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THE BOYS' FRIEND 1^D

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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

No. 499.—Vol. X. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1910.]



THE NEW BROOM

MAXWELL SCOTT'S
New School Serial.

MEDICINE DAY AT RAYTON COLLEGE. AN INCIDENT YOU'LL ENJOY.

"Pl—please, sir, I don't think I need it," faltered Holcroft. "I—I'm feelin' ever so much better now." "Drink that—at once!" said the doctor sternly. There was no help for it. Holcroft shut his eyes and gulped down the nauseous stuff with a shudder of disgust.

An Introduction for the New Reader appears on the next page.

A Good Samaritan.

MR. WALKER was the first to find his tongue. "Tubb!" he thundered. "How—how dare you leave your dormitory at this hour of the night? Get up at once!"

Tubb scrambled out of the bath, wrung some of the water out of his dripping pyjamas, and gazed sheepishly at the two masters.

"Now, what is the meaning of this egregious folly?" demanded Mr. Walker.

"Please, sir," said Tubb, "it was so cold in the dormitory with all the windows open—"

"So you came down to Mr. Drummond's bed-room, and took a cold bath to keep yourself warm,

eh?" said Mr. Walker caustically. "Was that the idea?"

"I didn't see it, sir," said Tubb.

"No," said Mr. Walker, "and I don't see the idea, either!"

"I mean I didn't see the bath, sir," said Tubb. "I stumbled over it in the dark."

"But why had you left your dormitory? Why had you come into Mr. Drummond's bed-room?"

"It was like this, sir," said Tubb.

"It was so cold in the dormitory, with all the windows open—"

"You've said that before!" snapped Mr. Walker.

"Yes, sir," said Tubb; "but you won't let me finish. It was so cold in the dormitory, with all the windows open, and we couldn't shut the windows because they were screwed open, so I thought I'd go

down to the buttery and get a screwdriver, and unscrew the windows, and then we could shut 'em. I was on my way to the buttery when I saw you and the doctor comin', so I thought I'd hide in here, but I didn't twig the bath, and—and I stumbled over it, and sat down in it."

Mr. Walker tried to look stern, but the ghost of a smile hovered round the corners of his mouth. Tubb saw it, and plucked up courage.

"I hope you'll overlook it this time, sir," he said meekly.

"I'll speak to you about that later," said Mr. Walker. "In the meantime, you'll catch your death of cold if you stand there much longer in your wet pyjamas. You have another suit in your box, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your box is in your cubicle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go back to your cubicle at once," said Mr. Walker, "and dry yourself, and change your pyjamas."

"And, please, sir, may we have the windows closed?" asked Tubb.

"That is for Dr. Gandy to decide," he said. "It was by his orders that the windows were screwed open. I have no authority to interfere."

"Please, sir, may we have them shut?" asked Tubb, appealing to the doctor. "You've no idea how cold it is up there. It wouldn't be so bad, perhaps, on a calm night; but with this wind blowin' it's simply awful."

"It certainly is rather stormy to-night," admitted Mr. Walker, with a sidelong glance at the doctor.

"Nonsense!" said Dr. Gandy, speaking for the first time. "You exaggerate when you speak of this as a storm. It is merely a bracing, health-giving breeze. Why, I myself have slept with my window open with a blizzard raging outside, and three inches of snow on the bed-room floor. You spoil the boys. They need hardening. They have been so accustomed to sleeping in a stuffy atmosphere that they do not appreciate the benefits of an abundant supply of pure fresh air."

"We don't, on a night like this," said Tubb feelingly. "We can't keep the bedclothes on the beds. There's a regular hurricane howling through the room. If you don't believe me, come upstairs, and see for yourselves."

(Continued on the next page.)

THE NEW BROOM.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Shall we?" suggested Mr. Walker. Dr. Gandy shrugged his shoulders. "Just as you like," he said; "but it will not alter my decision."

decision is irrevocable. The windows will remain open. Now, go back to your beds all of you, and try to behave like grown-up boys, and not like babies. Good-night."

that we could shut 'em whenever we wanted." "I apologise," said Tubb handsomely. "But, I say, whoever fastened these windows in this way must have done it on purpose."

A New Alliance. WHEN the first bell rang, at a quarter past seven next morning, the boys of Dormitory B arose, opened all the windows, and replaced the screws in their holes.

A truce between the Paulites and the Walkerites for the rest of the term! Tubb could hardly believe his ears. "This isn't a trick?" he said suspiciously.

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT.

Our Helpful Series That Will Interest All Boys, Whether Scouts or Not.

Cold Knees.

THERE'S a letter from "Clarence" this week. He finds it rather a trial having to go about in uniform this weather with his knees bare.

It's jolly warm and comfortable, I can tell you, but, of course, it's only for really cold weather. A fellow who is afraid to go about with bare knees in decent weather is a "muff."

A New Equipment. Now, here's a suggestion for a new equipment. All my chaps wear it—one of them invented it—and it's the smartest, most serviceable, and most uniform rig-out of the kind I've seen for Scouts.

Diagram showing a Scout's equipment with labels: Strap sewn to back of haversack, Loop sewn on back of mess-tin cover, Rolled blanket and ground-sheet, Belt, Scarf, End of strap buckled to haversack, Loop on top of mess-tin cover, Loop on front, Rolled ground-sheet and blanket, and usual coat straps.

Sew one end of a long strap firmly to the back of your haversack near the bottom. This strap passes down through a loop sewn to the back of your mess-tin cover, then down behind your belt, under, and up again round the roll of blanket and ground-sheet.

THE SCOUTMASTER.



SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

A Superb New Serial,
Specially Written for THE
BOYS' FRIEND by that
Well-known Globe-trotter
and Author, STANLEY
PORTAL HYATT.

JUST TO INTRODUCE TO YOU

Dudley and Marcus Scarfield, who are travelling northwards in Africa on the track of Mr. Douglas, a hunter, who is beyond the pale of civilisation, and who holds the papers referring to an invaluable invention their father has left to them.

By getting these papers they become immensely rich, whilst 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

leaves no stone unturned to gain his ends.

Amous is a native who has attached himself to the brothers, and he is a friend indeed.

Travelling with a prospector, the boys are held up at Palapye, owing to the rising of the Matabele against the British. They learn of an attack to be made upon Fort Busi, and with the intention of preventing any disturbance they proceed in the direction of the fort.

They are now only about eighteen miles from Fort Busi, and so that one at least may have a chance of reaching the destination, Marcus and Dudley travel by different roads.

Marcus, accompanied by Kerridge, a prospector, takes part in a terrible fight with an impi of Matabele savages, and succeeds in rescuing a white woman from their clutches. Proceeding on their journey once again, they meet another tribe of Matabeles, of several hundreds strong. They are seen by the natives, and flee for their lives, but suddenly the prospector's horse puts its foot in a hole, and falls heavily to the ground. A moment later the savages are all round them.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

The Raid on the Fort.

AS soon as he reached the drift Dudley gave the appointed signal—struck two matches; then he and Amous rode into the water, and crossed as quickly as possible.

The police were fully on the alert now, and Captain Railton came forward to meet them.

"Well, what news?" he asked. "The raiders will be at the drift in about five minutes," Dudley answered. "They are coming on ahead of their waggons."

The captain nodded, and went back to his Maxim-gun. That was their most important weapon, and he intended to work it himself. True, it is not easy to aim accurately in the darkness, but when you can get out six hundred shots a minute, you may be sure some of them will get home, especially when the range is short, and the enemy is moving slowly through water in more or less close formation.

The sergeant was working the seven-pounder. He had once held a commission in the Royal Artillery—you found a strange mixture in the police in those days—and he knew his job thoroughly. He had got his gun trained on the other slope of the drift towards the bottom just where the crowd would be thickest, as the horses slowed down before actually entering the water, and he had set the fuses of his little shells to burst at that range. He, at least, was perfectly confident, and perfectly happy.

"The bounders are coming to get my gun, are they?" he remarked to a corporal, who was squatting beside him, finishing a mug of coffee, which had been made in the donga where the horses were. "Well, I guess I can show them exactly where it is—with a shell. Perhaps they won't be quite so keen on it then."

Meanwhile, Captain Railton was saying to Dudley:

"No; I shall not challenge them at all. I have a perfect right to assume they are a hostile party, and I know Boer 'slimness' too well to parley with them. From what you say, they are the riff-raff of the Northern Transvaal, far more savage and degraded than many of the natives. Honour is a word which has no meaning for them. Ah, here they come at last!"

Half a dozen of the raiders, the advance guard, appeared on the other side of the drift, silhouetted against the sky. They paused for several minutes, peering across the river, apparently fearing an ambush; but the guns were well masked, the police lay perfectly still, and the enemy's suspicions seemed to be allayed, for one of the scouts rode back to the main body, whilst the others came down to the water's edge, where they waited.

"I'm glad they're not crossing," Captain Railton whispered. "That would have upset our plans, as we should have had to shoot them, and so give warning to the others. Hallo, here comes the main body! Now, be ready, you fellows!"

The police officer's plans had been well laid. He had arranged that, as soon as the guns opened fire, the troopers not actually required for working them should go down close to the water's edge and endeavour to pick off any Boers who might be bold enough to push on. Dudley and Amous had agreed to join this section.

The Boers came down the drift more or less in a clump. They did not fancy the darkness any more than do the natives, many of whose superstitions they have picked up. The slope down to the drift was a long one; consequently, practically the whole force of raiders was in view when Captain Railton started his Maxim six hundred shots a minute. An instant later, the seven-pounder roared out, its shells bursting right in the thick of the enemy, disabling a dozen men and horses.

The captain worked his Maxim scientifically. He had got the sighting now—the shouts and groans showed him that—and he moved it slightly all the time, literally peppering the raiders with bullets. Meanwhile, at the edge of the water, Dudley and the handful of police were waiting for those who might escape the hail of Maxim bullets or the splinters of seven-pounder shell.

The Boers had been taken utterly

by surprise. Nine out of ten of them had never seen or heard a Maxim or a seven-pounder before, and from the hail of bullets they judged that a large force must be opposed to them. They halted, huddled up into a heap, then, when the sergeant placed a nicely-timed shell into the middle of that same heap, they turned and fled over the rise, where those abominable guns could not reach them.

A score or so of the leaders, however, went on into the water. They knew how small the police force must be, and they judged rightly that once they were in the stream the guns could not be depressed to cover them. What they had not reckoned on, though, was the little party at the water's edge.

Dudley and his companions saw them coming, but held their fire until the raiders were in midstream, where the current was strong; then they blazed out, several bullets getting home into either men or horses. The second volley was even more effective, so effective that the Boers turned quickly, and made for their own bank again, the survivors landing well below the drift itself.

The Maxim had stopped now, and Captain Railton heaved a sigh of relief.

"We've stopped them, or, at least, checked them. They'll come on again, of course. You don't turn Boers back as easily as that, though they must have lost pretty heavily already. They may try another attack in the daylight, or they may cross at the Lower Drift twenty miles down, or attack us from the rear, in which case we should have no chance. Some way or another, they'll get through, I'm afraid. If we lose two or three men we're done, and I can't wire to any of the other forts, as either these raiders or the Matabele have cut all the lines. Still, we've put up a good fight, and they won't forget it in a hurry."

Now that the excitement was over, Dudley had time to think of his brother again. It seemed useless to speculate as to whether Marcus and old Kerridge were still alive—the only question appeared to be at whose hands they had fallen. If they were in the land of the living, they would certainly have reached the fort long since, for Kerridge had mentioned another ford, ten miles upstream, where they could have crossed had they been afraid of meeting the raiders at the drift itself.

Dudley sat down behind the provision-case rampart, and stared miserably towards the eastern sky, where the dawn was already beginning to appear. Marcus was not watching that dawn; very likely he himself would not see the next. Then he fell to wondering where Joseph was—how he had fared in the fight. He smiled scornfully to himself at the thought. It was quite safe to assume that Joseph had remained behind

with the waggons; he could not picture his cousin facing that ghastly trail of Maxim bullets and the added horror of the splinters of seven-pounder shell.

Dawn was coming very quickly—or, at least, it seemed so. That red glow had sprung up quite suddenly, and was growing redder every moment; moreover, it was smoking, too—He jumped to his feet suddenly.

"Captain Railton!" he cried. "What is that fire?"

The police-officer had been dozing, his head on an empty ammunition-case, but he rose instantly at the boy's words. One look sufficed for him.

"It's the fort! Someone—those treacherous Matabele, I suppose—are burning the grass huts there. Now we're in for it properly—Boers one side, Matabele the other!"

He was a man who had failed for Sandhurst; in fact, he had failed in every examination he had ever attempted, yet none the less he was a splendid soldier. He was "up against it," and he was fully aware of the fact. They were going to be wiped out, he and his men, either by the Boers or by the savages; but they were going to die game. They were in a miserable position so far as attack from the northern side was concerned—he had sacrificed everything else in order to check the Boers—but he had the Maxim and the seven-pounder swung round, and then, from the pockets of his tunic, which Dudley had already noticed were bulging out, he produced a couple of dozen dynamite cartridges, in each of which was a short length of fuse and a detonator. He handed a couple out to each man.

"These are the last resource," he said grimly. "When we're absolutely licked, I trust you fellows who are left to shove one of these into the seven-pounder, and one into the mechanism of the Maxim. Neither niggers nor Boers are to get those guns, you understand?"

The men grunted, and made sure that the matches in their pockets were dry. If they had to die, it was no bad thing to die in company with a man like John Railton.

A battle, or an engagement, or a fight—call it which you like—is nothing, so far as its nerve-trying effects are concerned. Nine men out of ten, ninety-nine out of a hundred perhaps can be brave enough when the bullets are flying, and there is the smell of blood, human blood in the air, when someone else is trying to kill them, and it is a question of who shall get his blow, or his bullet, home first. But waiting for a fight to begin is quite another matter, especially at about daybreak, when one's vital energy is always at the lowest ebb. In those circumstances most men shiver, and wonder why they ever got into such a fix, and

revile their own luck, and wish it were all over. It is not cowardice, it is anything but that. It is simply the natural instinct of a man which bids him go on living as long as possible, and makes him resent the mere idea of dying at the hands of someone else. When the fight has begun, it is different. Then, instead of thinking of living himself, he thinks of killing the other man. The sense of personal fear is lost entirely in the lust of blood.

It is safe to say that, as they waited in the growing light for the coming of the match, every one of the little party round the guns was conscious of a certain measure of dread. They were anxious to get it all over—to know the worst. As before, they had thought only of the Boers, now they thought only of their black foes.

True, from time to time they glanced behind them across the river at the dread men and horses lying on the slope of the drift—twenty men, perhaps, and thirty horses—for both the Maxim and the seven-pounder had been well aimed, despite the darkness; but their thoughts now were really with the enemy on their own side of the river—the hideous savages who would soon be charging down with their great stabbing assegais.

The buildings on the fort were blazing merrily. Evidently the Matabele had quickly cleared out the few contents which were of any value to them; but then, as Captain Railton whispered to the sergeant, "Why don't they come at us, Austin?" The fiends must know where we are."

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders. He was, perhaps, the only man present who was utterly careless of the issue so far as he himself was concerned.

"Austin" was not his real name, as Railton knew—he could tack the word "baronet" on to the name he had inherited from his father—but a woman had ruined his career in the Army, and he had come out here to Africa deliberately seeking a grave to cover a disgrace which was not his own.

"They will come soon enough, Jack," the sergeant answered, "and they'll get me for one. I'm sure of that. If you get clear, don't forget the messages I gave you once, and don't forget me. It was all my fault; I simply had to lie to screen that woman."

The captain muttered under his breath, then their hands met in a final clasp, and they never spoke to one another again; for a moment later the Matabele war-cry sounded out clear and evil, and the Matabele were racing down on them.

The Battle on the Veldt.

THEY had brought the seven-pounder close to the Maxim, knowing it would be of little or no use at close quarters, and had thrown up a very crude breastwork of provision cases and logs on the side from which the Matabele would come.

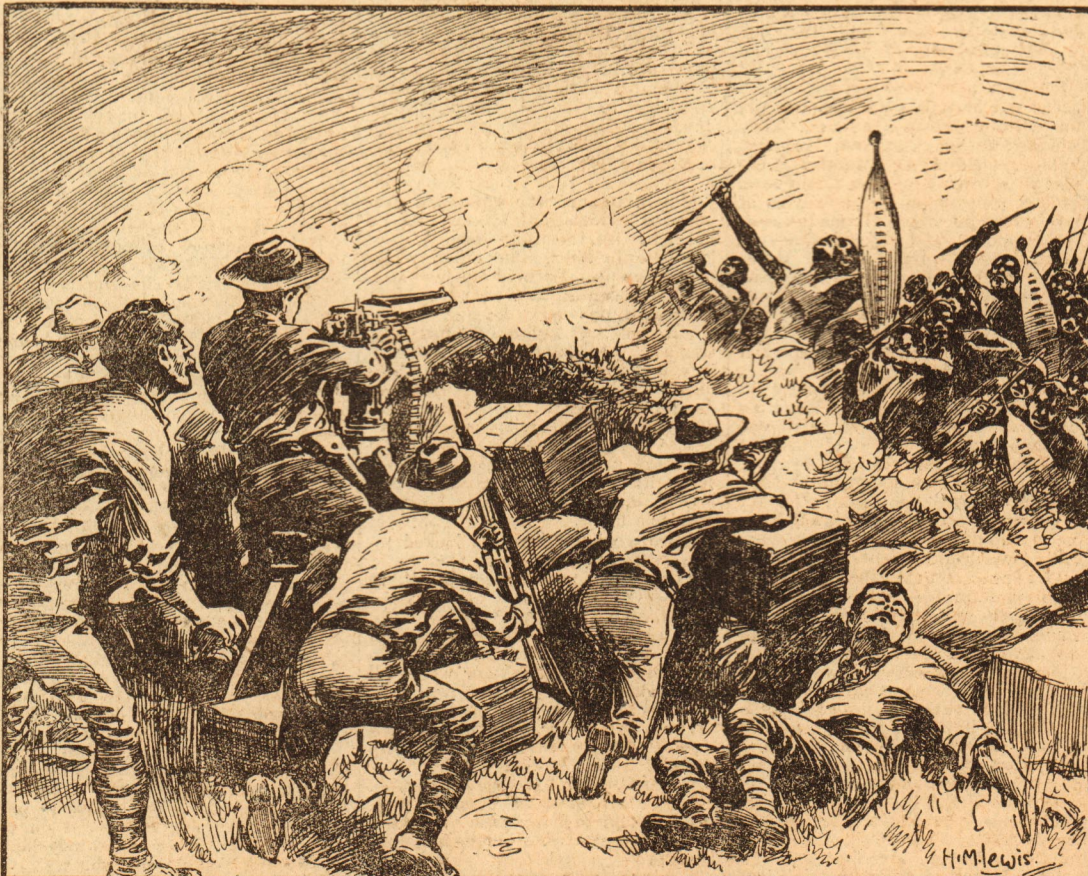
The sergeant fired one shell from his gun—a shell which ripped through solid flesh in the forefront of the attacking force, and then, bursting, put half a dozen men out of action—but he did not reload. Instead, he picked up his rifle and began to fire rapidly.

On the other hand, the captain started his Maxim, sweeping the bush with its hail of lead. For a moment the onslaught was checked; then the Matabele came on again, hundreds of them apparently, recking nothing of their dead, yelling, screaming even, in their fury. Many of them had rifles, though the bullets from these were all timed too high; but their throwing assegais proved more effective.

One trooper went down, a spear clean through his heart, another staggered back, vainly trying to tug a long, jagged blade out of his stomach, alternately groaning and sobbing in his agony. But all the time the survivors stood firm. They were up against it, and they were going to die game.

Dudley, kneeling behind a pile of bully-beef boxes, suddenly became aware that his rifle barrel was so hot that it was burning his fingers. He whipped out a handkerchief, wrapped it round his left hand, then went on shooting. It was light enough to see the rifle-sights now, and every cartridge he used lessened the number of the enemy by one.

The attack surged up to the very foot of the breastwork. Another moment, it seemed, and all must be over. Then it melted away under the terrible fire of the Maxim and the rifles, rolled back, and for a space of minutes only a few haphazard shots showed that the enemy was still.



The attack surged up to the very foot of the breastwork. Another moment, it seemed, and all must be over. One of the few troopers went down, and on came hundreds of savages.

YORKSHIRE GRIT.

(Continued from the previous page.)

the search after Dick's precious document that he judged was concealed somewhere in the house—"sewn up somewhere," as Dick had said. He ran an astute eye over the contents of the cottage first of all. His choice for first examination fell on the bedding—that in Dick's room—for a start. He carefully examined the pillows, stroking, pressing, and feeling every inch. He followed with the bolster. Nothing rewarded him. Then he went on to the flock bed, going over every inch of it with scrupulous care. Presently he felt something that made his eyes open wide with exultant anticipation. He could feel something that cracked like paper. Careful examination of the ticking also showed that it had been out at that place and carefully stitched up again. He pulled out his penknife and cut the stitches, and, putting his hand inside the slit, he pulled out a long envelope. A glance at its contents showed him that it was the document he sought. He hid it away in his pocket at once, and, taking a folded newspaper, he slipped it into the bed where the long envelope had been, then he looked about for a needle and thread, which he eventually discovered in Jessie's room, and with it he carefully sewed up the slit again, and afterwards put the bed as he had found it. Between then and ten o'clock, at which hour the bank opened, he spent an anxious time. At half-past nine he started out. He would be on the steps of the bank when the doors were opened. His heart beat wildly as he stood there, and the town-hall chimed broke on his ears. One minute after the doors were flung open he walked within. He went up to the pay-counter and put down the cheque, together with Ackroyd's letter, confirming its genuineness. The cashier took it, turned it over with provoking deliberation, and cast his eyes down the letter. He paused a moment and went behind a screen to consult another cashier. It seemed to Scrimshaw a century before he came back. It was really about half a minute. "How will you have it?" asked the cashier. "Half notes, half gold," murmured Scrimshaw, in a voice that he hardly knew for his own. "No, you won't do anything of the kind!" said a voice, over his shoulder. "I stop that cheque being paid!" Looking round he saw Ackroyd, with eyes blazing out of a white face, looking fiendishly at him. But Scrimshaw was not going to give up, without a struggle what he had so nearly won. "By Jove," he said aloud so that the cashier could hear him, "you don't look well, Mr. Ackroyd! You look ill, in fact! You have a look on your face very much like your uncle—Mr. Trimble—had before he died! You remember, I was there when he passed away, and—" The blow got home. James Ackroyd was seized with a sudden panic. He thought this other was going to divulge the dread secret that would put the rope round his neck. He pulled up with an icy terror laying hold of him. "Yes, yes, I am not very well!" he gasped, looking into Scrimshaw's eyes and reading the threat there. "It's all right, cashier. I was—er—that cheque is perfectly good!" "Put the gold into this bag, please," said Scrimshaw coolly, pushing a leather bag on to the counter. They went out of the bank together, Scrimshaw feeling jubilant. "But if you had given me away, I'd have done the same for you!" Ackroyd hissed in his ear. "What about? What can you tell about me?" "About last night." "But it didn't come off." "I know. I've seen him this morning. But I suppose you tried?" "How do you know? I might have been kidding you. In fact, I was. I didn't try to do for Dick Allen, and I don't intend to. The game's too risky, Mr. Ackroyd." "You cunning hound! Anyhow, the lad is at work this morning with a bandage round his head, and there's a tale going round about a sawn plank." "I don't know anything about it, Mr. Ackroyd, except what the boy's told me himself. He's a friend of

mine. I am lodging with him. He knows I am all right." "You're lodging with him?" gasped Ackroyd, startled at the man's cool impudence. "Yes, rather! And I'm in his confidence! Look here, I can tell you something else! It is a silly game trying to put him away, because that sort of thing always gets found out. I'm not going to do it because I have a better thing on." "What?" "Blackmailing you!" chuckled Scrimshaw, who was enjoying the position. Dark thoughts surged through Ackroyd's brain. He could see he was in this man's power. He could foresee that he would never be able to satisfy him: that his own ill-gotten gains were in danger of slipping away into Scrimshaw's hands. "But, look here," continued the tout, "let that go for a minute. Instead of running the risk of clearing the lad off the map, why not simply collar his document? That would clip his wings, it would pluck him to the bone—what! Now, I can lay my hands on that paper in no time at all, and I am open to trade." "What is that, eh? Do you mean it, really?" exclaimed Ackroyd, under his breath. "By gum I do! I'll sell it for two thousand pounds! It'll be the end of the lad's claims altogether!" "Look here, I'll give you that, if it is the genuine thing!" "It wouldn't be likely that I should try to pass off a wrong 'un on you. You'll be able to judge for yourself. But I should want hard cash. No more of your cheques, thank you! You get the money out of the bank ready in your safe, and I'll come round this afternoon." "Better be to-night," Ackroyd said. "I shall be there alone. There are too many long ears about during work hours for my fancy." "Right-oh! I'll be there!" Scrimshaw said. James Ackroyd did a lot of hard thinking that day. It was thinking that gave him no pleasure, but a lot of uneasiness. It did not take much reasoning out to discover that he was in an uncomfortable position. He was more. He was as a rat in a trap. And the trap was in the hands of Scrimshaw. Scrimshaw held him under his thumb, because Scrimshaw could put a rope round his neck. Scrimshaw would fasten on him like a leech while there was a penny left. He would suck him dry like an orange, and, then, in the end, probably betray him. What was to be done? How could he rid himself of this man who knew too much? He thought hard, and he thought darkly. Scrimshaw was coming to the mill to-night—after dark—when no one would be there! When night came, full of confidence and exultant to the brim, Scrimshaw came along to Trimble's mill to complete the great coup that was going to set him up for life. It was his life's habit to be secretive and cautious, and he looked carefully about him as he entered the mill yard. There was no one to be seen. Vulcan Street was quite deserted, though some way off he could hear a chorus of boyish voices singing carols. For this was Christmas Eve. "We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door; We are your neighbour's children that you have seen before."

Ackroyd opened the safe. He took out a big, japanned cashbox, having contents of some weight. "Some is in gold; some in paper." "Lemme look!" cried Scrimshaw. "That might only be coppers inside." "Can't you trust me, eh?" "Not a penn'orth. Lemme look." The box was opened. He gloated over its contents. "Righto! Now I'll show you the paper—only keep your 'ands off it. You can look, but you aren't to touch. Look here, you put your hands in your trousers' pockets while I spread it on the table for you to read." "My jacket pocket will do as well, I suppose?" said Ackroyd grimly. There was something bulgy and heavy in one jacket pocket which Scrimshaw had not noticed. He nodded and pulled out the long envelope and took from it the folded paper within. This he spread out on the writing-table, and held it there, framed in his lean hands, while Ackroyd read it greedily. All at once, from the pocket in which something bulged, Ackroyd jerked his hand. In the fingers were gripped a revolver, and he clapped it of a sudden to Scrimshaw's head. "Hands off that paper, you beggar! I'm going to kill you!" Scrimshaw's jaw dropped. He went



Glancing forward, Dick saw with a thrill of apprehension that the slip-knot was none too secure; indeed, the loop was slowly working itself to the end of the scaffold-pole.

white to the lips. In that swift moment he understood why he had been brought here at a time when they two were alone in the building. For an instant he could utter no words. Then he gasped out words quick and fearful. "You'll get nothing out of it. If you kill me it will be found out; and I've written down and hidden away in a place where it will be found if I die a paper showing how your uncle met his death. It is among my things. It will be found right enough!" "No it won't," retorted Ackroyd, enjoying the man's fear, "because no one will know you are dead. You'll just disappear, that's all. There'll be no one at work here for four days. I can put you safely out of sight in that time. You'll just have disappeared, that's all. And then I shall take measures to get hold of your belongings myself and get hold of this paper you speak of." "Someone will hear the report outside," gasped Scrimshaw. "You'll not escape—" Then he made a desperate bid for life, because he saw no mercy in the other's eyes. He shot up his hand, and made a grab for the weapon. Ackroyd pulled the trigger simultaneously. Scrimshaw ducked his head as his hand went up, but the report sounded heavily in his ears, though the bullet missed him. He somehow grabbed hold of an office stool, and flung it at Ackroyd. It

gave him a moment's chance of freedom, and he took it. He darted out at the doorway, crashing it to after him, leaped through the outer office and down the dark stairs, feeling the way with one hand, and grasping the precious paper, that meant fortune to Dick Allen, in the other. But Ackroyd, wild, desperate, drink-maddened, was on his heels. Scrimshaw tried to get into the street, but he suddenly realised that a straight run across the yard would bring him within range of his pursuer's weapon, which he would not scruple to use, so he turned sharply to one side, and sought to dodge Ackroyd round the in-and-out shape of the building. Hidden by a corner, he got an advantage for a moment or two; and at that instant he saw a chance of hiding. Some building planks were reared up against a wall. He slipped behind them. A moment later he saw Ackroyd race by. He was out again, swiftly calculating his chances of getting through the yard. In a fatal moment he decided against the chances of a bold rush, for his eyes caught on another avenue of escape. Reared up against some scaffolding, not a dozen paces away, was a ladder. He made a dash for it and quickly mounted the rungs. He could hide securely above—Ackroyd would not think of looking for him there. He

He approached the edge, gripping the stone, looked over and saw Ackroyd not a dozen rungs away. He saw the pistol hand go up and he flung down the stone as the fire leapt out of the muzzle. His missile reached its mark, though he never knew it, for the bullet bit into his brain, and with no more than a low groan he threw up his arms and fell a limp, human thing down into the yard far below. For a moment Ackroyd clung to the ladder with a shrill shriek of agony coming from his lips, and then he, too, lost hold, and followed the man whose life he had taken. It was fated that Dick Allen, whose destiny was so intermingled with this tragedy, should be witness—at least, in some degree of it. He, with Bulgy Fry and some of their chums, were carol-singing in some of the streets that run between Vulcan Street and Manchester Road. They were coming round the corner of Duncan Street into Vulcan Street, almost opposite Trimble's, when of a sudden they heard the report of firearms. They all turned towards the mill, whence the sound seemed to come, and with one impulse started running thither. Two or three seconds after came another report, and this time Dick distinctly saw the flash high up against the chimney-stack. Almost the next instant there broke out an agonised shriek which was maintained for a moment, and then there came silence. "Something's happened!" he cried in alarm. "I don't know what; but we ought to go and see." "Be goy, t' little door's open!" cried Fry, pushing forward the small entrance in the big gates. They ran in. They found what lay at the bottom of the big chimney. "It's awful!" gasped Dick under his breath. "I—I don't know what it means. I suppose we ought to fetch the police—and a doctor." "Yes, yes; only a doctor won't be able to do anything here. Be goy, and this is Christmas Eve, and we've been singing while this, whatever it was, has been going on. What we heard was only the finish." Fry suddenly stooped and picked a crumpled piece of paper up from the snow, and he saw there was writing on it. He flashed upon it for a moment the light of the little fourpenny bullseye that he carried at his waist belt. "Sithee, there's thy name on it, Dick!" he exclaimed. Dick glanced hastily at the paper. He saw that it was the paper given to him on that wild night by Mr. Trimble, which was to make him partner in this mill. Over Dick Allen's Christmas lay the shadow of this tragedy. In a dim sort of way he knew that his troubles were ended—in so far as troubles ever do end. He knew, at least, that the way of his life lay open, and that no more would he be the victim of the malice and hatred that had before dogged every step he made. And yet, for all this knowledge, he could not feel joyful. For death is so dreadful a thing, and the sudden ending of two lives, although they were worthless ones, in this grim fashion shadowed the joy of Christmas with sadness. But the time passed. Clever brains pieced together the whole train of circumstances as they have been recorded here. The executors of the late Henry Trimble, of whom Mr. Sylvester, the lawyer, was one, stepped in and took possession of the mill on behalf of some distant relatives. Dick Allen's claim was taken care of by Mr. Sylvester, junior. A reliable manager was found to look after the mill till such time as the new working junior partner, Dick Allen, should be fit to take charge. That will not be quite yet, because Dick means to thoroughly master the business before venturing to promote himself. He has left Scotland Street and Johnson's Fold, and has taken a jolly little house in Southfield Square, off Lamb Lane, where there is a pretty patch of garden for Jessie to play and plant flowers in. He is able to afford this now, because he is getting a better wage. So we leave him with a fair life spread before him after the battle which he won with his own good courage and his Yorkshire grit. THE END.

("Chris of the Camera," the story of a young Press photographer, commences next Tuesday in the 500th and New Year Number of THE BOYS' FRIEND. Id. only.)