what I saw in this office that

particular night when your uncle died. I've written down enough to hang you, my boy."

Ackroyd was silent. He had the uncomfortable feeling of being in this man's power. It seemed that here was a beginning of his sin finding him out.

"And so," said Scrimshaw, driving home his advantage, "you'll see that it is your game not to do for me, but to keep me very safe and free from accident"

"It's all right. I didn't mean it," murmured Ackroyd. "Look here, we can work best in agreement."
"You bet! Gimme your 'and on

And the agreement of the pair of villians meant ill for Dick Allen and evil for his future.

"E! Lad, but tha's gotten some

"E! Lad, but tha's gotten some gradely Christmas trimmings," said Bulgy Fry, poking his head round Dick's doorway.

"I must trim up a bit," said Dick, looking up from the manufacture of a gay "wessel-bob," which is an arrangement of crossed hoops dressed about with coloured tissue-paper, and filled in with sprigs of holly, and a dangling Father Christmas or other emblem. No Yorkshire home is complete at Christmas-time without a wessel-bob, even as no table can have the Christmas flavour without an ample supply of spice-cake and choese.

"Must have a bit of Christmas," continued Dick. "Jessie is coming out of the infirmary to-morrow, so I want a bit of something to cheer her and make her feel she's glad to get

want a bit of someon.

and make her feel she's glad to be home."

"I should think so an' all," agreed the stout boy. "We ought to give her a right welcome. What about a bit of mistletoe just over the door, and me on hand to give her a kiss under it, so's she'll know it's Christmas-

You mean she might bang me one t' ear-'ole. But it might be worth

Christmas comes but once a year,
A kiss on t' cheek and a bang on
t' ear.'

'Christmas comes but once a year,
A kiss on t' cheek and a bang on
t' ear.'

Sithee, thi wants a bit o' band for
that wessel-bob."

"Band" is Yorkshire for string.
He produced a length from his
pocket, and fastened it to a nail on
a beam, from which the Christmas
emblem could hang.

"I say, and what about putting
something in her stocking? You've
got to do t' thing properly. Childer
think a right lot o' Christmas,"
Bulgy said wisely.

"I've bought a pair of stockings
purposely, so that she can wear 'em
afterwards," said Dick. "How
would a lump of spice-cake, two
oranges, a penn'orth of nuts, and a
penny Father Christmas do?"

"Gradely. I've got a ha'porth o'
locusts, an' all in my pocket," he
said, putting a handful of those beans
on the table. "Put them in. That
will be a right proper lot for her.
Sithee, what I've come about is some
o' the lads are bahn a-wesslingcarol-singing tha knaws. They
thought maybe you'd like to come,
and if so, perhaps we could have a
bit of a practice in this kitchen."

Dick was willing-more than willing. There is more Christmas spirit
in Yorkshire than in all the rest of
the country put together, and as
carolling is one of the recognised
means of expressing that spirit, there
are few youngsters within smell of
the Yorkshire smoke who fail to join
some singing band or other.

By the time Dick had cut and
frilled a length of pink paper to go
along the edge of the mantelpiece,
Bulgy Fry's mates had assembled.
There was a lot of caked snow to
shake off their clogs before they came
in, and one or two had to get the
remains of sundry snowballs out from
behind their shirt-collars.

"There's Rotter Widdop and his
own gang of particulars on the job
in t' street," Fry said. "They're
lamming everybody within reacheverybody smaller than themselves."

"Well, I reckon he won't bother
us any more," said Dick, putting a
bit of coal on the fire. "Now, what
are we going to sing?"

"Let's polish up t' owd 'uns," said
Fry.

"Here we come a-wessling among
the leaves so green," he warbled in a

"Go and look at thyself in t' look ing-glass, and tha'lt see a bigger," he retorted.

compact snowball caught him

A compact snowball caught minfull on the mouth before he could draw back, accompanied by a fusillade on the door.

"All right, I'll get my own back soon!" he yelled, as he banged the door.

"Here, are we to go and palt 'am?"

"Nay, lets get on wi' t' singing," said one boy who had his eye on future pennies. "Now, then, all together, and let me hear what sort o' voices you've get!" voices you've got!

"'We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door; We are your neighbour children that you have seen before.'"

They had to stop here because the mongrel terrier, Tykey, mistaking the nature of the proceedings, began to howl pitifully.

"Oh, chuck it, Tykey!" said Dick.
"You can't be a Yorkshire dog if you've no car for music. Here

"You can't be a Yorkshire dog if you've no ear for music. Here, I've got a bit of parkin left over from plot-night. Just worry that, and

door as big a snowball as it is possible to conveniently move, and to then wedge it about with smaller ones, top, sides and back.

A lot of snow had fallen, on the night before Christmas Eve, so that a ball started by the Manchester Road corner, and run down the slight slope past the Dusty Miller lodginghouse, had gathered a huge bulk to itself by the time it was level with Johnson's Fold. Dick observed them rolling it across the yard, and he watched them gently push it up against his own door and wedge it there. Then he saw them creep away to get another.

against his own door and wedge it there. Then he saw them creep away to get another.

He went down with the news.

"The game is," he said, "to open the door and pull the snowball inside. Then carry it upstairs—or at least as much of it as we can handle, and then when they come back with the next one, just push this out of the window on to the begars."

"Proper! Gradely! Fair beautiful!" grinned Fry, hugging himself.
"Talk about laffing! Open the door quick, and invite the snowball in."

It was done, and the big snowball



The next instant a pile of snow came down and split its on Widdop's head. Then he and his companions went to ground in a heap.

don't waste your voice. Now, lads, all together!'
"'For it is a Christmas-time,
And we travel far and near,
And we wish you a merry Christmas
And a ha-appy New Year.'"
They gave it voice to the old old.

And a ha-appy New Year.''

They gave it voice to the old, old tune. Who wrote the doggerel verse is lost in the mists of antiquity; but there it was, and there it is, and doubtless there it will be so long as Yorkshire is Yorkshire.

There were others, of course, to be sung, but this was the prime old favourite, for it contains verses which invite the friendly householder to "bring out a little table" which must be well-furnished with cake and cheese, a hint which, in the warmhearted north, is seldom given in vain.

While they were lustily singing, Dick's sharp ears perceived certain sounds in the yard that waked his suspicions.

suspicions.

"Keep on singing," he said, "I'm just going to have a look from the window upstairs."

From that point of observation he observed that Widdop and his pals were working upon them the old trick of blocking up the doorway with snow. The process is, as every boy knows, to roll up against the chosen

pulled inside. It was much too big to handle as they proposed, but a warmed fire-shovel quickly divided it into conveniently-handled sections. "For goodness' sake keep sing-ing," said Dick, as they worked, "in case they're coming back!"

"For it is a Christmas-time, And we travel far and near—"
Three of them stayed below sing.

"For it is a Christmas-time,
And we travel far and near—"
Three of them stayed below singing, while Dick, Fry, and another boy crept upstairs, each with as big a mass of snow in his arms as he could carry.

They had scarcely got into position when Widdop and his associates were heard struggling through the archway with a particularly mighty specimen of a big snowball. They had their heads down, so that they were not aware of the disappearance of the other snowball till they got level with the door.

"By goy, what dost ta make o' this?" exclaimed Widdop, pointing to the empty space where there should have been the last big snowball they had rolled up.

"Look through t' keyhole!" said one of his mates, with some sort of a suspicion of what had happened. "They're singing away like black-birds, but I dunno—"

Then a mighty blow from above came down and silenced the speaker; or, at least, turned his remark into a mighty yell. The next instant another avalanche came down and split itself on Widdop's head, with enough left over to snow-up the youth at his shoulder. A third mass came down in the next breath, completing the slaughter, so to speak.

The four of them were bowled over

third mass came down in the next breath, completing the slaughter, so to speak.

The four of them were bowled-over amid remarks that breathed little of the true Christmas spirit. Then at the moment they were on the ground, hardly knowing whether surprise or rage filled them to the greater degree, something else added to their defeat.

The kitchen door suddenly opened, and three boys, who were still lustily declaiming that they were not "daily beggars who beg from door to door," all with snowballs in their hands made from the remnants of the big one. Each had an armful of ammunition. They bauged in the shots with quick, good aim.

The door was closed and fastened before the foe could make reprisal.

"Snow, snow, beautiful snow!" yelled Fry from the upper window as they skulked out of the yard.

"Well, now that little job's done, we can go and sing better than ever!" Dick said. "Come along!"

But they were not to remain very long undisturbed.

"I say, what the dewdrops is the matter with the fire?" asked Bulgy, blowing out his breath. "The smoke isn't going up t' chimney. It's just oozing out into t' kitchen. Perhaps your chimney is a bit foul."

"Well, if it is, it hasn't got choked up all in a minute, unless something or somebody has helped it," said Dick. "See, it isn't going up at all. It's a dead stop somewhere."

"And we'll be dead suffocated unless we put t' fire out or else cure."

up at all. It's a dead stop somewhere."

"And we'll be dead suffocated unless we put t' fire out, or else open the door," said Fry. "Perhaps an airyplane has come down and gone to roost on the chimney-pot!"

"Perhaps someone has climbed up and put something on it," said Dick. "It's easy enough to get up there just now. There's a ladder left in the top corner of the yard where they are repairing the roof. P-f-f-f! We shall have to open that door!"

The moment it was thrown openwhich moment, it was thrown openwhich moment, it was evident, the enemy outside had been waiting for—there came a fierce fusillade of snowballs that drove the air-seekers back.

"One rush out," said Dick, we will be the said out, and the said out," said Dick, we will be said to the said out," said Dick, we will be said to the said out," said Dick, we will be said to the said out," said Dick, we will be said to the said out, and the said out, and the said out, and the said out the said out the said out."

snowballs that drove the air-seekers back.

"One rush out," said Dick, seizing the copper-lid for use as a shield. "I want to see what is happening on the roof."

They ran out in a line, with Dick at their head protecting himself with the copper-lid, scooping up snow as they went, and attacking with great spirit. Dick got a glance upwards, and learned what he wanted. On the apex of the low roof up against the chimney stood Widdop holding a sack over the chimney-pot, and laughing uproariously at the struggle going on below.

"Back!" yelled Dick, starting an orderly retreat. "Get inside!"

They banged the door on their foes, and the bombarding snowballs thumped harmlessly on the door panels.

"But, what's the game?" asked.

"But what's the game?" asked Bulgy. "We'll be smoked kippers if we stop in here."

"The game," said Dick, going to the top shelf of a cupboard and getting down a tall tin canister, "is that we're going to give them a surprise. Do you know one way of cleaning a chimney?"

"Rather! With a long-handled brush," said Bulgy, who was not thinking clearly.

"There's another. You get a big, fat rocket..."

"There's another. You get a big, fat rocket—"
"Yes; I'm listening!" broke in Bulgy excitedly.
"Well, there's a rocket here, that's all! I bought it for plot night, but didn't use it. Now, what's the matter with—"
"I know! I could hug myself to a jelly. Talk about laffin'!"
The preparations were quickly made.

The preparations were quickly made.

The rocket was lighted, and the oven sheet fixed instantly in place over the grate.

"Now open the door!" cried Dick.

"Let's give them a tickling up at the same time!".

Out they rushed, wildly and impetuously, driving back the big fellows by the very fury of their onslaught. For a moment the battle raged below in the yard, then the youngsters stopped as a slow, soft, funny kind of an explosion came to their ears. Their eyes were set above on the figure that gripped the

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YORKSHIRE GRIT. (Continued from the previous page.)

chimney-pot. Of a sudden the sack that was pressed over the mouth of the chimney-pot flew high into the air on the top of a belching explosion of fiery sparks.

Widdop roared out in sheer terror. He stepped back. Before he knew what was happening, he had lost his footing, and he started sliding down the roof, on the street side, towards the gutter in a sitting position.

Those in the yard lost sight of him, though his companions bolted through the archway into the street to see how many bones he had broken. In some respects Widdop was lucky. There happened to be passing down the street, on his usual beat, the policeman who, upon a former occasion, had conveyed Widdop to the lock-up for street disorder. disorder.

disorder.

There was often a good lot of noise in Johnson's Fold, so when voices from that quarter reached him he did not take any notice; but when all at once he heard a noise of an explosion somewhere on the roof above him, and the next instant heard the sound of some heavy body progressing, with shrieks of terror, down the slope of the roof, he looked up and saw for a brief instant a pair of legs in the air right above him.

looked up and saw for a brief instant a pair of legs in the air right above him.

It was for a brief instant only, because the legs, and the body they belonged to, came down with a whack upon him, and as the ground was slippery at that point, he went down very violently indeed.

With an instinctive grip he hung on to the assaulting body till he could pull himself together, when, finding it was the youth he had had trouble with before, he got him by the jacket-collar and shook him till Widdop wondered if he would have to look in the snow for his teeth. Then he laid his heavy policeman's hand on him, and beat him in a bending position in a time-honoured fashion.

And while the blows rose and fell-there came the boyish voices in the yard singing, while the blows some-how kept time:

"For it is a Christmas-time, And we travel far and near-

And we travel far and near—"
While this was happening,
Widdops' pals took the opportunity
to make themselves scarce, and he
eventually crept away feeling cowed
and broken, yet with a very demon
of rage burning within him. And,
curiously, it was not against the
policeman his rage burned, but
against Dick Allen. All his hate converged to that one point.

At the corner of Manchester Road
he ran into a tall, thin, shabby man
who spoke in a gurgling voice, and
who accosted him to inquire whether
this was Scotland Street.

"I happen to be looking for the
address of a young man named Dick
Allen. If you could—"
"You mean a blooming kid!"
snapped Widdop, not concealing his
opinion of the owner of that name.
"A blamed, rotten, mean little
skulking rat as'll get his backbone
kicked out of him before long! Yes,
he lives down there."

"He's not a friend of yours, then,
Mr. Widdop?" gurgled Mr. Scrimshaw, slowly rubbing his hands together.

"Hey-up! How d'you know my

"Hey-up! How d'you know my name

"Ha, Mr. Widdop, a smart young feller like you can't go unnoticed long. I notice things—quietly and hunhostentatiously. A smart young feller like you has got his dignity and respect to keep up. Would you really like to get your own back with that lad?"

"By goy, I would!"
"All right! You mustn't say a word to anybody. I'll tell you how to manage it, just because I hadmire and respect you, Mr. Widdop. Now, listen here!"

(Another stirring instalment of this grand serial next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. 16 large pages. 1d. only-as usual.)

HOW PRIVATE DETECTIVES

A Splendid Article for Followers of Sexton Blake.

HOUGH there is no actual personage known in real life as Sexton Blake, the greatest detective character in fiction is founded to a very large extent on fact, and a well-known private detective has been taken as a model for the immortal Blake in many of his most fascinating yarns. This well-known detective has suggested numbers of the actual incidents, and many a stirring adventure in which he has himself taken part has been worked up by a skilful author into

worked up by a skilful author into a story.

Now, how can one become a private detective?

In answer to this question, there are a few private detectives who have set up in the profession because they have been born with the true detective instinct, and their wonderful powers of deduction and reasoning have drawn them into the calling, just as a lad with literary ability becomes a journalist, or a clever young mechanician takes to engineering.

Generally speaking, however, the vast majority of our private detectives are

detectives are

time-expired detective inspectors

from the Police Force. They enlist as constables, and work their way through the force till they reach detective rank. At a certain age they are compelled to retire with a pension, and then they take offices in populous parts and become private detectives and secret investigators.

m population of the private detectives and secret investigators.

Messrs. Littlejohn, Sweeney, and Smale are just three of the gentlemen who have served with distinction at Scotland Yard, and in their official retirement, have become private detectives. In our country towns many a police-sergeant on leaving the force makes known that he is willing to undertake inquiry work in a private capacity.

The quest for missing people forms

employed by solicitors to obtain evidence in their legal cases, and fat fees are to be earned by an astute wan in this direction. Often, for example, there is a street accident, and the owner of a vehicle is damages.

His solicitor then engages a private detective, who hunts out as many witnesses of the accident as is possible, and from them extracts evidence so that the accident may be

one of the chief branches of a private

one of the chief branches of a private detective's work. All sorts of "missing" cases find their way to the inquiry agent, often leading him on slender clues to the uttermost ends, not only of the United Kingdom, but of the world.

Suppose, for instance, you had a brother who disappeared—walked away from home, and is not seen again. You go off to the nearest police-station, where they take a description and ask you many questions. Beyond that they can do nothing, unless, of course, there are some suspicious circumstances.

In the ordinary way, however, let us suppose that your brother just left home, and you knew of no one who wished him ill, or who was likely to do him an injury. The police, of course, would sympathise with you in an official way, but beyond that they would take no action. They would say that your brother had a perfect right to leave home, and that it was none of their business to bring about his return. Well, you are

faced with this difficulty.

You want your brother to be found, so you go to a private detective and explain the case to him. On the clues you supply he sets off, and step by step he traces the missing one's movements until, if at all possible, he finds him. At the conclusion of the chase you receive an account for services rendered and out-of-pocket expenses, and when you have paid it the matter ends.

Private detectives are very largely employed by solicitors to obtain evidence in their legal cases, and fat fees are to be earned by an astute man in this direction. Often, for example, there is a street accident, and the owner of a vehicle is threatened with an action for heavy damages.

put before the jury by reliable

It is surprising how in this way the whole aspect of a case may be changed, and though missing witnesses are often advertised for in our newspapers, it is frequently the private detective who eventually produces them private dete duces them.

In a hundred and one ways solicitors make use of the services of private detectives. Watching is a great portion of their work, and they will shadow a person, and make a daily report in writing concerning daily report in writing the most trifling events.

When the person being watched takes a taxi-cab, the watcher does likewise, and so on through the day the detective sticks to his man

like a shadow,

going a journey of hundreds of miles,

going a journey of hundreds of miles, or remaining on guard outside a house for hours if necessary.

And sharp, eager men these watchers have to be if they are to hold their quarry. In London, in particular, there are vast buildings with more than one exit, and it needs a smart man to follow another through such a maze of courts and passages as some of our city offices present.

passages as some of our city offices present.

At election times the private detective is exceptionally busy. As you probably know, there are a good many illegal practices in connection with electioneering, such as bribing and treating, and occasionally, when one candidate suspects the officials employed by his rival, he engages the services of a private inquiry agent, who makes frequent reports of what is going on in the opposition camp. At an election petition, when a candidate alleged to have secured his seat by unfair means is tried by a judge or judges, the evidence of the private detective is often of the utmost value.

In my next article I will tell you how the private detective is often employed by the Government in Secret Service work.

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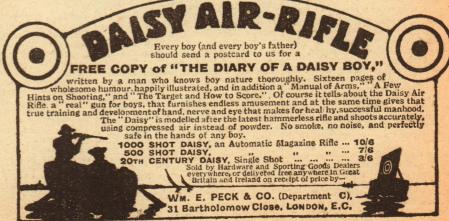
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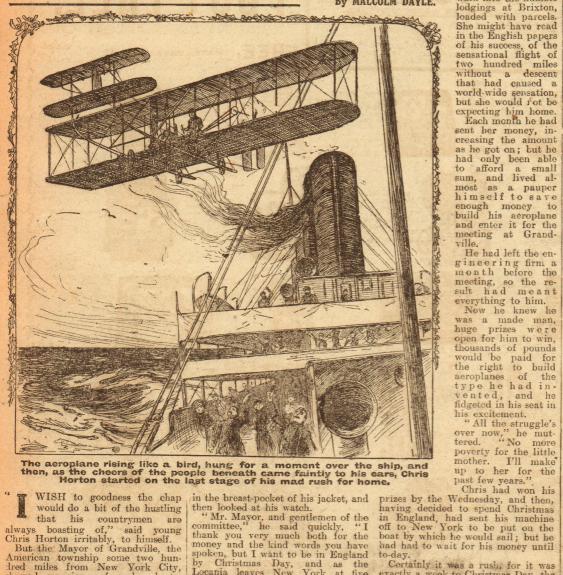
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A Hustle for Home.

The Grand Story of an Aeronaut's Race to Spend Christmas with his Mother. By MALCOLM DAYLE.



The aeroplane rising like a bird, hung for a moment over the sh then, as the cheers of the people beneath came faintly to his ear Horton started on the last stage of his mad rush for home. the ship

WISH to goodness the chap would do a bit of the hustling that his countrymen are

would do a bit of the hustling that his countrymen are always boasting of," said young Chris Horton irritably, to himself. But the Mayor of Grandville, the American township some two hundred miles from New York City, showed no signs of undue haste. The town's December aviation week, a novelty that had drawn thousands of people from the neighbouring States, had been a great success, and the fact that a young Britisher, not yet twenty years of age, had carried off the two most valuable prizes on an aeroplane of his own design and construction, gave the mayor plenty to talk about.

"Fellow citizens, I guess we can

"Fellow citizens, I guess we can one and all heartily congratulate this young Britisher, Mr. Horton, on winning the dollars. He has flown farthest, and has ascended higher than any other competitor. I think—"

Chris Horton fidgeted uneasily as the good man went on speaking with his monotonous nasal twang. After a three years' absence, he was to return to his native country to spend Christmas with his widowed mother, who was living in a humble dwelling in the south of London. He had left England a poor lad of seventeen, travelling steerage, with the money he had saved; he was to return a rich man in a first-class cabin that he had booked up by telegraph, as soon as he knew he had won the two prizes amounting to a thousand pounds each.

Until he had entered the flying-

prizes amounting to a thousand pounds each.

Until he had entered the flying-ground, he had been unknown; but now the world's newspapers were full of his name, his wonderful machine, and the story of how, emigrating to America, he had found employment in an engineer's shop, and by half-starving himself and working. late into the night, he had invented the Horton aeroplane, which experts said would take first place of all the standard 'planes.

And yet Chris Horton, as he stood impatiently listening to the mayor's speech, had but little over a dollar in his pocket, and was very glad the prize-money was to be paid in notes.

"Therefore I have much pleasure in handing Mr. Horton the prize-money which he has so deservedly won."

in the breast-pocket of his jacket, and then looked at his watch.

"Mr. Mayor, and gentlemen of the committee," he said quickly, "I thank you very much both for the money and the kind words you have spoken, but I want to be in England by Christmas Day, and as the Locania leaves New York at five o'clock this afternoon, I've got to catch the train that is due here in ten minutes."

minutes."
Then before the people who had heard him had quite realised what he meant, he set off at a run towards the entrance, knowing that it was a close thing as to whether he caught the train or not, and knowing full well that if he missed it, he must miss the Locama, and therefore not reach England in time for Christmas.

One of the attendants handed him the kit-bag that he had left in his charge, and Chris was out in the road and had jumped into a passing cab before the man had time to come to a ston.

before the man had time to come to a stop.

"Railway depot as quick as you can go!" he shouted. "I want to catch the New York Express."

"I calculate that you won't do it, young man," said the driver to himself, as he whipped up his horse.

A clock struck twelve.

Twelve o'clock! His train was due to leave Grandville in five minutes, and he was still about a mile from the station.

from the station.

"Quicker!" he shouted excitedly, and pulled out a dollor-bill, the only small change he had with which to pay his fare. pay his As the

As they turned into the street leading to the station, Chris heard the whistle of the express, and almost the next instant saw the huge locomotive come round the bend.

And he and the train arrived at the station at exactly the same moment.

Chris was out of the cab in a second, and had tossed the driver the dollar bill; in the entrance he collided with a portly railway-official, and the official went down. The train was standing at the opposite platform, and as Chris jumped down on the line to get across, it began to move away.

his pocket, and was very glad the prize-money was to be paid in notes.

"Therefore I have much pleasure in handing Mr. Horton the prize-money which he has so deservedly won."

The notabilities of the town on the platform, with the mayor, clapped vigorously, a roar of cheering came from the crowd standing out on the ground where in the past week the tlying had taken place.

Chris took the rolls of notes extended to him, bowed, placed them

what a surprise it would be to his mother to see him walk into the humble lodgings at Brixton, loaded with parcels. She might have read in the English papers of his success, of the sensational flight of two hundred miles without a descent that had caused a world-wide sensation, but she would fot be expecting him home. Each month he had sent her money, increasing the amount as he got on; but he had only been able to afford a small sum, and lived almost as a pauper himself to save enough money to build his averaging to

enough money to build his aeroplane and enter it for the meeting at Grand-

He had left the en-

had had to wait for his money until to-day.

Cortainly it was a rush, for it was exactly a week to Christmas Day, the Locania was one of the fastest boats in the cross-Atlantic service, but even under the most favourable conditions, he could scarcely hope to reach London before late on Christmas-Eve, and he would have a lot of shopping to do if he was to make this Christmas the happiest he and his mother had spent for very many years.

years.
Suddenly, with a terrific grinding of brakes, the train came to a stop at a small station, which consisted of a platform and a log hut which seemed to be booking-office, telegraph-office, and waiting-room combined.

Then, the

Then the conductor, coming through the train, informed them that a freight train had fouled the points at the next station, and it was uncertain as to when they would be able to proceed

uncertain as to when they would be able to proceed.

Chris Horton rose and strode out on to the platform. He had cut things fine enough already; if there was to be a long delay on the line, he would for a certainty miss the boat.

He paced impatiently up and down the platform whilst a pale-faced millionaire, who was as anxious to reach New York as he was, alternately shouted and pleaded with the driverto go on.

houted and pleaded with the drivero go on.
Suddenly the station-agent, as he
alled himself, disappeared into the
ittle log hut in answer to the tinking of the telegraph-bell, and in a
ew moments reappeared.
"Take yer seats, gents!" he roared
'take yer seats!"
There was a general scramble back
to the cars

There was a general scramble back to the cars.

"Fifty dollars if you get to New York by a quarter to five!" shouted the worried millionaire to the driver, as he got back into the train.

Now twenty minutes had been wasted at this station, and unless something wonderful in the way of pace was accomplished, they would not reach New York until about the time the Locania was putting off from the landing stage.

He blessed the millionaire who was so anxious to get to New York to keep a business appointment the offer of fifty dollars was almost certain to make the driver do his best. Certainly the train began to move far quicker than it had done previously, and after stopping at a junction, the express rounded corners at a dangerous pace, and the passengers,

with the exception of Chris and the

with the exception of Chris and the millionaire, to whom the rapid travelling was a delight, began to think that the driver must be mad.

And at seventeen minutes to five the train glided slowly into the terminus, and Chris, bag in hand, sprang out, dashed along to the entrance, sprang into the first cab he saw, and told the man to drive as he had never driven before for the landing-stage from which the Locania was to sail.

saw, and told the man to drive as he had never driven before for the landing-stage from which the Locania was to sail.

The man, scenting a good tip, did his best, but there was a lot of traffic in the streets, and several times he was held up. Then, when still some distance from the landing-stage, Chris heard a clock strike five.

"It's all up," he said dully, and was on the point of getting out of the cab, when the driver, finding a clear road, whipped up his horse and dashed along at a terrific pace.

As the cab clattered up to the entrance gates, Chris jumped out.

"Has the Locania gone?" he shouted to a man.

"Not yet, but you'd best look alive, if you're going to catch her."

Chris handed the man some money, not stopping to calculate how much, and dashed across to where a bell was clanging and gangways were being withdrawn.

"Name Horton, passage booked!" he panted to an officer at the foot of the gangway, and that gentleman recognising the name, touched his cap, shouted to a man on the deck of the liner to hold on a moment, and Chris Horton, exhausted and panting for breath, was safely on board, and entered for the second stage of his hustle home.

It was a quarter-past five. The Locania had been detained owing to the exceptionally heavy Christmas mail she was carrying.

"Well, Mr. Horton," said the dig-

"Well, Mr. Horton," said the dignified captain of the mammoth liner, "I don't see how you can reach London before Christmas Day."

The Locania had been delayed by bad weather, and was several hours behind her scheduled time, and the loss of each hour had been greatly worrying the young aviator.

Then he gave a shout that startled the captain, who was just turning away to go up on the bridge.

"By Jove, I'll do it! There's not a great wind, and what there is will help me. Captain, I'm going to finish the journey on my aeroplane!" echoed the astounded officer.

"Yes. I know there's some petrol on board, and I'm going to borrow some for the engine. I'll get the machine ready in less than half an hour!"

machine ready in less than half an hour!"

Before the captain could say anything, he dashed away, arranged for the aeroplane to be brought on deck. He hurriedly got the machine together, assisted by the chief engineer of the liner, who provided some petrol, and watched by the little group of first-class passengers who stood on the promenade deck, which had been cleared to give him sufficient room to get a proper take off.

Then he went to his cabin, donned his flying costume, and after strapping his kitbag to the machine, took his seat, whilst passengers and crew watched him dazedly, amazed at the daring of the young aviator in leaving a liner out at sea to journey to London.

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Chris pulled over a lever and started the engine, and the strange-looking machine began to glide along the upper deck of the great liner.

"Good-bye! Merry Christmas!" he called, and the aeroplane, rising like a bird, hung for a moment over the ship, and then, as the cheers of the people beneath came faintly to his ears, the young aviator steered for the north-east, the direction in which the metropolis lay.

It was bitterly cold in the air, and, as he neared land, it commenced to snow, but fortunately the mild southwest wind helped him, and within a couple of hours he passed over what he knew must be Fishguard, flying low enough to see the wonderful harbour and railway-station beneath the cliffs.

He had come about a hundred and fifty miles in less than two hours. It was now a quarter-past four, and he had roughly about two hundred and fifty miles to travel.

If everything went right he would do it in time.

It was dark now, but he had lights to guide him, and ascended higher, for just as it is easier to swim in deep water, so does a man fly easier the higher he keeps.

And Chris had cause to be thankful for being up a height, for after covering about a couple of hundred miles

in good time something went wrong with the engine, and but for having plenty of time to manœuvre before it quite ceased, he would have been dashed to the ground.

As it was he descended in a snow-covered field, apparently miles from anywhere, and with chilled fingers put matters right, and refilled the petrol tank with the reserve supply he had brought with him.

Then he groaned inwardly as he tried to start, for the snow had clogged the wheels of the aeroplane, and he could not move.

"Beaten on the post!" he muttered, and then savagely: "No, I'm hanged if I will!"

With a desperate effort, and greatly assisted by a sudden gust of wind behind him, he was in the air again, and gradually getting up full speed came nearer and nearer to London.

Then at last the lights of London showed beneath him, and he passed over the outer suburbs. At Wormwood Scrubbs, he knew there was a good alighting ground, and sheds for aeroplanes, for he had kept in touch with the progress of aviation in the Old Country during his residence in America.

He came down lower and peered

America.

He came down lower and peered eagerly down upon the great city below him. The sound of church bells ringing out Christmas chimes came to his ears, and his heart beat quicker, for there was a large open space near to the railway lines, and the huge station with the twinkling red and green lights must be Paddington.

And as in the distance Big Ben

dington.

And as in the distance Big Ben struck nine, Chris Horton sailed down from the sky, and landed in London, as he had determined to do on the night of Christmas Eve, in time to see that his mother spent a happy Christmas.

"There's a gentleman to see you, mum," said the tired-looking land-lady, entering the dull, cheerless room, where a middle-aged, sad-looking woman sat over the small fire that burned in the grate. She had been told to break the news, so that there was no great shock of surprise. "To see me!" said Mrs. Horton, in astonishment.

"Yes, mum; a gentleman from abroad, a young—"
"My son?"
The woman had risen to her feet.

The woman had risen to her feet, and looked at the other with pathetic

and rosed an excited an excited voice. "Your son, who has hustled and bust all records of even the country of hustle. Oh, it's good to be home!"

A har and various parcels were

home! A bag and various parcels were dropped to the floor, and Chris Horton held his mother in his arms. Two small boys, one carrying a hamper, and the other a bundle of holly and evergreens that would have decorated a good-sized mansion, stood awkwardly in the doorway.

There was a strange silence for some little time, and the landlady slipped from the room, whilst the two heavily-laden youngsters stood wait-

"Oh, Chris," said Mrs. Horton at last, "you've come back to me a famous man! I've read about you in the papers, and—Oh, those poor boys are waiting, Chris, and it's nearly eleven o'clock!" crist Scatt!" crist Scatt!" crist Scatt!" crist Scatt!"

boys are waiting, Chris, and it's nearly eleven o'clock!"

"Great Scott!" cried Chris, releasing his mother from an embrace like that of a young bear. "I'd forgotten all about them! Had to get them to help me carry the stuff, mother, and we'll have such a time to-morrow! Well, you youngsters, chuck the things down and cut along home! Don't go and spend all this in sweets!"

And the two astounded boys, thinking they were dealing with an escaped lunatic, went off with half a sovereign each, whilst Chris Horton, flinging off his overcoat, started to pile holly and evergreen over the faded ugly pictures, that hung on the walls of the room, whilst his mother, carried away by his excitement and good spirits, began to undo the parcels and hampers with equal eagerness.

"Chris," she said suddenly.

parcels and hampers with equal eagerness.

"Chris," she said suddenly.

The young aviator was risking his neck in an attempt to place a bough of holly over the shabby gilt mirror that adorned the mantelpiece.

"Yes, mother?" he said.

"I wish," said his mother solemnly, "that everyone was as happy as we are to-might."

"Ay!" said Chris, shipping down to the floor and putting his arm round his mother's neck. "A Merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year to everyone!"

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