

EVERY BOY'S BEST BOOK IS—

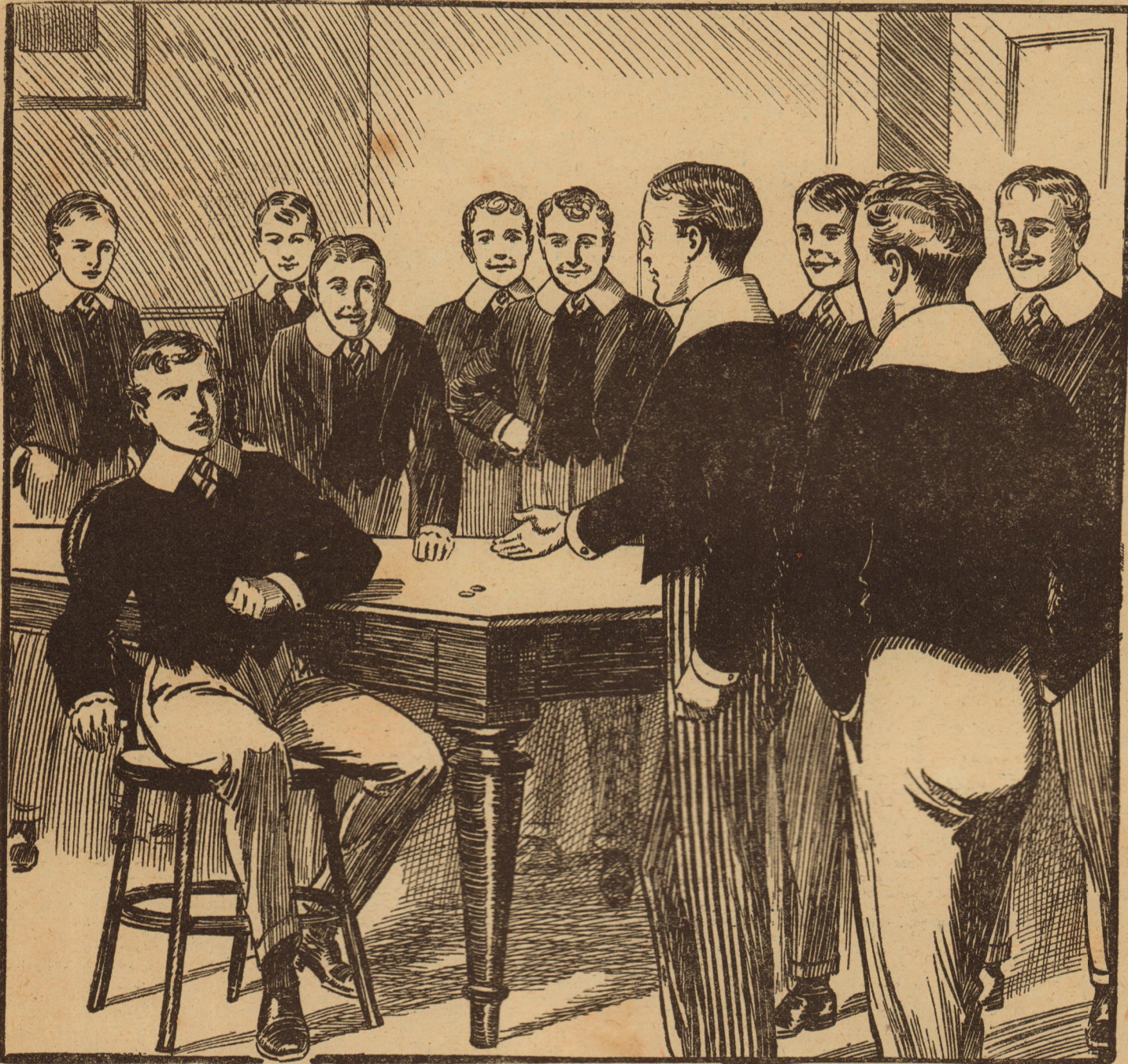
# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>st</sup>

OUR MOTTO IS: "PLAY THE GAME!"

No. 771, Vol. XV, New Series.]

ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending March 18th, 1916,



"By our combined efforts we have raised a fund for presentation to our friend Rawson, in acknowledgment of the honour he has done us by comin' to reside in our midst," said Adolphus Smythe, placing two coins on the table. "In the name of Rawson's friends, I hereby make the presentation."

## THE SCHOLARSHIP BOY'S SECRET!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Hard Up!

"Keep smiling!" Jimmy Silver of the Fourth clapped Rawson on the back, with a sounding clap that made Rawson stagger, as he gave him that useful admonition. Rawson gasped. "Ow!" Jimmy grinned at him cheerfully. "What are you looking like a boiled owl about?" he asked.

"Was I?" "You were! Come up to the study to tea," said Jimmy. He held up a parcel, which he had just brought from the tuckshop, temptingly. "Look here! We're in funds—at least, I'm in funds, and the study is flowing with milk and honey—anyway, with ham and eggs! Come on!" Rawson grinned faintly. "Thanks! But—" "No, buts," said Jimmy Silver; "you're coming."

And he grasped Rawson's sleeve with his free hand, and marched him along the passage. Rawson went unresistingly. It was difficult to resist Jimmy Silver's high spirits, Jimmy's spirits were always high, his face always sunny. He swung his parcel of tuck cheerily by the string as the two juniors went up the passage to the end study. Rawson's face was dark and clouded and Jimmy wondered why.

Rawson, the scholarship boy, had had a good many little persecutions to suffer at the hands of Townsend & Co., the snobs of the Fourth; but they had not affected his spirits much. The burly Rawson was a little too muscular for the "nuts" to handle personally—and he repaid their absurd contempt with a contempt much more profound and well-founded, despising them as snobs and slackers, and duffers, as they were. He was generally in cheerful spirits.

But Jimmy Silver had spotted him looking as if most of the troubles in the universe had settled on him in a cloud.

So it was just like Jimmy to march him off to a merry feed in the end study, with the intention of cheering him out of the "blues."

Townsend and Topham and Peele, the nuts of the Fourth, were in the passage, and they made it a point to curl their lips as Jimmy Silver came by with Rawson. Rawson did not even look at them. But Jimmy Silver did. And he swung his parcel a little more widely, and caught Townsend under the chin with it as he passed. Towny gave a yell and sat down. "Clumsy!" said Jimmy Silver chidingly.

And he walked on to the end study, leaving Townsend sitting in the passage, rubbing his chin and glaring.

"Cheeky rotter!" gasped Townsend. "If—if I thought he did that on purpose, I'd go after him and lick him!"

"He did it on purpose, right enough," said Topham.

"No doubt about that," chimed in Peele.

Townsend considered it judicious to turn a deaf ear to those remarks. Certainly he would have fared very badly if he had gone after Jimmy Silver to lick him.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were in the end study, getting tea. They greeted Rawson with friendly nods. The Fistical Four of the Fourth rather liked old Rawson. He was so burly and good-natured, slow to take offence, but a dreadfully hard hitter when he did take offence, as some of the nuts had discovered, and a decent fellow could hardly help liking him. And then, there was no "rot" about him. He made no attempt to conceal the fact that his father was a working carpenter, and his brother a private in the Army—amazing as it seemed to Towny & Co., he was distinctly proud of both these facts.

Townsend, in a moment of deep sarcasm, had asked Rawson if he would have been proud if his sisters had been washerwomen; to which Rawson had replied in his serious, thoughtful way, that it depended upon whether they did the washing well. Rawson's amazing opinion was that a good carpenter was superior to a bad emperor; an opinion which proved to Towny & Co. that he was simply "outside"—in fact, the very extreme outside edge.

Rawson's plain common-sense, which outraged all the ideas of beliefs of the elegant nuts of Rookwood, rather amused Jimmy Silver & Co. It was really surprising the number of things Rawson was proud of. He was proud of having come to Rookwood on a scholarship, instead of being paid for by money he hadn't earned. So he wasn't likely to agree in any way with Towny, who regarded earning money as the very last degradation a fellow could fall into.

Jimmy Silver slammed his parcel on the table—the study table that stood as firm as a rock now, since Rawson, with his wonderful knowledge of carpentry, had mended the "gammy" leg.

"Here you are!" said Jimmy. "A feast of the gods, dear boys. Have you got the kettle boiling?"

"Just on," said Lovell. "Make the tea, Rawson, old chap—make yourself useful!" said Jimmy Silver briskly, as he unfastened the parcel.

Rawson nodded without speaking, and made the tea—in his careful way. Everything that Rawson did was careful and methodical, and he made tea as carefully as he did Greek exercises.

It was indeed a feast of the gods in  
(Continued on the next page.)



gasped. "Let go, I tell you! Ow—oh! I'll—"

"Come on!" said Tommy Dodd cheerily.

The three Moderns rushed Rawson up the staircase, with his arms and legs wildly flying. He was rushed headlong into the juniors' passage, and they arrived at Leggett's door.

"You silly duffers!" gasped Rawson.

"Knock at the door!" said Tommy Dodd.

Crack!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Rawson.

The merry Moderns had used Rawson's head to knock at the door with.

"Come in!" called out Leggett.

Crack!

"Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leggett opened the door with a wince. He jumped at the sight of Rawson struggling and wriggling helplessly in the grasp of the three Tommies.

"Visitor for you," gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, we're showing him in, Leggett."

"Come on, Rawson."

Leggett jumped back as Rawson was rushed into the study. But he did not jump quickly enough. Rawson's head crashed on his chest, and Leggett roared and fell on the carpet. Rawson was deposited on his chest, and the three Tommies retired from the study, howling with laughter.

The 4th Chapter.  
The Amateur Shylock.

"Yow-ow-ow! Gerroff!" gasped Leggett.

Rawson, breathless after his rough handling, rolled off Leggett, and the Modern junior sat up, gasping.

"You silly Classical ass!"

"It wasn't my fault," said Rawson.

"Those duffers—"

"You silly fathead, what did you come here for?" hooted Leggett, staggering to his feet. "I'm hurt."

"Sorry, but—"

"Oh, get out, you Classical rotter!"

Rawson put his collar straight. He picked up the book, which had rolled into the fender.

"What the dickens is that?" said Leggett, looking at it.

"I've come on business," said Rawson.

Leggett calmed down, a gleam coming into his narrow, shifty eyes. Leggett of the Fourth was always open to do business. He would buy anything for a tenth part its value, and sell it again for double its value when he found a purchaser, and he was always ready to lend money at fifty per cent per week. There was no doubt that Leggett would be a great financier when he grew up, unless he found his financial operations cut short by a cold and unsympathetic judge and jury some day.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Leggett. "Short of tin?"

"Yes."

"You shouldn't waste your tin in spreads," grinned Leggett. "I've heard all about it, you see!"

"You buy things of the fellows," said Rawson, without heeding that remark.

"Yes, if they're any good."

"What will you give me for this book?"

Leggett sniffed.

"Nixes!" he replied.

"It's a pretty good book," said Rawson. "Morocco binding, gilt edges, and a jolly good story—'Treasure Island.'"

"Books are a drug in the market," said Leggett, with another sniff.

"What is it—some blessed school prize?"

"Yes," said Rawson.

"Let's look at it."

Leggett took the book and examined it. He burst into a scoffing laugh as he read an inscription on the flyleaf:

"Presented to T. Rawson, Denham Road School. My hat! Is that the County Council School where you used to go?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd have to tear out that flyleaf, and that takes away a lot from the value of the book," said Leggett. "Still, I'll give you two-pence for it."

"Two-pence!" ejaculated Rawson.

"I don't suppose I should get a shilling for it," said Leggett. "Anyway, there's my offer—take it or leave it."

"I'll leave it, thanks!" said Rawson, taking the book back.

He moved towards the door, his face gloomy in expression.

"Hold on!" said Leggett, eyeing him curiously. "If you're hard up, I might be able to let you have a loan."

Leggett paused.

"How much are you in want of?"

"I'd like ten shillings."

"That's a lot of money for a chap like you," said Leggett inquisitively. "What do you want it for?"

Rawson did not reply.

"Another spread for your little self—what?"

"Never mind that. Will you lend me the money?"

"On terms—yes," said Leggett. "Always open to do business. A penny on the bob every week—that's tenpence a week till you're square."

Rawson hesitated.

"I mayn't be able to square for weeks," he said.

"I don't care, so long as you keep the interest up."

There was a long pause. Leggett's interest was at the rate of about eight per cent, per week—something like four hundred per cent, per annum. Leggett could have given the venerable Shylock himself points in the usury business. But Leggett did not lend money for amusement.

"Well, I—I'll take it!" said Rawson at last. "I must have money from somewhere."

"A poor kid like you shouldn't come to a school like this," said Leggett.

"That's not your business. Where's the money?"

"Look here, Leggett," he said awkwardly. "I—I can pay this money at the end of the term. I get a whack from my scholarship—the rest that's due to me. I wouldn't borrow if I couldn't pay."

"Good-bye!" said Leggett. "I don't know what's due to you and what isn't. Bring me the I.O.U. with Jimmy Silver's name on it, and it's a go. Otherwise, don't trouble to call again. I'm rather busy!"

Leggett sat down to the table and began to work. Rawson eyed him for some moments, and then left the study with a downcast face.

The three Tommies were in the doorway, waiting for him. They intended to carry him back to the Classical side, as they had carried him to Leggett's study, but the grim trouble in the junior's face disarmed them. Tommy Dodd clapped him on the back.

"Cheero!" he said.

Rawson started.

"What?"

"Anything up?" asked Tommy Dodd, in wonder. "Been doing business with Leggett? I warn you to give him a miss. He's an out-and-outer!"

Rawson nodded, and walked away without replying. Townsend and Topham met him as he came into his own House, and grinned at the sight of his downcast face. Townsend

his paws on me—the cheeky scoundrel. Pretty sort of a ruffian to come to a gentleman's school!"

"Regular hooligan!" said Topham.

"I say, Towny, I've got an idea. What about raising a subscription for Rawson, as he's hard-up?"

"Dotty?" grunted Townsend.

"A spoof subscription, I mean—I've got two farthings—"

"Farthings—"

"Yes—and some gold paint—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and tell Smythe, and we'll work it on him this evening," chuckled Topham.

And a little later there was an important consultation, amid much cigarette smoke, in Adolphus Smythe's study, and the loud laughter that proceeded from the study seemed to hint that Adolphus & Co. were enjoying a very good joke indeed.

The 5th Chapter.  
The Presentation.

There were several curious glances at Rawson when he came into the junior common-room that evening.

The depression in Rawson's face was visible to every eye.

That Rawson was unusually "hard-up" was now known to every fellow in the Fourth; but it was not so clear what he wanted money for.

His wants were few, and his allow-

joke of the form. Rawson's personal affairs were his own business; but Townsend & Co. made them theirs.

Jimmy Silver, who was playing chess with Lovell, gave Rawson a nod as he came in, which Rawson did not even see. He dropped into a chair by the fire, and stared moodily at the embers, unconscious of the looks that were cast towards him. Signs passed between several of the nuts who were in the room. The merry rag planned by Townsend & Co. was in progress.

Adolphus Smythe came in, with Howard and Tracy of the Shell. He was joined by Townsend and Topham and Peele. The six elegant nuts came towards Rawson, and there was a general movement of interest. All the juniors in the room could see that something was "on."

"Aw! Excuse me, Rawson," said Smythe, with a little cough.

Rawson looked up moodily.

"Hope I'm not interruptin'," said Smythe politely.

"I'm doing nothing," said Rawson.

"What is it, Smythe? I warn you I don't feel in a humour for any of your little jokes."

Adolphus looked pained.

"Dear man, I'm not jokin'," he said seriously. "I'm goin' to speak to you as a friend."

"Yaas, that's it," said Townsend.

"We're all friends here."

"Don't be ratty about nothin', Rawson," urged Howard; "we're really feelin' very friendly you know."

Rawson looked puzzled.

"Well, what's the game?" he asked.

"Go it, Smythe!"

"It's a presentation," said Smythe.

"A what!"

Jimmy Silver was looking up suspiciously from the chess-board. Although all the nuts made it a point to look serious and solemn as owls, Jimmy could guess that a joke was intended.

Smythe of the Shell gave another little cough.

"Gentlemen," said Smythe, turning his eyeglass round upon the interested juniors, "I should like you all to see this presentation made to Rawson by his friends."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

"Sure, phwat's the little game intirely?" asked Flynn.

"There is no little game, Flynn. It is a presentation. I hope Rawson will take it in the spirit in which it is meant."

"You can rely on that," said Rawson.

"Good! Gentlemen, hitherto Rookwood has been a somewhat exclusive school. True, we have Modern bounders here—and even on the Classical side there are such outsiders as Muffin—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Muffin indignantly.

"But until quite lately we were never able to boast here a member of that truly useful and admirable class, the workin'-class," said Adolphus gravely. "This has been altered. We have now a representative of the class which have been called the backbone of England. Don't smile, gentlemen. The Rawsons of this world have a very important function to fulfil. Without Rawsons, how should we get our boots cleaned or our hats made?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Our attitude, therefore, should be one of grateful recognition towards the lower classes, to whom we owe so much—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Off the wicket!" said Rawson calmly. "My idea is that people who work are the upper classes, and people who don't work are the lower classes. They're called by their wrong names at present."

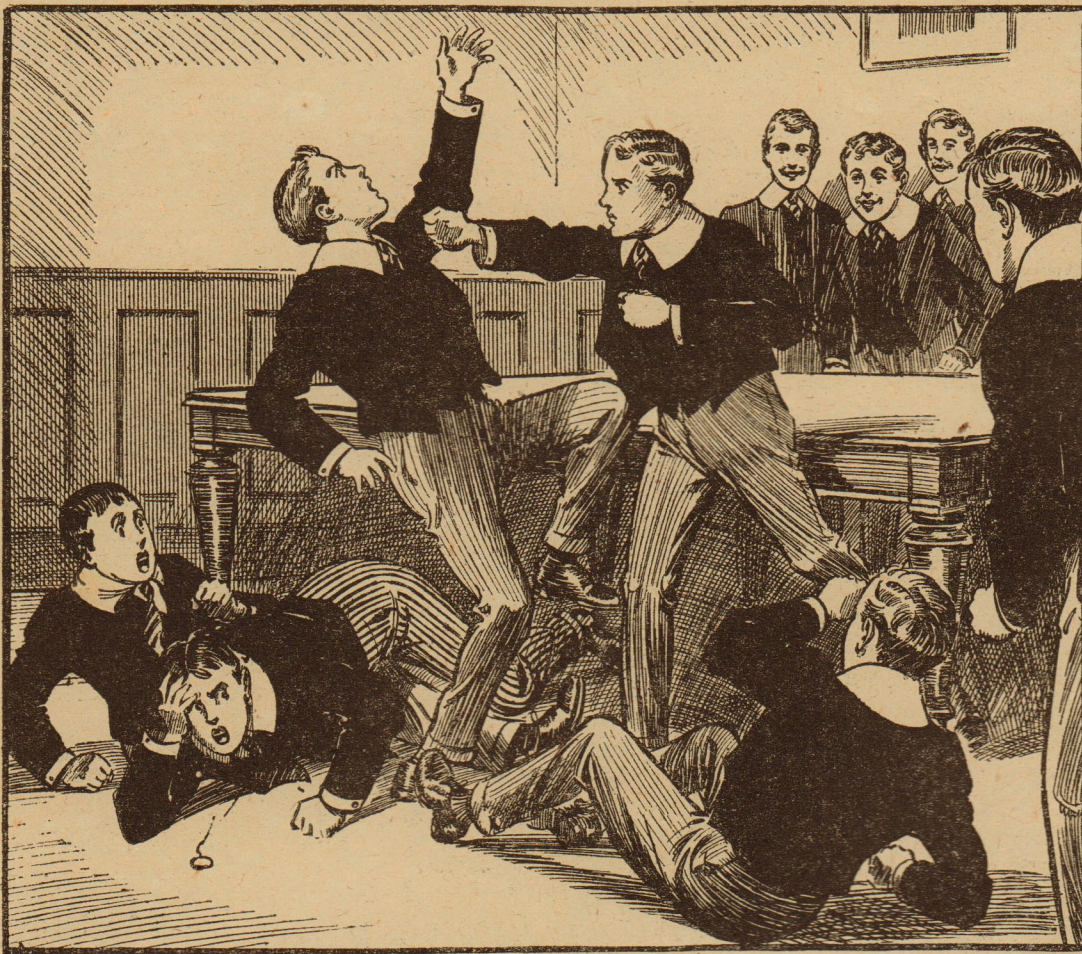
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I stand corrected," said Adolphus gracefully. "Our friend Rawson, therefore, comes here as the representative of what should justly be called the upper classes. Unfortunately, in the upper class to which he belongs there is a dearth of hard cash, which causes our friend Rawson to be under the painful necessity of wearing old clothes—"

"Shut up, you cad," came from Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, let him run on!" said Rawson. "This is as amusing as watching the monkey at the Zoo."

There was a chirrup of laughter, and Adolphus turned red with wrath. But he calmed himself with an effort, and proceeded in the same strain of gentle irony. "The upper, or Rawson classes, are somewhat short of filthy lucre—our friend Rawson is in that unhappy state known as stony. This is an intolerable state of affairs. Our superior friend, Rawson, has been driven to selling the valuable prizes he won in the palatial halls of the County Council—"



Rawson rushed forward, his face pale with anger, hitting out hard and quick. Topham rolled over, and Townsend and Tracy were sent reeling by a blow on the chin. Peele backed away, but not in time. A drive on the chest laid him on his back.

"Hold on!" said Leggett coolly. "I don't hand over hard cash for nothing. How do I know you'll pay up?"

"I promise," said Rawson simply.

But Leggett chuckled.

"Promises are like pie-crusts!" he remarked.

"Yours may be," said Rawson contemptuously. "Mine are not. I will pay you the interest every week till I can return the money."

"Promises ain't business," said Leggett coolly. "You may mean to, and you mayn't have the money. You don't have much, I know that. You'll have to hand over some security, of course."

"I—I don't think I've got anything of value, except this book."

"That's of no value. Look here, if you think I'm trusting money into the hands of a poverty-stricken bounder who mayn't be able to pay up, you're mistaken," said Leggett.

"Suppose I give you an I.O.U.?"

"You'll have to do that, of course, but your signature's not worth anything. You've got no resources. If you get a fellow to sign it whom I can trust, it's a go!"

"I couldn't ask—"

"What rot! You're friendly with Jimmy Silver. Ask him."

Rawson flushed.

"I—I couldn't ask him!"

"Then you won't have the tin!" said Leggett coolly. "Good-bye!"

Rawson still hesitated,

winked at his chum, and tapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"Hard up, old chap?" he asked in a very friendly tone.

Rawson stared at him.

"Yes, if you want to know!" he said.

"Wouldn't Leggett advance a tanner on the book?" grinned Topham.

The nuts had guessed the purport of Rawson's visit to the Modern side.

"No!" said Rawson calmly.

"Well, look here," said Townsend. "As you're in our study, we feel that we ought to stand by you, Rawson. If you want to raise the wind, we can give you a tip."

Rawson eyed him very dubiously.

"If you mean that, I'll be glad," he said.

"Well, write home to your mater—"

"Yes?"

"And advise her to take in washing. You see—Yaroooh!"

Townsend staggered back against the wall as Rawson gave him a rough shove, and the scholarship junior walked on. Townsend, his face red with rage, made a furious stride after him, but paused.

"The cheeky cad!" said Topham. "It was jolly good advice you were giving him, too, Towny."

"I'll be even with him," growled Townsend. "By gad, I'll make the poverty-stricken cad sit up! Laying

ance, small as it was, covered them. He had told Jimmy Silver that there was nothing wrong at home. Tubby Muffin certainly had no doubt what he wanted cash for—it was to stand himself feeds, with smokes galore. But such a want as that was not likely to have such an effect upon a steady character like Rawson's. It was a puzzle, which Rawson himself did not seem in the slightest degree inclined to explain.

Townsend & Co., sticking to the story of the surreptitious smokes, had suggested that Rawson had gone a little further in playing the "giddy ox," and had lost money on gee-goes. All the Giddy Goats knew how money went when it went in that direction.

Jimmy Silver had heard the suggestion, but he did not believe it. Rawson had too much sturdy commonsense to waste money in that way, and he had very strong views on the subject of racing generally, too. More than once the nuts, with undisguised contempt, had heard him express his indignation that horse-racing was allowed at all in war-time. But if Rawson had not been betting, it was hard to guess why he was in such extreme need of money.

In the case of any other fellow, the matter would not have attracted much attention; but in poor Rawson's case, the nuts of Rookwood were keen to draw attention to it, and make it the









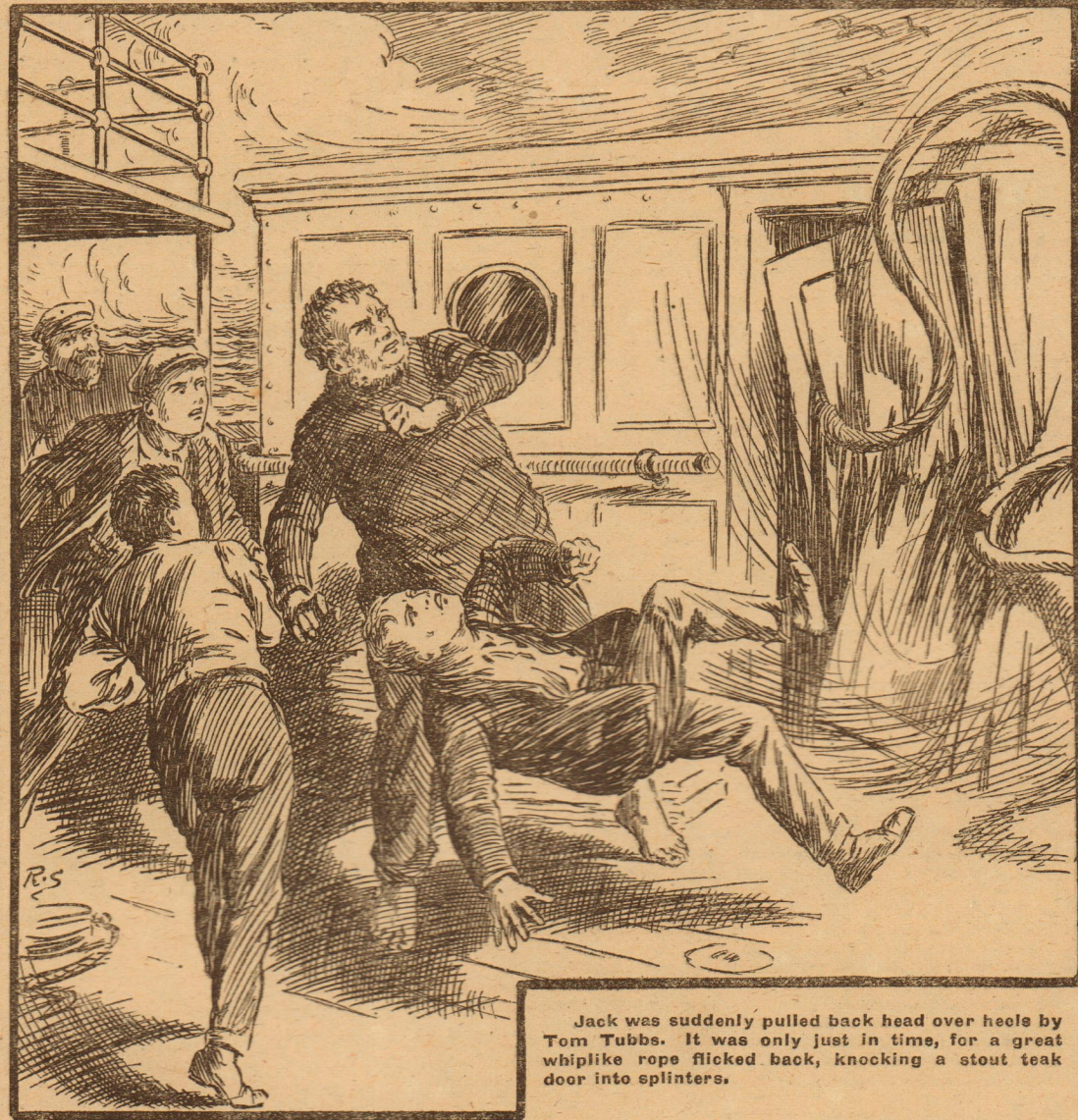
## THE SECRET OF THE SEAS

BY DUNCAN STORN

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Now, boys," said the captain, with a grin, "in the next five minutes I'm going to save three hundred thousand pounds' worth of ship, and make a hundred thousand pounds by doing so, or she'll stay where she is and she will be a total wreck in a week, whilst the Golden Girl will be a hundred thousand pounds poorer. No cure, no pay, are my terms, signed and sealed with her owners. Everything is cut through inside her, decks and stringers and girders. She's only hanging now by her outside skin, and I'm going to cut that away by exploding the gellignite charges which are fixed each side from her keel upwards. I fire the bottom one first."

He gave the handle of the firing-box a sharp turn. There was a dull thump under the keel of the vessel, and a fountain of white foam shot up ten feet high alongside.



Jack was suddenly pulled back head over heels by Tom Tubbs. It was only just in time, for a great whiplike rope flicked back, knocking a stout teak door into splinters.

"That was the first charge," explained the captain. "There are a string of thirty of 'em each side of her."

One by one he fired the charges methodically, first exploding on the starboard side of the ship, then on the port side.

As soon as the last of the sixty charges were fired, the boys went down into the barge alongside, and watched the divers go down below to examine and report on the result of the string of explosions which extended from the waterline down to the keel of the ship. Above the waterline a perpendicular seamed line of scorched and melted steel showed where the plates had been cut through by the intense heat of the oxygen-acetylene lamps.

Whilst the divers were down the boys had plenty of fun picking up the fish which, stunned by the explosions, had floated to the surface. There were some fine rock-bass and mullet amongst them, and they were not long in collecting enough to provide the whole ship's company of the Golden Girl with a big fish supper.

The Golden Girl was now stoking up for her towing effort. A huge pillar of black smoke was pouring out of her funnel, and a full head of

steam was roaring from her escape-valves. Notwithstanding the large section which had been cut off behind the crumpled bows of the Queen of Java, the Golden Girl had still about eight thousand tons of ship and cargo to pull off.

But as yet she was putting no strain on the powerful hemp and steel hawsers which lay drooping in the water.

Presently Mike Cassidy, followed by his mate, came to the surface. Their faces were beaming as their copper diving-helmets were unscrewed and lifted from their red-capped heads. They had examined both sides of the ship, and had discovered that their work had been successful. The outside shell of the ship had been cut as clean as a whistle from the waterline to the keel, and the huge keel-plates had been parted by carefully-placed explosives.

The body of the ship was now entirely separated from her torn and mangled bows. All that was now necessary was to pull her astern as soon as the flowing tide had lifted her sufficiently.

Already there seemed to be a new life in the stern of the great liner. It no longer lay dead and inert as part of the rocks below, but felt

pudden that he broke the buttons off his party waistcoat."

Soon the leadmen were shouting the depth of water again, and Captain Tiddler, taking a couple of signal flags in his hands, marched astern, followed by the boys, to communicate with the Golden Girl.

His flags flickered away with signal after signal, and presently a gentle churning of foam under the stern of the Golden Girl showed that she was going ahead on her tow-ropes, gradually working up her pulling strain on the great inert mass of the Queen of Java's hull.

"D'ye see, boys," explained Captain Tiddler, as he fluttered his signals, "it don't do to tighten up too quickly on a towing hawser. The hawser hasn't been built yet, steel or hemp, that will stand a strain being put on it suddenly. The old Golden Girl could break this lot like pack-threads, if she went ahead suddenly at the full strength of her engines."

Gradually the hawsers tightened and strained, under their thick wadding of chafing bands, at the bits of the liner.

But the great ship did not budge.

The Golden Girl increased the speed of her engines. The white smother of foam at her thrashing propellers increased to a wide patch of

Tom Tubbs' reminiscences of the gentleman who was cut in half by a parted hawser were suddenly cut short. There was a bang like the report of a cannon, and Jack, who was peering round the corner of a steel deckhouse at the hawsers was suddenly pulled back head-over-heels by Tom Tubbs.

It was only just in time. A great whiplike end of ragged steel rope flicked back, cutting a four-inch stanchion in halves as though it were butter. Then the frazzled-out end knocked a stout teak door into splinters and lay still on the deck.

"That's the way a hawser goes, Master Jack," said Tom Tubbs. "I thought she was going. That's why I pulled you back so rough-like. But if that end had hit your head, you wouldn't have had any head at all now."

"I am very much obliged to you, Tom!" replied Jack, who was a little dazed by the suddenness with which the good old boatswain had sent him sprawling on the deck.

"Don't mention it! As the old lady said when the gent trod on her cork foot in the 'bus," answered Tom. "Now we'll have to get another hawser passed."

His whistle shrilled out, and there was a lot more flagging. The Golden Girl ceased to tug at the hawser, and a thin rope which passed between her and the liner came running home over the capstan, bringing the end of another great steel wire rope with it.

This was made fast, and the tugging began again.

The boys had had enough of watching wire hawsers. They walked forward to where Captain Tiddler was standing watching the gap which had been cut across the liner's decks.

This was over two inches wide now, and across it were pasted strips of stamp-paper.

"She's on the move now, boys!" said the captain triumphantly. "The old Golden Girl shifted her exactly one inch in that last pull. Next time she'll get her on the move altogether, and as soon as you see those bits of stamp-paper part you'll know that you are each five hundred pounds in pocket, for that'll be your share of the salvage-money."

The boys gasped. They had never realised that money was picked up in this fashion.

Needless to say, they watched the bits of stamp-paper breathlessly.

"Now she's going! Now she's going!" exclaimed Captain Tiddler at last. "I can feel it! I can feel it!"

A shiver ran through the whole fabric of the liner.

The boys saw the strips of stamp-paper snap. The gap in the deck yawned suddenly to six inches, then to a foot.

Of a sudden, the deck on which they stood slid away from the fixed portion of the ship. The Queen of Java slid slowly and magnificently back from the severed portion. A gap of twenty yards of blue seawater showed, which rapidly increased to a hundred yards.

And the boys saw, left behind them on that ragged, savage ridge of rocks, the front of the ship, cut clean into floors like a house which is being demolished by the housebreakers.

Then a tremendous cheer went up from the crowded decks of the mutilated liner which had thus left nearly two hundred feet of her length behind on the Burlings.

Word came up from below that the bulkhead was holding tight and good, as the disabled liner was tugged stern-foremost by the Golden Girl in the direction of the tall mountains that marked the mouth of the Tagus at Lisbon.

The delighted Dutchmen cheered themselves hoarse. They cheered Captain Tiddler. They cheered his crew. They cheered the divers, and they cheered themselves. And finally they sang "God Save the King!" to the accompaniment of the ship's band, which crashed out the British National Anthem in fine style.

The boys, standing to attention, bare-headed, felt good. This was life! And they looked with grateful eyes upon the good-hearted captain who had taken them out of his charity off the streets of London, and who had laid the beginnings of their fortunes.

The captain clapped them on the back heartily.

"Well boys," said he, "she's as safe as houses now. In ten hours we'll be over the bar at Cascaes, and safe in the Lisbon river. And, best of all, we've cheated Davy Jones and his pal Satan Gomez of another hundred thousand quid!"

(Another thrilling long instalment of this great adventure story in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

ing leads, were stationed all along the ship to watch the increasing depth of water, and when the firing-boxes were all ready a lull fell upon the ship.

Half an hour was to elapse before the firing of the first charge, for the captain wished to allow an extra cushion of water to gather about the stranded hull before he started the series of small explosions that would cut away the last plates that held the ship to her stranded bow.

The stern was already afloat, although the keel, forward of the engine-room, was still resting on the rocky ledge.

In the hold behind the bulkhead, which Tom Tubbs and his gang had reinforced, the whole strength of the huge centrifugal pumps had been centred. There were six of these twelve-inch pumps, which meant that, if there was a hole four feet square in the bottom of the vessel, these, with their combined power, could keep the water down.

As he sat on the steps by his firing-boxes, Captain Tiddler called the boys up to him.

"Well, young gentlemen," said he, looking sharply at their pale faces, "you don't look much the better for your bath. Has anything happened, or was last night's work too much for you?"

The boys then told him what had happened in the cove, although they did not mention Snowball's Obeah work.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed the captain, when he had heard their story. "I don't wonder that you all look a bit peaked! And it was I who sent you into it. I ought to have known better with my experience of friend Satan. But, though I kept my eye on the Albatross all the time, and was ready to send a boat round for you in case I saw any move on his part, I clean forgot that he might do some dirty trick with that submarine. I even got so far as to think of the submarine. But we should have seen it if the Albatross had hoisted it out. He must have come up from Lisbon, towing it alongside, on the far side of us. Well, it only shows us, boys, that we have got to look out a bit more for Satan. We'll never be able to trust him till he's dead!"

The captain was for sending them all back to the Golden Girl to lie down in their bunks after the strain of their adventure.

But the boys begged hard that they might watch the final operations of the Queen of Java. So the captain contented himself by dosing them all with a stiff mixture of bromide, which he obtained from the doctor's surgery of the Dutch ship.

In the meantime the Golden Girl was shifting her position. She came astern of the stranded ship, and three huge towing hawsers were passed from her stern to the stern of the Java Queen. These were to be left slack until the mines had been exploded.

Watch in hand, the captain waited for the tide, keeping an eye on the broad expanse of the Atlantic to windward. The sun was working to the westward, and there was a golden haze on the horizon, above which floated a few wisps of the streaky cloud which is known as mare-tail cloud.

"We are going to get her off just about in time, boys!" said the captain. "By night there will be a nice fresh breeze blowing from the westward, and it doesn't take long in this water to knock up a swell that'd soon have smashed up this old hooker lying in this berth. The skipper can thank his lucky stars for a single day of flat calm and the chance of having the Golden Girl and her tool-chest by, to have saved him."

Soon the leadmen shouted word of increased depth of water.

Captain Tiddler slipped his watch into his pocket, and moved to his first firing-box. It was a small mahogany box, from which projected a small handle like the handle of a coffee-mill. To it were led a pair of insulated wires, which were clamped in brass screws at the end of the box.

underfoot like something that floated.

There was a slight drain of swell now, setting in from the westward, and the breeze was freshening.

The liner's boats which had been launched when she had run ashore, and which had lain alongside her all day, busy carrying the precious discharged cargo of spices and cocoa beans to the shore, were hoisted up to their davits.

Later on, when opportunity offered, ships would come from Lisbon to recover the discharged cargo which was now laid up on the beach ashore, covered up snugly with boards and tarpaulin-roofs to keep it from the weather.

Mr. Tubbs, beaming all over his face, came up from his job in the hold abaft the line of division. His wonderful cofferdam of planks, and their elaborate backing of beams and girders had nobly withstood the shock of the explosions, and the separating of the ship. Not a drain of water was coming through the bulkhead, or the huge mass of timbers that backed it.

"She's as tight as a drum!" he exclaimed—"tight as a drum, as the old lady said w'en 'er little grandson filled 'isself up so tight with C'ristmas

broken, swirling foam as she strained and tugged at the three great hawsers which bound her to the stranded leviathan.

But the Queen of Java did not move. She still lay heavy, soggy, inert, and as stolid as the Dutchmen who had put her together.

"Confound the old Dutch bilge-tank!" exclaimed the captain. "But the Golden Girl will be one too many for her yet. She's got to go whether she likes it or not."

He left Tom Tubbs in charge of the signal flags and went forward to see whether the inch-wide cut across the decks of the liner was increasing a hair's-breadth in width under the strain of the towing hawsers.

They could hear the engines of the Golden Girl throbbing as she strained at the huge bulk of the liner. The hawsers tightened and hummed.

Tom Tubbs looked at these anxiously.

"Better look out, young gents!" said he. "We won't stand too near the ends of these hawsers. If one of 'em parted and caught one of you a clip under the ear, you wouldn't want another belt. I once saw a party cut clean in halves by a hawser going just as one of these might go. He was a married man, he was, an'—"





## THE BOXER'S ORDEAL!

(Continued from the previous page.)

crossly. "Anyway, you don't catch me backing Jean against Smiler!" "Ah!" said the imperturbable Pontieux. "That is where you are wrong, then. The Americans are ready to lay what you call—odds, isn't it?—on Dillon. We mean to snap them up. Jean will show the Americans that they have to get up very early in the morning if they want to catch him asleep—eh?"

And he chuckled gleefully. "Oh, rats!" muttered Gorringe angrily, for he didn't like having fun poked at him. "He'd catch him now, at any rate."

Jean reached across for a new pack of cards.

"My deal!" he cried, and he was more excited and eager than when the game started. He was not tired. His mind was concentrated on the game. And Henri Pontieux smiled knowingly as he watched his protege.

Happy the boxer's manager whose charge is always as care-free as Jean Verlet on the night before a big fight. Presently, during a lull between the games, Tom Belcher rose and stretched himself.

He took a turn up and down the room.

He could tell, on glancing towards the window, that the moon was still shining brightly, though the dawn must be near.

He went to the window, drew the curtain back, and suddenly lifted the blind.

As he did so, he saw a face at the window, a face with sunken cheeks and cruel, pursed lips, a face in which a pair of eyes burned like living fire. Tom stood transfixed.

A cry of horror and dismay rose to his lips, but suddenly remembering Jean, he checked it.

The next moment the face had vanished.

Pontieux at that moment turned his head, and seeing Tom standing there, cried:

"Open that window, Tom, and let the fresh air in. It'll do us no harm to breathe it for a minute or two."

Tom was glad of the excuse. He pushed the window open, and leant out.

Below was the yard. Leading up from it was a flight of iron steps. These in turn, led to a platform, or gallery, which swept past the window to a door leading to the house.

Tom searched the yard, scanned the gallery and the steps. Yet he could find no trace of any man.

He swung his leg over the sill, and dropped on to the gallery below.

"Hi! Where are you going, Belshar?" cried Verlet.

"I'm just going for a turn in the yard," answered Tom. "I'll be back by the time you've cut for partners, and dealt the cards."

Tom did not want to alarm either Verlet or Pontieux, and besides, he was not at all sure that the face he'd seen so plainly was not a vision conjured up by a tired brain.

He now went to the door leading into the house, and tried to open it. It was fast locked and bolted. Nobody had passed into the house, or left it, that much was certain.

He next went down into the yard. It was empty. The lower doors of the house were fast locked also.

The walls were high. Tom felt sure that had anybody attempted to scale them while he was watching, he would have seen them.

He could not have missed doing so, for the moon was shining straight down, and the air was almost as bright and as light as if it were day.

Convinced that he had been mistaken, he went back into the room, but before taking his place again at the card-table, took care that the windows were fast shut and bolted.

The cut for the new game had given him dummy as a partner, Gorringe having retired to bed, and Jean Verlet and his manager sat opposite to each other.

"Ah-ha!" laughed Jean Verlet, sipping a cup of hot beef-tea, which had been set beside him. "Tom, he now has the dummy for a partner, but we must beat him, Henri!"

### The 5th Chapter. Proof!

Manager Starkey, who looked after Dillon's interests, was a very cautious and far-seeing person.

He took almost as much care with Dillon's preparation for a fight as did Pontieux in respect of Verlet.

But he was more of a martinet. He drilled his man, and drilled him hard.

The night before the fight, Smiler Dillon went to bed at ten o'clock, with instructions that he was to sleep the clock round.

Now, Starkey had taken the precaution to bribe one of the lads who was helping to train Verlet.

From him he had received information to the effect that Verlet was in grand fettle.

Starkey also got to know Gorringe, and although there was nothing of the traitor about Bob, yet the latter so disapproved of the methods of training adopted by Pontieux, that he could not help denouncing them to Starkey.

For instance, he had informed Starkey that instead of going to bed

a mile out and home before going to bed.

His amazement when he saw Starkey standing there was profound.

"Hallo, Bob!" said Starkey, with a nod and a smile. "You're out early—eh? Catching worms—what! Say, kid, how about Jean? He's snugly tucked up in bed, I'll be bound!"

Gorringe growled and frowned.

"Not him!" he cried, in a tone of deep annoyance. "I've just played my last hand of cards with 'em. They're still at it in the back room."

"I don't believe it!" said Starkey eagerly. "Show me!"

Gorringe hesitated. He knew he'd get into trouble if he were caught helping Starkey to play the spy.

Still, he so wanted the American to be an eye witness of this most astounding fact that he gave way.

"Come on, then!" he cried. "But don't make a noise! You can peep in at the keyhole! I never see anything like it! Verlet is in grand shape; but they're going to chuck the match clean away! Fancy

shivers. And what amazed him was that, instead of sitting there, brooding over his chances in the fight, Jean Verlet seemed to be completely engrossed in his game of cards.

What did it mean? Had the French kid got any real chance against Dillon?

Starkey dismissed the idea with a shrug and a laugh.

"Of course not!" he said to himself. "Smiler will kill him!"

Yet, had he entered Smiler's room when he got back to the hotel, he might have found the Yankee boxer turning from side to side, his brain far too active to permit of his going to sleep, and Smiler might have told him that thus far he had not slept a wink.

All the time the American was figuring out what he could do to the French champion when he got him into the ring.

Dillon, though he reckoned the result a foregone conclusion, was worrying about the fight.

Jean Verlet, engrossed in his card-playing, didn't even give the fight a thought.

would stray towards those curtains which he had drawn across the window, as if he half expected to see them move, and a man leap into the room.

The dawn had almost come now. Even Jean's high spirits began to flag. His merry laughter rang less frequently.

Once he yawned and stretched. "Feel like bed, Jean?" asked the attentive and watchful Pontieux.

In a moment the young French boxer had roused himself.

"Not yet!" he cried. "I shall feel fresh in a moment. I won't go to bed just yet. I'll turn in after breakfast, and sleep till six o'clock in the afternoon."

Pontieux nodded and smiled. "Good boy!" said he.

He knew that Jean would be so tired when at last he set his head upon the pillow that he would be off to sleep in a flash. Then would follow forgetfulness of the trying ordeal through which he had got to pass, until it was almost time to start for the boxing hall.

Upon waking Jean would eat a light and wholesome meal, and then rest and read awhile.

Henri Pontieux hoped—nay, expected—his protege to enter the ring full of vigour and confidence, when he would have little fear as to the result.

Pontieux was feeling quite wide awake. Now and then he would drink a glass of wine, and light a fresh cigarette. But his eyelids never drooped, and there he sat, a living monument of patient devotion.

Tom Belcher, on the other hand, found it a hard job to keep himself awake. And therefore perhaps he hardly paid sufficient attention to a creaking noise at the window, which made itself heard now and again above the irresponsible and light-hearted chatter of Jean Verlet.

It was not until Tom saw the window-curtains fluttering in the breeze that he suddenly started and sat bolt upright, rousing himself to the urgent need of the situation.

Somebody had opened the window which he had closed.

Pontieux had not moved, neither had Verlet. Tom could have sworn that Bob Gorringe had left the room without approaching the window.

How, then, had the window been opened? It was impossible for it to have opened itself.

Even now the window did not stand wide open. Tom could see the glass shining, as the light played on it, in the gap between the curtains.

As Pontieux seized a pack of cards, and began to shuffle them prior to dealing them out again, Tom Belcher rose and took a step towards the window.

As he did so he saw the shadowy outline of a man's head and shoulders beyond the glass. Then it seemed to him that a hand was raised. He imagined he caught the glint of steel.

"Look out, Jean!" yelled Tom, and he leapt between Verlet and the window.

As he did so a loud report rang out, mingled with the crash of shivering glass; and as Jean Verlet and Pontieux sprang erect in their alarm, Tom Belcher threw up his arms, and tumbled backwards to the floor.

Jean, who just failed to catch him, glanced in horror towards the window. For a moment the face of a man showed itself amid the wreathing smoke, and then vanished.

"Henri," said Jean, in icy tones, as cool and as calm as if he were making a casual observation, "Lisette was right in warning me! They meant to kill me!"

Pontieux bounded past him to the window. He looked out.

He was just in time to see a man leap up the face of the wall below like a cat, swing himself over it, and vanish.

There was nobody else in sight. They had evidently only to deal with a single assassin.

Pontieux saw in a moment that it would be useless to pursue the wretch, who would be far away by the time they reached the street.

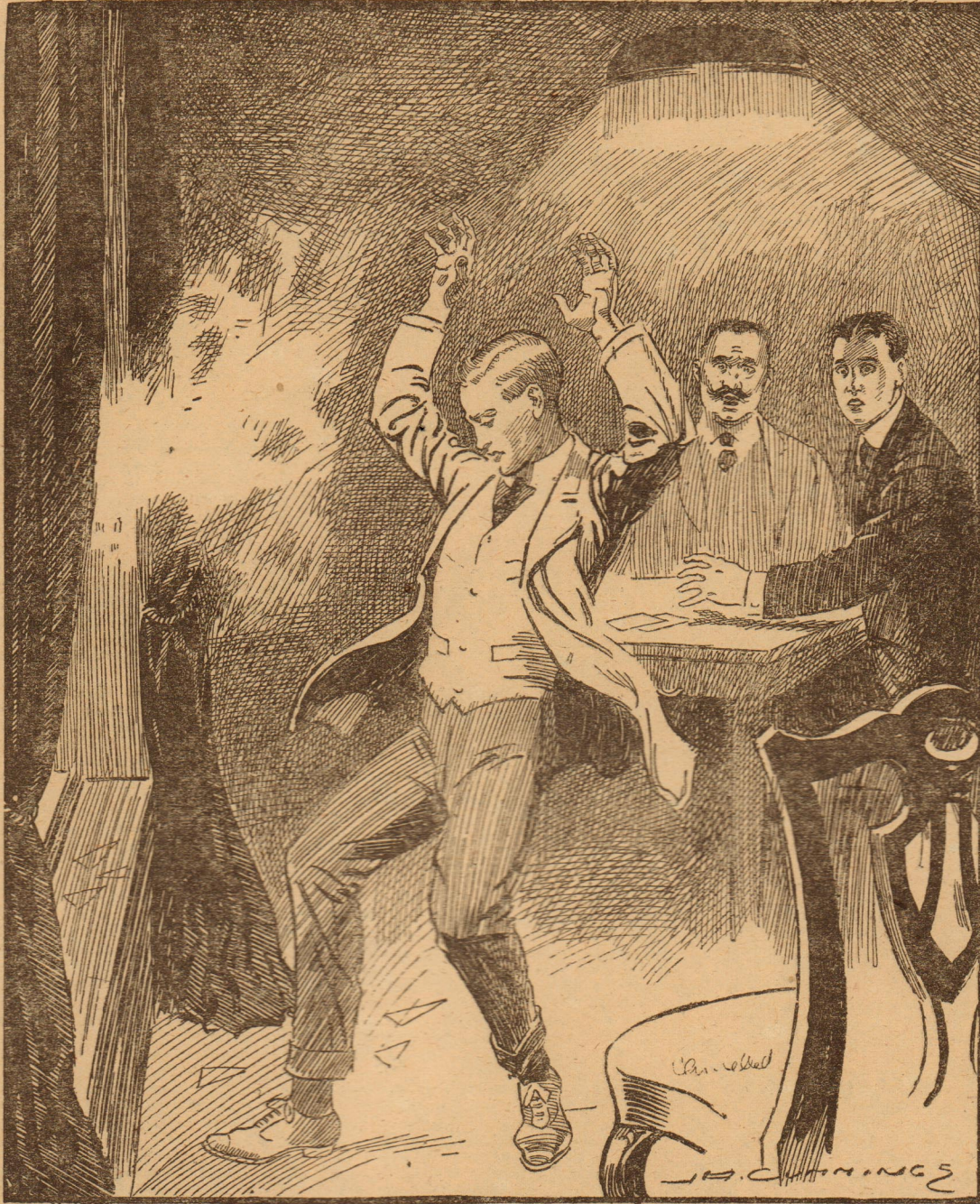
He swung round and came back into the room, to find Jean Verlet kneeling upon the floor and supporting Tom Belcher in his arms.

Jean's face was white, his lips were trembling. There were tears in his eyes.

"Poor Tom!" he murmured. "Poor boy! He has given his life for me!"

Pontieux bent reverently over Tom.

"Poor little chap!" he sighed. "Next to you, Jean, I do believe I loved him better than anybody else in the world!"



"Look out, Jean!" exclaimed Tom Belcher, stepping between Verlet and the window. The next moment, a loud report rang out, mingled with broken glass, and the young boxer staggered backwards.

as any self-respecting boxing champion should on the night before an important fight; Jean Verlet was going to sit up and play cards till morning.

"Nonsense!" Starkey had ejaculated incredulously.

"It's a fact!" said Bob Gorringe solemnly.

Still, the American boxer's manager would not believe it, and in order to satisfy himself he rose in the early hours, and took a stroll as far as the house in which Verlet and his party were staying.

All was silent and dark from the outside.

Starkey stood there ruminating. "It's as I thought!" he muttered. "It's all bunkum! Gorringe must have taken me for a fool to think he could catch me with that dope!"

Just then the door of the house was thrown open, and out came Gorringe himself.

Bob intended taking a turn of half

letting the kid play cards all night! It beats everything!"

They crept into the hall and up the stairs.

Merry laughter came echoing from the card-room. Starkey applied his eye to the keyhole, and saw.

When he got into the street afterwards his face was a study.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he growled. "Those guys have got a nerve! And Jean didn't look very bad, did he? He seemed keen, and he looks fit. Pontieux seemed happy and contented, and that Tom Belcher boy was resigned. I'd never have believed it if I hadn't seen it, Bob! Thanks for showing me!"

He pressed a gold piece into Bob's hand, and then they went along the street together.

Gorringe presently came back, and turned into bed.

Starkey went back to his hotel in a very doubtful frame of mind.

### The 6th Chapter. A Close Shave!

As Tom Belcher went on with the game he could not help his thoughts straying every now and again to that phantom-like face which he had seen at the window a little while ago.

"Could he have been mistaken?" he asked himself. "Was that a man who had looked in at him through the glass, with a demoniacal expression on his face—a face which had been the face of a murderer?"

Tom thought that it was almost impossible that it could have been so, and ever and anon he dismissed the subject from his mind, and tried to concentrate his thoughts on the game with the wholeheartedness which Jean Verlet displayed.

But he did not succeed. Much as he liked a game of solo whist, Tom could not make a business of it.

And between the hands his eyes



# A GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY BY FAMOUS MAURICE EVERARD JUST STARTING!

## A TALE OF TWELVE CITIES



### The 1st Chapter. Birds of a Feather.

Bustle, activity, a sea of eager faces and countless thousands of hurrying feet, some moving to this platform, others to that, and almost all intent on getting away from the great city where the day's bread had been earned through long hours of strenuous toil.

Nowhere a scene which pulses more with life than the meeting-place of the main railway-tracks of central England. But the station of New Street, Birmingham, for all its magnificent size and ceaseless traffic, is hardly the spot one would choose to linger on with a slatter of cold rain turning the pavements outside to oily, shining slabs under the gas-lamps, and a chill wind blowing that easily puts to silence the sonorously-musical chimes of St. Martin's bell-tower not so very far away.

The tall young man in the shabby thin suit, minus an overcoat, turned up his collar, and, with hands deep in pockets, slouched moodily away from the main-line platform, where station officials and possibly plain-clothes' detectives are always too plentiful for one of his calling; and moved with ever-watchful eye in the direction of the branch line which runs through Monument Station to the Rotton Park district of Edgbaston and to Harborne.

"Oughter be somethink doin' there!" he muttered, laughing dejectedly to himself, as he kept well among a press of prosperous city men on their way home for the night. Most of them carried interest-looking attache cases, and not a few promising gladstones and leather hand-trunks.

Arrived at his destination, he drew to a halt in the dark shadow cast by an overhead standard, and watched, with hungry eyes, the kaleidoscopic throng. His face was good to look upon, despite the hollowness of the cheeks, and the drooping lines of care about the eyes and tightly-compressed lips.

"I'm hungry, and I'm cold, and poor—while money lies about on every side," he might have told himself, as he kept an alert watch on a well-dressed fellow who just then deposited a brand-new dress-case within a stone's throw of him. "I might lift that bit of goods—perhaps containing a wad of Lady Godiva's—but it's too smart. Ah, this looks more about my mark"—as an exceedingly tall man warmly clad in a long tweed greatcoat deposited a small but bulky portmanteau on the platform and moved a dozen yards or more away in search of a porter. Anyway, the watcher made short work of his chance, for, walking briskly forward, he picked up the portmanteau with the utmost unconcern and moved leisurely off.

"Something like business," he reflected, with a self-satisfied smile when the station was well cleared and the spacious streets of the heart

of Birmingham stretched away on every side. "In a little while we shall see—"

The words died on his lips as a hand was laid quietly on his shoulder. He glanced up with quivering eyes, and squared his shoulders as though prepared to drop the bag and run, for the man who had accosted him was the gentleman of the long tweed coat—the owner of the portmanteau!

"Guess you've made some mistake over that bag," he said, in low but softly-modulated tones. "If it comes to a question of ownership, you'll find yourself on shaky ground."

The young fellow started guiltily. "Oh! Is it yours? I thought it was mine!" he mumbled apologetically.

The other smiled. "A most convenient mistake, my friend—for you. But, you see, I happen to have spotted you just as you darted away in the direction of the street. You're a luggage-thief, and I happen to have caught you red-handed. Put the bag down and listen. On the island, in the middle of the road, stand a couple of policemen. Forty yards away is another; at the end of Corporation Street a fourth; a fifth by New Street Corner, and yet one more by High Street. Result, directly I call you are surrounded."

A pitiful whine broke from the wretched fellow.

"Don't be hard, gov'nor! I'm starving, fair starving—that's what I am. If you nark me over this biz, I go down for a long stretch—three years' penal for sure. Give us a chance!"

The man with the moustache toyed with it thoughtfully, the while his keen eyes watched the pinched face.

"What sort of a chance?" he asked suddenly.

"Anything; it don't matter what, so long as I can turn a humble monarch. Like you, I've got to live."

The other laughed.

"Ah! You don't live like me, but there's no reason why you shouldn't—" Then he broke off, leaving the luggage-thief staring him over critically from head to foot.

"You mean you've got a job for me?"

"Yes, of sorts. I'm looking for a fellow who doesn't mind running risks."

"Risks! I don't know what they are. Straight, I'll do anything to get food and a night's lodging!"

The tall man showed his regular white teeth in a smile.

"I can get you three years' lodging, perhaps five, if I raise my hand," he said, looking towards the policemen. "If you do this work for me, you'll do it because you know I have the power to send you to gaol. But there, perhaps I'm a little hard, and I don't want to take all the fight out of a fellow. What

brought you down to luggage-stealing?"

As he asked the question he picked up the stolen portmanteau and signalled to a passing cab, which drew alongside the kerb.

"Oh, the same old story, sir—first one thing, then another—until you don't stand a dog's chance by going straight. So I chucked hard work for the easier road, and sometimes I don't do too badly. But when coves like you come along and get the darbies slipped on me first go off—well, it makes me think if the game's worth the candle. What are you going to do—give me up, or let me go?"

"Neither!" came the laconic reply over the taller man's shoulder. "Get into the cab. I want you. What's your name?"

"Fleck—Raynor Fleck," replied the luggage-thief, sinking on to the soft cushions with a sigh.

The other started and slammed the door. "Guessed you've been in prison more than once," he remarked, as the car rolled off.

"Six times. Three short, one year's hard, and two years at Portland, and I don't want to go back, give you my—Richard the Third!"

The stranger laughed.

"I should say not. Then don't forget what I'm doing for you—saving you from a pretty stiff sentence."

"Why are you doing it?" inquired the young man suspiciously.

"Because I need someone who will be useful to me—a fellow who knows his business, and possesses just the iron nerve and quick hand which you do. Fleck, I like you, and we're going to do good business together. We're stopping at a shop in Colmore Row, where you can hop out and buy a suit of ready-mades and a good overcoat, to say nothing of a box of collars, some ties, a bowler-hat, and a new pair of boots. Then you'll be in a fit state to accompany me to my hotel."

Fleck's clear eyes widened. "Gosh! This is a fairy god-mother

dropped from the skies!" he laughed.

"Not much, my friend; but a very keen business gentleman who reckons to see good interest back for his money. Here's the store; get right along into the changing-room, order what you like, and leave the bill to me."

More mystified than he had ever been before, Raynor Fleck obeyed the strange commands, and re-entered the cab a changed man. At the hotel his new-found friend, who called himself Dingwall, insisted on Fleck joining him at dinner, after which he took him upstairs to his own private suite of rooms.

When the door was shut Dingwall motioned Fleck to a chair.

"Now, look here, young man," he said, eyeing him sternly. "In your brief time you've been a pretty bad lot. I happen to know something of Portland Prison, once having a second cousin who was governor there, and I know that every chap who becomes a convict never loses the taint—Why, what's the matter now?"

for Fleck had risen to his feet, and was staring wild-eyed at Dingwall, whose clever-looking face was clearly outlined in the bright glare from the overhead chandelier.

"I know you!" muttered Fleck, in a muffled whisper, crouching back, with one hand to his throat. "For all your fine ways and swagger clothes, you've done time, too!"

Dingwall leapt up, his cheeks flaming and his hand flashing to the pocket at his hip.

"Shut up, you fool! You're making a mistake. I'm a gentleman—"

"Yes—a gentleman-crook!" sneered Fleck. "I've placed you now the light has given me a good look at your chivvy. You're Dacre Howard, alias Bluefish Peter, and you was in for five years for jewel theft; let out in June, 1912. So you would put

me away, round on a pal of the craft, would you, Howard? Fancy getting poor Fleck nabbed for three years for pinching a fellow-crook's bag of tools! Oh, I know why the bag was heavy, Peter; you've got irons in there!"

Dingwall flopped back, and forced a smile.

"Sit down. I haven't time to quarrel," he muttered, producing a cigar-case and handing the other a weed. "I'm not going to deny what you say—"

"Because you can't. I was there, working in No. 16 Squad, while you were in No. 9, Dacre Howard—otherwise, Convict 64 A. Oh, yes, I remember you quite well!"

Dingwall lit a match.

"Shut up! I want to talk business. You can be useful to me—mighty useful. And there'll be bagfuls of money if only you play the game. I've got business on in Birmingham. A pal, Rust Jacobs, was to have come in, but he's turned out dud—got himself pinched in Huddersfield last night for ticker-lifting. Result, I'm minus a hand. Fleck, you're about to supply the deficiency."

Fleck blew smoke rings and yawned.

"Mighty good of you, Mr. Dingwall! But where do I come in, and what's the business?"

Dingwall drew his chair closer.

"D'you happen to know anything about precious stones?" he asked, in a low voice.

A laugh escaped the younger man.

"I should shay sho!" he said mirthfully. "Just try a couple of barnacles on me. That little bit of a sparkler you're wearing in your tie—it's a Rio blue-water stone, and would sell in the St. Paul's quarter of the town at from seventy-five to eighty sovereigns. I know, 'cos once I was assistant to a Dutch Jew merchant in Hatton Garden. I had to leave him; my fingers grew sticky, and somehow the stones used to stick to them. Well, Mr. Dingwall, go on."

Dingwall sat up as though someone had poked him in the back.

"You're a judge of diamonds?" he asked, with a quick intake of breath. "That alters my programme altogether. At first I wanted you for something quite different; if you can tell the worth of gems there's far better game worth flying for."

Fleck smiled behind his hand.

"Lay out a tray of mixed stuff. I'll sort out the duds from the straights, and give the value of each and the weight to the tenth of a carat."

This very startling announcement

(Continued on the next page.)



As Dingwall dangled the precious haul halfway to his pocket, from two separate points the boys landed themselves on him, Kit seizing the bag, and Earny winding a stout coil of rope round the fellow's slashing and swirling arms.

