

The BOYS' FRIEND

TWELVE PAGES! TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 20th, 1920.]

An Amazing New Story that is Creating a Sensation!

THE BOY WITH FIFTY MILLIONS!

BY VICTOR NELSON.

A Narrow Escape—Chuta's Vow!

Dr. Harding stared for a moment at the prostrate boy, a stupefied amazement then, with a gasp of alarm, he fell upon his knees and raised Don's head.

Frank Philips, Losely, South, and the other juniors also recovered from their surprise and pressed forward, but Mr. Farmer waved them back.

"Give him a chance of getting air, boys," he said. "He has fainted."

"Fainted! He's not, Farmer!" the Head exclaimed, horror and indignation in his usually kindly voice. "He was shot at—shot at by some soundrel from the summit of the hill!"

"Four heavens, can it be possible?" cried the under-master, who had heard the shot, but had not realised that it was anything more serious than someone potting at the girls.

He went down on one knee beside Don Darrel. Farmer could really have been termed "Captain Farmer," for in that rank he had experienced active service during the war, and he had seen enough of bullet-wounds to be able readily to tell when one was serious.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, as he stooped over Don and examined the thin red streak that ran across his temple. "It is not very bad, sir; merely a flesh-wound, that was just sufficient to stun him. Someone fetch water—quickly!"

South was about to dash off into one of the village shops. As he swung round, he uttered a cry and pulled up, however. In excitement, he pointed to the hillside.

Stumbling up a narrow and rugged path that ran up to its top was a strange figure.

It belonged to Chuta, Don's half-caste servant. The faithful fellow had been coming towards the procession when the dastardly attempt upon Don's life had been made, and had not failed to see the red flash of flame, or to hear the report that came from amongst the gorse-bushes. Had those who looked after him been nearer they would have seen that his brown-skinned face was distorted, and that his sombre eyes blazed with a fierce anger.

"He's after the fellow who fired the shot!" one of the musical clowns cried. "Let's help search for him, boys!"

In a flash, the grotesquely garbed, white-faced men were tumbling from their horses. Willing hands held their instruments and the animals; for by this time nearly all the inhabitants of the little village were gathered round.

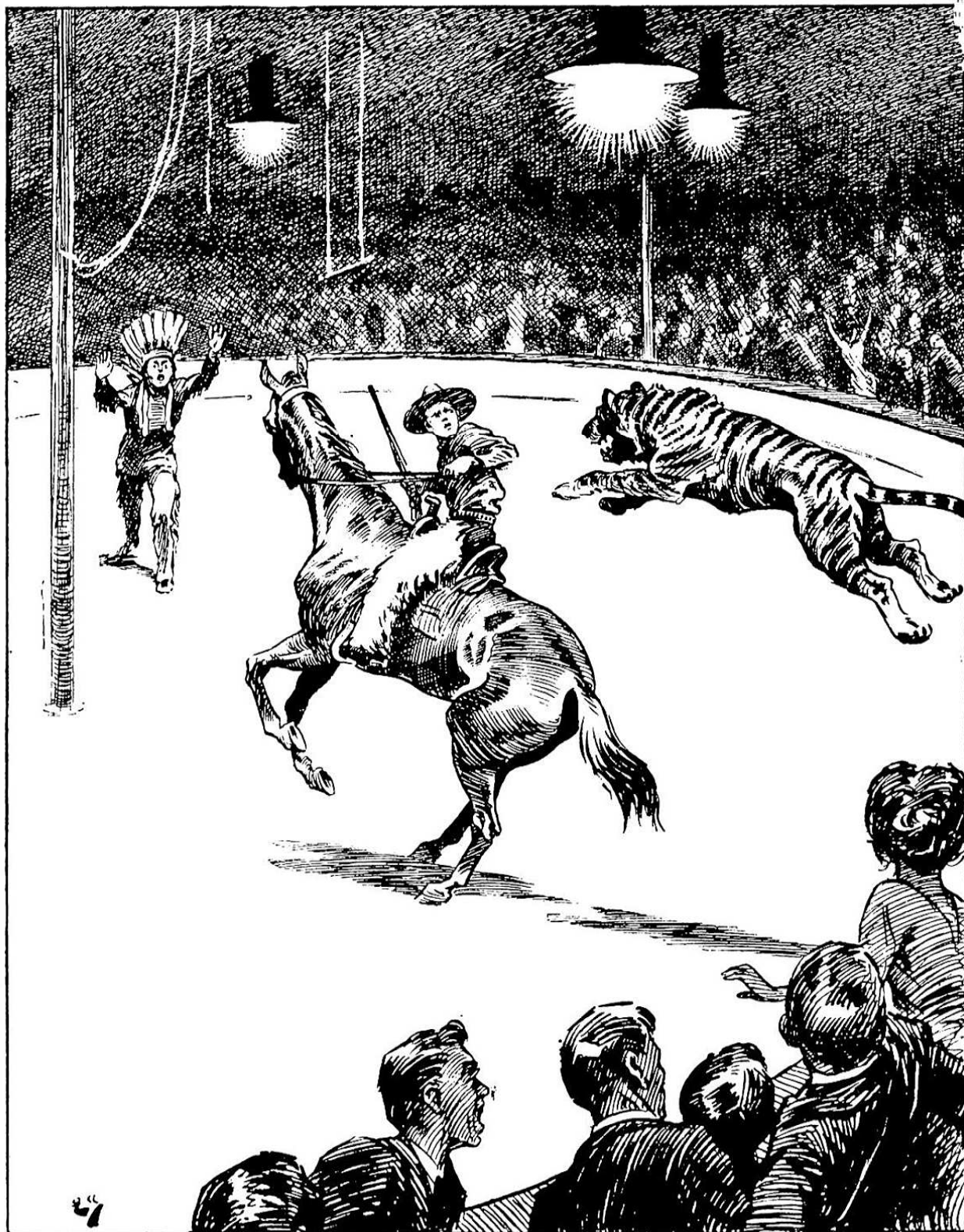
They had been first attracted by the playing of the band, and hurried out to see the procession, but had now almost forgotten the circus in their excitement at the startling thing that happened to the boy who lay beside the great elephant.

The example set by the clowns was immediately followed by hosts more. Don Darrel had spent some little time with the circus company after he had completed the purchase of the show, and, as was usual with him, had quickly endeared himself to all.

Thus the whole company was angry and indignant, and anxious to catch the would-be assassin and see him punished.

Men leapt from the triumphal arch and from the backs of other horses. Inhabitants of the village dashed into their homes, and returned with an extraordinary array of weapons—guns, pokers, sticks, and pitchforks.

In rather less time than it takes to write, fully sixty people were climbing the hillside after Chuta and the clowns, and, if the man who had tried to murder Don Darrel was caught, he looked like having a decidedly unpleasant time.



THE MAN-EATER'S SPRING! Don Darrel swung round in his saddle just in time to see the Bengal tiger, its yellow eyes full of deadly menace, flying through the air towards him in a mighty spring!

"He'll not be long before he has," says Mr. Farmer, "I have heard, as, South having brought down the water, the master bathed Don's stony and bandaged it with a couple of pocket-handkerchiefs. 'Ah, see! study he is better.'"

"That was true," Don Darrel had said and moaned softly. Presently his lids flickered, and he opened his eyes, gazed up dazedly at Mr. Timms and the Head.

"What has happened, sir?" he asked, confusedly of the latter.

The Head hesitated for a moment, realising that the boy must be shocked, grim though it was, Quaid.

"You were fired at, Darrel."

"Fired at?" Don muttered, his ears widening. "Shucks! What for, 'T?"

The Head gave a helpless gesture. "That is a matter we shall only tell you, I expect, if the miscreant who is caught, my boy," he said.

"Apparently, it was a deliberate attempt upon your life."

Don Darrel started, and his brows knit together in a frown.

Instinctively his mind went to the cause in the will left by Cyrus Q. Jeaster; that, in the event of his death, the whole colossal fortune of fifty millions should revert to the late millionaire's relative by marriage, Randolph Gurney.

Was he behind this villainous attempt to kill him? the boy wondered.

Memory—full memory—was returning to him now with lightning speed. He remembered the grief of the little cripple girl because the circus was cancelled, and her many fellow-invalids would be robbed of the afternoon's treat that had been promised them.

He recalled his breakneck ride to find the show, and how he had purchased it, and brought it back with him to Eaglehurst.

With every moment that passed he was feeling better, save that his head was throbbing painfully. He was a trifle bruised from his fall; but not nearly so badly as might have been the case, as he had naturally fallen with all his muscles relaxed. He felt firmly certain that, as soon as he could get upon his feet and move about a little the stiffness would pass.

"Anyhow," he said, unconsciously dropping into the manner of speech he had been accustomed to use upon his ranch. "I guess the guy who fired that bullet was a darned bad shot!"

The eyes of the Head and Mr. Farmer met, and both smiled in spite of themselves. Many boys would have been prostrated with the shock of learning that which Don had just learned—that their life had been attempted—and the masters could not help admiring his cool nerve.

"I sincerely trust the scoundrel is caught!" the Head said. "Shall we arrange for one or other of the villagers to take you in and let you rest, Darrel, and let a doctor see you?"

"Why, no, sir, though it is very kind of you to suggest it!" Don returned, struggling to a sitting posture. "You see, the wound can't be more than a scratch, and I've such a mighty lot to arrange before the performance this afternoon."

"Did I understand you to say you had bought this circus, Darrel?" Dr. Harding asked.

"Yes, sir. I gave a few thousand for it, as I happened to know that all the little cripple children away at the home here were expecting to be taken to the show, and that the poor kiddies would be real disappointed if it remained cancelled, as was the case before I weighed out the dollars—er—I mean purchased it, sir."

"You are indeed an extraordinary lad, Darrel," Dr. Harding remarked. "Your object is a noble one, but, my dear boy, think! What are you going to do with a circus, after to-day?"

"Oh, I've arranged that, sir!" Don explained. "Horatio Swiggers, the man from whom I bought it, will be supplied with some needed capital and travel about with it, acting as manager of the show for me. It will really be a profitable investment, I think."

"If you are sure the man will conscientiously look after your interests and treat you honestly, Darrel," the doctor reminded him.

"He will, sir. I am confident of that."

"But how can you be, my boy?" demanded the doctor, with a trace of severity.

"Well, sir, I just am," Don explained. "When you've lived for years with all kinds of men on the plains, good, bad, and indifferent, you somehow get into the way of being

able accurately to judge a guy—a man's character. And Swiggers, I am sure, is made of the right stuff."

"I hope you will find your judgment not at fault, Darrel; but as I am practically your guardian whilst you remain at the school, I must ask you to give me an opportunity of interviewing this circus proprietor—or, rather, manager we must call him now, I suppose."

"Certainly, sir. I will arrange for him to come to the school before the performance!" Don agreed. "Though, if he does prove a rogue, it does not inatter very much. The little cripples will have had the treat they've so looked forward to, and—well, after all, what's seven thousand?"

"Bless my soul!" Doctor Harding exclaimed. "It is a great deal of money, Darrel! You must really be wise as to your expenditure, my lad, even with your vast wealth!"

Don smiled in his frank manner at the shocked expression on the head's kindly face, and, somehow, Doctor Harding found himself wanting to smile, too; but, as a master, he was obliged to retain his dignity and gravely shook his head.

With Mr. Farmer's assistance, Don got upon his feet. He swayed dizzily for a moment and clutched the master's sleeve; but he quickly recovered from the momentary giddiness and stood alone.

Meanwhile, the crowd had long since reached the higher ground and were scouring it, the clowns and Chuta heading the search.

Bushes were beaten, stretches of woodland searched and the surrounding country swept by a shopkeeper who had brought with him a pair of powerful field-glasses; but there was no sign of anyone who seemed likely to be the person who had fired the shot.

True, by a deep pool, some five hundred yards away from the brink of the hill, a Chinaman, dressed in European clothes, sat stolidly fishing. He spoke quite good English, though with a lisp, and courteously answered the excited and eager queries put to him by the search-party. He had heard the shot, he said, but paid little attention to it; thinking it was fired by someone who possibly wanted to scare away the crows; and, although someone had hurried past him soon afterwards he had been intent on a "bite" and not even glanced round.

The crowd would have been surprised when they left him had they been able to see the evil expression that crept into his slit-like eyes. Still more surprised would these good people have been could they have known that the rifle with which Don Darrel had been wounded, lay in the mud at the bottom of the pool; and not long before they had dashed over the brow of the hill it had been held in the Oriental's skinny, yellow hands.

Dusty and chagrined the throng poured back down the hill-side at length to find Don Darrel being helped on to his horse by Frank Philips.

A villager at Doctor Harding's request had hastened off to report the matter to Eaglehurst's solitary constable.

Don Darrel was pale, but, as he rode away on his horse, which had been led along with the procession, he sat steadily in the saddle and seemed almost himself again.

Horatio Swiggers, a fat man with a blonde moustache and much worthless jewellery, who wore a rather threadbare riding suit, galloped after him, for they were going on ahead to view the ground where the circus was to pitch.

The Head and Mr. Farmer drew back and stood on the pavement. In silence they looked after Don Darrel until he had disappeared round a bend in the road.

The procession started off again, a giant Hindu in turban and full native costume now in charge of the elephant Don Darrel had been riding.

The clowns had regained their steeds and their band blared out merrily, the red-nosed gentleman on the camel pounding the drum and cymbals for all he was worth.

"Farmer, that boy is going to be a terrible responsibility!" the Head said suddenly. "Yet, somehow, I cannot be sorry that I have him as a pupil!"

"You mean, sir, that you have taken to him?"

The Doctor nodded.

"I have known him only a very short time, but I do not think I could like or admire him better were he my own son," he answered. "What cool pluck he has, Farmer; and what a fine disposition. You heard why he

rushed away and spent all that money to bring the circus here—so that the crippled children should have a treat that was almost snatched from them at the eleventh hour."

"Yes!" Mr. Farmer returned. "As we should have said out in France, sir, he is a 'good sport' and a 'white man!'"

"After that, never dare to lecture your boys upon the question of using slang again, Farmer!" the Head laughed.

Mr. Farmer shrugged.

"A schoolmaster can also be a man, sir!" he replied. "And my words expressed just what I meant. Like you I admire and respect that boy. But, what can this attempt upon his life mean?"

"Heaven knows, Farmer!" Dr. Harding answered very gravely. "I shall have to report the matter to Mr. Pensonby, the American solicitor who has been appointed his guardian and trustee. I have been wondering if it were an attempt at sweeping him from the path of someone who, on his death, would inherit his tremendous fortune. I must make enquiries as to how the will stands—the will of the millionaire who left him all those millions of money."

"Here comes Grayson, the local constable!" Mr. Farmer said. "He will wish to interview you, sir. I expect. Shall we go to meet him?"

"Yes!" the Head agreed, starting off towards the policeman, who was strutting majestically down the High Street; but the doctor's voice was drowned by the cheering of the villagers.

The story of Don's purchase of the circus and his reason for buying it had got about, and, although the lad by this time must have been almost out of earshot, the cheers were for him and his show.

Chuta at that moment was returning down the hillside; for he had not desecrated with the rest of the crowd of searchers. The half-bred Indian loved Don Darrel better than his own life; and he, perhaps, was the one man to accept the statements of the Chinese angler with doubt and suspicion.

He had dropped behind some bushes, and, crouching there, had watched the Oriental for some time, though as the yellow man remained patiently dangling his line in the water, Chuta had at length crept away.

"If he 'cought he did it, me kill 'im!" he was muttering. "Let 'im try again, dat's all! Chuta will watch and"—his dark eyes smouldered with passionate anger—"next time will be dere to see! Then, you slit-eyed, murderous Chink, look out!"

How Don Ran the Circus—Fresh Part I!

Don Darrel had had in his mind certain plans he had determined that it was unnecessary to mention to the Head.

You see, he thought the worthy doctor might discover reasons why he—Don—ought not to risk his neck in the ring of his newly-purchased show, and he decided it would be as well to give no hint that he himself meant to "do stunts" therein for the benefit of the audience. Of course, the Head might have something to say afterwards, but then little things like that never troubled Don. He was accustomed to let the future take care of itself.

When the great tent was pitched and the time arrived for the afternoon performance, however, the lad felt altogether too shaky to do more than look on.

It was in the tent, and standing near where the performers entered, that Grayson, the local constable, found him; after searching for the boy for some time to interview him.

Although a country policeman, Grayson was far from being a fool, and immediately he heard of the Chinaman who had been found fishing at the pool upon the higher ground, he had gone up to take stock of the man and question him. It had been only to discover him gone, and Grayson called everyone fools for not detaining him.

"It's my opinion, Master Darrel, that this Chinese fellow fired that

shot," he said, when, note-book in hand, he talked to the Boy With Fifty Millions. "Have you any idea who he might be?"

"Not the slightest, constable!" Don Darrel answered. "And I should feel you were mistaken but for the suspicions of him my servant, Chuta, also seems to have. However, you must not let the whole affair rest; I'll keep on my guard in future, never fear!"

"But it ain't a matter to be forgotten so easily, young sir!" declared the policeman, who would have liked the chance of arresting the would-be assassin and possibly receiving promotion. "I must question you, anyway. Have you any enemies who would be likely to seek your life?"

Just for a moment, Don Darrel hesitated; then he shook his head.

It had been in his mind to confide in the constable's suspicions that the attempt upon him had been the work of some agent of the man who would inherit his mighty fortune should he die, but a little thought convinced him that at this stage, at all events, it would be best to keep his own counsel.

After all, he had no proof that it was the work of some hirling of the dead millionaire's distant relative, Randolph Gurney, and it was just as possible that the shot had been fired by some lunatic of Bolshevist ideas who wanted to kill him simply because he was one of the world's most powerful capitalists.

He suggested this latter theory to Grayson, who seemed rather to believe in it.

"But please let it drop, old chap," Don urged, slipping a ten-pound note into the constable's ready palm. "If the affair gets a lot of publicity my guardian in America will be coming right along to watch over me like a duchess' lap-dog, and, say, I guess I don't want that. Do you get me?"

Constable Grayson grinned, winked, and touched his helmet. Ten pounds will do wonders in making certain people obliging and polite and, although he was portly and hated exertion, Grayson would have run five miles at top speed for Don now if the latter had requested it.

"I'm afraid it will get into the local paper here, Master Darrel," he said, "but otherwise, as you wish it, of course I'll do my best to 'ush it up!'"

"Do!" Don said nodding, and turning his eyes back towards the ring, where Wuffles, chief of the troupe of clowns was hugely delighting the audience with his witty puns and "gags" at the expense of Horatio Swiggers, who acted as ring-master.

As circuses go, the show was quite good, and it was only short hard luck that had brought its recent owner to his financial difficulties and failure.

Don Darrel's eyes sparkled with pleasure as he looked across to where, in the very best seats, nearly a hundred crippled children were smiling, clapping, and laughing in delight.

Don had insisted that they should be given the best accommodation in the tent, and that not only should they all enter free for the afternoon performance, but that they should stay and have tea with him and see a show in the evening, which, he declared, should be quite different.

When the afternoon show was over Don Darrel's tea for the little unfortunates was served by the clowns under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Timms who ran the local "tuckshop."

It was more like a Lord Mayor's banquet than a tea, as a matter of fact, and the matron of the home and others in charge of the children remonstrated good-naturedly with the young millionaire, declaring that the kiddies would all be down on the morrow with indigestion.

Don just grinned, and went on piling their plates with good things.

His suggestions that he should buy the local chemist out of indigestion remedies and wire for a dozen London specialists to be here on the morrow in case of emergency was laughed at but not accepted.

Chuta helped in catering with a will, whilst Snap, who loved children only second best to his master, made himself particularly agreeable.

He walked on his hind legs for pieces of cold chicken, "shook

hands" with the children for mere, and only made one hole in his manners—when Mr. Timms, who was carrying a tray and did not see him, fell over him.

Snap's dignity was ruffled, and he seized the caterer's trouser-leg, and shook and tore it. But Don quickly mollified Timms by instructing him to buy a new suit and send him in the bill.

The time for the evening performance came at last, and Don had arranged the entire change that was to be made in it with the worthy Swiggers.

The tent had been fairly full in the afternoon, but the crowd had been nothing like that which peered in at the several entrances to-night.

Seats had been reserved for the Head and his wife, and most of the masters. The boys had been given the option of which performance they went to see, and the majority had elected to patronise the evening one, and thronged in thickly now.

The show commenced with a trapeze act, which was both clever and sensational, and after the acrobats had retired Wuffles, the clown, must, of course, attempt to outdo them, ending by falling head over heels into the net, out of which he was lifted by Daisy, the elephant, whose "turn" came next.

Daisy was as intelligent as she was huge and ungainly, and, after a boxing match with Wuffles, she partook of a meal, seated on a mighty chair at a still mightier table, trumpeting in varying keys to signify her wants.

Followed tight-rope walkers, jugglers, and contortionists, "gags" by the clowns, and endless trick riding by Fay Swiggers, the one-time proprietor's pretty and slender daughter, who was billed as the "great Mademoiselle Yvette."

But the sensation of the evening had yet to come.

There was a sudden wild whooping, and, dressed in the Apache costume in which he had arrived at the school, Chuta rode madly into the ring, brandishing a tomahawk.

"Bless my soul! That's Darrel's servant, isn't it?" the Head exclaimed to Mr. Farmer, who sat next him.

"Yes, sir; and that's Darrel himself!" Mr. Farmer said grimly, as, in his cowboy rig, Don came galloping into the ring at a still more furious pace.

Don doffed his sombrero, and slackened his horse for a moment, whilst he bowed left and right to the audience.

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, trotting out his pet ejaculation yet again. "I had no idea he intended to—ahem!—make an exhibition of himself in this way, Farmer. I do not think I should have allowed it."

"I fear it is rather late to stop him now, sir," Mr. Farmer returned. "By Jove, how he rides! He seems quite to have recovered from his unpleasant experience of this morning."

"Quite," the doctor admitted, shaking his head doubtfully. "Bless my soul! I wonder what he is going to do?"

Don Darrel had shaken off all effects—or practically all effects—of the wound he had received. His head still throbbed a trifle, but otherwise he was once again his old sturdy self.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he shouted. "Imitation of now we used to catch Indians in the Wild and Woolley West!"

As if this were a signal, Chuta leant far forward over his horse's neck, and sent it sweeping round as a round the ring with the speed of a racer. Don unsling his lasso, and went after it, the boots of the splendid animal beneath him sending up a cloud of dust from the turf.

Round and round the two tore, Snap, who had bounded into the ring, dashing after his young master, and barking in excitement.

Another animal grew excited, too. It was on the programme to be put through a performance after Don and Chuta had concluded the exhibition they intended to give, and was a savage-looking Bengal tiger—perhaps the only animal of its kind ever really trained, and brought to obedience by man.

But the wild-animal trainer attached to the circus was no ordinary man. He passed under the name of Colonel Bartlett—though his real name was Smith—and, if Swiggers was to be believed, feared nothing that walked upon four legs, and possessed an apparent charm over the fiercest beast breathing.

He had trained and tamed endless wolves, lions, and bears in his career, and his crowning success had come when he had, after endless personal risk, mastered and brought to heel this Bengal tiger, which had been born in the menagerie.

THE THREADS OF THE STORY.

DON DARREL, a lad of fifteen, inherits from a stranger, whose life he saves, the stupendous fortune of fifty million pounds. With this he intends to give up his ranch in Mexico, and come to England and go to school. The disinherited heir to the fortune, RANDOLPH GURNEY, is plotting to do away with Don, and so secure the money for himself. On arriving in England with his faithful half-caste servant CHITA, and his dog, SNAP, Don learns that at Eaglehurst School they

(Now read on.)

But, if he had trained the tiger, it could hardly be said that Colonel Barlett had tamed it. Its den had been drawn quite close to the entrance to the ring, ready for its performance with its master, and, as it watched Don and Chuta racing round and round, it growled, and lashed its tail from side to side, and there was a baleful light in its gleaming yellow eyes.

A man who had been in one of the seats near the den got up quietly, and, unnoticed by all, as every eye was upon the riders, he sidled near the cage.

He was a dark-skinned man, with black hair and black moustache, who looked like a Spaniard. As he stood by the cage, he eyed the lioness, striped brute speculatively.

Ah! A gasp went up from the auditorium, as Don's lasso suddenly snaked out, its loop falling fairly and squarely over Chuta's head.

As neatly roped as could be, in spite of the flying pace at which he had been riding, Chuta reined in his horse; and, as both he and Don bowed, there was thunderous applause.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, I'll try to amuse you for a few moments with a little shooting!" Don said, as the clapping died down.

He unhitched a repeating-rifle from his saddle-bow, and, removing the rope from about his shoulders, Chuta hastened to assist him in the display.

For the next few minutes Don held the great tent spellbound with the marvellous accuracy with which he used the gun.

Chuta tossed into the air various-coloured balls, and without exception Don hit them with a bullet, and smashed them, though he was quite twenty paces away, and seemingly did not trouble to take any particular aim.

Then came preparations for the final and most thrilling feat of all.

Don Darrel backed his horse farther away from Chuta, until he had almost reached the low barrier forming the ring, and was only some couple of yards from the den of the tiger, which was growling menacingly, and pacing to and fro.

The lad's horse moved uneasily, and began to tremble; but, with a coaxing word and a touch of the hand, Don quieted it.

Amid a dead silence, Chuta picked up a red ball, little larger than a golf-ball, and, raising his arm, he held the brilliant little sphere between his finger and thumb.

For effect, the drummer in the orchestra began to beat a tattoo, that gradually increased in rapidity and noise as Dan levelled his rifle.

Every person in the audience was gazing at the Boy With Fifty Millions and his servant, wondering if Don could possibly hit the ball without the bullet touching and injuring Chuta's fingers; and no one saw the swarthy-skinned man near the tiger's cage suddenly dart out a hand to the door of the den, jerk the bolt from its socket, and fling the door wide. Neither did anyone notice the miscreant recoil, swing round upon his heels, and dart out into the night.

Crack! Don's rifle spoke, and everyone saw that the ball had been shattered, and

that Chuta was unhurt, and smiling.

This feat, as a matter of fact, was not a very difficult one for the Boy With Fifty Millions, who, having spent all his life out on the plains, was naturally no mean shot. It is not so many years ago that in the West it was not exactly wise to go about without a gun, for fear of being way-laid by some band of wild red men; and even at the present time there are many uses for the gun carried by a rancher in the Western States of America.

To the circus audience, however, Don's skill was little short of miraculous. Don Darrel shot a grin at Chuta, which, however, froze on his lips as he saw Chuta's eyes suddenly fill with an indescribable horror.

There was something about this look on his servant's face that warned the boy of approaching danger.

Realising in that brief moment before Chuta uttered a warning cry and sprang forward, that his servant had been gazing at something at his back, Don Darrel swung round in his saddle.

He was just in time to see the tiger, his paws outstretched, and its yellow eyes full of deadly menace, launching itself from its cage and flying through the air towards him in a mighty spring.

(Another exciting instalment of this splendid tale in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

HAVE YOU HEARD THESE?

BUT 'TWAS USELESS.
Little Thomas' hair was wet, was painfully apparent to his me eye that he had Willie Jones' tr on.

"Thomas, she said solemnly have disobeyed your dear father!"

"Mother, I haven't--real haven't!" said Thomas.

"But you have been swimming; I heard your grandpa tell you do so. Fetch me the slipper with tin-tack in the heel!"

"But, mother," pleaded Tom. "you didn't hear grandfather say what he said was, I shouldn't swim if I were you, Tom! And I shouldn't think he would, his rheumatics! But he never said word about me, so I went!"

UNKIND.

He was a dandy of the first rate, and he had about as much intelligence as the average hot cross bun.

"Ya-as," he said, "my hands are soft," and he glanced positively down upon them. "Do you know how I keep them so, Miss Sweetstuff?"

"How?"

"Well, I always with my gloves on."

A little red gleam came into her limpid eyes.

"And do you sleep with your hat on also, Mr. Green?" she queried.

He replied solemnly that he did not. And to this day he knows not why everybody laughed.

IN EVERY WAY.

"I have always believed," said Mr. Twaddles reflectively, "that a man in marrying should always choose his opposite."

"My dear, said Mrs. Twaddles, "that is the greatest compliment you ever paid me!"

Mr. T. began to speak, but thought better of it. He settled in his chair, and buried his nose in his paper.



SNAP RETALIATES! Snap's dignity was ruffed. He did not like being trodden on, so he turned round and bit the caterer's leg.

THE ADVENTURES OF GRANT, CHAUFFEUR DETECTIVE

By EDMUND BURTON

"The Affair of the V-Shaped Scar."

The 1st Chapter.
An Unwilling Accomplish.

It all happened so suddenly that Grant was scarcely aware of what was taking place until the man sprang up beside him, and clapped a revolver muzzle to his temple.

The taxi-driver had had a tiring day, and was perhaps not quite so wide awake as usual as he drove through Crane Street, preparatory to housing his cab for the night. It was foggy, and the street-lamps did little to dispel the gloom which hung over everything like a pall.

All at once a sharp crack sounded from one of the big warehouses on the left, to be followed by a scurrying of feet, and then someone leaped at him out of the darkness, gruffly ordering him to pull up.

The cold touch of a revolver against one's bare flesh generally goes a good way in an argument, and Grant, not being exactly a born fool, complied with the request. Two other figures, carrying something heavy between them, staggered across to the taxi, and climbed in with their burden.

"Nah then, boss. I don't want to hurt yer!" said the owner of the weapon. "So open 'er out for our yer worth! Whitechapel, an' sharp's the word!"

It was very late--well after midnight--and, as the street seemed quite deserted, there was no chance of assistance. Evidently the man guessed something of what was passing in Grant's mind, for the taxi-driver suddenly felt the cold ring of metal press more painfully against his forehead.

"This 'ere's a hair-pull, boss, so I'd advise yer not to try any tricks! Come along, set 'er goin'! Me an' me mates 'as a most important appointment with--with the Prince of Wales! Haw, haw!"

Despite the jocular tones, Grant knew perfectly well that the fellow was in deadly earnest, so he opened the throttle, and the cab shot forward.

From Crane Street to Whitechapel is a fair distance, and the fog prevented anything like a fast pace being attained. The man at Grant's elbow seemed to realise this also, for he made no complaint--nor, indeed, did he speak at all until they neared their destination. Then:

"That'll do, nah! Many thanks for the drive, boss, which 'as done us a power of good! Pull up at the kerb, 'e James'!"

The taxi halted, and Grant, inwardly seething at being made such a fool of, was cudgelling his brains for some way of detaining the men, when he felt an arm encircle his throat, and something soft pressed against his mouth.

The sweet, sickly smell of chloroform was in his nostrils, and, after a few ineffectual attempts at resistance, everything became a blank.

Then the swiftly-pattering feet died away in the distance, and the fog swirled in smoky wreathes around a motionless taxicab, with its driver apparently fast asleep at the wheel.

"Now then, my lad, wake up!" Grant felt himself roughly shaken, and he opened his eyes. It was just growing-light, and the fog had

thinned considerably. A sturdy member of the Force was standing beside him, notebook in hand.

"This won't do at all, you know," said the constable, meditatively sucking the end of his pencil. "Gettin' drunk whilst in charge of a motor-vehicle is a serious offence! Name?"

Grant flushed, and stepped down on the pavement.

"I'm not drunk, he returned. "You can see that for yourself!"

"Then why were you asleep, snorin' like a pig, when I came along?"

"I suppose a chap can't sleep unless he's under the influence of drink!" snapped the taxi-driver irritably.

This policeman was evidently a raw recruit, and out for promotion.

"What's wrong, then?"

"I was chloroformed, after being set upon in Crane Street by three chaps, and forced to drive 'em here at the pistol's point."

The constable gave a loud laugh.

"Well--ha, ha!--that's the best I've heard for a long while! Perhaps you'd like to add that you're actin' for a film-- Here, hold on, young fellow! Not so fast!"

For Grant, with a spout of disgust, had leapt back into the driving-seat, and the taxi shot forward before the astonished constable could grasp what was happening.

"He's got my number, of course, if he was smart enough!" muttered the chauffeur. "But I've no more time to waste. I must get hold of North at once. This is a job for him, I'm thinking!"

He and Detective-Inspector North, of the C.I.D. had worked together before, and, recalling the mysterious shot he had heard previous to his cab being stopped, Grant feared that the business might develop into something very serious.

trio of rascals as ever pestered society being laid by the heels.

Only the previous evening the taxi-driver had noticed a large dull patch on one of the front mudguards, and had given it a touch of varnish; but the stuff was very slow-drying, and even some hours afterwards was still sticky.

Now, as he drove towards New Scotland Yard, Grant happened to glance at this patch; then he suddenly caught his breath, pulled up, and got out.

For, plainly visible on the surface of the mudguard, was the impression of a hand!

"And then, like a flash, an incident of the night before recurred to him--an incident which, at the time, seemed but trifling. But was it?"

He recollected that as he pulled up the cab after driving the mysterious trio from Crane Street, the man who had been sitting beside him had dismounted before the vehicle had quite come to a standstill. He had stumbled slightly, clutching at the mudguard to save himself from falling.

With a low whistle of surprise, Grant drove on, and finally drew up outside the Yard.

Although it was very early, North was already there--had been all night, in fact, putting the finishing touches on a rather tricky case--and welcomed the taxi-driver warmly. A close intimacy had sprung up between the pair since Grant had been of such assistance to the professional investigator on the occasion of their first meeting.

"Well, what's wrong now?" North inquired. "More mysteries, I presume?"

"Perhaps. It certainly looks--" "Be-r-rh!"

The buzzing of the telephone-bell interrupted Grant's reply, and North took up the receiver.

"Yes! Who's that? Oh, Martin! Westerby's place, you say? All right; give me fifteen minutes!"

"That's Martin, the inspector-in-charge at Crane Street Station," he explained. "He reports that Westerby's big warehouse was broken into last night--or early this morning--and the watchman shot. I must be off at once, so you'll have to-- What's up, man?"

For Grant was trembling like a leaf in his excitement.

"Westerby's? Crane Street! Why, that's probably the very thing I wanted to see you about!"

And he gave a rapid outline of what had taken place.

"Now come outside, and I'll show you something," he concluded. "It may mean a lot, or nothing at all."

North examined the mark on the mudguard closely through a pocket-lens, and then rushed back to his office, presently reappearing with a small, curiously fashioned camera in his hands. He made a couple of exposures, and finally turned to Grant with a satisfied smile.

"I'm glad you noticed this," he said. "Perhaps it means nothing--but I don't think so. Now, just wait for me till I tell 'em to have these developed, and then we'll move."

When they reached Crane Street the news had evidently spread--it's a habit news seems to have--for quite a goodly crowd had collected round the scene of the burglary. Though it had been very dark and foggy the previous night, Grant, knowing the locality so well, had little difficulty in recognising the spot as the place where he had been held up.

As far as could be gathered from the night-watchman, who was lying seriously wounded in hospital, he had been suffering badly from neuralgia and had taken a powder just before going on duty, hoping to ease the pain. The stuff, however, was evidently very powerful, for he dozed off, and remembered nothing until he suddenly awoke, conscious of the fact that someone was moving about in Mr. Westerby's private office.

He was making his way there to ascertain who it was, when, possibly still dazed from the effects of the drug, he blundered into three men coming down the passage. They were carrying a large and seemingly heavy sack.

Then, before he could do anything, one of the miscreants fired point-blank at his chest. He recollected nothing after that.

The constable who had reported the burglary said that whilst passing down Crane Street he had noticed the door of Westerby's warehouse slightly ajar, and, on looking closer,



(If you are in need of any advice concerning health and general fitness write to "The Health Editor," THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. All queries will be personally answered by Mr. Longhurst. Seize this opportunity of securing first-rate information and advice FREE!)

That Tired Feeling!

There are some fellows so horribly slack and disinclined towards exertion as to make anyone believe that they really were "born tired," as they say in the North of England. It is difficult to get them to take part in any game or exercise that calls for much or sustained exertion. That kind isn't so much tired as to body but as to mind. But there are great numbers of growing lads, who, although they look right enough, who are keen enough on sports and games, are prevented from doing well at these because they get tired so easily. This is no pretence. They just "can't stay." Yet apparently there's nothing definite the matter with them.

There are two likely reasons for this—they are deficient lung power and poorness of blood, otherwise anemias.

These two troubles may, to a very large extent, be cured.

Deficient lung power may be brought about by breathing impure air, or by breathing improperly. Well, if one lives in a place where the air isn't of the freshest, the only thing to do is to get away from that neighbourhood as often and as far as possible. By this I mean the taking of long walks or slow runs, or a combination of both, on every opportunity that leisure affords. Outside even the smokiest town the air is purer than it is inside. Make the most of it.

But proper breathing all can do—anywhere. It doesn't matter much how you take air in, so long as it is through the nose—which acts as a kind of filter—you fill the lungs, and in order to do this you allow the stomach to come forward. But when you breathe out, let out all the air you possibly can. Exercise the lungs, thus squeezing the stomach as you breathe out, bending the body forward, or sideways, so as to assist in getting rid of the foul, used-up air.

Take such exercises regularly, twice a day. Try to breathe so at all times, and the lungs will develop, be strengthened, and give the power which will enable exercise to be taken without the feeling of tiredness and weakness coming over you.

Of course, muscular movements should be added, so as to accustom the muscles to the demands exercise makes upon them.

Such breathing will also go a long way towards lessening the effect of anaemia, for by bringing increased oxygen into the body it gives the blood just what it is lacking.

But the weak youth mustn't rush things. He must be content to improve slowly.

Japanese Physical Exercises!

Again the contestants face each other, the left hand of the defender forward, arm horizontal, palm of hand downwards. The fingers are seized by the attacked, whose hand is also palm downwards; the fingers interlace. A tight grip is necessary.

The defender now bends a little backward, drawing back his left hand until it rests on the top of the left shoulder-blade. The attacker also bends slightly forward. The muscles of both arms engaged are to be firmly tensed. The attacker then tries to drag the captured hand up, above the head and forward, until the limb is straight. As a finish, the defender bends over backward, pulling the resisting attacker with him.

This is strenuous work, and a brief rest will be required before the movement is gone through again with the other hands.

Percy Longhurst

(Another splendid Health and Exercise article in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

Occupying a prominent position on the page was a long and fairly accurate account of the Crane Street robbery; but it was a short paragraph at the bottom which had caused North's amusement, and which now caused Grant's extreme indignation. "Early this morning," it ran, "a policeman on duty in the White-chapel district discovered a taxicab drawn up at the kerb, with the driver, apparently under the influence of drink, asleep at the wheel. Upon being questioned, the man replied that he had been forced to drive three men from Crane Street at the pistol's point, and then chloroformed."

"Disbelieving the man's story, the constable asked his name, but this was refused, and he drove off ere he could be detained. The number of the cab, however, has been taken, so doubtless more will be heard of the matter."

"The incident, it must be admitted, looks suspicious in the extreme. Has it any bearing upon the outrage just described? Was the driver intoxicated, or was he chloroformed, as he stated? Did he really drive three men from Crane Street to White-chapel? And if so, can he be an accomplice?"

Grant gritted his teeth with rage, and flung the paper down.

"I'd just like ten minutes with the fellow who wrote that!" he said savagely. "I guess he'd exercise his imagination in the nearest hospital ward for a few weeks to come!"

North grinned. "Don't worry!" he said. "You're not going to hear any more of that part of the business. When people like that constable and the inklinger are out for promotion, they get very zealous. I was like that myself when I started to work my way up the ladder."

As he spoke, he took his stand in front of a small mirror, and with the aid of a stick of grease-paint proceeded to deftly alter his appearance, after which he treated Grant's face in like manner.

"We're not exactly going to—well, Park Lane," he said, "so a little less respectability is advisable. Put on those!"

He tossed a bundle of clothes across to the taxi-driver, and then drew over the telephone. Calling for a certain number, he issued a few concise instructions, after which he and Grant left the Yard.

On this particular night the bar was even more crowded than usual. A medley of strange sounds—a babel of different tongues—English, Dutch, French, Italian—made the place hum like some gigantic hive. In one corner, several unprepossessing individuals were squabbling over a dirty pack of cards; a little farther off a trio were discussing something very earnestly in an undertone; whilst, half-sitting, half-lolling, at a small table, two more equally disreputable-looking ruffians were drinking from a couple of battered tankards, and blinking at each other in a maudlin fashion through the reek of tobacco-smoke.

Presently the card-players grew quieter, finally taking their departure. Others followed in twos and threes, until there was no one left save the barman, the trio who were still in deep conversation, and the two half-drunken gentlemen at the little table. Then a curious thing happened. One of the latter stealthily pressed his companion's foot, and became very wide awake all at once. A piercing whistle rang out, and the other men sprang up in alarm.

The small table went over with a crash, and one of the apparently tipsy men pulled out a couple of revolvers. The other was blowing his whistle as though his very life depended on it; as, indeed, it probably did.

"Game's up, Joker! And you Sims chaps as well!" cried a sharp voice. "Up with your hands, quick, and no tricks! You're fairly nabbed!"

"Curse it!" snarled one of the three. "That's North, of the Yard, or I'm a Dutchman! Scatter, boys!" "Stay still!" snapped back North. "You've no chance! The place is surrounded, so you may as well give in. Drop that stool, Joker, or I'll—Ah! Hang you!"

For Smithson, rightly believing that North did not want to fire, had snatched up a three-legged stool and let fly at the lamp overhead. There was a crash, a shower of splintered glass, and the place was plunged into darkness, just as half a dozen blue-coated, helmeted figures rushed in through the doorway.

What followed beggars description. Choking grunts, snarls, and oaths, tramping feet, and sounds of blows struck at random; then North's electric-torch flashed out.

The brothers Sims lay on the floor, all the light knocked out of them.



CORNERED! Smithson, believing that North did not want to fire, sent the stool crashing at the swinging oil-lamp.

The 3rd Chapter. The "Jemmy."

No matter how well you may be acquainted with Whitechapel and its environs, I am quite willing to wager that you neither know where nor what the "Jemmy" is—that is, unless you happen to belong to the criminal fraternity, which, of course, you don't.

Well, to be brief, the "Jemmy" is a tavern patronised, as its name would suggest, mainly by gentlemen who have some fault to find with the law of the land, and who, therefore, refuse to obey it. To reach the place requires a very thorough knowledge of the back streets and alleys, and, once having reached it, it demands equally as complete a knowledge to get away again. There are many curious entrances and exits to the "Jemmy," which doubtless are found necessary at times.

The public-house is very rarely visited by the police—certainly never, unless in good numbers—for the inhabitants of this particular locality have an ugly reputation. No, the "Jemmy" is not a nice place, by any means.

But the Joker—where had he disappeared to?

Muttering something, North flashed the light round, but to no purpose. Smithson had made good his escape.

The barman, who during the scuffle, had been crouching in safety behind his own counter, now emerged, and began bitterly bewailing the smashed lamp and other damage done to his premises. He was a dirty-looking little foreigner, and his lamentations in broken English would have been amusing to hear, but for the urgency of the situation. North gripped him tightly by the arm.

"Here, you!" he said quickly. "What secret way is there out of this infernal den?"

"Signor, I do not know. My lamp, eet sea! all smash! My table broke to bits! My—"

"Be hanged to you and your furniture! Will you answer my question?"

"Signor, I—" the alien was beginning again, when the look in the C.I.D. man's eyes made him think better of it. He shuffled towards a dark corner, and tugged at an iron ring in the floor. A trapdoor swung silently upwards on well-oiled hinges,

disclosing the top of a ladder leading down into the darkness.

"To ze sewer, signor!" explained the barman, pointing.

So this, then, was how the Joker had escaped!

The 4th Chapter. London's Waterways!

"Get those two chaps safely out of this before the alarm's raised!" was North's final order. "And a couple of you fellows follow me! Come along, Grant!"

They descended the ladder, and splashed along the bottom of the sewer, through which some eighteen inches of water was flowing. The C.I.D. man took the lead, flashing the electric-torch ahead. Nono knew better than he that the chase was almost certain to turn out a fruitless one, for the Joker was sure to be well acquainted with every twist and turn of London's underground "thoroughfares." It was hardly likely that this was the first time he and his fraternity had used this means of slipping from the clutches of the law.

Splash, splash, splash! The swish of their feet blended with the murmur of the current, but beyond that no sound was audible. It was impossible to say how many yards ahead Smithson was, or, for that matter, to form any idea whatsoever of his whereabouts—whether in front, behind, or down one of the many branches to right or left. Running water leaves no traces.

Suddenly one of the constables uttered a sharp exclamation, which caused the others to halt in alarm.

"The water, air—it's rising!"

North, now that his attention was called to the matter, looked down and perceived at a glance that the man was quite right. Moreover, the current was flowing more quickly and growing stronger every moment.

"Hurry!" he cried hoarsely. "We must give up, if we're to get out of this alive! Get back to the ladder!"

But going against the current was a much more difficult job, and became harder each minute as the flood rose inch by inch. It was now up to their middles, and North gasped out:

"I believe someone's opened the sluices, not knowing anything of this! By Jove, we'll never do it!"

It was now well-nigh impossible to keep their feet. Grant, being rather lightly built, found it necessary to cling to the arms of the burly constables, otherwise he would have been swept away. The C.I.D. man held the torch as high above his head as possible, but as yet no sign of the ladder they sought gladdened their eyes.

"Up, up, up, slowly, but with maddening certainty, rose the water, until Grant felt it lapping round his neck. His feet were swept away from under him, and his whole weight hung for a moment on the muscular arm of his companion, when North's excited voice rang out:

"All right, boys! Here's the ladder!"

As Grant seized one of the lower rungs something cannoned into him, and instinctively he put out his hand. Then a half-stifled cry burst from his lips, and North turned the ray of the torch downwards. It shone on the pale face of the very man they had been looking for—the Joker!

Evidently he had taken the opposite direction to his pursuers, and had been caught by the flood which swept him away before he could reach a place of safety.

"Better let him go!" advised the C.I.D. man, a trifle hoarsely. "He's no use to us now. We ought to be thankful we're not in the same condition ourselves!"

"Well, that's your case, anyhow Detective-Inspector North turned round in some surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What I say, of course! You worked the whole thing from start to finish!" replied Grant.

The C.I.D. man laid his hand on his colleague's shoulder.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "Who discovered the mark on the mud-guard? Was it I? No! Well, that's enough. Everything depended on that, for there wasn't a ghost of a clue to be picked up at Westbys!"

THE END.

(Next week, "The Affair of the Stolen Despatch!" Make a point of reading this thrilling yarn!)

A SPLENDID TALE OF JIMMY SILVER, KIT ERROLL, AND THE "KID."



Betrayed By His Chum!

A GRAND YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Information Received!

Valentine Mornington, of the Fourth, tapped at the door of the Head's study at Rookwood. There was a murmur of voices in the study, and the junior's tap passed unnoticed.

He waited. Morny's handsome face was pale, and his eyes were gleaming under his bent brows. On his cheek was a slight mark, as if a blow had fallen there. He waited a few moments. The murmur of voices in the study was uninterrupted.

With a muttered word of impatience, Mornington raised his hand again and rapped on the door.

The knock this time was loud and startling, and it was followed by a sharp "Come in."

Mornington opened the door and entered. Dr. Chisholm gave him a sharp and angry look. His visitor, Inspector Sharpe of Rookham, glanced at the junior and shrugged his broad shoulders slightly. The inspector had been interrupted, and he was not pleased. Neither was the Head pleased by the intrusion.

"Mornington! What do you want? You should not have come here now—"

"If you please, sir—"

"Go away at once! You can see that I am engaged now!" the Head exclaimed irritably.

"But—"

"Do you hear me, boy? I have something to say to you. You can have nothing to tell me that I need listen to. I am engaged with Inspector Sharpe. Leave my study at once!"

Mornington stood his ground. When his passionate temper was roused, Morny feared no one. Even the frown of the Head did not deter him, and he was now in his most passionate and bitter mood.

"What I have to tell you, sir, will interest Mr. Sharpe," he said calmly. "It is important that Mr. Sharpe should hear it."

"Nonsense!"

"One moment, sir!" said the inspector, with a very curious look at Morny. "Perhaps the boy knows something of the very matter we were discussing—the recent robbery at Rookwood."

"Exactly!" said Mornington. "Oh," said Dr. Chisholm, "in that case—"

"But I fail to see, Mornington, how you can possibly know anything about the matter, or why you have not told me before, if you have any knowledge of the robbery."

"I am ready to tell you now, sir."

"You may proceed, but be brief."

"Go on, my boy," said the inspector encouragingly. "Have you seen anything of the man Baldwin Sleath—"

"Nothin', sir; but it is as not Baldwin Sleath, whoever he is, who robbed the school the other night."

"Indeed! How do you know that?"

"Because I know who the thief was."

likely that he had a hand in the robbery. Let the boy explain."

The Head was silent, but he made a sign to Mornington to continue.

"I haven't seen the fellow called the Kid, sir," went on Mornington, "but I know he is in this neighbourhood, and that he was in Rookwood School on the night of the robbery."

"You did not see him?" asked the inspector.

"No; but he was seen—"

"By whom?"

"Erroll of the Fourth, my study-mate. He woke up, and saw the Kid in the dormitory for a moment."

"Why did he not give the alarm?"

"He thought it was only a dream at the time."

"How did he know the Kid at all?"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "And Erroll is gone—"

"Yes, sir."

"This information may be very useful," said the inspector. "Do you know where they are meeting?"

"Somewhere in the wood, I believe."

"H'm! That is rather vague. Does Erroll know that you have come here?"

"Not yet."

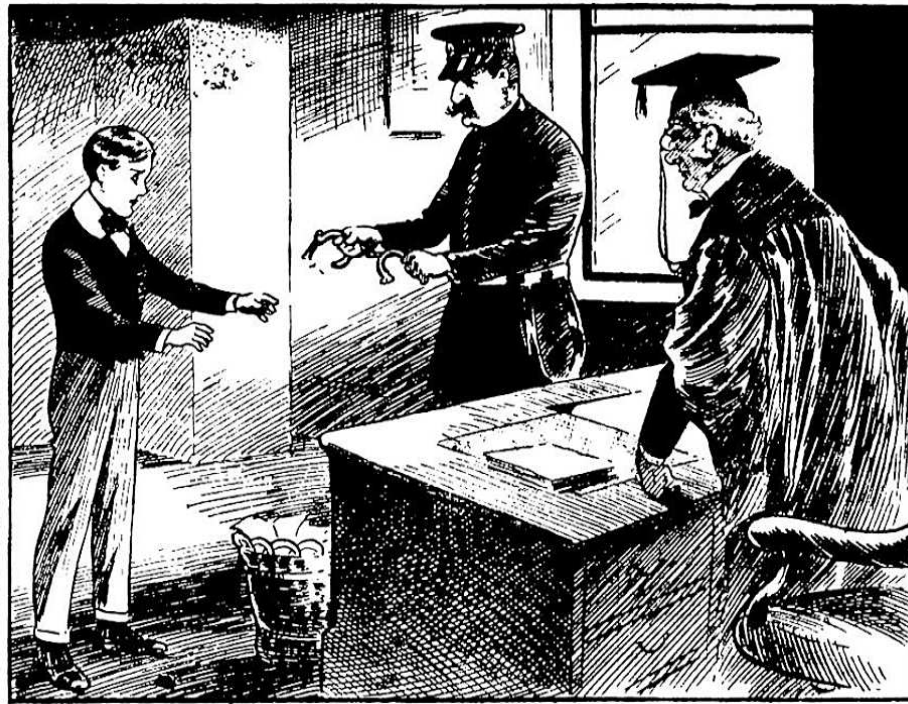
"Have you anything more to tell me?"

"That is all."

"Very good."

The Head made a gesture of dismissal, and Valentine Mornington left the study.

Inspector Sharpe rubbed his hands.



KIT ERROLL'S SACRIFICE! "Your hands!" said Inspector Sharpe roughly. Erroll, with a catch in his breath, accomplished what the Head looked on in anguish, powerless to do anything to save the unfortunate boy.

asked the inspector sharply. "Had he met the young thief before?"

"Yes; the Kid pulled him out of the river when his canoe upset."

"Did Erroll know he was a thief?"

"Yes."

"Where is Erroll now? Let him be sent for, sir," said the inspector, turning to the Head.

"He is out of gates, sir," said Mornington. "He has gone to meet the Kid."

"What exclaimed the Head. "Do you mean that a Rookwood boy is in league with a young thief?" the inspector exclaimed.

"No, sir. He has a fool idea of befriending him and reforming him," said Mornington, his well-cut lip curling in a sneer. "I tried to stop him, but it was no use. He—he struck me."

Morny's eyes glittered. "We've been good chums, and I want to save him from making a fool of himself. He's going to get into trouble for the sake of a young rascal, and I'm going to stop him. That's why I've come here."

"He will certainly get into trouble if he has dealings with a thief and cracksmen!" said the inspector grimly. "His romantic ideas of reforming a thief will not serve him much if the matter is really as you say."

"This looks like business, sir," he said. "Whatever that boy's motive in coming here, he was plainly speaking the truth. I will remain till Erroll returns to the school, with your permission, and interview this romantic young gentleman who is seeking to reform a cracksmen instead of handing him over to the police." And the inspector's jaw closed hard. "What sort of a boy is this Erroll?"

"A very fine character," said the Head. "One of the best in the Lower School."

"Nothing shady about his antecedents, of course?"

Dr. Chisholm hesitated.

The inspector smiled. That momentary hesitation did not escape his eye.

"Come, sir, it is necessary for me to know all the facts," he said. "Kindly let me know the facts about Erroll."

"He is one of the best characters in the Lower School," said the Head. "But before he came to Rookwood—"

"That is what I want to know."

"He was very unfortunate," said the Head reluctantly. "He was lost as a boy, and fell among thieves. But he kept his honour unstained. He

never became a thief. He was the most upright of lads."

"I'm—"

"I think it is probably owing to his own early and miserable experiences that he has this romantic idea—"

"Possibly; or possibly his connection with the thieves was closer than you suppose, and he may have found an old acquaintance and confederate in the Kid," said the inspector drily.

"I am sure not!" exclaimed the Head hastily.

"Well, well, we shall see."

"In fact, inspector, I am not inclined to place much reliance on Mornington's views at all. I feel that it is more probable that the robbery was committed by Baldwin Sleath," said the Head earnestly. "He came here—he defied me in this study—"

"That does not look as if he had recently robbed the place. It would show a very unusual nerve, at least."

"He is my old enemy—the man who has shadowed my life. He came to tell me that my son, who he stole from me in childhood, was trained as a thief, and is now in Borsal Prison under a false name."

The Head's voice trembled. "That is a matter that affects me more nearly than the robbery at Rookwood—"

"No doubt; but you cannot afford to lose the school silver and a large sum in money," said Mr. Sharpe. "My business here is to find the thief. Will you give instructions for the boy Erroll to be brought to me the moment he returns to the school?"

"Certainly," said the Head, with a sigh. "You will deal with him as gently as possible, inspector? He has

Morny gave the fat Classical a fierce look.

"You spyin' cad!" he muttered. "Reginald Muffin sniffed."

"I suppose a fellow can't help seeing what happens under his eyes," he exclaimed warmly. "You shouldn't scrup with Erroll in the passage if you don't want fellows to see."

"Scrapping with Erroll?" repeated George Raby, in astonishment. "You haven't been scrapping with Erroll, surely, Morny?" ejaculated Nowome, staring at the dandy of the Fourth.

Mornington gave a bitter smile. "Ask Tubby, if you want to know!" he snapped, and he went into his study and slammed the door.

The Fistical Four exchanged surprised glances.

The friendship between Morny and Erroll had often surprised the Fourth Formers. Often enough they had wondered how the quiet and sedate Erroll "stood" Morny's uncertain and passionate temper. But they were still more surprised to learn that the oddly-assorted chums of Study No. 4 had come to blows.

"Are you romancing, as usual, you fat boulder?" asked Jimmy Silver, regarding Tubby Muffin with anything but favour.

"I tell you I saw 'em!" hooted Tubby.

"Morny and Erroll scrapping—"

"Yes! Erroll punched Morny—"

"Well, it's really surprising that he's never punched him before," Arthur Edward Lovell commented.

"I would have! Come on, you fellows—"

"But I'm going to tell you all about it!" howled Tubby Muffin.

"You're not, old top! Go and tell somebody who wants to hear!" growled Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four went down the staircase, leaving Reginald Muffin to find other listeners for the thrilling details he had to impart.

Jimmy was looking rather worried. It was not his affair personally, of course; but he was sorry to hear of trouble in Study No. 4. He knew that Erroll's friendship was a good thing—a very good thing—for the wild and wayward Mornington; but it was not likely that friendship would survive the scene witnessed by Tubby Muffin.

Bulkeley of the Sixth called to the Fistical Four as they came down the stairs.

"Have you kids seen Erroll?"

"No, Bulkeley."

"He's wanted in the Head's study as soon as he can be found," said the captain of Rookwood. "If you're not busy you can look for him. He went out of gates some time ago—towards the river, Mack says."

"Right-ho!"

The Fistical Four were not specially occupied just then; but if they had been, they would have obliged Bulkeley of the Sixth all the same. The requests of a head prefect had the weight of commands.

"Is Erroll in trouble with the Head, I wonder?" Raby remarked, as the chums of the Fourth turned out of the gates of Rookwood. "That's something new. Erroll is generally in the Beak's good books."

"To err is human!" grinned Lovell. "Even old sober-sides Erroll may kick over the traces sometimes. Perhaps he's been offendin' the lofty dignity of Cartwain of the Sixth. We've done that sometimes, good boys as we are."

"We have—was has!" chuckled Nowome. "But the question is, where is Erroll? We want to oblige old Bulkeley, but we don't want to start a voyage of discovery to the ends of the giddy earth!"

"Oswald!" Jimmy Silver hailed Dick Oswald, who was sighted sitting on a log by the river-bank with a book on his knee. "See Erroll lately?"

Oswald looked up. "He passed me some time ago," he said.

"How long?"

"About an hour, I think."

"Which way did he go?"

"Down the river, and he turned into the wood," said Oswald. "He seemed to be in a hurry, and didn't answer when I called to him. He had a bag in his hand."

"Oh, good!"

The Fistical Four walked on down the towing-path.

"Something's on," said Arthur Edward Lovell sapiently. "Erroll punches Morny's nose—the sacred nose of his pal—and then goes out in a hurry with a bag, and doesn't answer when he's called. My beloved 'ears, this looks like something on."

"Blessed if I know what, though," said Jimmy Silver. "I hope the two duffers will make it up."

"That depends on Morny, I fancy."

acted foolishly, no doubt with romantic generosity—but—"

"We shall see."

It was evident that the Rookham inspector was not an implicit believer in romantic generosity. The Head said no more.

The 2nd Chapter!

Jimmy Silver is Puzzled.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came cheerily down the Fourth Form passage, and stopped as they met Mornington on the landing. The expression on Valentine Mornington's face was quite sufficient to arrest them. Morny was pale, and on his pale cheek the mark of a blow, slight as it was, showed up vividly. There was a cold, hard grin on his face, and a very unpleasant glitter in his dark eyes.

"What's up, Morny?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Morny glanced at him. "Nothing," he answered.

"You look as if you'd been looking for trouble, and finding it—bad!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

Mornington shrugged his shoulder.

"He, he, he!" came from farther along the passage. That unmusical exclamation proceeded from Tubby Muffin. "Morny's been rowing with Erroll! I saw 'em!"

Erroll is the very chap to turn the other cheek—Morry is more likely to hand out the other fist."

Jimmy nodded. He felt that that description fitted the case. The chums of the Fourth walked quickly down the towing-path, planting up the leafy paths that her... and there led into the brown woods that bordered the river.

"Hallo! There's Erroll!" exclaimed Nowcome suddenly. The Fiscal Four stopped. Fifty yards away from them, far up one of the footpaths through the wood, they sighted Kit Erroll of the Fourth. He was not alone. He was standing under the old trees, foot-deep in fallen leaves, talking to a ragged, tattered-looking lad, whom the chums of the Fourth had never seen before, Arthur Edward Lovell put his hands to his mouth to make a trumpet, and bawled.

"Erroll—Erroll!" Erroll started and looked quickly round towards the river. The tattered lad gave one quick look at the juniors in the distance, turned, and darted into the trees, disappearing in the twinkling of an eye.

Erroll, with a flush in his cheeks, came along the path towards Jimmy Silver & Co. They noticed that he was no longer carrying a bag. "You fellows looking for me?" he asked, as he came nearer.

"Yes; Bulkeley sent us. The Head says you," said Jimmy Silver. "The—the Head?"

"Yes. Nothing to be scared at, is there?" asked Jimmy, eyeing Erroll very curiously. "You can't have been getting into any very fearful scrape—a sober old Johnny like you, Erroll!" Kit Erroll smiled faintly.

"I—I hope not," he said. "Who's your tattered pal?" asked Lovell.

"The—the boy I was speaking to? a kid—" stammered Erroll. "I could see he was a kid," said Lovell, with a stare. "I wasn't likely to mistake him for a goat."

Erroll laughed. "You fellows don't know what the Head wants me for, I suppose?" he asked.

"The Head didn't confide that to us," said Jimmy Silver seriously. "An oversight on his part."

"Well, I'd better go, I suppose," I suppose so," remarked Lovell, with sarcasm. "It's always best to go when the Head wants you. It saves trouble."

The Fiscal Four turned back, and Erroll walked with them to the school. He did not join in the cheery talk of the juniors; his brow was thoughtful, and he seemed deep in reflections not of a very pleasant nature, to judge by his looks.

"In the dock!" ejaculated Lovell. "Yes." "What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Guess?" drawled Mornington. And he strolled away, with his hands in his pocket, leaving the Fiscal Four more perplexed than ever.

The 3rd Chapter. In the Name of the Law! "Come in, Erroll!"

Dr. Chisholm's voice was quite kindly; he gave Erroll a kind glance. Inspector Sharpe's face expressed nothing, but his eyes were as keen as a hawk's as they dwelt on Erroll's handsome, grave face.

"You wanted me, sir," said Erroll, as he came quietly into the study. "Yes, Erroll. It appears—"

"Perhaps you will allow me to question the boy, sir," said Inspector Sharpe.

"As you choose, Mr. Sharpe," said the Head oddly. "Erroll, kindly answer any questions the inspector puts to you, and do not think of concealing anything, my boy. I am afraid you have acted foolishly, but I have not the slightest doubt of your honour."

"Thank you, sir," faltered Erroll. His heart was sinking. The unfortunate boy's mind was almost in a whirl.

Morry—his chum—had betrayed him! That was the miserable thought that was uppermost in his brain. Morry, whom he had trusted as he would have trusted a brother, had betrayed him. It was the very last happening he would have looked for or expected, and it had happened. It was incredible, but it had happened. He had been betrayed, and by his own familiar friend!

No wonder his face was pale and troubled, and his eyes downcast; signs of inward trouble and distress, which Inspector Sharpe did not fail to see, and to misinterpret. The inspector's manner became grimmer. He raised his right hand, his fat forefinger pointing at the junior as he proceeded to question him, heedless, perhaps not seeing, the expression of repugnance on the face of the kind old Head.

"You have just been out of gates, Master Erroll?" "Yes."

"For what purpose?" "No answer."

"Was it to meet a boy known at the Kid?" "Still no answer."

"Your own past is not, I think, entirely above suspicion," said the inspector coolly. "Dr. Chisholm trusts you. My profession has not taught me to place faith in the repentance of thieves."

"I never was a thief!" Dr. Chisholm knew—"I know it, my boy, exclaimed the Head: "I am assured of it! But you must see that if you stand the friend of a known thief—you must see, my boy, the terrible suspicion that must fall upon you!"

"I am known at Rookwood!" said Erroll proudly. "If any fellow in the school can say that I have done a base or rotten thing, let him say so; but till then—"

"No heroics, please!" broke in the inspector's grim voice. "You will either tell me, Master Erroll, where to lay hands immediately on the Kid, or I shall come to the only possible conclusion—that you are his confederate, and lent a helping hand in the robbery of the school."

"Conclude what you like!" exclaimed Erroll fiercely. "I will not say a word!"

"Erroll!" exclaimed the Head. "Oh, sir! That boy—the Kid—risked his life to save mine!" exclaimed Erroll. "How can I put him into danger after that? And that is not all. He is more sinned against than sinning; he is good at heart. I know, I feel that that is so. I have every hope of recovering what was stolen from the school—every hope—"

"You are admitting everything, young man!" broke in the inspector's grinding voice. "For the last time, where can I lay hands on the thief?" "I will tell you nothing!"

Inspector Sharpe rose to his feet. His hand slid into his pocket, and there was a clink of metal. Erroll shuddered.

He knew the metallic clink of the handcuffs. "I am sorry, Dr. Chisholm!" said the inspector. "But it is my duty to take this boy away with me in custody."

"Oh Heaven!" breathed Erroll. Yet even at that moment the chief thought in his mind was of his chum—of Mornington—of Morry's misery and remorse when he should know what he had done in his bitterness.

"Erroll," exclaimed the Head, in great distress. "For your own sake—for your father's sake—for the sake of your honour and good name, speak frankly now, and tell the inspector all!"

"I cannot!" "Your hands!" said Mr. Sharpe roughly.

Erroll, like a fellow in a fearful dream, held out his hands for the handcuffs. The Head shuddered. Inspector Sharpe had drawn the handcuffs from his pocket. He bit his lip and slid them back again.

him in a cell, and he would not speak, and he could only be detained for a time on suspicion—" "Then that is why—" "Precisely, there is a surer card to play—" "And that?"

"Now that he knows all is discovered, he is certain to warn his pal, if the Kid is his pal; at least he will be concerned about the safety of his plunder. He knows where it is concealed. I intend, sir, to give him enough rope to hang himself!" said the inspector grimly. "In a few days, at the most, the proof will be in my hands; and the stolen property too. Leave it at that."

"But your plan—" "That will be known to you, sir, when the case is closed!" said the inspector with a bow; and with that he took his leave.

He left the Head of Rookwood in a state of deep agitation. But there was a smile of satisfaction on Inspector Sharpe's stolid face as he crossed ponderously to the gates. He was envisaging a very rapid and successful conclusion of the case.

The 4th Chapter. Tracked Down! Kit Erroll went almost blindly to his study.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were waiting for him on the stairs, anxious to know what had happened; but Erroll passed them without a word. He did not even seem to see the chums of the Fourth.

He was in a whirl of troubled thought; in his ears still seemed to ring the metallic clink of the handcuffs. He went into his study, No. 4 in the Fourth, and closed the door. Then he saw Mornington standing by the window.

Morry looked him full in the face, his own face wearing a mocking smile. Erroll did not speak. He would not utter words of reproach; he would not even let reproach be seen on his face. It was not reproach or anger that he was feeling; it was bitter grief and dismay.

He threw himself into a chair by the table in silence. The mocking smile faded from Valentine Mornington's face. He had not expected to see his chum like this. He made a quick step towards Erroll.

"What's happened?" he asked. "Erroll did not answer."

"They know now—all about the Kid, as you call him!" said Mornington. "It's better for them to know, before you get suspected of being in league with the young rotter. Can't you see that, Erroll?"

"Don't speak to me now, Morry! I daresay you meant well, or tried to think that you meant well. But you've—you've—" He choked.

"I did mean well—Erroll, old chap, don't look like that," exclaimed Mornington. "I—I'm sorry, if you feel it so much. I admit I was wild. You've thrown me over for a new pal, who's leading you into trouble and disgrace. What I've done was done to save you—"

Erroll—he knew at the bottom of his heart—that it had been jealousy and malice that had driven him out. Jealousy of Erroll's friendship—a bitter resentment of his chum's kind thoughts of the tattered outcast—had played upon the malice that was deeply rooted in his wayward nature. He knew the truth, he realised it now—now that it was too late, and he saw his chum stricken down before him.

"Erroll!" whispered Mornington miserably. "Old chap, I—I never thought, I never knew! I—I was wrong—I know I was wrong! For mercy's sake, old fellow, don't—" He laid his hand on his chum's shoulder, timidly.

Erroll raised his white, tear-stained face; he was struggling to control himself. "Let me alone for a bit, Morry—let me alone now!"

"But—but you don't hate me for what I've done?" "No, no! But let me alone now for—"

Mornington nodded, and left the study quietly. The door closed behind him, and Erroll was alone.

He rose, and in the deepening dusk he paced the study, his face pale and working. What was to happen now?

The shadow of shame was upon him, yet he did not repent of what he had done. He had tried to serve, to save, a boy who was the victim of others, whose heart was sound and true, he felt sure, and to whom he owed a debt he could never repay.

To save that wretched boy, little more than a child, from a life of hunted crime—surely that was not wrong.

Baldwin Sleath, who had led him into crime, had abandoned him, and fled. He had no friend, no guide for his erring steps. Within a mile of Rookwood he lay in the brown, autumn woods, the loot of the robbery under his hand—the loot which Erroll believed he could make him restore, as the first step to a life of honour and honesty.

He must save the Kid! Save him from the police—save him from himself, save him from crime, from the downward path that led to the destruction of body and soul. In spite of the danger—the danger that was terrible now that Morry had betrayed him—he must seek out the little wail; he knew that he must.

He stopped his hurried pacing at last, and stood at the window, looking out into the thickening dusk. The dusk hid the old beeches of Rookwood. The quadrangle was dim. From along the passage came the sound of merry voices—footsteps—a crowd of juniors tramping in to tea. He must save the Kid!

Even now it might be too late. What if they were searching already—bearing the woods for the wail as the hunters beat it for game? Erroll shuddered.

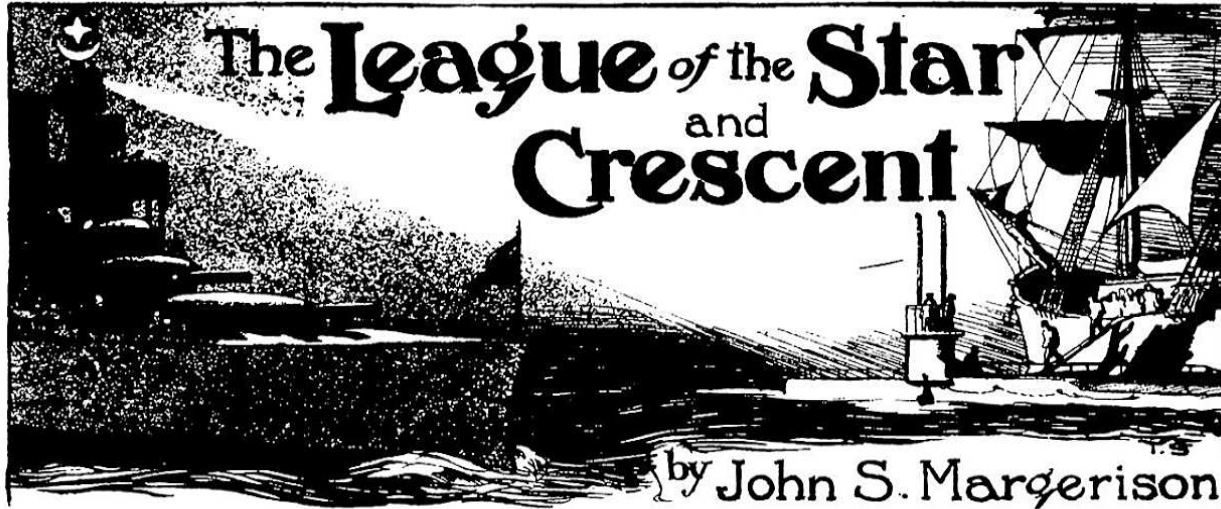
Old Mack was about to close the school gates as Kit Erroll passed out. The old porter called to him, without receiving a reply, and grunted as he slammed the gate and turned the key. Erroll of the Fourth was marked down absent at calling-over that evening.

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OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL OF ADVENTURE IN FOREIGN WATERS!

The League of the Star and Crescent

by John S. Margerison



INTRODUCTION.

DICK MERRAY, a midshipman on board H.M.S. "Fury," has orders to bring a despatch and a small quantity of provisions to a fisherman of the name of CASEY, and a crew of some eighteen British sailors to man the salvaged vessel, the Maria Doloresa. They had some plans to get board of money, reported by the King in the late war, which documents are eagerly sought after by a secret society whose sign is the Star and Crescent. As the crew of the Maria Doloresa are bidding farewell to some visitors in a submarine, a cruiser in the bay of the League of the Star and Crescent opens fire on them. The crew of the Maria Doloresa manage to escape and land on the coast of Africa, where they discover a situation the headquarters of the League; they are trying to avoid.

The League's Headquarters.

"If this was a Drury Lane melodrama," remarked Casey, with a grin, "I should say, 'Ha, ha! The plot thickens!' But I really can't see that we've got anything to worry about. After all, the old poker ashore has never got or heard of us before, and so it's a safe bet that he doesn't know the papers are in our possession."

"But it's an equally safe bet," interposed Dick, "that he has seen the Maria Doloresa before, and knows that the papers are—or were—contained inside her structure. That's the reason why he's towing her to shore. He wants to get those papers without us seeing them, assuming that we've found the schooner scuttling around without any crew. Most likely he knows that she was boarded by the submarine, and her crew killed and carried away, and that the cruiser, by this time, has accounted for the under-water craft."

"Oh, you may have reckoned that the papers were aboard the sub, and may only be taking a chance upon their still being in this ship, and, really, I don't see how he can suspect us of having them. It's odds on that he questions us, so, Casey, you might just walk forward casually—the old poker watching you through his glasses, and won't miss a thing you do—and tell the ship's company that they know nothing about papers—that they never even heard of such things in connection with this ship. Else we might all find our heads carried away from our shoulders one time, and that'll not be a thing any of us will want to write home about."

Casey grinned, and went forward along the schooner's slanting deck, for now the forepeak was full of water, and the bulkhead that kept the sea forward was strained to the very limit of its capacity. And as the petty-officer rejoined the midshipman once more, and reported the crew sworn to the uttermost discretion, that bulkhead did what Dick had long expected it to do. That is, it burst with a noise like a torpedo exploding, and the heavy sea rushed aft along the bowels of the ship which had so nearly crushed it. The Maria Doloresa shuddered once, and then seemed to give herself up to her fate. For, as the water came in, she settled down more and more in the water, till her decks were nearly awash.

The towing motor-launches put their engines to full speed in a frantic effort to get the old ship beached before she could founder—but she was a water-logged hulk, far too heavy for them, and, like pieces of sewing-cotton, the stout hemp hawsers parted one after the other. And before the motor-launches could get alongside

properly the waves were wading foot of her bluejacket crew.

Like an arrow from a bow the sailing launch shot alongside and the young Moor in command made signs for Dick and his men to leave their ship. Carefully counting his men, to make sure none had been trapped, Dick stood by the bulwarks and watched them all over, and then himself left the ship last—all, as was his right, and die as her commander. And then, as he took his place in the launch, the Moor shot out some order in his own tongue, and leapt

thereabout, and turned green.

Dick nodded, and turned green the venerable Moor in the white robe whose scarlet badges had aroused so much consternation in his bowels.

"Welcome to our shore," Effendi, said the gentleman, bowing low. "Though one might wish that you had come in a more fitting and leisurely fashion. Yet when it was so stressful, I am sure that the necessities and duties of life must be put aside that day, and take the place of ours."

The Moor bowed politely.

Ahmed Ben Adeem is flattered by suggestion, but in this Morocco where, until late, the people were wild and barely civilized, and the brigands, whose rank you were such made inventions as wire telegraphy, he said, "Nay, I fear you will need to rest a while till such trusty messengers as I can send can reach Gibraltar with a message that you are here with me. My people are wild, but their hospitality is greater than their rudeness, and under my protection you will be safe."



NO CHANCE OF ESCAPE!

"Quite a decent collection of tin soldiers, Mr. Blackmoor," said Casey, in no way repressed by the formidable array of arms trained on him and his superior.

waterlogged schooner leavin' the Britishers staring after him in wonderment. Standing up, Dick and Casey watched him run to the companion way leading down to her main saloon, and disappear, only to emerge a second later, his face wrinkled with an expression of disgust.

"I've got all my men aboard," Dick told him, when he at last returned and again boarded the launch. "I counted them to make sure none were left behind, and, in any case, they'd hardly be down in the main cabin when it was full of water."

"I sought not men, but a thing that is a thousand times more important than all your lives," replied the Moor. And after that, though Dick pretended to be exceedingly puzzled, and plied him with questions, he refused to say another word till the launch ran alongside a little jetty close to the sandy beach.

"Heaven rest her soul," said Casey, as he looked back to where the schooner's broken-off masts showed above the surface of the water. "She's sunk in eight fathoms, or

that not. Navy while the inform among its great type which Africa and Spain, nor guns, or other weapons. White Ensign, that your arse aboard the ship it has so little to see you lose.

Dick, with a son her scolding out any care of her, so with these men to Gibraltar, and didn't barge into she so nearly barge Firecat, which is She's got guns enough and other things, too, and she always flies the White Ensign, and if you've not any means of communicating with her, wireless, or that sort of thing, you know—she'll be jolly glad to come round here and pay you a call, and thank you officially for rescuing eighteen-of-her company."

Effendi, you may be sure that you and myself remain friends, and all that is yours are safe from me, if any people ever the Prophet is safe from all evil.

"Ratho," he paled with long men remember it's long men who had been watching the cratty face with much interest, and just long folks don't try any monkey tricks, it don't take that as he for, to be trances on with you'll find one or two of your men with their necks severed. That's all. Treat us right, and you'll get paid well for all that you do. The Navy's a good firm, Whiskers, as you'll discover. Treat us wrong, and we'll pay you ourselves. I'm not threatening. That's just a word of advice, so to speak, and it's hoping you'll take it quietly I am."

"The tall man is certainly outspoken and frank, almost to the point of rudeness," remarked Ahmed to

Dick. "But I will suppose that he is upset by his recent experiences in the ship you have lost, Effendi, and punish him not."

Casey hung back his head and laughed sarcastically.

"I wish you wouldn't try to be funny Mr. Whiskers," he said. "To think of you, a nigger, punishing me a white man, even if you had anything among yer measly collection of fore rows as could put his fists up to me, is enough to make a cat laugh."

"So?" queried the Moor, with a smile. His hand crept up to his breast, and he fingered the crimson star there embroidered, while he smiled mildly upon the big Irishman. "So," he repeated. "Thou mayst Giant Effendi will do himself the pleasure of looking around himself, and he will see whether it lies in the power of a poor nigger of a Moor to punish an insolent white man. See—and remember!"

Casey laughed again, but as he looked round the laugh died on his lips. For not only had every native the beach produced a very noticeable Lee-Enfield out of a modern type from under his robe and levelled it at Dick and himself, but from the cliffs above, the summits of the craggy hills everywhere abounded, and from behind every rock and stone and tuft of vegetation, the muzzle of a rifle peered wickedly, the whole trained upon the British blue-jackets standing in a group on the beach.

"Quite a decent display of tin soldiers, Mr. Blackmoor," agreed Casey, in no way repressed. "With a backing like that, any man as said you couldn't punish him would be a fool. But rifles and men ain't every thing, you know; there's such things as brains and cunning to be reckoned with. Not that I'm meaning that there's any need to exercise things of that sort where you're concerned, of course. I'm just referring to 'em so that, say, anybody who thought they might like to keep you prisoners for a certain length of time might understand that they weren't going to have things all their own way even if they have got a small army at their command."

Ahmed Ben Adeem looked the big Irish giant full in the eyes for a second.

"Go back to thy own country, thou of the loose tongue and the fearless eyes," he said, at last, "and bring back to me five more others like thee to be my personal bodyguard, and I will make thee their captain. By the beard of the Prophet, thou art indeed a man, and with a legion of thy sort the League of the Star and Crescent might sweep hosts of enemies off its path."

Again Casey laughed. "You are a funny old sort, Ben!" he said, with a chuckle. "First of all you're threatenin' to punch me overized carcass full of holes because me tongue wags a bit too freely at times, and then ye come right round on the other tack and offer me a job. It's maybe as well that I don't take ye seriously, though I'd not take your job in any case. In the first place, it's not Irishmen, like me, that work for niggers of any standing whatever, and, in the second, another three years' time I'd be thinkin' about retiring from the Navy with pension. And it's in the wilds, Kerry I'd rather be than in a slow place like Morocco seems to be. Why ye haven't ever asked us if we've got such a thing as a mouth about us, and we're not touched here or sup since last night. It's hospitality of a fine sort ye're extendin' to us. I must say, Tell your little tin soldiers to put their poggans away and show us where the canteen is, if really want to be pals with us—and not make us cross with ye."

The Moor was immediately all solicitude. He apologised profusely. He had not known they were hungry, and thirsty, or he would not have wasted their time by useless talk. By the beard of the Prophet, they should be so no longer. He waved his hand, and the riflemen disappeared, and the Moors on the shore again resumed their role of ordinary spectators as the rifles were once more hidden beneath their robes. Ahmed clapped his hands, and a negro appeared, saluting low, much to Casey's amusement.

"Hasten thou to the city, and instruct them to prepare food and wine for my guests," ordered the chief. "Haste at thy fleetest, lest the soles of thy feet be taugth with the bastinado to loiter not upon my commands!"

The negro salaamed again, and disappeared along a road which seemed to lead into the rocks.

"Come," said the Moor to Dick and his men. "Irishman of the big body, attend thou me close, for I would fain speak with thee and thy master, Nay,

AN EXCITING TALE OF FRANK RICHARDS AND THE RUSTLERS!



THE RUSTLERS' VENGEANCE

A Grand Yarn of the Chums of Cedar Creek.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapter.

At the Backwoods School!

"Popper!"
 "Uncle!"
 "No!" said Rancher Lawless emphatically.
 "But—" said Frank Richards and Bob Lawless together.
 The rancher shook his head. "You hustle off to school, sonnies, and stick to your lessons. This ain't work for you."
 "Well, I like that, popper!" said Bob Lawless warmly. "Who was it nosed out the rustlers' retreat in the Wapiti Hills—"
 "Who was it led the sheriff of Thompson there with his outfit?" inquired Frank Richards.
 Mr. Lawless smiled.
 "I don't deny it," he said. "You were very useful. That don't alter the fact that your place is at school, and not with the sheriff's outfit hunting for Handsome Alf and his gang of rustlers. There'll be some sharp shooting when they're run down again, and I don't want either of you knocked over by a bullet."
 "We're ready to take the risk—"
 "Quite."
 "But I guess I'm not ready for you to take it, sonnies," said the rancher, with a smile. "Nuff said! You can ride with me as far as the timber, and then off you go to school!"
 Bob Lawless grunted.
 He felt that it was hard lines, and his cousin, Frank Richards, fully shared his feelings.

Handsome Alf, the rustler, was loose again, after once being rounded up and consigned to the calaboose in Thompson Town. Half a dozen of his old desperado gang were free with him. And during the days that had elapsed since Handsome Alf's escape the rascal had proved that he had not quitted the Thompson Valley.
 More than one outlying ranch had been raided; two stockmen had been shot on the range. And the sheriff of Thompson and his men were seeking the rustlers far and wide.
 The chums of Cedar Creek had taken a hand in the hunt for the rustlers, and had helped in the round-up. Naturally, they considered that they had a right to keep on the trail till Handsome Alf and his gang were finished with.
 Rancher Lawless took quite a different view.
 The schoolboys' place was at school, in his opinion, and to school they had to go.
 Frank Richards and Bob mounted their horses outside the ranch-house in the sunny morning, and rode away with Mr. Lawless—not looking at all contented.
 The rancher was on his way to Thompson, to join the sheriff's outfit and take up the trail of the outlaws. And his son and nephew wanted very much to ride with him.
 But where the trail entered the timber they had to part.
 Mr. Lawless waved his hand to the boys, and galloped on towards Thompson, and Frank and Bob reluctantly turned their horses into the timber trail.

"It's rotten!" grunted Bob. "I guess we were as much use as any galoot in rounding up the rustlers, Franky."
 "More!" said Frank, with a smile. "We found out where they were hiding—"
 "Partly by chance—"
 "Well, we found out, anyhow; and we guided the sheriff's outfit. 'Tain't fair play to leave us out now."

"It's rotten!" agreed Frank. "English grammar this morning, too. I don't feel very keen on verbs, either transitive or intransitive—"
 Bob Lawless laughed.
 "Same here! I'd rather be gunning after Handsome Alf. I wonder whether the Cherub will be coming to school?"
 That doubt was soon resolved. At the fork of the trail in the timber they came on Vere Beauclerc, mounted on his black horse, waiting for them. Beauclerc joined them in the trail.
 "Your popper gone to Thompson, Cherub?" asked Bob.
 "Yes. He's going to the sheriff."
 "Are you're going to school?"



FIRING THE SCHOOLHOUSE! Across the playground came streaks of fire from the lighted arrows fired by the rustlers. Should Frank Richards and his pals give themselves up to save the school from destruction?

"Yes; it's rather rotten."
 "Can't be helped," said Frank Richards, as cheerfully as possible. "I dare say our respected parents and uncles are right from their point of view. They don't want us to stop any bullets. We're safer at Cedar Creek."
 Bob Lawless gave a snort. He was not thinking much about safety.
 But there was, as Frank Richards said, no help for it. And the three chums cantered on to the backwoods school.
 They arrived at Cedar Creek in good time for morning lessons, and found a crowd in the playground, all eagerly discussing the latest exploits of the rustlers.
 That topic was one of undying interest in the Thompson Valley.
 The valley had been as peaceful and law-abiding as almost any section in British Columbia before Handsome Alf and his gang came over the border, but since then there had been

a startling change. And feeling raw high on the subject along the banks of the Thompson River.
 There were a score of the North West Mounted Police in the valley now, seeking the rustlers, as well as Sheriff Henderson and his men; and it seemed inevitable that Handsome Alf must be rounded up and dealt with—unless he was wise enough to "skip" over the border while he had the chance. But during the week that had elapsed since the escape of the handsome outlaw, the hunt had been utterly unsuccessful, and many an outrage had proved that the Californian was still on the warpath.
 "They were going it again last night!" Chunky Todgers announced as Frank Richards & Co. dismounted.



"Up at Lone Pine, cattle run off and a stockman wounded."
 "And the rustlers?" asked Frank.
 "Oh, they got away," said Chunky Todgers. "I saw the Mounted Police ride out of Thompson as I came through this morning. They're off to Lone Pine to look for trails."
 "I guess I've a jolly good mind to ride for Lone Pine instead of going in to lessons," grumbled Bob Lawless.
 "Won't do," said Beauclerc, shaking his head. "Orders have to be obeyed, you know."
 Grunt from Bob.
 "Besides," continued Beauclerc, thoughtfully, "Mr. Lawless and my father, too, know that Handsome Alf is very keen on getting hold of us three—he knows it was we who routed out his retreat in the Wapiti Hills, and led the sheriff there. He hasn't forgotten that, and if he got a chance at us—"
 "I don't care about that. I only want a chance at him!" said Bob.

"There's the bell!" said Frank. In a dissatisfied mood the three chums joined the stream of Cedar Creek fellows going into the lumber schoolhouse.
 Their thoughts were with the sheriff's outfit riding in the trail of the rustlers.
 Lessons just then were more than a bore; they seemed to Bob, at least, like insult added to injury.
 But there was no help for it, and they had to detach their thoughts somehow from the sheriff's outfit and the rustlers, and fix them upon the worrying intricacies of English grammar. It did not cross their minds, just then, that that day was destined to be more eventful and exciting than any ride with the Thompson sheriff's outfit could have been.

The 2nd Chapter.
The Rustlers at Cedar Creek!
 "Hallo! Something's up!" murmured Frank Richards, and Cedar Creek school was hushed upon "last lesson."
 The quiet of the school-room was broken by the sudden sound of trampling hoofs without.
 A number of horsemen had ridden into the playground, and there was a buzz of hoarse voices, mingled with a jingle of bridles.
 "Some of the sheriff's men!" murmured Bob Lawless.
 Knock!
 A rider had dismounted at the door of the lumber school, and was knocking there with the butt of a riding-whip.
 Miss Meadows started.
 A thrill ran through the class.
 Outside the schoolhouse a hoarse voice was heard shouting:
 "Hands up, you durried nigger!"
 Evidently Black Sam, the stableman, had come out of his quarters to interview the intruders. Equally evidently, they were not some of the sheriff's men.



Frank Richards turned a startled glance upon his chums.
 "Surely it's not possible!" he muttered.
 Bob caught his breath.
 "The rustlers!"
 "Good heavens!"
 Knock, knock, knock!
 The whip butt was hammering on the big pinewood door of the schoolhouse which was closed and bolted.
 As a rule, that door was open in the daytime, during school hours, but since the advent of the rustlers in the section, it was kept closed—not that Miss Meadows had really expected the outlaws to look in at the backwoods school. It was simply a precaution; but as a matter of fact, it turned out that it was needed.
 "Keep your places!" rapped out Miss Meadows sharply.
 Boys were on their feet now, with startled faces. There was a rising buzz of voices.
 "Silence!"

Miss Meadows went quietly to the school-room door, which opened upon the wide passage through the house. In spite of her injunction, a dozen of the schoolboys followed her, breathless with excitement.
 She advanced to the house door—outside in the porch, there was a sound of heavy boots, mingled with the hammering of the whip butt.
 Miss Meadows glanced at the bolts first, to make sure that they were secure.
 Then she looked round, and signed to Frank Richards.
 "Richards—" Her voice was a whisper.
 "Yes, ma'am.
 "See that the back door is bolted. Lawless, Beauclerc, Lawrence, look at the windows."
 "Yes, Miss Meadows."
 The schoolboys scudded off in hot haste.

It was clear now that the rustlers were at Cedar Creek—though the daring of the raid, in broad daylight, almost took away the breath of the Cedar Creek fellows.
 Up at Lone Pine, the mounted police were hunting for Handsome Alf and his gang; on the plains, the sheriff's outfit were tiding in quest of them; and here they were, at the backwoods school!
 The very daring of the raid made it safer; for certainly, those that were hunting the rustlers could hardly have the thought of looking for them at the school in the backwoods. There was little if any plunder there to tempt Handsome Alf and his gang.
 "Knock, knock, crash!"
 "Open this door," shouted a voice outside.
 It was the voice of Alf Carson—Handsome Alf, the chief of the rustlers. Any possible doubt was set at rest now.
 Miss Meadow answered from within, without touching the bolts. She had no intention of opening to the raiders.
 "Who is there?"
 "Hallo!" there was a mocking laugh. "Is that the schoolmarm?"
 "Yes."
 "I guess I'm Handsome Alf—you've heard the name, I reckon."
 "Yes, I have heard it."
 "We've no time to tuck out to waste—open the door."
 "I shall not open it," answered Miss Meadows, in a quiet, clear voice.
 "Go about your business, my man."
 Handsome Alf laughed.
 "I reckon our business is here, marm. If you don't open the door, I guess we shall soon have it in splinters."
 Crash, crash!
 The butt of the riding-whip beat on the door like a hammer.
 There were exclamations and some shrieks in the crowded schoolroom. Mr. Sliminey and Mr. Shepherd were going round hastily, closing the window shutters and bolting them.
 A rifle snubbed off in the playground, and a bullet crashed through a shutter.
 "My hat," murmured Frank Richards. "This is a go, Bob."
 Bob Lawless nodded, his eyes gleaming under his bent brows. From the rack in the hall the chums lifted their rifles—which they had always carried with them since the arrival of the outlaws in the valley. The same thought was in the minds of all three—it was mainly on their account that the rustlers had come to the backwoods school. What loot there was in the place was hardly worth the while of the rustler gang, and their danger was great.
 Crash!
 The pinewood door creaked under the heavy blow of an axe.
 Miss Meadows set her lips.
 The Canadian schoolmistress did not lose her courage or self-possession. But her face was very pale.
 "Hack it down, Bunco!" shouted the Californian.
 "I reckon I'll be through in a brace of shakes, pard," answered a deep, hoarse voice.
 "Crash! Crash!"
 "Lawless, what are you doing?" exclaimed Miss Meadows.
 Bob had placed his rifle-muzzle to a thin crack in the door where the axe edge had glistened through.
 Without replying, Bob pulled the trigger.
 Crack!
 The shot was answered by a wild howl from without. One of the rustler gang, crowded about the wooden porch, had been hit.
 There was a shout of rage from Handsome Alf.
 "Shoot! Shoot!"
 The reports of six or seven rifles followed.
 Bullets smashed on the pinewood, and one or two came through and dropped, spent, on the floor.

"It is one of the saddest things that has happened on this coast since I've been here, boys!" Mr. Quaffe exclaimed. "I simply cannot understand how Hendron overturned his boat—simply cannot understand it!"

Ted was on the verge of excitedly explaining about the pencilled message on the floorboards that he had found, when it was put out of his head by the arrival of the coastguard's boat.

The stout craft was manned by a couple of young coastguards and Tenterfoot Wilson, and they had no news to tell.

"We've searched every yard of the rocks, sir," one of the men said to Mr. Quaffe, "and we've rowed right round your island. We can find nothing."

"No; and I am afraid you won't come Mr. Quaffe's quiet answer. "There is no need for you to trouble about White Gull Island, for I'll have that searched from one end to the other by one of my servants. I have already told the police I will attend to that."

He turned and walked away, and the rest of that day passed in alternate hope and fear for the Otters.

With the Robins to help them, the coast for miles was searched, and later in the day the rocks where Ted himself had been attacked were examined. They launched the boat, too, and towed for hours, dreaming to make a discovery, then Ted gave conclusive proof of the almost impossibility of overturning the boat.

He and Kitto actually tried to overturn her, and failed, and that experiment raised everybody's hopes still higher.

"There's a chance that Mr. Hendron struggled with the masked man after the message was written," Ted explained, "and it isn't impossible the boat got overturned that way; but, even if Mr. Hendron were still partially bound, he'd have been able to keep afloat. Kitto, I'm as sure as anything that he is a prisoner somewhere!"

"But—but where?" "There's no answering that, of course."

And why should he be kept a prisoner?" added Kitto. "Like you and me, he's really a stranger in England, and—and he isn't a wealthy man. I can't see what motive there could be."

"Neither can I," agreed Ted, his mouth set. "I believe it, all the same, and still I am going to Captain Bowers' shack!"

Jack Kitto was only too ready to fall in with that idea, but by the time the boat was beached, a hasty meal snatched at the camp, and the start made for Captain Bowers' cottage, it was quite dark.

The two scouts came upon the shack among the sandhills rather suddenly, and instinctively they stopped dead. Captain Bowers was in his little sitting-room, seated at a table on which stood a lighted lamp, and instantly the same thought flashed across both lads' minds.

"What did a blind man want with a lamp in his room?"

Instantly Ted Martin answered the unspoken question.

"Look at the table, Kitto," he whispered. "Count the glasses!" There were four glasses set in front of Captain Bowers, and two bottles of rum, and yet it was said that the blind sailor hadn't a friend in the town!

Even as Ted thought of that, Kitto caught him by the arm.

"Someone is crossing the sandhills, Ted!"

The scouts dropped to their knees among the long, coarse grass, and strained their ears. Sure enough there were footsteps to be heard, muffled, certainly, by the loose, dry sand, but unmistakable.

"There is more than one man, Kitto," whispered Ted.

"Yes," breathed Jack, and the two waited in dead silence.

Captain Bowers' Guests.

Ted Martin and Jack Kitto had not to wait long.

The muffled sound of footsteps became louder, and within a matter of seconds four of the choicest-looking scoundrels it had ever been the scouts'

lot to look upon, were pushing their way through the long grass in front of the cottage window.

The light from the lamp fell full upon the gang, showing up their evil, vicious faces; but apparently they were welcome guests to Captain Bowers.

At the first tap on the window-glass the blind sailor was on his feet, and the next thing that the scouts saw was that the four men were taking their places at Captain Bowers' table.

"Sailors, every one of them," whispered Kitto, "or they have been."

"Just wasters of the sea. Did you ever see such a cutthroat gang in your life?"

Jack Kitto certainly never had. Then he noticed that Ted was working his way nearer the cottage. Jack followed easily, and, with care, they were able to reach the window without being heard.

What they were to do now was a mystery, though.

The window was closed, and unless Captain Bowers and his villainous-looking guests spoke in raised voices not a word of what they were saying would carry to the chums, yet Ted Martin was desperately anxious to hear.

More than ever now he thought the blind sailor could solve the mystery of Mr. Hendron's disappearance if he wished to, and perhaps it was that belief that made Ted take a big risk.

He raised himself to his knees, and put his ear so close to the window that Kitto thought he must be seen. Still, it was the only thing to be done, and even this risk did not bring unqualified success, for Ted could only catch a word here and there, usually when it was Captain Bowers' harsh voice that was holding forth.

"Thousands of pounds, my merry lads! Treasure to make your mouths water..."

"That was all Ted could hear for a long time, then came another word or two."

"White Gull Island, I tell you! With my own hands I'll kill him—with my own hands!"

(More of this exciting tale in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

Next Monday's issue sees the publication of the fourth and last part of our grand

FREE BOXING GUIDE. Just think—on Monday you will possess the complete book! A book which no one should miss, and which very few people have missed.

The usual complement of stories will appear, including instalments of all the new serials, etc.

"THE WAIF'S SACRIFICE!" By Owen Conquest,

is the title of the next of the brilliant new series of Kookwood stories. These yarns are proving extremely popular—and no wonder at that. Specially written for the BOYS' FRIEND by that popular boys' author Owen Conquest, and published in THE BOYS' paper—what more could anyone want?

There will be fine, long instalments of:

"THE LEAGUE OF THE STAR AND CRESCENT!" By John S. Margerison,

"THE BOY WITH FIFTY MILLIONS!" By Victor Nelson,

and "THE MISSING SCOUTMASTER!" By Ross Harvey.

Speaking of "The Boy With Fifty Millions," reminds me—what do you think of our cover this week? Topping, isn't it?

The title of the next of the splendid new series of backwoods yarns is,

"THE FLIGHT OF THE RUSTLERS!" By Martin Clifford,

and it is simply top-hole. This new series has made a stupendous hit, and

we intend now to continue it for a bit. That pleases you, doesn't it?

"THE AFFAIR OF THE STOLEN DESPATCH!" By Edmund Burton,

is the next case to be handled by our crime expert, Grant, chauffeur-detective.

SOMETHING STALE! The other day, in answer to a question from me as to whether there was anything wrong with the paper, a reader said that the following was the only stale and unnecessary thing in "the whole shebang."

"Don't forget to order a copy of the BOYS' FRIEND early, you might get left."

Well, you would think that it would hardly be necessary now to put this reminder in, wouldn't you? But you would be surprised at the number of letters I get every week—almost every day—in which the same old complaint is made.

"I couldn't get the last copy of the 'B.F.' as my newsgagent said he was sold out."

So there it is! The only way to make sure of the "B.F." every week is to give a standing order to a newsgagent for it!

What do you think of our new wheeze—namely, the Telephone Competition? Rather unique, isn't it? You should have a try, as they're really not very difficult, and there is a cash prize of 10s. for somebody each week.

Your Editor

Advertisement for a kitchen and bedroom clock. Features a large illustration of a clock with the number 376. Text includes '5/- MONTHLY', 'CALLS YOU EVERY MORN', and 'MASTERS Ltd., 8, Hope Stores, RYE.'

Advertisement for Dutton's shorthand. Text includes 'EIGHT INCREASED 5/- Complete IN 30 DAYS' and 'DUTTON'S SHORTHAND has only 6 rules and 29 characters.'

Advertisement for 'CUT THIS OUT' featuring a 'Boys' Friend' pen coupon. Text includes 'Value 2d.' and 'Send this coupon with P.O. for only 5/- direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet St., London, E.C.4.'

Large advertisement for CLARNICO CARAMELS. Features a central illustration of a family (mother, father, two children) looking at a display of caramels. Text includes 'CLARNICO CARAMELS', 'Excellent! And you can get them on any scale', and 'CLARKE, NICKOLLS & COOMBS, Ltd., Victoria Park, London.'

Advertisement for 'PAIN'S BARGAINER' and 'FATHER XMAS LETS OUT HIS SECRET'. Features an illustration of a man's face. Text includes 'I am a man who I get my Biggest Bargains from, and I strongly advise all to write now for their New Illustrated Catalogue Free and Post Free of the Season's Biggest Bargains for XMAS AND AFTER.'

Advertisement for 'WATCH YOURSELF GROW' and 'IF YOU SUFFER'. Features an illustration of a man's profile. Text includes 'by using the Girvan System Mr. Briggs reports 5 inches increase' and 'IF YOU SUFFER from nervous worried feelings, lack of concentration, or feel awkward in the presence of others.'

Advertisement for 'NICKEL SILVER WATCHES'. Features an illustration of a pocket watch. Text includes 'DELIVERED ON FIRST PAYMENT OF ONLY 2/- WATCH WHILST PAYING FOR IT.' and 'G. KAVANAGH & CO. (Dept. 20), 65, BISHOPSGATE, LONDON, E.C. 2.'