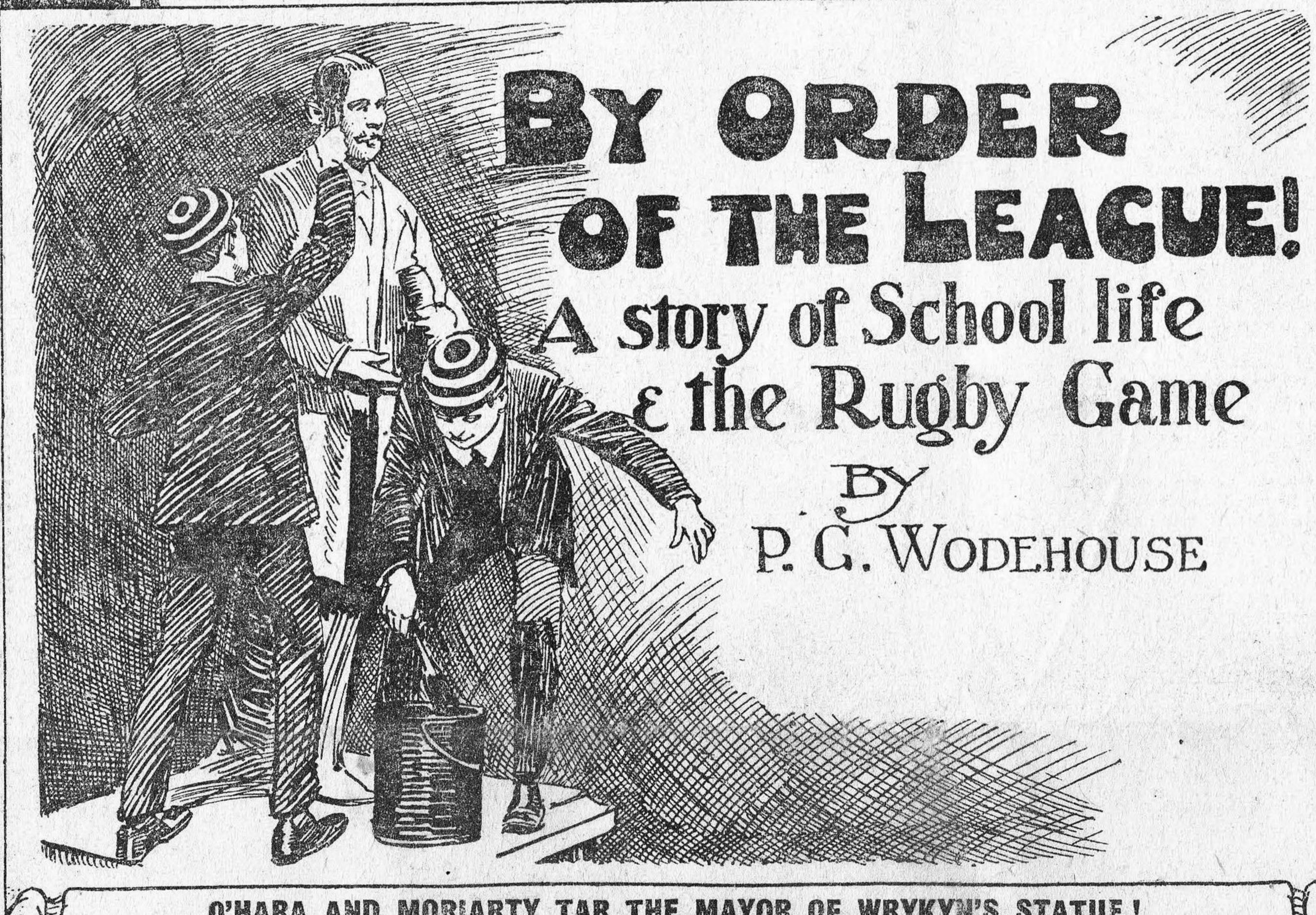
# 66 BY ORDER OF THE LEAGUE! A Great School P. G. WODEHOUSE In This Story By



No. 1,126. Vol. XXIII.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

Week Ending January 6th, 1923.



#### O'HARA AND MORIARTY TAR THE MAYOR OF WRYKYN'S STATUE!

### This Week's SPLENDID PROGRAMME

- "BY ORDER OF THE LEAGUE!" A Long Rollicking School Story from the pen of World-Famous P. G. WODEHOUSE.
- "THE MASTER STROKE!" Another Magnificent Footer Story, featuring Rello Dayton and the Duke, by WALTER EDWARDS.
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BOYS! HERE'S THE GREATEST SCHOOL STORY EVER WRITTEN!

# BY ORDER OF THE LEAGUE! A story of School life Ethe Rugby Game by P. G. Wodehouse

The 1st Chapter. The Fifteenth Place.

"Outside!"

"Don't be an idiot, man! I bagged it first."

"My dear chap, I've been waiting here a month."

"When you fellows have quite finished rotting about in front of that bath, don't let me detain you."

"Anybody seen that sponge?" "Well, look here"—this in a tone of compromise—"let's toss for it." "All right. Odd man out."

All of which, being interpreted, meant that the first match of the Easter term had just come to an end, and that those of the team who, being day boys, changed over at the pavilion, instead of performing the operation at lessure and in comfort, as did the members of Houses, were discussing the vital question-who was to have first bath?

The Field Sports Committee at Wrykyn-that is, at the school which stood some half-mile outside that town and took its name from itwere not lavish in their expenditure as regarded the changing accommodation in the pavilion. Letters appeared in every second number of the "Wrykynian" some short, others long, some from members of the school, others from Old Boys, all protesting against the conditions of the first, second, and third fifteen dressing-rooms. "Indignant" would inquire acidly, in half a page of small | the bath, vice Otway, retired. "I aware that there was no hairbrush was the senior wing three-quarter of in the second room, and only half a the second, but he's no earthly good." comb. "Disgusted O. W." would remark that when he came down with cause he's big," was Robinson's the Wandering Zephyrs to play opinion. "A man who's big and against the third fifteen, the water strong can always get his second supply had suddenly and mysteriously i colours." failed, and the W. Z.'s had been obliged to go home as they were in a state of primeval grime, and he thought that this was "a very bad | through that time he scored for thing in a school of over six hundred | them? He simply didn't attempt to boys," though what the number of tackle him. He could have brought boys had to do with the fact that him down like a shot if he'd only there was no water he omitted to gone for him. Paget was running explain. The editor would express straight along the touch-line, and his regret in brackets, and things would go on as before.

There was only one bath in the first fifteen room, and there were on the present occasion six claimants to it. And each claimant was of the fixed opinion that, whatever happened subsequently, he was going to have it | said Otway. first. Finally, on the suggestion of Otway, who had reduced tossing to a fine art, a mystic game of Tommy Dodd was played. Otway having triumphantly obtained first innings, the conversation reverted to the sub-

ject of the match.

The Easter term always opened with a scratch game against a mixed team of masters and Old Boys, and the school usually won without any great exertion. On this occasion the match had been rather more even than the average, and the team had only just pulled the thing off by a couple of tries to a goal. Otway expressed an opinion that the school had played badly.

asked.

Otway was one of the first fifteen

halves.

"They were so jolly heavy in the scrum," said Maurice, one of the forwards. "And when we did let it out the outsides nearly always mucked it."

"Well, it wasn't the halves' fault. We always got it out to the centres." "It wasn't the centres," put in well. Trevor was ripping!"

"Trevor always is," said Otway. "I should think he's about the best | see."

time. He's certainly one of the best centres."

San Million

"Best there's been since Rivers-Jones," said Clephane.

Rivers-Jones was one of those players who mark an epoch. He had been in the team fifteen years ago, and had left Wrykyn to captain Cambridge and play three years in succession for Wales. The school regarded the standard set by him as one that did not admit of comparison. However good a Wrykyn centre threequarter might be, the most he could hope to be considered was "the best since Rivers-Jones." "Since" Rivers-Jones, however, covered fifteen years, and to be looked on as the best centre the school could boast of during that time meant something For Wrykyu knew how to play football.

Sirce it had been decided thus that the faults in the school attack did not lie with the halves, forwards, or centres, it was more or less evident that they must be attributable to the wings. And the search for the weak spot was even further narrowed down by the general verdict that Clowes. on the left wing had played well. With a beautiful unanimity the six occupants of the first fifteen room came to the conclusion that the man who had let the team down that day had been the man on the right-Rand-Brown, to wit, of Seymour's.

"I'll bet he doesn't stay in the first long," said Clephane, who was now in type, if the editor happened to be suppose they had to try him, as he

"He only got into the second be-

"Even if he's a funk, like Rand-Brown," said Clephane. "Did any of you chaps notice the way he let Paget hadn't any room to dodge. I know Trevor was jolly sick about it. And then he let him through once before in just the same way in the first half. only Trevor got round and stopped him. He was rank."

"Missed every other pass, too,"

Clephane summed up.

"He was rank," he said again. "Trevor won't keep him in the team

"I wish Paget hadn't left," said

Paget was the wing three quarter who, by leaving unexpectedly at the end of the Christmas term, had let Rand-Brown into the team, and his loss was likely to be felt. Up till Christmas Wrykyn had done well, Paget had been their scoring man Rand-Brown had occupied a similar position in the second fifteen. He was big and speedy, and in second fifteen matches these qualities make up for a great deal. If a man scores "Why on earth don't you forwards one or two tries in nearly every let the ball out occasionally?" he match, people are inclined to overlook in him such failings as timidity and clumsiness. It is only when he comes to be tried in football of a higher class that he is seen through. In the second fifteen the fact that Rand-Brown was afraid to tackle his man had almost escaped notice. But

> circles. "All the same," said Clephane, before committing themselves. pursuing his subject, "if they don't

the habit would not do in first fifteen

puzzling Trevor, as he walked off the of practice that makes you funk. field with Paget and Clowes when And even when he did have a try at they had got into their blazers after the match. Clowes was in the same House as Trevor-Donaldson's-and Paget was staying there, too. He had been head of Donaldson's up to Christmas.

"It strikes me," said Paget, "the school haven't got over the holidays yet. I never saw such a lot of slackers! You ought to have taken thirty points off the sort of team you had against you to-day."

"Have you ever known the school play well on the second day of term?" asked Clowes. "The forwards always play as if the whole thing bored them to death."

disagreed, it was unfortunate, but he was not going to alter his opinions summed things up, and gave you the | then, Paget?" result. You could take it or leave it, as you preferred.

"I thought he was bad," said Clowes.

"Bad!" exclaimed Trevor. "He a chap having his off-days at any on toast, the same as last term." game, but one doesn't expect a man in the Wrykyn first to funk. He mucked five out of every six passes I gave him, too, and the ball wasn't a bit slippery. Still, I shouldn't mind that so much if he had only gone for his man properly. It isn't being out [ you, Paget, he always went high."

"That," said Clowes thoughtfully, 'would seem to show that he was game."

Nobody as much as smiled. Nobody ever did smile at Clowes' essays in wit, perhaps because of the solemn, almost sad tone of voice in which he delivered them. He was tall and dark and thin, and had a pensive eye, which encouraged the more soulful of his female relatives to entertain hopes that he would some day take orders.

"Well," said Paget, relieved at finding that he did not stand alone in his opinion of Rand-Brown's

"All right, then," replied Trevor. "There can't be any harm in trying for that, unless convinced at great him. We'll have another scratch length that they were unsound. He game on Thursday. Will you be here "Oh, yes. I'm stopping till Satur-

"Good man. Then we shall be able to see how he does against you. I wish he hadn't left, though, by was a disgrace. On a can understand Jove. We should have had Ripton

Wrykyn played five schools, but six school matches. The school that they played twice in the season was Ripton To win one Ripton match meant that, however many losses it I might have sustained in the other matches, the school had had, at any rate, a passable season. To win two Ripton matches in the same year was almost unheard of.

This year there had seemed every likelihood of it. The match before Christmas on the Ripton ground had resulted in a win ior Wrykyn by two goals and a try to a try. But the calculations of the school had been upset by the sudden departure of Paget at the end of term, and also of Bryce, who had hitherto been regarded as his understudy.

And in the first Ripton match the two goals had both been scored by Paget, and both had been brilliant bits of individual play, which a lesser man could not have carried through.

The conclusion, therefore, at which the school reluctantly arrived was that their chances of winning the second match could not be judged by their previous success. They would have to approach the Easter term fixture from another—a non-Paget standpoint. Under these circumstances it became a serious problemwho was to get the fifteenth place? Whoever played in Paget's stead against Ripton would be certain, if the match were won, to receive his colours. Who, then, would fill the vacancy?

"Rand-Brown, of course," said the crowd.

But the experts, as we have shown, were of a different opinion.

#### The 2nd Chapter, The Gold Bat!

Trevor did not take long to resume a garb of civilisation. He never wasted much time over anything. He was gifted with a boundless energy, which might possibly have made him unpopular had he not justified it by results. The football of the school had never been in such a flourishing condition as it had attained to on his succeeding to the captaincy.

It was not only that the first fifteen was good The excellence of a first. fifteen does not always depend on the captain. But the games even down to the very humblest junior game had woken up one morning-at the beginning of the previous term-to find themselves, much to their surprise, organised going concerns.

Like the immortal Captain Pott, Trevor was "a terror to the shirker and the lubber." And the resemblance was further increased by the fact that he was "a toughish lot." who was "little, but steel and indiarubber." At first sight his appearance was not imposing. Paterfamilias, who had Leard Young Hopeful's eulogies on Trevor's performances during the holidays, and came down to watch the school play a match, was generally rather disappointed on seeing five foot six where he had looked for at least six foot one, and ten stone where he had expected thirteen.

But then, what there was of Trevor was, as previously remarked, steel and indiarubber, and he certainly played fooball like a miniature Stoddart. It was characteristic of him that, though this was the first match of the term, his condition seemed to be as good as possible. He had done all his own work on the field and most of Rand-Brown's, and apparently had not turned a hair. He was one of those conscientious people who train in the holidays.

When he had changed he went down the passage to Clowes' study. Clowes was in the position he frequently took up when the weather was good-wedged into his window in a sitting position, one leg in the study, the other hanging outside over space. The indoor leg lacked a boot, so that it was evident that its owner had at least had the energy to begin to change.

That he had given the thing up after that, exhausted with the effort. was what one naturally expected from Clowes. He would have made a splendid actor; he was so good at

Robinson. "They played awfully play him, I don't see who they're the habit of forming his views on his for supposing that he's fallen off going to get. He's the best of the own account, and expressing them. | since then. We've seen that Randsecond three-quarters, as far as I can If people agreed with them, well and Brown can't tackle Paget. Ergo, good; it afforded strong presumptive | Barry is better worth playing for the

O'Hara dropped first and landed on all fours, and while he was still on the ground, Moriarty came down on top of him!

"It wasn't the forwards that mat-, performance, "I must say I thought tered so much," said Trevor. "They'll he was awfully bad myself." shake down all right after a few | matches. A little running and passing will put them right."

"Let's hope so," Paget observed, "or we might as well scratch to Ripton at once. There's a jolly sight too much of the mince-pie and Christmas pudding about their play at present.

There was a pause. Then Paget brought out the question towards which he had been moving all the

"What do you think of Rand-Brown?" he asked.

It was pretty clear by the way he spoke what he thought of that player | be worth trying for the first." himself, but in discussing with a football captain the capabilities of the | Barry," said Paget, "except being various members of his team, it is | collared by him when we played Seybest to avoid a too positive statement one way or the other before one has heard his views on the subject. And Paget was one of those people who | thought he marked me jolly well." like to know the opinions of others

Clowes, on the other hand, was in tackle. Paget. There's no reason

"I shall try somebody else next match," said Trevor. "It'll be rather hard, though. The man one would naturally put in, Bryce, left at Christmas, worse luck."

Bryce was the other wing threequarter of the second fifteen. "Isn't there anybody in the third?" asked Paget.

"Barry," said Clowes briefly. "Clowes thinks Barry's good," explained Trevor. "He is good," said Clowes.

"The question is, would he be any good in the first? A chap might do ! jolly well for the third, and still not

"I don't remember much about mour's last year in the final. I certainly came away with a sort of impression that he could tackle.

"There you are, then," said

Clowes. "A year ago Barry could ! resting. Trevor; "I want you to come over to the baths."

"What on earth do you want over at the baths?"

"I want to see O'Hara." "Oh, yes, I remember. Dexter's are camping out there, aren't they? I heard they were. Why is it?"

"One of the Dexter kids got measles in the last week of the holidays, so they shunted all the beds and things across, and the chaps went back there instead of to the House."

In the winter term the baths were always boarded over and converted into a sort of extra gymnasium where you could go and box or fence when there was no room to do it in the real gymnasium. Soccer and stumpcricket were also largely played there, the floor being admirably suited to such games, though the light was always rather tricky, and prevented heavy scoring.

"I should think," said Clowes, "from what I've seen of Dexter's beauties, that Dexter would like them to camp out at the bottom of the baths all the year round. I would be a happy release for him if they were all drowned. And I suppose if he had to choose any one of them for a violent death he'd pick O'Hara. O'Hara must be a boon to a Housemaster. I've known chaps break rules when the spirit moved them, but he's the only one I've met who breaks them all day long and well into the night simply for amusement. I've often thought of writing to the S.P.C.A. about it. I suppose you could call Dexter an animal all right?"

"O'Hara's right enough, really. A man like Dexter would make any fellow run amuck. And then O'Hara's an Irishman to start with, which makes a difference."

House. A Housemaster who enters into the life of his House, coaches them in games-if an athlete-or, if not an athlete, watches the games, umpiring at cricket and refereeing at football, never finds much difficulty in keeping order.

It may be accepted as a fact that the juniors of a House will never be orderly of their own free will, but disturbances in the junior day-room do not make the House undisciplined. The prefects are the criterion. If you find them joining in the general 'rags," and even starting private ones on their own account, then you master of that House retired from the

business and took to chicken-farming. in Dexter's. It was the most lawless at a public school—the usher type. In a private school he might have place. To him the whole duty of a

war against his House.

cricket cup in the summer term of to have and to hold in the manner of glorious, up-and-down cricket. Dexter did not see a single ball of that matched bowled. He was prowling in sequestered lanes and brokendown barns out of bounds on the offchance that he might catch some member of his House smoking there. As if the whole of the House, from the head to the smallest fag, were bats collapse before Henderson's bowling and Moriarty hit up that marvellous and unexpected fifty-three at the end of the second innings!

That sort of thing definitely stamps a master.

"What do you want to see O'Hara about?" asked Clowes.

"He's got my little gold bat.

lent it him in the holidays." A remark which needs a footnote. The bat referred to was made of gold, and it was about an inch long by an eighth broad. It had come into existence some ten years previously in the following manner. The inter-House cricket cup at Wrykyn had originally been a rather tarnished and unimpressive vessel, whose only merit consisted in the fact that it was of silver. Ten years ago an Old Wrykynian, suddenly reflecting that it would not be a bad idea to do something for the school in a small way, hied him to the nearest jeweller's and purchased another silver cup, vast withal and cunningly decorated with filigree work, and standing on a massive ebony plinth, | round which were little silver | just gone out." lozenges just big enough to hold the name of the winning House and the energetic way, and overtook the year of grace. This he presented with | youth referred to. There is usually one House in his blessing to be competed for by every school of the black sheep sort, | the dozen Houses that made up the | above like a sorrowful and rather disand, if you go to the root of the school of Wrykyn, and it was formally I gusted providence. Trevor's liking matter, you will generally find that established as the House cricket cup. for Ruthven, who was a Donaldsonite the fault is with the master of that | The question now arose: what was to | like himself, was one of the few be done with the other-cup? The | points on which the two had any real School House, who happened to be | disagreement. Clowes could not the holders at the time, suggested understand how any person in his disinterestedly that it should become | senses could of his own free will make the property of the House which had an intimate friend of Ruthven. won it last. "Not so," replied the Field Sports Committee, "but far otherwise. We will have it melted down in a fiery furnace, and there-; after fashioned into eleven little silver | where else?" bats. And these little silver bats shall be the guerdon of the eleven members of the winning team, to have and to hold for the space of one year, unless, by winning the cup anyone could find term-time dull. may safely say that it is time the twice in succession, they gain the right | For his own part, there always of keeping the bat for yet another | seemed too much to do in the time. year. How is that, umpire?" And And that was the state of things | the authorities replied. "O men of in- | games?" he said, remembering somefinite resource and sagacity, verily is | thing about a doctor's certificate in of the Houses. Mr. Dexter belonged | it a cold day when you get left beto a type of master almost unknown | hind. Forge ahead." But, when they had forged ahead, behold! it goodness," he added. would not run to eleven little silver passed. At Wrykyn he was out of bats, but only to ten little silver bats. a person who thanked goodness Thereupon the Headmaster, a man | that he was not allowed to play games Housemaster appeared to be to wage | liberal with his cash, caused an | he could find nothing to say. But eleventh little bat to be fashioned- | he ceased to wonder how it was that When Dexter's won the final for the | for the captain of the winning team | Ruthven was dull.

two years back, the match lasted aforesaid. And, to single it out from four afternoons-four solid afternoons | the others, it was wrought, not of silver, but of gold. And so it came to pass that at the time of our story Trevor was in possession of the little gold bat, because Donaldson's had won the cup in the previous summer, and he had captained them-and, incidentally, had scored seventy-five without a mistake.

"Well, I'm hanged if I would not on the field watching Day's best | trust O'Hara with my bat," said Clowes, referring to the silver ornament on his own watch-chain; "he's probably pawned yours in the holidays. Why did you lend it to him?"

"His people wanted to see it. know him at home, you know. They asked me to lunch the last day but one of the holidays, and we got talking about the bat, because, of course, if we hadn't beaten Dexter's in the final, O'Hara would have had it himself. So I sent it over next day with a note asking O'Hara to bring it back with him here." \*

"Oh, well, there's a chance, then, seeing he's only had it so little time, that he hasn't pawned it yet. You'd better rush off and get it back as soon as possible. It's no good waiting for me. I sha'n't be ready for weeks."

"Where's Paget?" "Teaing with Donaldson. At least, he said he was going to."

"Then I suppose I shall have to go alone. I hate walking alone."

"If you hurry," said Clowes, scanning the road from his post of vantage, "you'll be able to go with your fascinating pal Ruthven. He's

Trevor dashed downstairs in his

Clowes brooded over them from

"Hullo, Trevor," said Ruthven. "Come over to the baths," said Trevor, "I want to see O'Hara about something. Or were you going any-

"I wasn't going anywhere in particular. I never know what to do in term-time. It's deadly dull."

Trevor could never understand how

"You aren't allowed to play the past.

"No!" said Ruthven. "Thank

Which remark silenced Trevor. To

They proceeded to the baths together in silence. O'Hara, they were informed by Dexter's fag who met

them outside the door, was not about. "When he comes back," said Trevor, "tell him I want him to come to tea to-morrow directly after school, and bring my bat. Don't forget."

"Come to tea and bring your bat," repeated the fag obediently; "all right-I won't forget."

#### The 3rd Chapter. The Mayor's Statue!

One of the rules that governed the life of Donough O'Hara, the lighthearted descendant of the O'Haras of Castle Taterfields, Co. Clare, Ireland, was "Never refuse the offer of a free So, on receipt-per the Dexter's fag referred to-of Trevor's invitation, he scratched one engagement with his mathematical master. -not wholly unconnected with the working-out of Examples 300 to 306 in Hall and Knight's Algebra--postponed another-with his friend and ally Moriarty, of Dexter's, who wished to box him in the gymnasium -and made his way at a leisurely pace towards Donaldson's. He was feeling particularly pleased with himself today, for several reasons. He had begun the day well by scoring brilliantly off Dexter across the matutinal rasher and coffee. In morning school he had been put on to translate the one passage which he happened to have prepared—the first ten lines, in fact, of the hundred which formed the morning's lesson. And in the final hour of the afternoon school, which was devoted to French, he had discovered and exploited with | warmly. "And haven't we-"

#### DRASTIC MEASURES!



AT DEAD OF NIGHT! pot of tar, O'Hara and Moriarty climbed up on to the Mayor of Wrykyn's statue, and commenced to tar it from head to foot!

great success an entirely new and original form of ragging. This, he felt, was the strenuous life; this was living one's life as one's life should be

He met Trevor at the gate. As they were going in, a carriage and pair dashed past. Its cargo consisted of two people, the Headmaster, looking bored, and a small, dapper man, with a very red face who looked excited and was talking volubly. Trevor and O'Hara raised their caps as the chariot swept by, but the salute passed unnoticed. The Head appeared to be wrapped in thought.

"What's the Old Man doing in a carriage, I wonder," said Trevor, looking after them. "Who's that

with him?" "That," said O'Hara, "is Sir Eustace Briggs."

"Who's Sir Eustace Briggs?" O'Hara explained, in a rich brogue,

that Sir Eustace was Mayor of Wrykyn, a keen politician, and a hater of the Irish nation, judging by his letters and speeches.

Clowes was occupying the window in Then he said, 'Ah.' he said, 'ye his usual manner.

"Hallo, O'Hara!" he said. "There is an air of quiet satisfaction about you that seems to show that you've been ragging Dexter. Have you?"

"Oh, that was only this morning at breakfast. The best rag was in French," replied O'Hara, who then proceeded to explain in detail the methods he had employed to embitter the existence of the hapless Gallic exile with whom he had come in contact. It was that gentleman's custom to sit on a certain desk while conducting the lesson. This desk chanced to be O'Hara's. On the principle that a man may do what he likes with his own, he had entered the room privily in the dinner-hour, and removed the screws from his desk, with the result that for the first half-hour of the lesson the class had been occupied in excavating M. Gandinois from the ruins. That gentleman's first act on regaining his equilibrium had been to send O'Hara out of the room; and O'Hara, who had foreseen this emergency, had spent a very pleasant half-hour in the passage with some mixed chocolates and a copy of Mr. Hornung's "Amateur Cracksman." It was his notion of a cheerful and instructive French

"What were you talking about when you came in?" asked Clowes. "Who's been slanging Ireland, O'Hara?"

"The man Briggs."

"What are you going to do about it? Aren't you going to take any "Is it steps?" asked O'Hara

He stopped. "Well?"

"No. Ye're prefects."

"What's that got to do with it?" "Ye won't report it?"

"If you want a plug in the eye, George," said Clowes, "you've only got to say so, you know. What do you take us for? Go ahead."

O'Hara explained that he "did but

"But really, ye know," he said seriously, "ye mustn't let it go any further. I shall get sacked if it's found out. An' so will Moriarty.

"Why?" asked Trevor, looking up from the tea-pot he was filling. "What on earth have you been

"Wouldn't it be rather a cheery idea," suggested Clowes, "if you

began at the beginning?" "Well, ye see," O'Hara began, "it was this way. The first I heard of it was from Dexter. He was trying to score off me, as usual, an' he said,

'Have ye seen the paper this morn-They went into Trevor's study. | ing, O'Hara?' I said, no, I had not. should look at it. There's something there that ye'll find interesting.' I said, 'Yes, sir?' in me respectful way. 'Yes,' said he, 'the Irish members have been making their customary disturbances in the House. Why is it, O'Hara,' he said, 'that Irishmen are always thrusting themselves forward and making disturbances for the purposes of self-advertisement?" 'Why. indeed, sir?' said I, not knowing what else to say, and after that the conversation ceased."

"Go on," said Clowes.

"After breakfast Moriarty came to me with a paper, and showed me what they had been saying about the Irish. There was a letter from the man Briggs on the subject. 'A very sensible and temperate letter from Sir Eustace Briggs,' they called it: but, bedad, if that was a temperate letter. I should like to know what an intemperate one is. Well, we read it through, and Moriarty said to me, Can we let this stay as it is?' And said 'No, we can't!' 'Well.' said Moriarty to me, 'What are we to do about it? I should like to tar and feather the man,' he said. 'We can't do that,' I said; 'but why not tar and feather his statue?" So we thought we would. Ye know where the statue is, I suppose? It's in the recreation-ground across the river.

"I know that place," said Clowes. "Go on. This is ripping. I always knew you were pretty mad, but this sounds as if it were going to beat all previous records."

"Have ye seen the baths this term," continued O'Hara, "since they (Continued on page 323.)

HELP!



O'Hara, having spent the dinner hour in removing the screws from his desk, the first half-hour of the lesson was occupied in excavating M. Glandinois from its ruins!

#### HERE'S A GREAT YARN BY WALTER EDWARDS!



There is a surprise in every line of this Enthralling Mystery Yarn, featuring Rollo Dayton and the sinister Duke!

The 1st Chapter. Easy for the Duke!

It was Christmas night. The clock of St. Jude's Church had just struck the hour of nine, and its deepthroated chimes were still reverberating upon the chilly air when a party of nine men hurried through the vestibule of the Hotel Majestic. There were four police officers and five prisoners, and they were on their way to the waiting taxi-cabs at the

The people in the sumptuous lounge -perfectly-gowned women and wellgroomed men-had followed the little party with lazy interest as it passed down the staircase leading from the famous Blue Room; and then the eyes of the women had widened and the lips of the men had tightened at the sight of the slim, handcuffed figure in the grip of the grim-faced inspector.

The captive was quite at ease, and the glance he flashed round at the silent assembly was both insolent and contemptuous.

He was in waiter's garb, yet there was an indefinable something about his demeanour, a sangfroid about his easy carriage and the imperious poise of his head which stamped him as a leader of men.

His features, finely-chiselled and mask-like, were clean-shaven, and his smooth skin had a curious ivory pallor. The lips were thin and cruel, yet the eyes, wide-set and inscrutable, were the most remarkable feature of a remarkable face.

voluntary shudder of repulsion. For the light in the uncanny eyes was reptilian.

A moment later he was gone, and a name, which was feared throughout the world, travelled from lip to lip:

"The Duke!" Striding across the broad pavement, the inspector, with scant ceremony, bundled his charge into the first taxi, and the other prisoners and their escort disappeared into the remaining vehicles.

A second later the Duke and his hirelings were being driven swiftly in the direction of Bow Street Police Station. There was no fuss, no sensation; yet the grim-faced inspector had brought off the most dramatic arrest of recent years, and Scotland Yard had every reason to feel proud of its servant. The Duke was as elusive as a phantom-time and again he had snapped contemptuous fingers under the very nose of the policeyet even he, genius that he was, had

Settling himself comfortably in his corner, he closed his eyes, and a sinister smile flitted across his thin lips as he reviewed the events which had led up to the present situation.

been run to earth at last.

The affair had started with Chelsea Villa's Christmas morning game against Murlem Vale, when he had attemp'ad to wipe out the whole term. His object was to kill the Hon. Rollo Dayton, and the fact that the other players would perish with the famous amateur did not cause him to stay his hand. Human life meant | explained the position.

nothing to him, even though that life might be his own. It had been his boast that he would never be captured alive, yet---

The taxi swept round a corner, and the slanting rays of an arc lamp fell upon his manacled hands.

Using bombs for his terrible purpose, he did no more than wreck the dressing-room, which but a moment before had been occupied by the footballers. Rollo and his friends excaped by a miracle.

Learning of the failure, the Duke had merely shrugged his shoulders and evolved another scheme.

It came to his ears that the Earl of Stranbrooke, Rollo's father, was going to entertain the Chelsea Villa eleven to a little dinner that evening, so he laid his plans with his usual

The team had to leave for the North by the midnight train, having a Boxing Day fixture against Bridgetown Rovers.

Christmas night found the Blue Room at the Majestic ringing with cheery chatter and laughter, for the Earl, proved to be an ideal host, and the coffee stage had been reached before the Duke hurled his bomb-

A master of disguise, he revealed himself as the ancient head-waiter who had supervised the meal, whilst the other "waiters" exchanged their napkins for vicious-looking auto-

diners found themselves covered.

The Duke warned Rollo and the Reaching the portico, the man others against the slightest show of turned and glanced over his shoulder, resistance, afterwards mentioning and his mocking, valedictory smile casually that every dish had been caused more than one person in the | "doctored" with a tasteless poison. crowded vestibule to repress an in. Their death would follow in a matter of hours.

> The players were dumbstruck, and Giles, the burly custodian, toppled to the floor in a heap. Some of the other fellows were also upon the verge of collapse for they knew the Duke to be capable of any villainy, no matter how diabolical or cold-blooded.

> Rollo Dayton, however, was made of sterner stuff, and he reasoned that if the Duke spoke the truth, if he really had signed their death-war rants, the best thing they could do was to die fighting.

Rollo was that type of youngster. So he rallied the players and leapt straight at his enemy, and so unexpected and fierce was the attack that the bogus waiters were overcome and disarmed before they could do any damage.

Furthermore, the hirelings, who proved to be a spineless crowd after the rough handling they received, whined for mercy and confessed that there was no truth in the tasteless poison story. The Duke had a strange sense of humour.

There came a further surprise, for the door was suddenly jerked open and the grim-faced inspector and his men marched into the room. The management, it seemed, had heard sounds of a violent struggle, and had telephoned for police assistance.

The inspector's eyes had opened wide when he saw the state of wild disorder, the overturned chairs, the broken glasses, and the prostrate waiters; but Rollo Dayton quickly

It was some time before the inspector could believe that the muchwanted Duke had really fallen into his hands, for any member of the Force would have given a year of his life to have had such luck. The capture meant certain promotion.

Using special handcuffs and taking no chances, the grim-faced officer had jammed a revolver into the Duke's ribs and led him out of the Blue Room and down the broad staircase, where the dramatic appearance of the notorious criminal had caused

The scene passed through the Duke's brain as he remained still and supine in the corner of the taxi, and began Crispin dubiously.

Going North!

Meanwhile, Rollo and the others, quite oblivious of the clever manner in which the Duke had made his escape, were congratulating themselves in the Blue Room of the Majestic.

Not for one moment did they dream that the Duke, who had the manager of the hotel in his power, had timed his dramatic get-away to the second. Taking no risks-he had learnt not to do so when dealing with the Hon. Rollo Dayton-he had stationed Burchell and his other hirelings outside the door of the Blue Room, and Burchell, acting upon instructions, had carried out his part of the affair in masterly fashion.

The plan was simplicity itself, and in its very simplicity lay its success.

Rollo, who was polishing his goldrimmed monocle with a silk handkerchief he had surreptitiously taken from Dr. Dagnall's pocket, cast his mild blue eyes round the lofty room.

"Well, old eggs," he said in his lazy drawl, "that was a priceless little 'mill' whilst it lasted!" He glanced down at his bruised knuckles. "I fear I was rather rough with the Duke. Still, he shouldn't have put his fat head in the way of my fistwhat?"

"There's one thing about it, old man," put in Daggers, the Harley Street specialist, "we're certainly having a nice quiet Christmas. Perhaps we shall get a little peace in Bridgetown, especially as our old friend is under lock and key!"

"We've nothing to worry about, old egg," returned the fair-haired amateur, with conviction in his mellow voice. "What's more, we stand more than a sporting chance of bagging both points against the Rovers. They've scarcely got one forward worth the name."

"H'm! I'm not so sure---

The 2nd Chapter.

eleven when the players, well pleased with themselves, collected their hats and coats and prepared for their journey to the terminus.

Special arrangements had been made for their reception at Bridgetown, rooms having been booked at the Station Hotel. Reaching their destination at about six o'clock, they were to have breakfast, and then rest until it was time for them to leave for the football ground.

They were decorated with coloured streamers and paper caps as they passed through the thronged vestibule, and it was in this manner that they piled into the taxicabs and were driven stationwards, shouts of good will following in their wake.

"Good lad, Dayton!" cried a somewhat festive-looking gentleman whose dress tie had strayed under his right ear. "Play a straight bat, old man, and don't forget to chalk your cue. Great game! Great game! I adore

The remark did not reach Rollo, for his companions—Daggers, Storm, and Perne-were making the air hideous with a combined vocal effort which ran to quantity rather than

The footballers reached the terminus in good time and made for their reserved sleeping saloon; and ten minutes later the express was gliding over the smooth rails on its long journey through the night.

"Nighty, night, old eggs!" sang out Rollo, as he snuggled down in his bunk. "Pleasant dreams!"

"Same to you!" growled Giles, who could have kicked himself for having fainted in the Blue Room. "Only a size larger!"

"I wonder how the Duke likes his little wooden plank?" chuckled Dag-

The others also wondered, but their wonderment would have turned to amazement could they have known that the criminal was already on his to Bridgetown, travelling by road.

#### The 3rd Chapter. By Whose Hand?

Dan Marney, mine host of the Station Hotel, was beaming as he welcomed the Chelsea Villa players.

"Glad to see you, boys!" he cried, his eyes twinkling with good humour. "Walk right in!" Having exchanged hearty grips, he showed them into a spacious sitting-room. The place was comfortable and homely, and a cheery log fire was blazing in the open grate. "I suppose you're ready for a bite of something?"

"A bite?" growled Giles, alipping out of his greatcoat. "I'm hungry enough to eat you, Dan!"

Mine host gave a frightened yell and scuttled from the room, to be followed by the laughing players who had suddenly discovered that they were ravenous.

Three or four minutes passed, and then the door of the sitting-room opened, to admit a man who had arrived during the night and had been accommodated with a bed. He halted upon the threshold for some seconds and listened intently, afterwards closing the door and turning

the key in the lock. The man was the Duke. Leaving the Hotel Majestic in the company of the bogus policeinspector, he had been driven to one of his criminal haunts in Soho, where he had quickly changed into a suit of tweed and a thick overcoat. Then, upon the stroke of ten, his powerful touring car had picked him up at Tottenham Court Road and had whirled him northwards at a speed

man blanch. Moving swiftly, and making scarcely a sound, the criminal turned his attention to the footballers' bags, opening one after the other with a skeleton key; and in less than a quarter of an hour his dastardly work was finished and he had vanished as noiselessly as he had come, leaving no visible trace of his visit.

which would have made the average

The players, having made a hearty breakfast, spent the remainder of the morning either resting or playing billiards, and when, after lunch, they set off for the football ground they looked none the worse for their mild dissipation of the previous night.

It was a perfect afternoon for a game, cold and bright, and all roads seemed to lead to the Rovers' compact enclosure.

The holiday spirit was still abroad, and this, coupled with the important fixture against the famous Cupholders, put everybody in a cheerful frame of mind

The turnstiles had been clicking The conversation became general merrily for well over an hour when after this, and it was about half-past the Londoners passed through the



TREACHERY "Remove these things: shapped the bogus police officer. The accomplice unlocked the steel handcuffs, and the criminal nodded and settled himself once again!

he was still smiling as he opened his 1 eyes and glanced across at his tightlipped captor.

The fact that he was a prisoner at last did not seem to perturb him in the least. He was no more than annused.

Then the smile died, and his voice was harsh and commanding when he

"Burchell!" The man in uniform sat up, alert, respectful.

"Yes, chief?" "Remove these things!"

The criminal extended his slim, muscular wrists, and the bogus police-officer unlocked the steel handcuffs with professional dexterity. The Duke nodded and settled himself once again.

"Poor, credulous fools!" he murmured dreamily, well pleased with the simple manner in which he had tricked Rollo Dayton and the other members of the Chelsea Villa Club.

And a deep bass voice rang through the room. The speaker was Hercules Samson,

the diminutive outside-right, and the eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses blazed scornfully as he addressed himself to Crispin. "That you should even contem-

plate the bare possibility of defeat passes my comprehension, my dear sir," he cried, "for have you not the assistance of the world's greatest winger, the football genius of the age? I refer to myself!" Crispin nodded his tousled head.

"Well, there is that to it, Sammy," he agreed. "Still, accidents will "'Tis so," returned Hercules.

"But gentlemen, we shall win!" The quaint little fellow struck his narrow chest a resounding blow as he made the statement, and the room rang with laughter.

School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., and a Gripping Detective Yarn in this week's "Magnet" Library!

players' entrance and met McDuff, the Bridgetown manager, who conducted them to their dressing-room.

He waved his hand round the wellappointed apartment.

"I think you'll find everything you require," he said hospitably. "Anyway, just say the word-" A little puzzled frown puckered his brow. "By the way, where's the eleventh man?"

Lewis, the Chelsea Villa skipper, looked surprised.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"We're all here!"

"But you're not!" protested the manager rather excitedly. "There's one, two, three--" He pointed to each player in turn and then fixed his triumphant gaze upon Lewis. "What did I tell you?" he demanded.

"But you've forgotten our right winger, Samson," put in Rollo Dayton, with a smile. He nodded towards the little fellow as he said the words, and McDuff, following his glance, almost gasped.

"Wh-what!" he exploded, his eyes goggling with surprise. "Do you mean to say--- Why, I thought that was your mascot!"

Hercules Samson certainly looked somewhat quaint, for he was arrayed in his usual original style. His fancy had run to a vivid kilt on the present occasion, a scanty garment which showed off his knobbly knees and pipestem legs to advantage. His spare body was encased in a natty little jacket, and upon his birdlike head was a bonnet which threatened to slip past his ears and smother him.

He was standing stiffly in his enormous brogues, gazing up at the flabbergasted McDuff through his

horn-rimmed glasses. "Who is this impertinent jackanapes. sir?" he thundered, appealing to Big John Vaughan, the Villa manager. "Who is the person who dares to insult the world's greatest winger, sir?" He shook a skinny fist under McDuff's nose; he could !

just reach that ornamental organ. "I will thrash you within an inch of your life! I am a raging lion! will show no mercy!"

McDuff, who towered above the wild-eyed little fellow, ran bewildered fingers through his hair, not knowing what to make of matters.

"I think it is only right that you should apologise to my friend. Hercules Samson, McDuff," drawled Rollo Dayton. "I warn you! He's been known to destroy a tram ticket in his terrible wrath!"

The diminutive winger gave another bellow and swung round upon the speaker.

"You, also, Dayton," he cried, his eyes flashing. "You shall be thrashed as well! I will break every bone in your body!"

He advanced upon the fair-haired giant with clenched fists, and Rollo, letting out a frightened yell, swung Daggers off the floor and held him in his arms.

"Nunno, Herky, not that!" he begged, in stagy accents. "You would not strike a child with its father in its arms!"

The dressing-room echoed with a great roar of laughter, and the merriment was at its height when the door was swung open and the referee looked in.

A grin overspread his homely features as he caught sight of Hercules.

"Crikey! Look what's dropped off the Christmas-tree--" he began; and then he fled, with the infuriated little winger in hot pursuit. Hercules came up with his man on the balcony of the clubhouse, and the kick he aimed at the fellow's coat tails was powerful and well placed, causing the recipient to fly through the air and land on his hands and knees.

Hercules, standing with folded arms, glared down at the referee and snorted; then, turning majestically. he strode back to the dressing-room. to find his team mates in the act of

changing. McDuff made himself scarce, and the winger, noting the fact, gave a

sour smile. murmured, beginning to disrohe.

The other players grinned, but made no comment, knowing that even an innocent remark might cause a further conflagration.

The conversation turned upon the forthcoming game, until Giles' strident voice rang through the dressingroom.

"H'm!" he growled, staring into his bag. "Very funny, I don't fink!" He raised his blazing eyes and glared round at the astonished faces. "Come on! Out with it! Who's done it? Who's the funny bloke?"

The Hon. Rollo Dayton jammed his monocle into position, and regarded

the goalkeeper with a fixed stare.

"What is the matter, my gentle idiot?" he asked patiently; and, before Giles could frame a reply, Crispin ripped out a yell which brought every eye in his direction.

He held up a jersey which had been cut to ribbons.

"Who the dickens did this?" he shouted wildly, scarcely able to articulate. "I'll skin the blighter alive!" "And this?" yelled Terle, bringing a bundle of rags to light. "These

were my knickers and jersey!" "And look at my boots!" blazed Storm, hurling his mutilated footwear across the room, and just missing Samson's head. "They're ripped to bits!"

"What about mine, then?"

"And mine?" "Every blessed thing has been hacked to ribbons! Who the blazes

A chorus of indignant voices reverberated through the dressing-room, but the din died down when Rollo

called for silence. He was gazing somewhat ruefully at the pile of useless rubbish which

had been his footer rig. "Have any of you got anything intact?" he asked, with a grim smile; and proof that the wanton destruction had been carried out thoroughly was soon established.

"Sort 'em out for yourselves," he said briskly. "They're supposed to be white knickers and blue jerseys-McDuff says so. You can see that they aren't exactly in their first flush of youth, but they'll have to do. The crowd is shouting its little head off!"

"But what about boots?" asked Storm, glancing down at his light walking shoes. "I'm a full-back, y'know, and I shall smash my little tootsies if---'

NEXT WEEK!

= "AMAN OF HIS WORD!"

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"I'm afraid I can't help you, old man," put in McDuff. "Nearly all the spare boots are being repaired."

Storm groaned. "Thank goodness, I didn't come in dancing pumps!" he muttered, joining in the scramble round the heap of footer rig.

The Londoners dressed in record time, and they looked a very scratch lot by the time they were ready to Nothing had been spared. The act 'take the field. Each man seemed to

knees. The fact did not appear to worry him much, however, and he was as self-possessed as usual when he strutted on to the field immediately behind his skipper.

The crowd, good-natured and cheerful, gave the visitors a rousing reception, but it did not refrain from making a few personal remarks about their appearance.

Lewis slammed the ball towards the open goal, but the referee allowed but a second or so to pass before he whistled the respective captains to the centre.

Jenson, the home skipper, called correctly, and decided to take advantage of the slight breeze. There

was very little in it, either way. The official programme gave the teams as follows.

Bridgetown Rovers (Black-andwhite jerseys, white knickers):

Black; Doone, Jenson (Capt.); Booth, Dane, Cork; Henson, Drill, Mason, Slade, Horner. Chelsea Villa:

Giles; Storm, Gideon; Perne, Lewis W. (Capt.), Crispin; Terle, Britton, Dayton, R., Dagnall, F. G., Samson.

The whistle shrilled, and Rollo touched the ball to Britton, who shouldered Drill away, and made ground, eventually passing to Terle when he was being hard-pressed by Booth and Dane.

Rollo and the other forwards were on top of him by this time. He had to clear; there was no time to kick.

Back swung his long arm, and-Pheep!

He had taken the leather over the line. Chelsea Villa was one goal up! The home players looked anything but pleased with life as they lined up for the resumption of play, though it is to their credit that they did no more than sympathise with their custodian in his misfortune.

Mason, a stocky little fellow with a pugnacious appearance, passed to his left-hand partner and set off toward the Villa goal; and Slade, tricking Daggers, pushed the ball along to him.

The centre-forward was not particularly clever, but he had a hard. bustling method which as often as not took him straight through the enemy defence.

Hard as nails, and strong as an ox, he was willing to give and receive powerful charges, and it was usually the other man who came off second

Lewis tackled him and was sent spinning for his trouble, and then Crispin and Perne arrived to try

conclusions. Barging forward like a baby tank, Mason used his enormous shoulders with deadly effect, and, try as they would, the half-backs could not get

their feet to the ball. Still the stocky figure forged ahead. with the Villa players swarming round him like so many whippets round a mastiff and it was at this stage that the burly Storm ambled into action:

The Villa's right-back was about as gentle as an elephant, vet his mighty charge, which was calculated to shift a brick wall, did not knock Mason off the ball. Instead, Storm succeeded in jarring every nerve in his body, and by the time he had recovered from the shock Mason had almost shattered the crossbar with a terrific shot.

The ball rebounded into play, shooting across at an angle, and a mighty yell broke from the thousands of spectators when they saw the grotesque figure of Hercules Samson pounce upon it, swing round, and tear off down the line with that graceful kangaroo action which so delighted the football "fans" down Chelsea way!

> The 5th Onapter. Dayton Means Business!

Hercules Samson's birdlike features were quite serene as he sailed along the line to the thunder of encouraging shouts; but the ground seemed to rock when, instead of beating Cork in the orthodox manner, he took a flying leap over that astonished individual's head.

The amazing feat was new to the Bridgetown crowd, and if the diminutive Hercules was out to make an impression, he certainly succeeded in doing so.

His name was upon every lip. "Up, Samson!"

"Let's have one, boy!" "What a lad!"

The winger was almost on top of the corner-flag by this time, and in Jenson, the home skipper, he found himself up against a very hard proposition. Jenson was by way of being a veteran, but what he did not know about defensive play could have been inscribed upon a pin-head. He had not been capped five times for nothing.

Cool and confident, he trotted out to meet Hercules, who stopped dead in his stride and stared at the back as though he were a ghost. Jenson also came to a standstill, his broad brow puckered, wondering what was

Then Hercules shot out a skinny finger and pointed straight at the back's chest, and Jenson glanced down.

Something whizzed past him. It was Hercules.

On went the winger, his features

still masklike and serene, and, having beaten Doone with ease, he prepared for a shot. Black did not hesitate, but rushed out, thus re-

to a minimum. The winger did not attempt to shoot, however, but back-heeled, and Rollo Dayton, who was following him up, took a flying kick, sending the leather flashing under the bar.

It was a splendid movement, and Daggers and the other players swarmed round Rollo and Hercules, thumping them and ringing their

"Hold on, you asses!" begged the fair-haired amateur breathlessly. "It was Herky's goal, after all!" (Continued overleaf.)

was made for him, he lost his head. Then, when all seemed lost, he hugged the ball to his chest, clasping ON SALE FRIDAY! it in his right hand.

A SURPRISE FOR ROLLO! Rollo Dayton's list struck the point of the chair. It flew through the air and fell in a heap on the floor. "A-a dummy!" gasped Rollo, staring at what he had supposed to be the Duke!

had been callous and deliberate.

"But who would sink to such a low-down trick?" demanded Dr. Dagnall helplessly." "There's no point in the business. It isn't even a decent

"It's the sort of dirty business one might expect from the Duke; but he's tucked away in his little cell," put in Crispin, forcing a grin. "Of course, some of his satellites—"

A roar of voices welled up from the enclosure. Bridgetown Rovers

had taken the field. "Up, the Rovers!" "Set 'em alight, lads!"

"Now, then, Chelsea!" "Let's hear from you!"

Lewis, the Villa skipper, looked across at Rollo Dayton. "What's going to happen now?" he

asked. And at that moment the door "The thrashing can wait!" he opened and the referee hurried into

> the room. "Now then, hurry up, you chaps, the—" he began, when the words froze upon his lips, and he looked round at the Londoners in blank astonishment.

> > The 4th Chapter. The Villa One Up!

Something had to be done, and

quickly. Rollo explained the facts to the referee, who dashed away without a word, to return, in a minute or so, with McDuff and a bundle of cloth-

He threw the bundle to the floor.

have chosen the wrong garment-it being either too large or too smallbut there was no time to adjust matters.

"Now then, Villa!" roared the crowd.

"Wake up, Chelsea!"

Hercules Samson, of course, had picked upon a jersey which would have fitted Rollo Dayton to perfection; it reached to the little winger's

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Hook.

the polished manner in which he proceeded to walk round Doone brought wild shouts of admiration from all sides of the ground. And all the while he was working his way towards the centre, for he guessed that to slam a pass across from the corner-flag would prove fatal

The Londoners' left-winger, who

was wearing a pair of patent-leather

shoes, scarcely seemed to touch the

ground as he sped down the line, and

to the life of his light shoes. Doone, who was beaten again and again, began to lose his head, and the mild jokes and caustic remarks which reached his ears did anything but improve his temper.

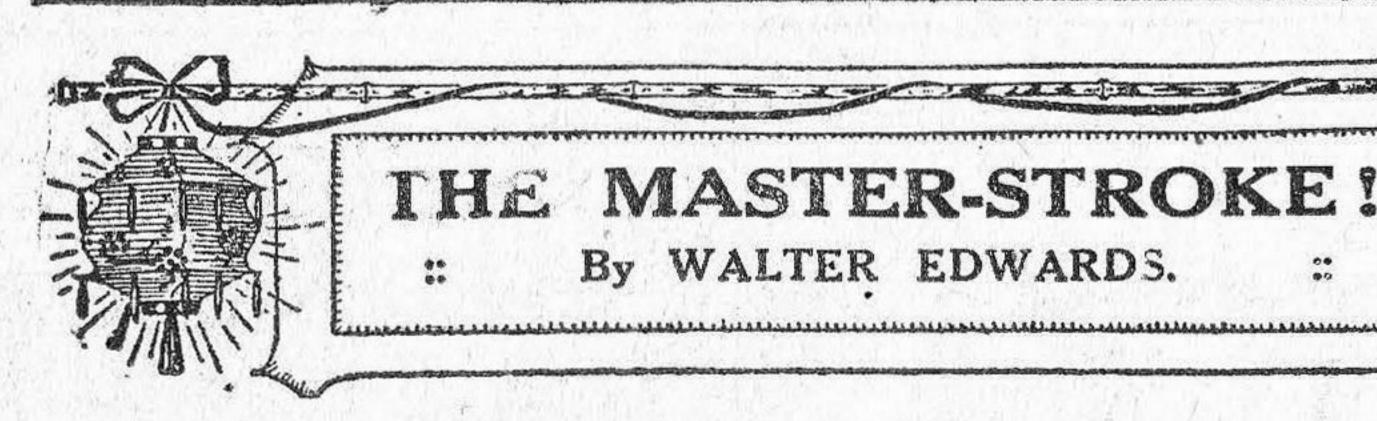
"At him, Joe!" shouted a plaintive voice. "He's all over yer!" "You'll never stop him like that, Doone!" roared another spectator. "Bite him, lad!"

Thoroughly roused by the taunts, the big back rushed at Terle with the ferocity of a mad bull; and once | ducing Samson's chance of scoring more the agile winger eluded him, swept forward, and tried a slanting shot at goal.

There was not a great deal of power behind the kick, but the ball swirled and swerved like a mad thing. Black's strong hands sought | to grasp it, but it refused to be held, spinning in his fingers as though charged with life.

The goalkeeper fumbled; a rush | hands.

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(Continued from previous page.)

"Pardon me, your goal, my dear sir!" cried the winger, in rumbling "Er-Dr. Dagnall, kindly refrain from such violence! You would searcely wish me to thrash you before this crowd!"

The spectators were still exercising their leathern lungs, but the little winger took not the slightest notice of the ovation as he strutted across to the touchline.

Mason and Slade, working like a well-oiled machine, tried time and again to pierce the Villa defence by sheer force, but Storm and Gideon had taken their measure.

Tireless, grim-faced and determined, the two forwards stuck to their task in a manner which brought round after round of cheers from the crowd; and when, five minutes from half-time, Mason succeeded in beating Giles with a shot which the custodian did not even see the volume of riotous sound which rose from all sides was heard all over the town. "Goal!"

That one magic word burst from every lip-it was a vocal explosion -and Mason was grabbed by his delighted club-mates, hoisted shoulder-high, and rushed down the field.

It was a great moment. No more goals were scored that half, but the Rovers had every hope of equalising during the last fortyfive minutes of play.

The Londoners found McDuff, the home team's manager, waiting for them in the dressing-room. He looked both angry and puzzled. There was something very like a black scowl upon his heavy features

"Hail, old egg!" cried Rollo Dayton cheerily. "Why the beaming smile?"

McDuff snorted. "I've been thinking a good bit about this rotten trick." he said, nodding towards the heap of mutilated rubbish which had been jerseys, knickers, and boots. "You surely know some scoundrel who is capable

of such a low-down thing?"

Rollo nodded. "We certainly do, old son," he answered. "But that person happens to be in prison at the moment. He's a bright particular pal of mine-"

"You mean the Duke?" put in McDuff eagerly.

"I do," returned the amateur. "We saw him nabbed last night at | them; and in Storm and Gideon they the Majestic."

He touched briefly upon the scene | brick wall. in the Blue Room.

"Yet we've heard nothing about it," remarked the Rovers' manager in a voice which made the players shoot an inquiring glance in his direction.

What's that?" "Eh? Daggers, who was washing his hands. "What are you driving at, Mac?"

"This," answered McDuff. "It looks to me as though you have been led up the garden once again, for had Duke-the most notorious criminal in the world-been nabbed in a fashionable hotel, the news would have been all over the country by now. What's more, you would have been called upon to go to the policestation to charge the Duke and the other fellows! I wouldn't mind betting that your friend was snatched away from under your classic nose! And that. Dayton, is that!"

The players were looking at each other in wide-eyed bewilderment. They did not know what to think. Moreover, they had an unpleasant his amazing performance. feeling that the astute manager might be right in his surmise.

grave as he ran his hand over his smooth hair.

"H'm, so you think the Duke is at large, and that he is responsible for this dirty business?" he asked.

"I do!" returned McDuff, with conviction

chance he had of monkeying with our I half an hour."

clothes was while we were at breakfast!"

"That's so," put in three or four

"Right!" snapped Rollo briskly. "We'll finish the game, and after

"Well?" smiled McDuff. "We'll find the Duke, even though we have to search every house in the town!"

#### The 6th Chapter. The Duke Scores!

The Chelsea Villa players, for once in a way, were not sorry when the final whistle blew

The home side had started the second half in great style, sweeping down the field and carrying all before again found themselves up against a

Time after time the stalwart backs broke up the attack, and after a quarter of an hour of strenuous effort Mason and the other forwards showed signs of being tired. Their pace slackened, they lost their dash.

The Londoners, however, continued to play their usual sound game; and it was not long before Rollo, Daggers, and Hercules were continually in the picture, and their clever passing he asked movements brought shouts of appreciation from the delighted crowd.

Twenty minutes ticked away without either side notching a goal, and then the Villa scored three in as many minutes, Black being beaten once by Rollo and twice by Dagnall in quick succession.

There followed a period of ding dong play, the home side contenting itself with playing for safety.

Yet Hercules was not to be denied. That he was a football genius was undeniable, and his two goals-scored in the last five minutes of play-will never be forgotten by those who saw

The Villa players tubbed and dressed without the waste of a second, Rollo Dayton looked unusually and in less than half an hour from the shrilling of the final whistle they were gathered in the sitting-room of the Railway Hotel.

Dan Marney was there, a worried expression upon his ruddy features.

"But it couldn't possibly have happened here, Dayton!" he was ex-"Then in that case," cried Rollo, postulating, his forehead moist. "No his eyes flashing, "the tricky little stranger can get in here without ringbeast must be in Bridgetown at this ing the bell; and, anyway, you very moment, for the only possible | weren't at breakfast for more than

"How many people are there staying here?" asked Rollo quietly.

Marney gave a short laugh. "That's just it!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "We're empty. There's nobody-" He pursed his lips and looked uneasy. "H'm, there's certainly one gentleman. He turned up late-car broke down on the road. Nice fellow."

The fair-haired amateur shot an excited glance at Daggers.

"D scribe him, will you, Dan?" he asked eagerly. "This is really important!"

Mine host ran his fingers through his scanty locks.

"H'm, I don't know as I took much notice of him, Dayton," he confessed slowly. "It certainly struck me that he didn't look the picture of health. Sallow complexion, y'know-"

"Clean-shaven?" put in Rollo briskly. ' "Good features? Queer Pleasant voice-almost a

Dan Marney nodded.

"That would be the feller." he agreed. "But you don't suspect him of this rotten, low-down trick, do

Rollo Dayton nodded his fair head. "Is this beauty still in the hotel?"

"He is, 'answered Marney, a wave of hot blood mantling his face, "and if there's going to be any scrappin', I'll make one! The despicable hound!"

"We've got to go about this job very carefully, Dan," declared Rollo, gravely "He's a tricky customer; but we're not going to take any chances this time! Where is he?"

"I saw him about twenty minutes ago," returned Marney, "in his room. The door was slightly open, and he was sitting in the armchair before the fire."

Dayton's blue eyes.

"Lead the way, old man," he said, lowering his voice, "and don't make a sound! You fellows had better wait here for a few seconds; we don't want to waken him!"

Treading stealthily, Dan padded along the passage and turned to the right. Half-way down a door stood

Dan Marney came to a halt and pointed, and Rollo understood. Motioning the landlord to remain

door and peered in, and he had the greatest difficulty in stifling a gasp of triumph which leapt to his lips as he recognised the sleek head of his enemy.

6/1/23

Rollo, trembling with excitement, retraced his steps along the passage and led the way back to the sittingroom, where he answered the score of eager questions which were hurled at

"He's there, right enough," Rollo declared, breathlessly. We'll rush him, and the first thing to do will be

to relieve him of his revolver." "And after that-" queried Daggers, with a broad smile.

"Well, if he cares to give in quietly he can do so," answered Rollo. "But if he tries any of his tricks there is no need to be too gentle with him! Are we all ready?"

They were, and they were quivering with excitement as they followed their leader along the passage and came to a halt outside the door of the Duke's room.

"Now then!" whispered Rollo Dayton, and rushed across the carpet. The room shook as the big fellows charged, and the supme figure in the chair moved ever so slightly.

The Duke was awake, on the alert, perhaps, and Rollo took no chances. Getting within striking distance, he swung his mighty fist upward with all the strength of his body. His knuckles struck the point of the jaw

with an ominous click, and the figure

was lifted clean out of the chair. It

flew through the air and fell to the

floor in a crumpled heap. It remained perfectly still; the head rolled under the table!

"A-a dummy!" The words tumbled from Rollo's lips as he stared with goggling eyes at the headless effigy at his feet. A Excitement was glinting in Rollo | sheet of paper was clasped in the pink, waxen fingers.

The amateur, like a person in a dream, reached down for the note.

"Another score to me, I think, you poor fool!-THE DUKE."

#### THE END.

(The Hon. Rollo Dayton, Hercules Samson, and the Duke, all appear in next Monday's bumper footer story, "The First Round!" Ask your newsagent to save a copy of the still, the amateur crept towards the Boys' Friend for you every week!)

## The Mark Continues Dom



. Your Editor is always pleased to near from his readers upon any subjec-Address your letters to: Editor, "Boys' Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

#### A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

My chums know what I am wishing them one and all at this opening of the New Year of 1923. I hope it will prove a better, brighter, and happier year than any yet; that clouds will speed up in their rolling-by manœuvres, and that the worries which will come as we tramp on . down the route, may be swept away. There's plenty of fine work to be done in this New Year. Let's get to it, and make of 1923 a record, so that when its turn comes to glide off the scene, it may be remembered as the year of good performance and magnificent tries.

#### GREAT NEWS.

For next week the programme of stories in the "Boys' Friend" is absolutely second to none. To start with, there will be a superb yarn of Rookwood School, by Mr. Owen Conquest. This tale is another conquest for him. The author has scored over past triumphs

#### "RUN TO EASTH!"

That's the title of the coming story. Of course, it brings in all the Lest known favourites of the school. Jimmy Silver is all there, and so is Mornington. doubt if Mornington ever stood higher in popular estimation than now. Life is all ebb and flow, ups and downs. Mornington has had a bit more than his share. But he has acted as a true sportsman all through. There is always something particularly displeasing about the fellow who takes the smooth with a grunt of satisfaction and whines no end when it comes to the rough.

#### TRUE BLUE.

has a temper, but, as a rule, it is well | stories either of the past or of the flying in leash, and who would give twopence | day, you can see in a flash that it is the for a chap who had not got the spirit | magic touch that does the trick. That's

for resentment? The mere way in which Mornington took the blow at his former prosperity showed him for what he istrue blue. It is not the cowl which makes the monk, nor the money that makes a man; even it to the right kind of fellow money permits an extra notable part to be played. Now Mornington did rather well in that bootblacking, dramatic stunt of his. He is as clever as he can be, though not as clever as Uncle James. Still, next week's yarn, with its thrilling mystery element, is not al. about Mornington. You will say it shows Mr. Owen Conquest in good form. The celebrated writer shows us each week what an inexhaustible mine of interest Rookwood is. THAT REWINDS ME.

Talking about school stories, I doubt it any recent series has had a bigger reception than that accorded Mr Wodehouse. The stories from his pen have simply swept their way into success. And who can be surprised? They are marvels of clear thinking, humour, human nature, and brilliancy

#### WODEHOUSE THE WONDER.

Somehow one is always safe with "P.G." Wodehouse draws his characters with perfect naturalness. You are sure to have met jolly shrewd fellows like Pillingshot, and as for Scott, the languid prefect, with his muffins and his nice taste in mysteries, why, he is a cut direct from life. Mr. Wodehouse is always happy in his smart delineations of character. There is seldom found such adroit portraiture.

#### " BOYS' FRIEND " SUCCESSES.

Mornington does play the game. He If you spot some of the more famous in him to be angry when there was call I where art comes in-the invariably

reliable Ars celare artem-the art that conceals art. That means being just true to nature.

#### " EY ORDER OF THE LEAGUE!"

Another instalment of a really great story from the pen of Mr. Wodehouse, forms one of the principal items of to-day's bill of fare. A public-school story of the kind which made Mr. Wodehouse world-famous, it has a strong Rugby football interest, with an intriguing mystery running all through it-the mystery of the Secret League, which exerts such a sinister influence in the school. I am expecting this story to make quite a furore, from the reception which my chums have already given to Mr Wodehouse's charming short "completes." "By Order of the League," is P. G. Wodehouse at his best all through, and that is saying something indeed. No other weekly paper in existence can claim this star author as a contributor, while the quality of the stories now appearing in the "Boys' Friend" is far above anything obtainable elsewhere. As soon as you have read this fine issue through, you will realise that this is so.

#### minimum READ minimum what your Editor has to say about coming attractions!

#### DAYTON, THE INDOMITABLE.

Rollo has had come rough houses. His bad times have been innumerable, and he is not by any means out of the wood yet. Next week's tale from the prolific pen of Walter Edwards, is chockful of cunning. The art and craft of the Duke have not run out of stock, as it were, and structed drama.

#### "THE FIRST ROUND!"

a good run for his money.

#### SOMETHING SPECIAL.

big things for next week's rumber. But that matters nothing. The important thing is to remember that Sidney Drew appears in the coming issue of the "Boys' Friend." The old favourite is simply great in his new story, "A Man of his Word." This is a grand, long, complete yarn of twelve thousand words all of the

#### DREW, THE DRAW.

If it is ever your good luck to meet Sidney Drew, you would set him down ust that indefinable something about standard. him which makes the truth leak out. has got the travelled expression, the keen eye of the man who has seen a heap of interesting things and—this is worty of note-he will let you see in the twinkling of an eye that his inclinations run to breezy, health-giving outdoor subjects-sport of all kinds. Fishing is his speciality—sea-fishing; and I'll be bound he has fished up some of his deepest and most amazing plots out of the depths of the briny. The new yarn, "A Man of his Word," gets you interested from the first line.

#### FULL OF FINE FEATURES.

Needless to say, that those two ripping serials, "The Space Destroyer," and "South Seas Treasure," will be reprenext Monday by splendid instalments. You should tell your chums about these stories, and the other prime attractions being offered in the old "Green 'Un." Let friends know what a superlatively good budget of fiction is to be found in the old paper. You will be doing them a kind turn, to say nothing of me as well.

#### GEORGES CARPENTIER'S

SCHOOLDAYS.

We are all interested in the famous French champion, who has trought so much that is of high repute to the Noble the story next Monday will be reckoned | Art. In the "Boys' Friend" next Monday a fair treat for address and well-con- you will find the story of the schooldays of the great boxer-of his life in Lens, the little mining village which was destroyed by the Germans during the war. You That description puts things in a nut- | will learn how he climbed the 'adder; all shell. Walter Edwards goes plumb for about his small beginnings the rebuffs the things that matter. The narrative of he experienced, the slow advance to the fight for the footer cup is as dashing | recognition, and then the rush into the a bit of writing as anybody need wish for. | dazzling light of world-wide celebrity. It I know it is not necessary for me to say is a story that appeals to anybody, a a lot about Walter Edwards He speaks | story with grit, a real life story which for himself. He is a master of what he I am proud to have the opportunity of writes, and he shows good judgment in giving to my chums Carpentier made giving that unprincipled rogue, the Duke. I good. It is amazing to look into such a history. A fine fellow is doing excellent work, but he is only known to a comparative few. Then that magical It is a bit far down in Chat to start a psychological something happens, and he reference to what is really one of the is made. His name is of household i

currency in every corner of the world. Look out for the new feature,

> "MY SCHOOLDAYS," Written by Georges himself. It will increase your admiration for the grit and pluck and endurances of the smart young Frenchman.

#### EXTRA TURNS.

keep your eye on the capital Health and Sport articles of that sure guide, Mr. Percy Longhurst. I have as well to mention the Football Special by "Goalie," as an author at first glance. He has the competitions, etc., all right up to

#### RESULT OF EVERTON COM

PETITION. In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution. The first prize of £5 has therefore been divided between

the following two competitors: W. BOYD BARRIE, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; ROBERT CARPENTER,

5. Strickland Street, Elswick. Newcastle-on-Tyne, whose solutions contained one error each. The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained two

errors each: Leonard Carpenter, 5, Strickland Street, Elswick, Newcastle-on-Type; Charles H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Howarth

Street, Sunderland. The ten prizes of 5s. each have been awarded to the following ten competitors, whose solutions contained three errors

John Hudson, 103, Queen's Crescent, Kentish Town, N.W. 5; Frances K. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland; Arthur Diver, jun., 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9; Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Mrs. A. F. Climie, 19. Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Arthur Wm. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9: James Horn, 119, High Street. Rothesay; J. Pattinson, 17. Clementine Terrace, Carlisle: Alfred Cooper, Ivy Cottage, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, near Stourbridge; Bernard Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston,

SOLUTION. The Everton club was formed a long time before it was realised that it was destined to rank as one of the finest football clubs in this country. At one period Everton was the wealthlest club in the League, in which it has generally gained a prominent place.

(The Result of Southampton Competition will be found at foot of col. 1 on next page.)

Your Editor.

chestbone

number.

over backwards.

muscular control.

movements.

anyhow.

mustard.

HEALTH and SPORT!

Conducted by

Percy Longhurst.

AN ALL-ROUND TABLE.

(Continued.)

There is another bit of body bending

you may do-two bits, in fact. One is bending back and forward from the waist

only, not the hips, but just below the

This movement is often neglected, but

should not be, as it gives exercise to the

upper part of the spine that otherwise

would not be given. The other exercise

-only a slight movement-is made side

to side after the body has been bent

will be quite enough. But do them!

Of these last two bends, five each way

Next comes the "100 up." Of this I

have no need to say much, as I dealt

with it very thoroughly in a recent issue.

But I will repeat this-begin with a few

steps-say 15 or 20 if not used to exer-

cise-and gradually work up to full

and the next two are mainly leg exercises

though they also benefit the abdominal

muscles and tend to teach balance and

Knee Raising.

Arms may be by sides, or used in a sort

of chest expanding movement. Lift right

knee, bent, as high as you can without

stooping forward at waist. Some of you,

I dare say, will be supple jointed enough

to be able to make the point of the knee

touch the front of the shoulder. Any-

how. let the knee be brought up high.

Bring it down smartly, and lift left knee

similarly. Work both legs thus alter-

nately until each has made at least ten

Deep Knee Bending.

You all know how to do this. It is a

fine exercise, very greatly improving the

shape of the thighs, and developing also

the calves. It gives good exercise to the

lungs and heart. It is, too, one of the

exercises that help to prevent and cure

knock-knees. But do it properly, not

together, and feet well turned out, and,

keeping body upright, lower by bending

knees until you are almost sitting on the

heels. Then rise erect on tiptoes, and

repeat, always opening knees as widely as

you can to right and left. At first you

will probably need to hold a support with

exercises of Indian native wrestlers.

have seen one such keep on at it, work-

ing away like a machine rather than a

creature of flesh and blood, until the per-

spiration ran off him in streams. And

then his trainer rubbed him all over with

very little, lowering the body, and not

slowly increase until you can go thirty

(The concluding exercise of the All-

RESULT OF SOUTHAMPTON

COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent

The second prize of £2 10s. has been

Miss E. Puttock, 87, Walnut Tree Close,

The ten prizes of 5s, each have been

F. Kennedy, 4. Fleshers Vennel, Perth;

John Kennedy, 4, Fleshers Vennel, Perth;

George Downs, 30, Aln Street, Hebburn-

on-Tyne; Harry Morgan, 27, Victoria

Road, Folkestone: Ernest Bunyard, 31,

Harold Road, Sittingbourne, Kent; R. A.

Camp. Baddow Park, near Chelmsford,

Ashton-under-Lyne; L. Jackson, 199, Rad-

Clara Love. 20. Enmore Green. Shaftes-

bury. Dorset; Samuel Bishop, 45;

Wordsley Green. Wordsley, near Stour-

bridge, Staffs; Raymond W. Kernick, 62,

Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham;

Stanley Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace,

Ardrossan; F. S. W. Wiffen, Bridge End,

SOLUTION.

Southampton Football Club, like

numerous other famous clubs, owed its

Essex; John Cutchinkus, 17, Low Albion

Street. South Bank, Yorks; R. W.

McGuinness, 828, Oldham Road, Bardsley,

cliffe Street. Oldham: Louie Pagan, 224,

St. George's Road, Bolton; P. Broomfield,

Rosebery Road, Felixstowe; J. Donetta,

122, St. Mary's Road, Edmonton, N. 9;

divided among the following seventeen

competitors, whose solutions contained

awarded to the following competitor,

whose solution contained one error:

Glasgow.

in a correct solution. The first prize of

£5 has therefore been awarded to:

424, Parliamentary Road,

WILLIAM SCOTT,

Guildford.

two errors each:

Bocking, Essex.

a brilliant record.

to rise on the toes, but keep flat-footed.

The other way is to open the knees but

Begin with ten of these movements, and

This is one of the favourite training

one hand to keep balance.

times without feeling tired.

You can place hands on hips, heels

For this exercise you stand upright.

The legs are not neglected in my table,

#### BEST FOOTER INFORMATION OBTAINABLE HERE!

# 

BOYS' FRIEND

All lovers of King Soccer should make a point of reading "GOALIE'S" chatty articles week by week. Besides being interesting, they include many tips that should prove helpful to the young player!

The Championships.

Last week we had something to say about the successful clubs of the first half of the season. We mentioned that Liverpool and Leicester City were regarded as the most likely candidates for the championship of their separate sections of the League. But just as there are successes of the present season, so there are failures, which incidentally, is inevitable in this game of football. There must be clubs at the top and clubs at the bottom, although the latter fact is not very consoling to the supporters of those clubs which happen to have struck a bad patch.

London's Many Disappointments.

So far as a general statement can be made, there is plenty of justification for suggesting that the League clubs of London have been, in the collective sense, the most disappointing up to this halfway house. Last season, it will be remembered, the Arsenal only escaped relegation by a sensational win away from home on the last Saturday but one

J. FERRIS (Preston North End).

Round Table will be given next week.) of the campaign. Naturally, everybody thought that the Highbury people, after I League ladder, and they, like the Arsenal, | by the seashore. Wilson deserves to be such a fright, would see to it that the Oldham Athletic, and possibly Stoke, mentioned along with McCall as among team did not have another such experi-But it is not in mortals to command success, and though the Arsenal players have undoubtedly done their best to deserve it in their matches up to now, it is already clear that there is a terrific fight in front of the Reds if they are to steer clear of the last two places at the end of the season

> For this comparative failure of the Arsenal there is at least one good reason. Sir Henry Norris, who is chairman of the club, holds the opinion most strongly that no footballer, however good, is worth more than a thousand pounds by way of transfer fee, and though Sir Henry has not yet succeeded in persuading the other big football clubs of the wisdom of this view, the Arsenal have, so far, tried to carry out the policy as set down by Sir Henry, and have resolutely refused to pay record prices to obtain the transfer of ready-made players.

> > The One Big Problem.

In addition to the Arsenal, both the Spurs and Chelsea of the London clubs have been very disappointing, for the former were runners-up in the League last season, and were expected by many people to make a very bold bid for the championship of the First Division this

an extremely good start, which seemed to suggest a great time for the club, and possibly its first championship success, failed to keep up the promise. It is rather a peculiar and significant fact that all these three London First Division clubs have, almost since the start of the season, been faced with the same problem -the question of who should play at centre-forward, and of finding a man who supplied the completely satisfactory

Pity the Orient.

Just as London's First Division clubs have failed to do anything worthy of "writing home about," so the Second Division teams of the Metropolis have also been disappointing to a large extent. West Ham United made many alterations in their staff during the summer, but obviously did not find the solution to all their forward troubles. Then Crystal Palace, as we know, went for a further length of time than any other club in the big Leagues without scoring a single victory, though it must be said for the Selhurst crew that they, pulled themselves together in fine style, and have done good work since the turning in the long lane of misfortune was discovered.

But it is rather tragic to recall that when the Palace got rid of the wooden spoon they handed it over to another London club in Clapton Orient.

Of course, we don't expect great things of the Lea Bridge club, because they always seem to be struggling with financial difficulties. But they have, up to now, managed to keep their place in the Second Division, though they look like having a hard row to hoe to escape relegation at the end of the present season.

Some Striking Failures.

Turning from London for a moment, one of the most disappointing teams has been Cardiff City. This side did so well in the latter part of the last campaign, and also started the present season in such excellent form, that many people jumped to the conclusion that it was their turn to win the championship. Alas, they were unable to reproduce their early form, and in spite of many changes in the team-or perhaps partly because of these many changes—the name of the took the step of calling the players toany grievances, or any suggestions for the general good of the side. The fact that none of the players expressed any sort of dissatisfaction served to stop many rumours which had been going the rounds about unhappy players in the camp at Deepdale.

What One Man Means.

Perhaps the real secret of the compara. tive failures of the Preston North End club is to be found in the fact that they no longer have the regular assistance of Joseph McCall, one of the greatest centrehalf-backs of modern times, and also a man with a fine influence on the rest of the team. McCall, however, is getting on in years, and no longer feels equal to the strain of a long season in the trying position of centre-half. Personally, I think there is much reason to hope that the "Proud Prestonians" will pull through all right, for they have some extremely likely lads on their books who are bound time round. But they, too, have struck to improve with experience. And at last

a bad patch, while Chelsea, after making , they seem to be getting the very best out of Ferris, an inside-right whom they secured from Chelsea not so long ago. Ferris has played for Ireland, but could not get a regular place in the Chelsea side. Nor did he impress when first he went to Preston. Lately, however, he has shown himself in tip-top form, and one of his best games was reserved for that visit of Chelsea to Deepdale. Naturally, fellows like to do specially well against their old colleagues, and what is more, they generally manage to show up in good form.

A Great Centre-Half.

Practically since the start of the season rumour has been busy with the name of George Wilson, the famous centre-halfback of the Wednesday. It has been said more than once that he did not altogether relish Second Division football, and there seems little prospect of the Sheffield club, which has its home at Hillsborough, getting back into the First Division at an early date. Wilson was born at Blackpool, and it is said that he



GEORGE WILSON (The Wednesday).

club has steadily dropped down the I learned his football artistry on the sands have a tremendous fight ahead of them. | the great centre-halves of the present Huddersfield, the Cup winners, have day, and, like McCall, has played several pulled up after a start which was none | times for England. Centre-forwards up too good, but Preston North End, who | against Wilson are never allowed a great were in the last Cup Final against | deal of rope, but it is true to-day, as Huddersfield, have not been any too | ever, that one man cannot make a foothappy. Not so long ago the management | hall team. Barson, the centre-half of Manchester United, is another great gether, and of asking them if they had I player who is proving the truth of the foregoing,

(In next Monday's splendid footer chat "Goalie" deals with the first round of the English Cup, mentioning from past experience the surprising results which are bound to crop up in this strenuous struggle for possession of the silver bauble. On no account must you miss our next issue, so order your copy in advance!)

# BY ORDER OF THE LEAGUE! By P. G. WODEHOUSE. (Continued from page 319.)

shifted Dexter's house into them? The beds are in two long rows along each wall. Moriarty's and mine are the last two at the end furthest from the door."

"Just under the gallery," said Trevor. "I see."

"That's it. Well, at half-past ten sharp every night Dexter sees that we're all in, and goes off to sleep at the Old Man's, and we don't see him again till breakfast. He turns the gas off from outside." "Well?"

"Well, directly everybody was asleep last night-it wasn't till after one, as there was a rag on-Moriarty and I got up, dressed, and climbed up into the gallery. Ye know the gallery windows? They open at the top, an' it's rather hard to get out of them. But we managed it, and dropped on to the gravel outside."

"Long drop," said Clowes. "Yes. I hurt myself rather. But it was in a good cause. I dropped first, and while I was on the ground, Moriarty came on top of me. That's how I got hurt. But it wasn't much, and we cut across the ground, and over the fence, and down to the river. It was a fine night, and not very dark, and everything smelt ripping down by the river."

"Don't get poetical," said Clowes. "Stick to the point."

"We got into the boathouse--" asked the practical Trevor, for the boathouse was wont to be locked at one in the morning. "Moriarty had a key that fitted," explained O'Hara briefly. "We got in, and launched a boat—a big tub put in the tar and a couple of brushes -there's always tar in the boathouse

"Wait a bit," interrupted Trevor, "you said tar and feathers. Where did you get the feathers?"

-and rowed across."

"We used leaves. They do just as well, and there were heaps on the bank. Well, when we landed, we tied up the boat, and bunked across to the recreation ground. We got over the beastly, spiky railings and went over to the statue. Moriarty got up first, and I handed him the tar and a brush. Then I went up with the other brush, and we began. We did his face first. It was too dark to see really well, but I think we made a good job of it When we had put about as much tar on as we thought would do, we took out the leaves-which we were carrying in our pockets-and spread them on. Then we got into our boat again, and came back."

"Well, I'm hanged!" was Trevor's comment on the story.

Clowes roared with laughter. O'Hara was a perpetual joy to him. As O'Hara was going, Trevor asked him for his gold bat.

"You haven't lost it, I hope?" he

O'Hara felt in his pocket, but brought his hand out at once and transferred it to another pocket. A look of anxiety came over his face, and was reflected in Trevor's.

"I could have sworn it was in that pocket," he said. "You haven't lost it?" queried

Trevor again. "He has," said Clowes, confidently. "If you want to know where that bat is. I should say you'd find it somewhere between the baths and the statue. At the foot of the statue, for choice. It seems to me-correct me if I am wrong-that you have been and gone and done it, me broth av a bhoy."

O'Hara gave up the search. He was too penitent for words. Clowes took it on himself to point out

the bright side. "There's nothing to get sick about. really." he said. "If the thing doesn't turn up, though it probably will, you'll simply have to tell the old man that it's lost. He'll have another made. You won't be asked for it till just before sports day either, so you will have plenty of time to

"Oh. I suppose it'll be all right," said Trevor. "but I hope it won't be found anywhere near the statue." O'Hara said he hoped so, too.

(Where has O'Hara lost Trevor's gold bat, and what will the loss lead to? On no account must you miss next Monday's extra long instalment of this fine yarn. Ask your newsagent to save a copy of the Boxs' FRIEND for you!)

#### WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN ON SATURDAY.

Below will be found our expert's opinion of the probable results of the big games to be played on Saturday, January 6th. The likely winning side is printed in capitals. Where a draw is anticipated, both clubs are printed in smaller letters.

First Division.

STOKE v. Arsenal. Preston North End w. Aston Villa. Birmingham v. Sunderland. WEST BROM. A. v. Blackburn Rovers. CARDIFF CITY v. Bolton Wanderers. BURNLEY v. Sheffield United. LIVERPOOL v. Chelsea. HUDDERSFIELD "TOWN v. Everton. Oldham Athletic v. MANCHESTER CITY.

Tottenham Hotspur v. Middlesbrough.

Second Division. CRYSTAL PALACE v Bradford City. Fulham v. Southampton. LEEDS UNITED v. Port Vale. LEICESTER CITY v. Barnsley. MANCHESTER UNITED v. Hull City. NOTTS COUNTY v. Derby County. ROTHERHAM C'NTY v. Clapton Orient. THE WEDNESDAY v. Blackpool. SOUTH SHIELDS v. W'hampton W'ders. Stockport County v. Bury. NEWCASTLE U. v. Nottingham Forest. WEST HAM UNITED v. Coventry City.

(Scottish League). ALBION ROVERS v. Clyde. CELTIC v. Aberdeen. FALKIRK v. Ayr United. HAMILTON ACADS. v. Partick Th. Hearts v. Third Lanark. Kilmarnock v. Dundee. MORTON v. Airdrieonians. RAITH ROVERS v. Alloa. RANGERS v. Motherwell.

St. Mirren v. HIBERNIANS.

First Division

inception to the sportsmanship of a band of youths associated with a religious institution. It began at St. Mary's Church, Southampton, and was naturally called St. Mary's Football Club. - The eleven made wonderful progress, and have

Boys! Spread the same of the BOYS' FRIEND far and wide. It's easily the best boys' paper in the world.

#### MAURICE EVERARD EXCELS HIMSELF IN THIS HIS LATEST MASTERPIECE!



A Magnificent Story packed full with Startling Incidents!

#### The ist Chapter.

Stanton Hilliard, alias Stanton Maynard, has stolen from his cousin, Sir Leonard Maynard, the plans of the location of a French privateer, which, loaded with loot, sank in deep water in the South Seas. In company with Sebastian Marks and Otto Greenbaum, two accomplices, he hires John Brereton, a deep-sea diver, and his two nephews, Tom and Hal. It is not until they have been at sea some weeks, that the diver and the boys suspect Hilliard of being connected with the burglary at Sir Leonard's house, though they were present at the time John Brereton befriends Briskett, the galley-boy, whom Jonkers Petersen, the captain, has ill-treated. The diver and his nephews decide to see the thing through, hoping to be able to return the treasure to its rightful owner, when it has been raised. Whilst at Suva, they are attacked and robbed, but are rescued and their money returned to them by Abimeleck Hooper, a queer character, who was found as a stowaway on the Glentarn, their ship. Hooper, who poses as a deaf showman, down on his luck, is appointed personal servant to Hilliard and his friends. Camel Island, their goal, is sighted at last, and the wreck is located. Hilliard and Greenbaum go ashore, accompanied by Hal Brereton, but to their surprise they find that the island is not only inhabited, but that the natives are ruled by Cardross, an Englishman. Cardross demands three thousand pounds before he will allow them to start salving the treasure. After a great deal of argument on the part of Hilliard and Greenhaum the money changes hands and the two rogues return to the ship Next morning John Brereton descends to the wreck. To his surprise he finds that it is in not nearly so deep water as Hilliard & Co. suspected. Moreover, he discovers that divers have been at work on the wreck quite recently, and that all the treasure has been removed. "I'm sorry, sir," he says to Hilliard, when he reaches the surface, "but you've got to lace a great disappointment. Someone has been working on the wreck before we came, and there's not five bob's worth of treasure in her!"

#### The 2nd Chapter. The Mask Falls!

In all the world there was no spot so quiet as the deck on the Glentarn when John Brereton's amazing words fell on the ears of those about him. The sounds of business everywhere became suddenly hushed; even the ceaseless boom of the breakers on the outer reef, and the cries of the gulls, whirling like flecks of snow against the golden glories of the sky, died to a stillness in which the dropping of a pin might have been heard.

"Not five bob's worth of treasure

inside her!"

· It seemed years since John Brereton had made the staggering pronouncement, and, split into little groups, one stared at another in openmouthed astonishment, Tom at his brother, Greenbaum at Hilliard, Hilliard at Marks, the diver at all of them.

"Yes, I'm sorry to say it's only too true," jerked out John, with difficulty recovering his breath. "Someone was on the spot afore we came, and whatever gold was in her ain't there now. Those are the facts, gentlemen, and you've got to face | fell back, and Hilliard took courage. 'em. Every bit of plate and coin has been rizzed, and we've had our journey for nothing."

Otto Greenbaum gave vent to a roar, the embodiment of anger, disappointment, and ungovernable passion. He lifted his podgy hands and shook his trembling fingers in John Brereton's face.

"If dat am de truf, den I kill you. I kill everyones. You make of me a ruined man, hein, and I lose all my

fortune. You-you-"

slowly to his sides.

disappointed after coming all this way langrily, "does that please you?"

and spending so much hard cash. But the fact remains—the treasure ain't there, and I can't produce it." "Can't or won't; which?"

The interruption came in a quiet, silky tone from Stanton Hilliard, who stood a little way off, one arm folded across his chest, the elbow of the other resting on his wrist, while his long, white fingers thoughtfully caressed his beard. And, all the while, his brilliant eyes were fixed on Brereton's surprised face, into which, following the pallor induced by immersion under water, two pink spots of colour were slowly deepening to crimson.

Without moving a muscle, the diver looked squarely at his questionerfrom the neb of his white-topped cap to the caps of his snowy deck-shoes.

"I beg your pardon, sir. Were you speaking to me?" he asked calmly. At the tone, so deadly cold, both

Hal and Tom shivered. They knew when John Brereton spoke like that trouble was brewing-for someone. Slowly Hilliard inclined his head, and still his eyes were fixed steadily

on the other. "I repeat what I said a moment ago," he said easily. "You can'tor won't produce the treasure.

Which?" The diver shifted his immense weight from his left to his right foot, the unconscious adoption of a fighting

attitude. "Do I understand. Mr. Hilliard, that you doubt what I say?"

The question cut the warm air like a sudden blast of cold wind, the harbinger of the approaching storm.

Stanton Hilliard smiled mysteri-

"My friend, permit me to bring one very important fact to your notice," he retorted. "While you were down there," jerking his head in the direction of the unruffled surface of the lagoon, "I happened to be standing by the gear, watching the depth register, and I noticed that at no time were you more than forty fathoms down. To my certain knowledge the wreck lies deeper, and my suggestion is, that you never reached her at all, but hit upon the plan of telling us the gold is not there, in order--"

"Stop!" Brereton's voice broke like a clap of thunder. "If you value your life-"

But even as his immense fists doubled up and he took a quick step forward, Tom moved to his uncle's side and, closing a restraining grip on his wrist, drew his arm back.

"It's all right, Uncle Jack. Let him get on with it. He's entitled to his point of view, no matter whether we like it or not. Nothing is to be gained by flying into a temper."

By a clever manœuvre he managed to interpose himself between the two, and the swift drooping of his left eyelid flashed to John Brereton a warning to be cautious. The diver

"You never reached the wreck at all," he continued; "and now you want to make out the treasure doesn't lie in her."

"Tell him exactly what you discovered," said Tom again.

Brereton nodded.

"In one respect you're quite right, Mr. Hilliard," he explained. "I didn't go nearly as deep as I expected-because the ship doesn't lie seventy odd fathoms down at all. Scarcely forty; and at that depth I John Brereton's long arms dropped | found her, and searched her from end to end. The iron chests which held "No use taking on, my friend. | the plate and bullion are still there, I'm simply breaking the bad news as | but each one had been blasted open gently as I can," he said quite calmly. | and the contents removed. Now. I'm sure you must all be terribly then, my lad," eyeing Tom rather

Tom, however, had no time to reply, for Greenbaum interrupted with a shrill cackle-

"It may plis him, but it don't satisfy me, my friendt," he laughed derisively. "You don't pull that sort of stuff over our eyes. I prefer to believe Mr. Hilliard here. The gold is there, and you know it-"

"Right," snapped John, flinging his nephew aside with a force that sent him reeling half-way to the deckrail; "I may take an insult from an Britisher on suffrance, but hanged if I stand one from a German. There's one for calling me a liar, and

had rushed up to see what all the fuss was about. Brereton was powerless in face of a straight shot, and Hilliard raised the smoking barrel a third

> "I'm going to kill you, John Brereton!" he said, in a sibilant whisper, as he crouched down and steadily decreased the distance between him and his victim. "I'm going to kill you because either of your nephews can do the work we want just as well as you. Stand

right ear. "Now stand up to me,

shrilled. "We've got 'em now!

They're all unarmed. Fleischner,

Rattree, Bayling, close on the other

what he was doing, he snatched the

pistol from Petersen, and, without

waiting to take aim, emptied a couple

of barrels. Both shots flew wide,

scattering the mob of deckhands who

Too mad with rage almost to know

two while I down the big fellow!"

joined the rising Petersen.

like a man!"

back, both of you!"-momentarily bringing his weapon into line with Hal and Tom. "I shall need you both later. But this-this finishes your uncle! I'll repeat the words you used to me-take that!"

He pulled the trigger at the very instant when Tom and Hal launched themselves on him, and the shot flew wide as Hilliard thudded to the deck with the two Breretons on top of

But just as swiftly Petersen,

them, apparently quite unconscious of their presence, he took up a posi-Hilliard ducked, turned, ran, and tion in the centre of the ring, and to the strains of the music sang these "Here give me that shooter!" he words:

"The homeland calls to you and me. I hear its voice through boundless

Through sun or storm, by land and

The homeland calls—just calls to

"There is a land which is our home, Where all are strong and all are

I hear its voice where'er I roam-The voice of home, that calls to

There was infinite tenderness in every note that floated away on the morning breeze, and an exquisite sadness in the voice of the singer that hushed the sounds of strife, and for an instant caused the quarrel to be forgotten. They just stood there in an awed group, some with blood on their faces, some with swollen cheeks and cut lips, some burning to be revenged, yet all touched by the tenderness of the words of the songe

The professor might have been unaware of the rumpus, as, making a final sweep with his bow he drew it across the strings, and, perching himself on top of one of the deck ventilators, played something that made the feet of the younger members of the crew itch to dance to the tune.

"The White-eyed Kaffir!" shouted Rattree, wiping a scarlet stain from his face. "I say, George, let's have, 'My fiddle is my sweetheart.' "

For the first time Abimeleck Hooper looked up. He made a grave bow, and, tapping with his bow the strings of the fiddle, announced, in a solemn voice:

"Ladies and gennermen, by special request, 'My fiddle is my sweetheart.' "

And in an instant, as the sad, wailing notes floated over the placid waters of the lagoon, a number of the deckhands had taken up the refrain, and there poured into the deep silence of the morning the hauntingly familiar words:

"My fiddle is my sweetheart, And I'm her faithful beau."

Even Greenbaum had ceased to moan about his "t'ick ear," and tried in a cracked voice to join in the chorus. The strange interruption had given every one pause to think, John and his nephews time to cool down, Hilliard an opportunity to reflect on the recklessness of his charge, Petersen time to brook on the pain and injury the diver had caused him.

"De fight am a washout!" muttered Greenbaum, under his breath, when the firemen and stokers, drawn by the lilting strains, appeared from the bowels of the ship. "Dis fellah am holding a consick, and vair soon he send round de hat. I gueth it's about time for me to get along."

With a backward, venomous glance at Brereton and the boys, he crept furtively away, an example followed a minute or two later by Hilliard and by Marks, who, ever careful of his own skin, had taken the precaution to keep well out of the conflict.

rail, where Tom and Hal joined him. Amidships, surrounded by a group of enthusiastic lookers-on. Abimeleck Hooper was endeavouring to fulfil in turn all the demands made upon his apparently inexhaustible repertoire. "Let's have 'Annie Laurie,"

Brereton, too, drew to the deck-

someone shouted. "That row started mighty sudden," Hal remarked, looking up from the task of binding his uncle's wrist. "I'm rather sorry, aren't you, Tom? Because it means we've come to a dead end with Hilliard and his lot."

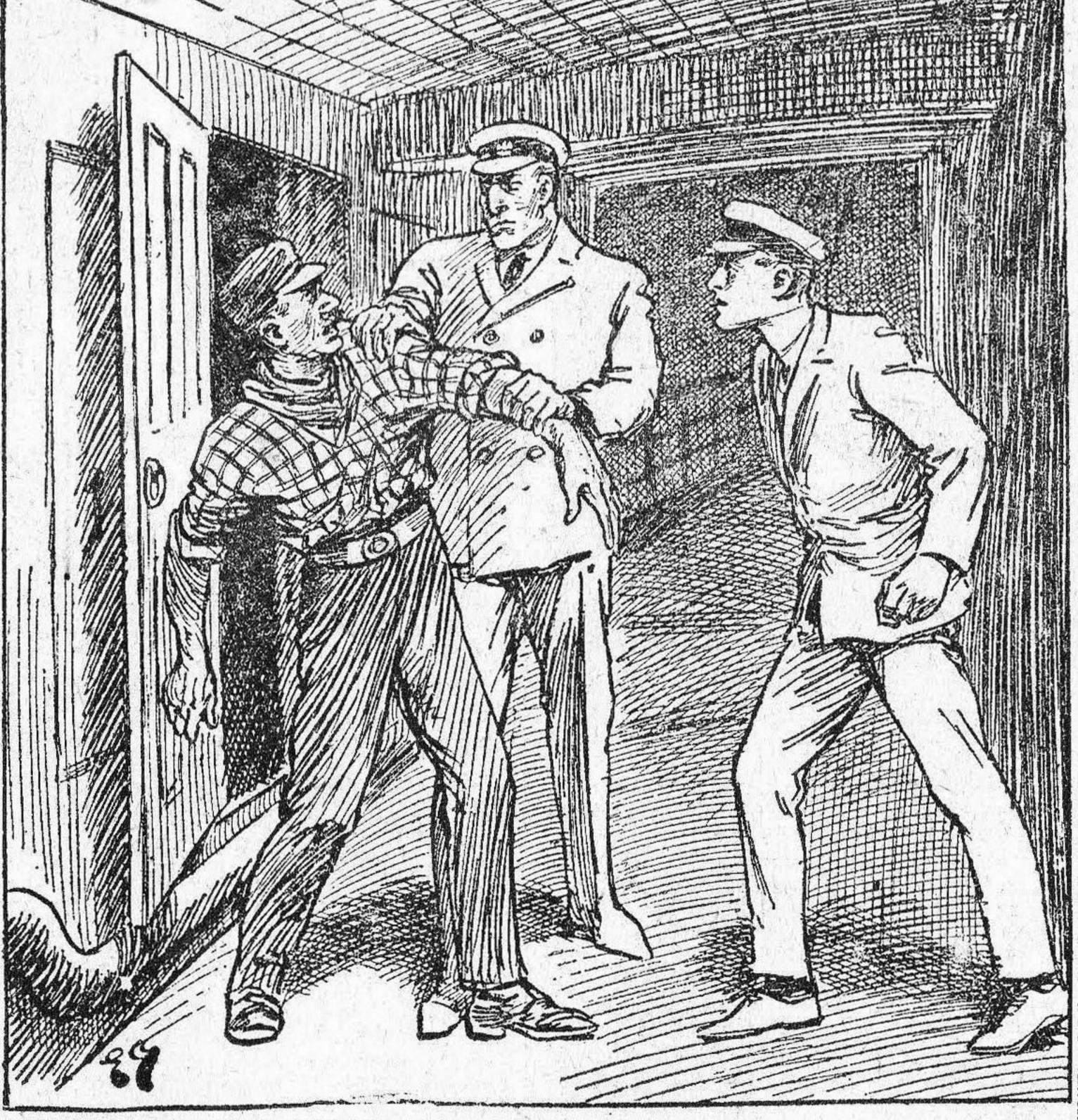
John Brereton laughed and glanced aft, to where Jonkers Petersen was just disappearing down the main hatch.

"I'm not sorry at all, because we've never been at anything else than a dead end with Hilliard and his lot. It's a declaration of war, that's all, and it was bound to come sooner or later. Only the other side, and not us, declared it."

Tom looked worried. "Well, what will happen next, do

you think?" he asked.

"What will happen. Be packing up that gear and I'll tell you what will happen." The diver, who was still feeling the strain of his underwater immersion, produced a pouch, and drawing a pipe from his pocket, sat down to enjoy a quiet smoke while the two lads packed the diving apparatus away. "Henceforth it's war to the knife between us. Hilliard thinks we want to cheat him out of the treasure by pretending it isn't there. He doesn't trust us any more



CAUCHT RED-HANDED! John Brereton laid a heavy hand on Rattree's shoulder. "Say, my good fellow," the diver growled, "what were you doing inside my cabin?"

another for making signs to your employer while I was talking to him."

The "one" was a left arm hook to the head, which caught Greenbaum so smartly that his teeth knocked together like castanets, and the other was a straight jab to the jaw.

It took Otto on the point, lifted him a good three feet in the air, and sent him, a mass of whirling legs and arms, right on top of Jonkers Petersen. Caught unawares, Petersen doubled up and crashed heavily to the deck, momentarily stunned by the terrific impact of his head against the planking.

By the time his scattered wits returned, and he sat up, with his right hand towards his hip-pocket. Brereton had thrust Hal also aside, and with clenched fists was advancing on Hilliard.

"Now then, we settle this matter once and for all!" he shouted. "Off with that spick-and-span coat, and put 'em up! I'm going to give all three of you in turn the biggest thrashing of your lives! Never mind about my engagement, or tricking you. You called me a liar, and you've got to pay for it. What! You won't fight? Then take that "a smart backhander crimsoned Hilliard's grey cheek-"and that!"following it up with a rattle to the Rattree, and Fleischner were on top of them, and in a moment the deck was transformed into a cockpit of fighting men.

The diver seized the pistol, and caught Otto Greenbaum such a smart tap over the head that he dropped out of action, blood pouring into his

A second smack at Fleischner, however, was not so fortunate. mate had drawn a claspknife, and as the blow descended the tip of the blade ripped a nasty gash in Brereton's forearm. The weapon thudded to the deck, and was lost to view in the maze of kicking legs and shuffling feet.

And then, above the groans and shouts, as hard knocks were given and returned, there came a strange sound, the cadence of liquid notes drawn by a master-hand from a wonderful stringed instrument, and as if by magic the rough-and-tumble sorted itself out, drew apart, breathless, bloodstained, and amazed, to see coming slowly towards them an apparition in black, playing a weird-looking instrument, which was a cross between a 'cello and a one-stringed fiddle.

The apparition was Hooper-Professor Abimeleck Hooper, clad from shoulders to feet in close-fitting black tights, and as he moved towards.

Heaps of tip-top stories are coming along—Watch "B. F." Chat.

than we trust him. And growing impatient, he has shown his hand. He was quite prepared to put my light out, and forcing you younkers to dive for him after I'd gone."

"As if we should," snapped Hal. "I'd see him at the bottom of Davy Jones' locker first. What do you think he'll do, Uncle Jack?"

Brereton stared away over the glittering stretch of water to the dazzling whiteness of the coral beach, backed by the dim mysterious green of the island forest.

"They're deciding down there, now," he flung back tersely. "Holding a sort of council of war on us. It was a miracle old Hooper came along with his weird musical interruption. on his arm. I suppose neither of you two was armed?"

The boys looked at each other guiltily and each had to confess: "Lihadn't a weapon on me."

The diver eyed them sternly.

"And what did I tell you weeks | ago? Never move a yard on board this ship without a pistol. I know I'm preaching summat I wasn't practising at the moment, but then a man can't very well go under water with a Smith and Webley at his hip. I However, be warned for the future. From now onwards we carry our lives in our hands. We shall be left alone just as long as it pleases Hilliard, Greenbaum, Marks, and Petersen to neglect us. When the hours of grace expire, there's no telling what will happen. And I wonder, boys"glancing to where Abimeleck Hooper still performed to a delighted audience on his one-stringed violin-"how much of the professor's timely interruption was due to accident and how much to premeditation?"

"Impossible to say," Hal Brereton replied. "He's the strangest creature I've ever known."

"We'd best not linger," said the diver, rising. "I shan't feel at all secure until I've got a six shooter and a dozen clips of shells in my pocket. You mark my word, blood's going to be shed on board the Glentarn—our blood or theirs before we are much older."

"As bad as that?" ventured Tom. "Sure of it!" was the laconic reply. "I feel it coming, and I wish to goodness I could decide whether Abimeleck Hooper is for or against us."

"Why not ask him? He appears to be in a good mood. Snakes, you wouldn't imagine a fellow with his mournful visage could sing such a jolly good comic song."

He told us he was a man of mystery," said the diver, moving aft. "And by jingo, he jolly well is!"

#### The Mysterious Hooper.

An atmosphere of tension hung over the ship all through the day. The excitement temporarily caused by the prospect of raising the treasure had for the time being been diverted to the two opposing factions. That matters could not be allowed to rest where they were, was as plain to John Brereton as it was to Hilliard and his associates. And as yet no one knew where, or how the next spark would arise.

From the start the diver maintained an attitude of unconcern, though more than once he was tempted to go straight to Hilliard's cabin and demand satisfaction for the insult of the morning. The more patient counsels of Hal, however, prevailed, and the rest of the day was mainly spent in lolling about the deck. So far no attempt had been made to land again on the island, and the wood, the canvas, and the stores still lay on the beach where they had been left the previous evening.

Nor was there any sign of Cardross or his native servants. Not once was the quiet of the forest unbroken; over hill and stream, forest and beach, brooded an eternal silence.

Brereton could not pretend he did not feel uneasy. No one spoke either to him or to the boys, and though there were comings and goings between the engine room, the the saloon where Hilliard, Greenbaum, Marks, and Petersen were closeted, scarcely a word passed.

In a moment it seemed the three divers found themselves cut off from all contact with their fellows. Not even Hooper nor Briskett the cabin boy had approached them. At length towards sundown John signed to his nephews and indicated by a jerk of his head his intention to seek the

shelter of their cabin. "They haven't even taken the trouble to send any food along," he said, as they went quietly down the companion. "I wonder if it's a state of subjection."

"Maybe," agreed Hal, who was leading. "The brute thinks we've been trying to deceive him about the depth at which the privateer lies, and he'd like us to go down on our knees and ask for foregiveness."

The diver laughed ironically. "Make no mistake about that, lad. He knows I'm not deceiving him as to the depth of the wreck, because this

afternoon he sent Fleischer for'ard to take a sounding. What he thinks is that the gold is still down there, but we don't want to raise it-till another time. Now, mark me if that isn't the line he takes. I---"

He broke off abruptly as Tom turned and laid a restraining hand

"Go quietly," said the boy, bending his head close to Brereton's in the gloom of the narrow passage. "I rather fancy I heard someone in our cabin. And, by Jove, there is, too!" -as there was a sudden crash of glass. "Hi, Tom, see that he doesn't slip that way!"

Both Tom and Brereton dashed forward together, and reached the door in time to see the seaman, Rattree, emerging. The diver laid a heavy grip on his shoulder.

"Say, my good fellow, what were you doing inside my cabin?" he growled. "Your place is down under,

"Now, see here, I'll worse than rope-end you!" growled John, thrusting forward his under-jaw aggressively. "You saw how I treated your captain this morning. Unless you answer my questions I'll break every bone in your miserable body and drop your carcase into the lagoon. You've smashed my shaving glass. How did it happen?"

The fellow knew he was beaten. He gave a timid glance round, and then said in an awed whisper:

"The cap'n, he sent me to find if you had any shooters among your things-wanted to know if you was armed. I didn't want the job, guv'nor. I didn't really. Give me a chance to get clear, or the old man'll triangle me. You don't know what that means, sir-to be strung up and lashed till there's not a pint of blood in your body! I'll do anything, so long--"

Brereton felt genuinely sorry for the unhappy wretch. Rattree was trembling from head to foot, and on his craven features was the expression of a hunted dog.

came!" the diver snapped. "You can tell your precious skipper you didn't find any arms, because there ain't such a thing to be found. And take my advice and keep out of

nervous. They want to test our strength before opening the ball. What's to be done—take the offensive, or wait till they show their hand?"

Hal did not answer for some seconds, but when he did speak his tone was very grave.

"Seems to me, Uncle Jack, what they want is to get rid of us. Hilliard won't believe the gold isn't there, and now he knows the wreck lies in fairly shallow water he'll decide he can raise the bullion just as easily without as with us. The first thing he'll do will be to get hold of the diving apparatus."

"Then let him," said John grimly. "He's quite welcome to try diving as a pastime if he wants to. But the thing I don't like is being cooped up here, knowing all the time those scoundrels are hatching some sort of mischief. Now, if only we knew what their game was-"

Tom moved to the port-hole and stared out. The lagoon was now a pool of darkness, reflecting only tiny specks of light here and there as the stars peeped out one by one. Against "All right; get back where you the sapphire of the sky the island, with its fringe of palms, looked sinister and forbidding.

"I'm game to find out," he said quietly. "Listen, the crew are singing in their quarters, and there's a

sure of the gold, wherever it ith," he was saying. "Thupposing vat Misther Brereton thays is right, and dair aindt no svag in the hulk, then someone's taken it, and that someone is likely to be Misther Cardross." "Cardross be hanged!" grunted Marks. "You talk like a fool. What does a fellow who lives year in and year out on an island tucked away in the South Seas want with gold? Can't you see his game? He's found the treasure—as like as not brought a few coins up with him, though Rat-

"Theems to me, my friendth, the

besth thing we can do is to make

tree swears he couldn't find a trace of one in their cabin. Now, here's the position. The Breretons know the gold is there, and we know it's there. If we let 'em off this ship alive, they'll join forces with that dago on the island, do us down for our lawful rights, and the whole expedition will be a washout. So what's to be done?"

"There's no doubt as to what's to be done," broke in Stanton Hilliard harshly. "By fair means or foul, we must stop their mouths between now and sunrise to-morrow morning. What's it to be—a square deal, or put their lights out?"

"Put their lighth out!" snarled "Ve don't vant no Greenbaum. more dealings. Ve had von deal yestherday vith Misther Cardross, and it costh me tree thousand poundth. Our friendth here, Captain Petersen, will take on the dethroying part of the bithness."

"Oh, vill he?" snarled Petersen. "You vas take too much on yourself, hein. It am no easy matter to kill dose big fellars, espeshul that old one. And if I help put dem out of ze way, I want my shares, heinvun quarter of all ze monies brought to de surface."

Tom began to feel so interested that he allowed himself to cross the intervening distance to the hatch and to look down into the brightly-lighted cabin.

At the long, narrow table, running almost the entire length of the saloon, save for the buffet at the end, Marks. Hilliard, Greenbaum, and Petersen were seated. The table had been set for the evening meal, decanters and spirit bottles laid out and everything in readiness for a feast worthy of the great occasion.

"Well. Otto"-Hilliard pressed the points of his slim fingers together, and rested his elbows on the snowwhite cloth-"what do you say? Is Captain Petersen to come in for a fourth share, provided he gets the Brereton fellows out of the way?"

Greenbaum mopped his bald head, on which little beads of moisture glistened like tiny diamonds. The prospect of parting with so much money evidently alarmed him.

"I dunno vat to tink. He may draw two hundred thousand poundths jus' for killing three men. It is a lot of monish."

"Then," shouted Petersen, bringing his huge fist down with a crash on the table, "you do the dirty business yourselves. Perhaps I lose tree, four, five of my crew, and you scoundrels get away scot free. I'll haf no more to do wid it."

"All ri'," Greenbaum sighed resignedly. "Ve'll agree, vun quarter share. And now shut ze mouth, for heah come zot fellah Hooper vid ze dinnah."

Tom watched open-mouthed at the dexterity shown by the professor, as, with one plate of soup on his head, two in his right hand, and a bundle of serviettes in his left, he made the complete circuit of the narrow table and set down his burden without so much as the loss of a single drop.

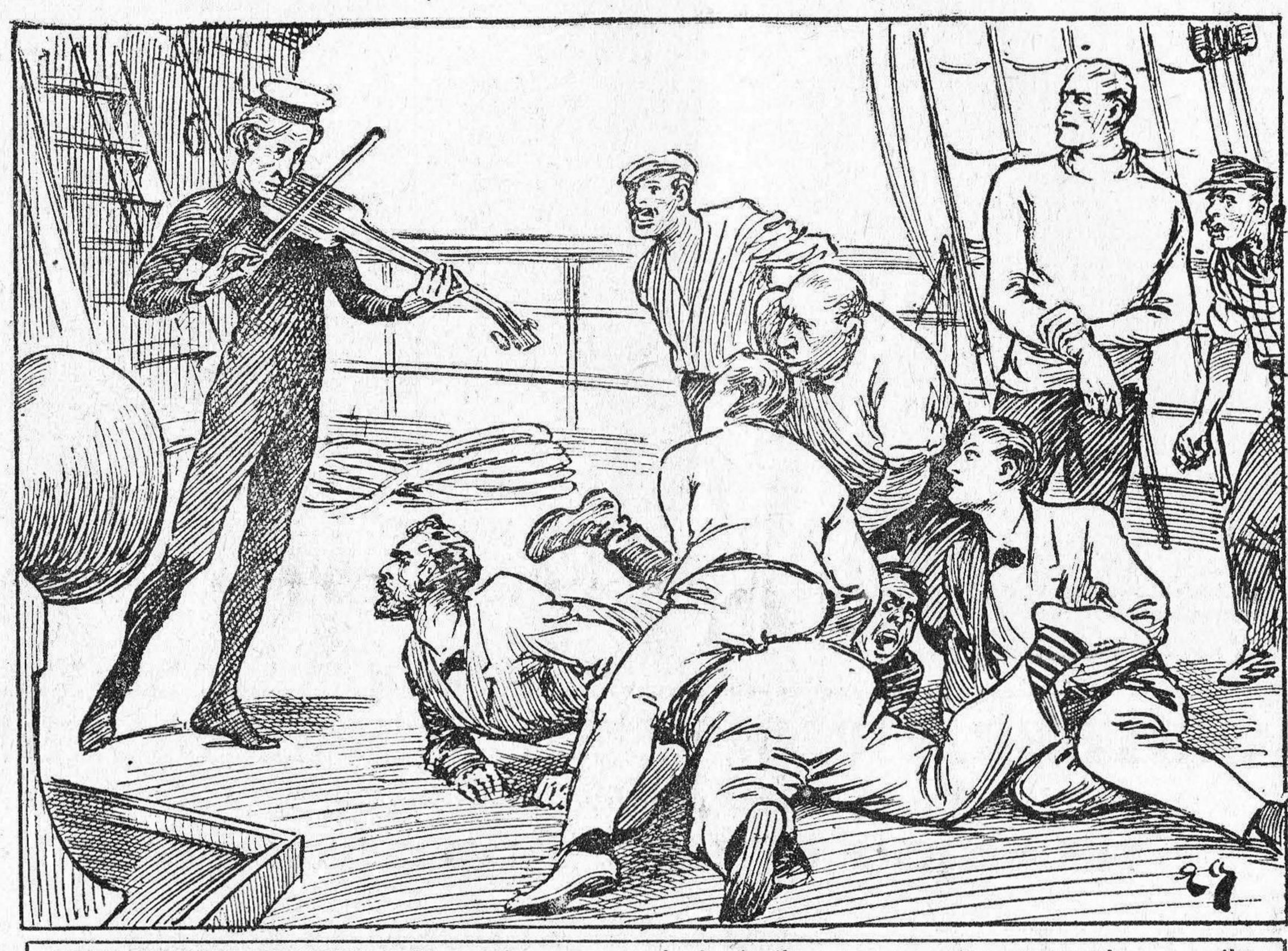
"Glass. Vun more glass for my friendth here!" shouted Petersen, making a megaphone of his hands.

Abimeleck Hooper started back, a pained expression settling on his thin

"Beg pardin, sir, but I'm not a silly ass!" he protested mildly. "A glass, I said!" cried the skipper, picking up a tumbler and banging it on the table.

Hooper nodded, laughed at his own stupidity, and turning to the buffet, withdrew a cork from a bottle of wine. The light overhead showed his every action, and Tom could not repress a start of surprise as he saw the deaf professor take from his pocket a small package of white powder, the contents of which he poured smartly into the neck of the

(There will be an extra long instalment of this stirring story of the sea in next week's Bumper Number of the Boys' Friend! Don't forget to order your copy in advance!



Above the groans and shouts there came a strange sound . . . the cadence of liquid notes drawn by a master hand from a stringed instrument, and as if by magic, the rough and tumble sorted itself out, drew apart, breathless and amazed, to see coming along the deck the figure of Abimeleck Hooper dressed in black tights, and playing a weird-looking instrument!

looking to the fires. Now, what is I trouble which will only land you in I pretty general air of slackness every-Rattree looked from one to the

other, and a defiant expression settled on his grimy face.

'Nuthin' at all, guv'nor. The skipper sent me along to see if you'd like a meal-said him and the owners would be pleased to welcome all three of you to a dinner in the saloon, so 1-1 just come along with the message."

"Oh, did you! Then why not walk inside and deliver it properly?" snapped the diver. "I want to know what it was you knocked over a moment ago."

"The cabin's dark," protested the man. "I couldn't see." Brereton hauled him unwillingly

"We'll soon remedy that. Light the lamp, Tom. Hal, close that door and put the bolt on it. Now before you go, by friend, I'm going to get an explanation from you. I see "as Tom applied a match to the wick, which suffused the compartment with a dim yellow glow-"you've been raking round among our private belongings, turning out boxes and drawers. What's the game, eh? Quick, now "-giving the captive's arm a twist which drew a howl from his lips. "Nothing less than the truth will suffice. Who sent you, and what was your business?"

Rattree looked from one determined face to another, and his courage began to ooze out of his finger-nails.

"I'll be rope-ended for this!" he whimpered. "Cap'n Petersen is a Hilliard's intention to starve us into | brute at best. I've told the truth, I swear."

difficulties. I sha'n't let on that where. Petersen must have broached I've seen you."

Without waiting to hear Rattree's mumbled thanks, he bundled him out into the darkness and closed the door. Then setting his back to it, he addressed Hal and Tom.

"Hilliard and his gang are getting

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a cask to keep them in good humour. Will you hold the door while I take a look round?"

Nothing was to be gained by a policy of sheer inaction, so, pressing an extra handful of shells into Tom's hand, Brereton , ened the door and remained on guard in the passage. Minus his boots, Tom crept silently up the steps and reached the open deck. There was no sign of life anywhere. The vessel lay like a wounded bird on the dark surface of the lagoon, not even showing her riding

Away to the left was a line of white, where the ebb tide drained the last of its strength away on the coral ledge, and shorewards the tiny wavelets made a gentle murmuring as they broke rhythmically on the sandy foreshore. To-night. no lookout man stood in the bows, nor did the bridge resound to Petersen's or Fleischner's heavy tread. The ship might have been a ship of death, save for an occasional burst of laughter floating from the direction of the lazarette.

Rounding the wheel-house and passing the chart-room, Tom gained the main companion, only to find the tiny double doors closed and locked. He turned away and walked aft, drawn by the muffled sound of voices engaged in earnest conversation. A few feet distant the eave-like flaps of a glass ventilator crossed with brass stays sent two streamers of light from one deck-rail to the other. And from below rose the shrill tone of Otto Greenbaum.

A SPLENDID STORY FEATURING YOUR OLD CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD!



The 1st Chapter. The Alarm!

46 Help!" Jimmy Silver opened his eyes, and blinked round him drowsily in the darkness of the room.

From somewhere, far off in the December night, a cry rang in his carsunless it was a dream.

Jimmy Silver was not much given to dreaming, but certainly his dreams had been busy that night. Round the fireside at the Priory that evening ghost stories had been told, and Jimmy was worried, too, by the fact that his chum, Arthur Edward Lovell, had persisted in sleeping in the Haunted Room. Jimmy had fallen asleep thinking of Lovell, and he had dreamed of the Phantom Prior. | Silver quietly. fabled to walk n his old haunts when the Christmas sucw was on the ground.

Outside the rambling old house the December wind raved and howled, awakening every ecno, and drifting the snowflakes against the window-panes. The sound seemed almost deafening to Jimmy as he sat up in bed and listened.

Was it only a dream, or-" Help, help!"

Loud and sharp, nigh above the howl of the winter wind, came that frantic

It was the voiss of Lovell-Lovell, who was sleeping alone in the Haunted Room at the further end of a deserted corridor!

Jimmy leaped from his bed. Something was wrong with Lovellsomething very wrong. Jimmy switched on the electric light in his room. A door from the next room opened, and Valentine Mornington looked in, with a startled face.

"You're awake, Jimmy! That's Lovell!" "Something's up!" said Jimmy breath-

lessly. "I'm going to see. Come along, Morny!" The night was bitterly cold, but Jimmy Silver stayed only to throw on a coat over his pyjamas. Then he opened the door on the corridor and ran out, with

Morny at his heels. Raby and Newcome emerged into the passage from their rooms at the same moment.

"It's Lovell!" exclaimed Newcome. "The silly ass has got a fright! warned him."

"He's dreamed of the ghost!" said Raby.

"Help, help!" Louder sounded the frantic calling from the Haunted Room. The same thought was in the minds of all the juniors-that Lovell, awakening in the · darkness in the Haunted Room, had lost his nerve, and was shricking for help in unreasoning terror. Jimmy Silver fairly raced into the next corridor, and along it to the old cak door of the Haunted Room. No light gleamed there; all was dark within. The corridor itself was dark; the electric light was not installed in that disused portion of the old house. Jimmy groped for the door-handle, Within the wild cries of Lovell were incessant:

"Help, help. help!" A flash of light came in the corridor. Mornington had turned on an electric pocket-lamp.

Jimmy turned the handle, but the door did not open. He wrenched at the big knob, but the door remained fast. It was locked on the inside.

"Lovel!!" shouted Jimmy. "Help!"

"Let us in!"

"What can have happened to him, with the door locked?" gasped Raby. "It's only fright. It can't be anything else." Thump, thump, thump!

Jimmy Silver hammered on the door. "Let us in, Lovell! Unlock the door, old chap!"

The juniors heard Lovell groping his way in the dark room, and there was a rattle of the door-knob, then a click of the turning key.

The door opened. Jimmy Silver & Co. crowded into the room.

Mornington held up the light. It shone on Lovell's face-white, drawn, fixed with terror.

Jimmy glanced round him hastily.

By Owen Conquest. (Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular,") Telling how Valentine Mornington Laid the

Ghost of the Priory!

there was nothing alarming to be seen, a broken voice. I saw it-1 tell you I apart from Lovell's terrified face.

Raby caught Lovell by the arm. "What's the matter, old chap?"

"Did you see it?" "What?"

"Did you see it?" panted Lovell. "Did we see what?" asked Newcome.

"The ghost!"

Lovell covered his face with his hands, as if to shut out a terrible apparition. The chums of the Rookwood Fourth stared at one another. They had wondered what would be the result of Lovell's reckless temerity in sleeping alone in the Haunted Room-whether in the dark hours of the night he would be seized with sudden fright. Apparently their misgivings had been justified. Jimmy led Lovell to the bed, and Lovell sat down on the edge of it, trembling in every limb.

"My hat!" murmured Raby, glaucing round him uneasily. "He-he thinks he's

seen something!" "I did see it!" muttered Lovell huskily. "Don't you fellows think I

fancied it! I saw it!" "What did you see?" asked Jimmy

"A figure in white. It was in the room when I woke up!" said Lovell. with a shudder. "It—it stood beside my bed, pointing-"

He broke off, shivering from head to

"You were dreaming, old chap!" murmured Newcome. "There's nothing here!"

Mornington was lighting the lamp. The light filled the room, and showed up the canopied bed, the glimmering old oak furniture, the almost extinct embers on the wide hearth. But it showed nothing to account for Lovell's terror. I the door was locked when we got here. "I wasn't dreaming!" said Lovell in

saw it!" "But-" said Raby.

"I saw it, I tell you!" "What is the matter?"

Mr. Silver, in dressing-gown and slippers, looked in at the doorway. His face was very grave.

"Lovell thinks he's seen the ghost, sir," said Newcome.

"I saw it!" repeated Lovell. Mr. Silver fixed a curious look on the white-faced junior, sitting shivering on the edge of the tumbled bed.

"It was foolish of you to occupy this room, Lovell," he said gently. "I wrong to allow it. I am afraid you are to blame, Jimmy, as you made the arrangement with Lovell while you were at Rookwood, and I did not wish to disappoint your guest. You must remove to another room for the remainder of the

night, Lovell." "I-I want to," murmured Lovell faintly. "I-I wouldn't stay here alone for anything. But it wasn't a fancy, sir. I saw it—saw it quite plainly."

Mr. Silver did not reply to that. was obvious that the old gentleman attributed the whole affair to nerves. Lovell gave a haggard look at his

"You fellows think I've been scared about nothing!" he muttered.

"Well, old fellow--" said Jimmy. "There's no such thing as ghosts, you know," said Raby.

"I don't say it was a ghost-now," said Lovell. "I-I thought it was when I saw it. But I saw it. ghost or not." Mr. Silver's brow grew stern. "Surely one of you boys has not been

playing a trick!" he exclaimed. "No fear!" answered Jimmy. "Besides,

Lovell had to unlock it to let us in."

"Then no one can have entered the room," said Mr. Silver. "Come, you had better return with Jimmy to his room, Lovell, at once."

There was a footstep in the corridor, and Eustace Spencer, Mr. Silver's secretary, looked in. His fat face had a startled expression, and he was blinking through his big spectacles with a look of scared inquiry.

"I thought I heard a call for help-" he began.

"Probably you did, Spencer," said Mr. Silver dryly. "Lovell has been frightened, and he awoke all of us. Jimmy, you will see that Lovell does not remain in this room. Good-night, my boys."

And Mr. Silver departed, still polite, but obviously a little cross-to call a reassuring word through Phyllis' door, and a ghost.' then to acquaint Mrs. Silver with the fact that the alarm was due to nothing than a foolish boy's fright. Lovell's white face reddened as the old Silver's opinion easily enough.

"Come on, old chap," said Jimmy. or no ghost." "You can bunk in with me for the

"You must excuse me for remarking that you have acted very thoughtlessly, Master Lovell!" said Mr. Spencer, blinking at the Rookwood junior through his spectacles. "You have alarmed the whole house.

"I know that!" said Lovell gruffly. "I think I had better go and speak to the servants," said Mr. Spencer. "I can hear one of the maids screaming. Really, Master Lovell, you should not do

these things from a spirit of bravado." Eustace Spencer walked away with that, leaving Lovell with a deeper colour in his cheeks. And he was not comforted by seeing a grin on the faces of his com-

> The 2nd Chapter. The Watch in the Night!

Valentine Mornington was roaming about the Haunted Room, looking into corners, and making a keen examination of the room. The other juniors hardly heeded him. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome were gathered round Lovell-upon whose face there was a far from pleasant expression. The secretary's words had stung him. Possibly it was from a spirit of bravado that Lovell had insisted upon occupying the Haunted Room, but it was no business of Mr. Silver's secretary to tell him so. What business was it of Spencer, anyhow? Lovell asked himself angrily.

"Well, let's get moving, old fellow," said Jimmy. "It's pretty cold, you know."

"Cheeky cad!" muttered Lovell.

"If I wasn't a guest here, Jimmy, and that fellow wasn't in your father's service. I'd jolly well punch his nose for his cheek."

"Well, you've woke him up in the middle of the night." said Raby. I dare say he felt a bit ratty."

"Jimmy's pater isn't pleased," said Newcome. "Dash it all, Lovell, you oughtn't to have camped in this room. You can't say we didn't tell you so. You were bound to get nervy when you woke up in the dark."

Lovell's eyes gleamed. "You think it was just nerves?" he asked.

"I know it was."

Price

Twopence

"I tell you I saw-" "Oh, rot!" said Newcome impatiently. "You saw some dashed shadow, or a flicker from the fire. What's the good of spinning us ghost stories?"

"Look here-" "Be reasonable, old fellow," said Jimmy. "Now there's a light, and we're all here, you must know there wasn't

"I know there was something." "Only fancy!" said Newcome.

Lovell's brows contracted. "Well, let's get off to bed, anyhow," gentleman went; he could read Mr. | said Jimmy Silver amicably. "No good freezing here It's beastly cold, ghost

> Mornington looked round. "You chaps don't feel juclined to sit

up for the ghost?" he asked. "What rot!" "You believe I saw something, Morny?"

exclaimed Lovell. "I think you must have," said Mornington. "You're rather an ass, but you're not a funk. You wouldn't have yelled out for nothing.

"Oh!" said Lovell, greatly comforted "You're by this unexpected support. not an ass, anyhow, Morny.'

"But it's all rot!" said Newcome impatiently. "Look here, I'm jolly well

going back to bed!" "Same here!" said Raby. And they started. It was cold enough in the Haunted Room, and there was

a bitter draught through the open doorway from the corridor. Raby and Newcome were fed-up.

Lovell rose from the edge of the bed. "Come on!" he said.

Jimmy slipped his arm through his chum's as they left the Haunted Room. He could see that Lovell was still very much shaken. He took Lovell to his own room; and then, perceiving that Mornington had not followed, he went back along the corridor.

Valentine Mornington was standing in the middle of the Haunted Room, looking about him with a keen, thoughtful

He nodded and smiled to Jimmy. "Going back to bed?" he asked." "Yes: I'm turning in with Lovell. You don't want to hang on here, I suppose?"

"Yes." "Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Come in, and shut the door," said Mornington quietly.

asked Jimmy.

Jimmy obeyed, in astonishment. Morny knelt by the old hearth, and began to relight the fire. The captain of the Rockwood Fourth eved him. "Look here, Morny, what's the game?"

he asked. "You don't want to dig m this room, after Lovell's been nearly frightened out of his wits."

"That's exactly what I want." answered Mornington. "And I want you to stay with me, Jimmy. We'll have the fire. and keep the light on; and as we'll be together we can handle the giddy ghost if he comes."

"But there's no giddy ghost."

"There's something." "Bosh, old fellow!"

"Lovell wasn't yelling for nothing," said Mornington quietly. "He saw something—and I don't believe in ghosts, so I believe it was a trick of some sort."

"But it's rot," said Jimmy. "The door was locked. There's no other way into the room. The walls are solid stone behind that oak. You're not thinking of a secret door or such rot, I suppose?" "No."

"Then what?"

Mornington did not reply for a moment. "Besides, who could have played a trick?" said Jimmy impatiently. "Not one of us-and there's nobody else in the house, excepting the pater and mater and Phyllis, and the gent with the barnacles, and the servants. Do you think one of them has been playing the

Morny gave him a very curious look. "I won't tell you what I think, Jimmy," he said at last. "I don't think anything very clearly yet. But I'm suspicious. It's a jolly odd coincidence that this ghost alarm should happen just now." Jimmy stared at the dandy of the Rookwood Fourth.

"Where does the coincidence come in?" he asked.

"It's only a couple of days since there was a robbery here, and your father's picture, the Rembrandt, worth two thousand pounds, was cut out of the frame in the library, and pinched." "What on earth's that to do with

"Nothing, probably—and perhaps something," said Marnington coolly. "At least, it's a coincidence that the two things should happen about the same time.

"Blessed if I quite see it. Where's the connection?"

Morny did not answer "I'm staying in the room to-night," he said, after a pause. "Stay with me, Jimmy, and if what I expect to happen does happen. I'll explain." "What do you expect to happen, you

"Wait and see."

"I believe you're as big an ass as Lovell," said Jimmy, laughing a little impatiently. "But, anyhow, it will be a joke on old Lovell to stay here and show that there's no giddy ghost. We'll stay."

The log-fire was burning up now, and the two juniors wrapped blankets round themselves and sat up in two deep old armchairs on either side of the cheerful blaze. Neither felt disposed to turn into the bed.

### ANOTHER £10 OFFERED TO READERS

Our Splendid Football Competition.

THE MIDDLESBROUGH CLUB. OF

SECOND PRIZE £2 10s., FIRST PRIZE £5, and TEN PRIZES OF 5s.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid footer com- MIDDLES petition which I am sure will BROUGH will find a history of the Middlesbrough Football Club in Picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve the picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears under the puzzle, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Middlesbrough" Competition, Boys' FRIEND Office. Gough House, Gough Square. E.C. 4, so as to reach that HA address not later than THURS-DAY, January 11th.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor IC reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all or any of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Gem," the "Magnet," and the "Popular,"



I enter "MIDDLESBROUGH" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final. 

Address................ and readers of those journals B.F. are invited to compete. The room presented its usual aspect;

Valentine Mornington proves his worth in "RUN TO EARTH!" next Monday's Gripping Story of the Chums of Rookwood!

Jimmy, in the warmth of the fire, soon nodded off to sleep; but Valentine Mornington did not close his eyes.

Jimmy awakened suddenly as there was a sound in the room. He glanced at Mornington, whose gaze was fixed on the door.

Jimmy followed his glance with a start. But he smiled as he saw the fat figure and glimmering spectacles of · Eustace Spencer in the open doorway. The secretary stepped in.

"Hallo!" yawned Jimmy drowsily. "Trot in, Mr. Spencer!" said Morn

ington. "May I ask what this means?" said the secretary, rather grimly. "Mr. Silver is under the impression that you boys have gone back to bed."

"No doubt," assented Mornington. "Then what are you doing here?"

"Waiting for the ghost."

"What nonsense!" "Well, that's right, Mr. Spencer," said Jimmy Silver. "It's all rot. But Mornington has a fancy for it, so I'm giving him his head. No need for you to stay

"You had better go to bed at once, as your father supposes you have done. Master Silver!" snapped the secretary

Jimmy sat upright and looked at him Jimmy was an easy-going fellow, but he had no intention whatever of being dictated to by his father's secretary. "I shall please myself about that, of

course, Mr. Spencer," he said. Eustace Spencer looked at him. He seemed about to make an unpleasant rejoinder; but he restrained himself, and quitted the Haunted Room, closing the door after him.

Jimmy smiled at his chum. "The dear old bean's ratty at being woke up at night," he remarked. "But, I say, Morny, you were waiting for some thing to happen, you told me."

"That's so." "Has it happened" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Yes." "Wha-a-t?"

"I'll tell you about it in the morning." dandy of the Fourth yawned. "Let's get to sleep now-there won't he any more ghosts tenight."

Aud Valentine Morn ington closed his eyes. and in a minute, or less, was fast asleep. Jimmy stared at him in amaze ment. But he was too sleepy to waste much thought on the matter He followed Morny's example, and was very soon sleeping as soundly as his comrade.

The 3rd Chapter A Startling Discovery

Arthur Edward Lovell looked very sheepish at breakfast the following morning. It was Christmas Eve, and the snow was banked up round the old house, and a bitter wind howled round the roofs of the Priory. But, within, all was merry and bright Only Arthur Edward Lovell did not succeed in sharing the merriment and the brightness. had expected to be chipped about his ghost adventure in the Haunted Room, and in that he had not been disappointed.

The Rookwood fellows felt that on this I through the snow, and as Miss Phyllis I clearest light and made a minute exami- I said Morny. "What a rippin' idea if | grinned. The "ghost" had turned on occasion Lovell had fairly asked for it, tactfully avoided the sore topic of nation of it. that he wanted it, and that if he got it so much the better. And Arthur Edward "got it" in large and generous measure.

He had persisted, against the advice of his pals, in sleeping in the Haunted Room. That was swank, his chums con sidered. The least Arthur Edward could have done, in the circumstances, was to keep his nerve, after taking on an unnecessary task out of bravado.

Instead of which he had been frightened, and had awakened and alarmed the whole household.

It was really too thick, Lovell's chums agreed, and they let Lovell see their opinion with unmistakable distinctness. Raby and Newcome were very candid Jimmy Silver, being host, could not be quite so candid; but he was not exactly reserved on the subject. Even Cousin Phyllis was seen to smile; and that was the unkindest cut of all, for Lovell entertained a tremendous regard for Jimmy's pretty cousin. Even the fat, spectacled secretary, Eustace Spencer, allowed him self to be humorous on the subject, and Lovell writhed under his humour. Indeed, even the servants allowed their eyes to grimmer when they looked at Lovell. Even Mr. Silver was amused, though he was not in a happy mood, owing to the mysterious robbery of his prized Rembrandt

It was a torment to Lovell, all the more because, in the cold, clear light of morning, he wondered uneasily whether after all his nerves had betrayed him in the darkness and solitude of the night.

He was certain—quite certain—that he had seen that ghostly figure, with pointing finger, at his bedside. But he remembered, too, that he had been dreaming of the phantom prior, and had awakened in darkness, with the eerie associations of the Haunted Room thick upon his mind. Was it possible, after all, that he had fancied that fearful apparition.

Be that as it might, Lovell had no intention of passing another night in the Haunted Room. Wild horses would

hardly have dragged him there after nightfall. Indeed, if he had desired to repeat his experiment, Mr. Silver cer tainly would not have allowed it. One midnight alarn was quite sufficient, in the opinion of Jimmy's father.

Smiling faces round a cheery breakfast table were quite in keeping with the joyous season of Christmastide, but to Lovell it seemed that there were far too many smiles -his noble self being the object of most of them. Only Mornington did not join in the general merriment at Lovell's expense, which was rather unexpected, as Morny might have been supposed to welcome such an occasion for hi satirical humour. But at least, refrained from chipping; a circumstance that considerably increased Lovell's estimation of the dandy of the Fourth

After breakfast the Haunted Room was a centre of interest. That morning Inspector Stanson came over from Denewood to see Mr. Silver on the subject of the stoler Rembrandt: but he had no news, excepting that there was no news. The interview did not have a cheering effect on the old gent.eman, who was beginning to despair of ever seeing his masterpiece again. By that time, he feared, it was in the clutches of the unscrupulous collector, who had doubtless commissioned the thief to purloin it, and the recipient of the stolen Rembrandt was certain to keep it well hidden. It needed all Mr Silver's self-com mand to keep up a cheery and smiling aspect for the sake of his son's guests He would not allow his own trouble to cast a shadow over the festive season.

While Mr. Silver and the inspector were talking in the library, the juniors visited the Haunted Room.

Lovell did not accompany them. He had had enough of the Haunted Room, and he was fed up with chipping. Lovell went out for ' tramp with cousin Phyllis

to his own devices. He preferred skating himself, but Morny was welcome to potter about the Haunted Room as long as he liked.

And Mornington did potter about till it was close on lunch time, and then he was interrupted. Mr. Spencer looked in. "Hunting the ghost in the daytime?" the secretary asked with a smile.

"Just that!" assented Mornington. "Isn't that rather absurd?" "Little things please little minds, you know," said Mornington unmoved. find it amusin'"

"Your friends seem to be enjoying themselves on the lake," said Mr. Spencer, eyeing the junior curiously.

"I'm glad of that." "You are not going to join them?" "Not at present."

Spencer nodded and smiled and walked away. Mornington smiled, too, when he was gone and resumed his pottering. But he desisted at last and came to a halt in the middle of the room, his hands driven deep into his pockets and wrinkle marking his handsome brow.

"Nothin' doin"!" he muttered "There's no secret way into the room, that's a cert! Floored in that direction! But Lovell saw somethin'-though they're chippin' him almost into believin' that he didn't! But how could that dashed somethin' have got 'nto the room?"

He glanced from the window. Below was a sheer drop of thirty feet, without even a rain pipe to be seen. And the shutters, which had been closed overnight, were heavy and strong. "Nothin' doin'!" said Mornington

again. He whistled softly.

"Fool!" he ejaculated suddenly That complimentary epithet was ad dressed apparently to himself He crossed over to the door and drew the big, heavy key from the old-fashioned lock.

He took the k-v to the window, in the

Jimmy stared at the dandy of the Fourth. He could not make out in the least what Mornington was driving at. "He may have changed his mind,

Morny-blessed if I know or care whether he has or not," said the puzzled Jimmy. "But, anyhow, I don't see how you know anything about his plans. Are you talking out of your hat?"

"I'm a giddy thought-reader."

Well, just inquire, and you'll learn that the Spencer-bird isn't flyin' away to-day," said Morny. "Bosh!" said Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver was puzzled and a little curious, and, in order to settle the point, he made an inquiry of his father on the subject. Mr. Silver shook his head

when the inquiry was made. "Spencer has caught a slight cold," he said. "He is putting off his departure

till Boxing Day." In great amazement Jimmy Silver returned to Mornington The dandy of the | The theory which Morny had formed in Fourth met him with a grin.

"Well?" he asked. "He's not going till Boxing Day," said Jimmy. "But how did you know?" "Perhaps a little bird whispered," said

Mornington, "or perhaps I got the tip from the gnost." "The ghost?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver "The ghost that Lovell saw in the Haunted Room," explained Mornington

"Catch on?" I suppose you're trying to pull my leg," said Jimmy. "I haven't the faintest idea what you're driving at, Morny Suppose you explain?"

"All in good time, old chap. I've been doin a lot of thinkin'," said Mornington, his handsome face becoming serious. "Your father is no end cut up about losin that jolly old Rembrandt. isn't he?"

"I'm afraid so," said Jimmy ruefully "He's been thumpin' decent to me."

"Enjoyed yourself?" Jimmy asked, rather sarcastically.

"Lots!" answered Mornington, with a cheery nod. "Mr. Spencer looked in for a few minutes; otherwise I've been on my own, enjoyin' my own fascinatin' society no end. The fellows gone to roost?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "Lovell doesn't want to sit up for the ghost?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I fancy Lovell's had enough of ghosts," he answered. "But if you're keen on it, I'll stay up with you, Morny. I think it's rot!"

Jimmy Silver stretched himself on the bed; Mornington sat in the deep chair by the fire. The lamp was put out, and the fire burned low. The deep and steady breathing from the bed soon aunounced that Jimmy Silver was sound asleep.

But Mornington did not sleep His eyes never closed for a moment. his mind, and which he had not explained to a soul, was a startling one; and more than enough to keen him very wide awake through the long watches of the

night. He leaned back in the chair, his eyes open and unwinking, waiting and watching with the patience and fortitude of a Red Indian

Iron-nerved as he was, Morny was glad that Jimmy Silver was with him If there was danger that night, it was not from ghosts-and he knew it But he was glad that he was not alone.

Midnight had long passed, and the night was still, save for a faint whine of the wind among the chimneys. The fire died lower, till all was dark save for a faint red glow in the sinking embers.

Mornington did not move; but he breathed harder as there was a faint sound at the door The door swung

draught penetrated from the gloomy corri-

In the darkness there was a glimmer of white. Several moments passed -long moments to the still, watching junior.

The white figure moved at last.

It advanced soundlessly into the room. For a second it hovered near the bed the steady breathing of the sleeper there went on, calm, uninterrupted. Then, for another moment, the ghostly figure hovered in the dim glow of the fire over the still form of the junior in the chair.

Morny's eyes were closed now; he breathed deeply. Only when a faint rustle of trailing garments moved farther away did Morny's eyes reopen

Still he did not move. His eyes were fixed on the glimmering patch of white in the darkness of the great room. The ghostly figure had flitted from him, and was now in a corner of the room by the window-bending

Silently, Mornington

sat bolt upright, watch-

ing. A sedden flash of light broke the gloom, and the watching junior

Mornington rose to his feet, still without a sound. His hands grasped a heavy cushion from the chair.

Whiz! Crash!

The cushion struck the bending figure in the corner, and the light of the electric lamp was instantly blotted out. There was a sharp, startled cry in the darkness.

The next instant a glimmer of white raced across the room, and the door closed. The ghost was gone!

Mornington laughed softly From the bed came a startled exclamation as Jimmy Silver sat up and stared about him The crash of the falling cushion had awakened him.

"Morny-what---" "Hallo, old top!" yawned Mornington.

"What-what's happened?" "Lots of things; but the jelly old happenings are over for to-night Go to sleep, my little piccaninny," said Morn-

Jimmy Silver's startled face. "Dreamin of ghosts, Jimmy?"

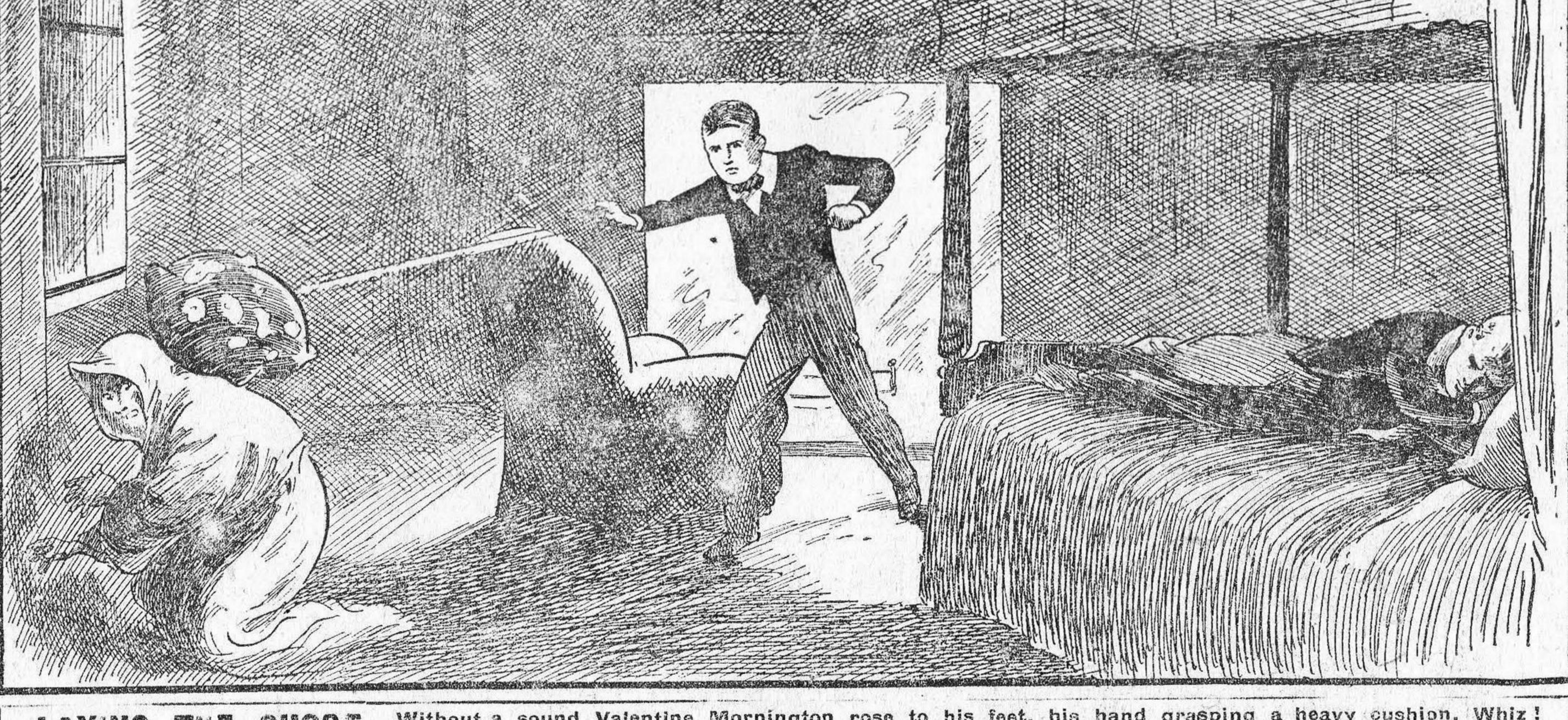
"N-n-no! I heard-" Jimmy stared at him. Mornington laughed lightly.

"Dou't worry!" he said. "And if you want something pleasant to dream of, dream of my givin' your pater his jolly old Rembrandt back as a Christmas present in the mornin'. What?"

"Good-night, old bean!" But before Mornington slept, he locked the door and dragged a heavy table against it. Then he settled down for the remainder of the night, with a smile on his lips that remained there when he slept. In his own peculiar way, Valen-

tine Mornington was enjoying his Christ-THE END.

The secretary did not stay long. After | (You must not miss "Run to Earth!" he was gone, Mornington winked into next Monday's gripping story of Jimmy space and resumed his entertaining | Silver & Co. It is full of breathless incident, and is one of the best stories that When, at a rather late hour, Jimmy Mr. Owen Conquest has penned! Order Silver & Co. came up to bed, Jimmy your copy of next week's Boxs' FRIEND in advance!)



Without a sound Valentine Mornington rose to his feet, his hand grasping a heavy cushion. Whiz! LAYING THE CHOST Crash! The cushion struck the bending figure of the ghost, and the light of the electric torch was instantly blotted out!

ghosts, Lovell enjoyed his morning very

Jimmy Silver and Raby, and Newcome and Mornington repaired to the Haunted Room. It looked bright and cheery enough now, with the shutters flung wide back and the wintry sunshine streaming

in at the high deep windows. "No giddy ghosts walking this morn ing!" chuckled Raby. "Poor old Lovell! He's getting quite waxy about

"About time we gave him a rest," said

Jimmy Silver, smiling. "Oh, rot!" said Newcome. "Lovel! shouldn't swank! Sleeping in the Haunted Room and then yelling out the alarm and waking up the house is rather too

"Yes, rather," said Raby. "What the dickens is Morny up to?" asked Newcome, staring at the dandy of

the Fourth. Mornington was making a close examination of the old oak walls. Jimmy watched him with a smile.

"Looking for a giddy secret door?" he Yes," answered Mornington, without

turning his head. "Ha. ha, ha!" roared Raby and New-"This is a joily old house," said Morn-

ington. "You've told me that there are secret passages in it. Jimmy." "Yes, but they're well known," said Jimmy Silver "Nothing of the kind in this room If you tap all the panels,

you'll find solid stone behind." "It looks like it!" confessed Morn-"Let's know what you find, Morny," grinned Newcome "I'm going out." And

Newcome went out with Raby. "What about skating, Morny?" asked Jimmy Silver "The lake's froze over." "I'll join you later, old chap. I'm amusin' myself in my own way, you

"Oh, all right." And Jimmy Silver cheerfully-left Morny

Then his eyes glittered. On the end of the key were two little marks. The key itself was an ancient one, of massive make, and a little rusted. But on the rusty end showed two clear marks, as if the metal had been gripped

in a pair of fine pincers "By gad!" muttered Mornington. He knew now how the locked door had been opened. It was no ghost that had visited Lovell-ghosts would scarcely require to unlock a dcor: a bodyless phantom would not be stopped by a door or a lock. The door had been unlocked from the outer side, by means of a pair of powerful tweezers that had gripped the end of the key-such instruments as burglars use. Morny's eyes fairly blazed over his discovery He replaced the key in the lock and sauntered away. There was a smi e on his face when he turned

> The 4th Chapter. The Mystery of the Night!

"So the Spencer-bird is postponin' his noliday?" "Is he?" said Jimmy Silver care-

"Isn't he?" answered Mornington. "Blessed 11 I know."

up at lunch.

"You didn't know I was a giddy thought-reader, did you?" asked Valen tine Mornington, with a smile. "Now I'm givin you a proof. Your pater mentioned to us the other day that Mr. Spencer was goin' away for Christmas. an' startin' on Christmas Eve."

"That's so," said Jimmy. "He hasn't gone yet, but I suppose he's going." "Two to one in mince pies that he

EVERY MONDAY\_PRICE 2:

a chap could bag that stolen smudge an electric flash-lamp in the corner! and hand it back to your pater as a Christmas present."

"I jolly well wish it could be done," said Jimmy. "But as it can't, it's not much good talking." "Who knows?" said Mornington.

"Stranger things have happened. When ghosts walk in a house jolly soon after a robbery, it makes me suspicious. Jimmy -to come back to the ghost-are you game to sit up in the Haunted Room again to-night?" "I'm afraid the pater wouldn't like

the idea after the terrific fuss Loveil made last night." "He won't mind if there are two or three of us together-and we'll keep the light burning," said Mornington. "I've got a fancy for that room. I've given

she's keeping up the fire there." "You ass!" "I'm going to read the "Holiday Annual 'there this afternoon, while you ington airily. He stirred the fire, piled others are leading the strenuous life logs, lighted the lamp, and grinned at out of doors."

the jolly old maid the glad eye, and

"What rot! Better come out and skate! What do you want to stick indoors for?" "Mr. Spencer's caught a slight cold—"

"What has that to do with it?"

"No reason why I shouldn't catch a slight cold, too. Havin' a slight cold, I'm stayin' in for a bit." And Mornington walked away whistling, | "But--" leaving Jimmy Silver in a state of the

most profound astonishment. Mornington spent the afternoon reading by a big log fire in the Haunted Room He received no visitors there, except that Mr. Spencer looked in for a few minutes. Mornington chatted to him cheerily, and asked after his cold, and confided to him the fact that he had a slight cold | mas holiday. also-just about as bad as Mr. Spencer's.

perusal of the "Holiday Annual." looked Mornington up.

Here's Something Special! "Georges Carpentier's Schooldays!" written by the Great French boxer himself. In next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND!

his fists!

getting excited about?"

swiftly."

them.

to be very careful. What are you

Perhaps it was that drawl in the voice,

or it may have been that there were

not a few patrons there who really en-

joyed that unrehearsed comedy; but at

any rate, before either of the attendants

could carry out Macdougall's desires, a

tall, silver-haired man arose from the

you, Macdougall," he said in a quiet,

cultured tone. "I am quite sure that

this young man mistook your word just

now. He thought you meant him to

take the cigar, and he acted rather

It was a pair of grey, twinkling eyes

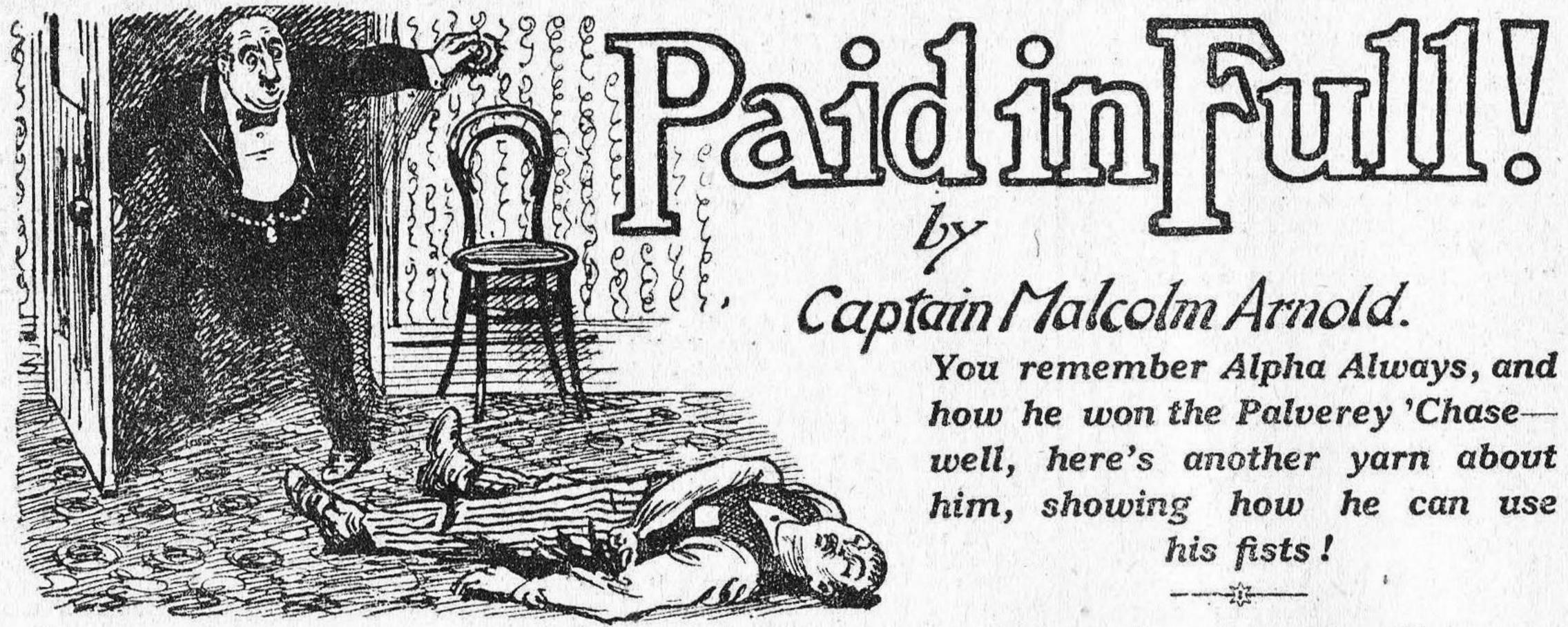
which were turned on the seated youth,

but there was also friendly warning in

"I shouldn't kick up a row, if I were

second row of seats, and came forward.

#### ANOTHER STORY OF ALPHA ALWAYS-THE FELLOW WHO GETS THERE!



The 1st Chapter. Cool Cheek!

The fat man in the greasy dress-suit and double collar held up a podgy hand, and the patrons of the Fistic subsided into as near an approach to silence as ever displayed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the raucous voice proclaimed, "the next item on the programme is a ten-round contest between two well-known lads for a prize of fifty pounds!"

Under the white light of the electric arc-lamp which was blazing overhead, the man's stout features shimmered with perspiration. Master of Ceremonies at the Fistic was by no means a sinecure.

He raised one arm and pointed it towards the dressing-gowned figure on the right-hand side of the ring.

"On my right, gentlemen, we have One-Round Mike Legan from Bow!" The boxer turned, and bestowed a comedy-actor smile on those patrons

near enough to suffer from it. A cheer greeted this effort at friendliness on the part of One-Round Mike, and his grin increased as he seated himself

The hook-nosed gentleman in the front of the ring lifted his left arm, indicating

the other corner. "And on my left, gentlemen, is Young Nipper Grey-from Anywhere!"

It was a very lanky youngster in a shabby dressing-gown whom the master of ceremonies indicated. In One-Round Mike's corner there were five or six seconds; but in the corner opposite there was only one somewhat lackadaisical individual, with pail and sponge.

Young Nipper's bow was awkward, and if he did receive a cheer, that was because patrons of the Fistic are inclined to cheer everything and everybody -before a match. What happens afterwards depends on their personal opinions

of the match itself. It was an ordinary night at the Fistic. That is to say, the usual programme had been supplied by the shrewd manager. whose name appeared on the bills as "Mr. Macdougall," but who responded readily to the name of "Iky" when bestowed upon him by his personal

friends. Mr. Macdougall was now seated in the front row, a resplendent figure in wellcut clothes. From the tip of his patent. leather shoes to the thin wisp of grey hair, which failed to disguise the baldness of his head, Mr. Macdougall breathed prosperity. His face was almost as long as his body, and only a professor of anatomy could have told how many chins he possessed, for they started immediately below his mouth and ran down in ridges until they vanished under the

copious folds of his dress-collar. But, if his body was rather large, his eyes were remarkably small, and set very rlose together; and his mouth, such as could be seen of it behind the fat cigar which he puffed, was loose and pendulous, and he had a habit of twitching one side

of it when he spoke. Not that Mr. Macdongall spoke very often. He had hired minions to do that for him. The part he played was that of the affable sportsman who had taken up boxing promoting as a form of charity

for the benefit of the pugilistic fraternity. Never in all his long experience had

Mr. Macdougall ever been known to admit that he made a profit out of the game. Yet, as he had a house in Park Lane, and a wife who rivalled the Queen of Sheba in jewels and general appearance when she waddled through the fover of the Trocadero, that Mecca of the Macdougalls of all nations, there were not wanting sceptics who formed other opinions concerning Mr. Macdougall's charity.

The Fistic Hall was situated in a narrow street in that region of dingy houses which lies behind Lincoln's lun. The greater part of its patrons are hardworking Londoners, who are prepared to pay their half-crowns and five shillings to watch a night's boxing: but they had to content themselves with the cheaper seats, and the ground floor of the hall was strictly reserved to the more wealthy clientele.

When Mr. Macdougall staged a particularly big night the prices of his seats soared upwards, but on an ordinary night such as this one guinea was sufficient to buy a front seat close to the ring.

There were quite a sprinkling of welldressed men in evening-dress and dinnerjacket. Macdongall's ordinary nights were always entertaining to watch, and now and again he was lucky enough to find a star performer in the person of some unknown.

Followers of the game of toxing are always on the look-out for something new, some budding champion, and that is what makes the game so fascinating.

Immediately behind the many-chinned Macdougall was seated a slim youngster in the correct evening-dress. He had that somewhat democratic assembly | that sleek, well-groomed appearance that tells of careful valeting and attendance. His dress-shirt was snow-white, his deep collar the last word in correctness, and his butterfly-winged black tie seemed to have no difficulty in remaining in the correct nosition.

He had a gold-knobbed stick between his small, well-shaped hands, and on his lap was placed an opera-hat.

Not a few amongst the audience had glanced once or twice at this curiously cool and collected youngster, but no one seemed to know who he was. Nor did it appear that he cared very much for the many glances which were cast in his direction. He seemed to ignore the rest of the company completely.

A preliminary bout between two feather-weights had already taken place, but this ten-round contest was one of the star items on the programme

After the M.C. had made his announce. ment, and had dropped into the corner of the ring, the first sign of animation appeared on the slender youth.

He raised his gold-knobbed stick and tapped the fat shoulder of the man seated in front of him-tapped him as though he were a bus-conductor

"I say, my good man," a cool voice drawled, "would you mind throwing that eigar away? I don't want to be gassed." For a long moment Mr. Macdongall sat breathless, hardly believing his own ears. The spectators in his near vicinity turned

to watch what was about to happen. Again the youth used his gold knobbed stick. This time, however, he slipped it under the chair and prodded Macdougall violently in the back.

There was a gasp and a smort, and the eigar almost shot from the pendulous

"Do you hear me, my good man?" Macdougall was slow of movement, and it took him some considerable time before he was able to turn in his chair and glare at the handsome-faced youth behind him.

"What-what the dickens are you doing-eh?"

Macdougall's collection of chins nearly danced as their owner barked out his

indignant request.

Having at last attracted Macdongall's attention, the youth leaned back in his chair and dropped his stick on the

"Don't apologise, old chap," he said. That eigar is quite enough to make anyone deaf. I should throw it away before it makes you blind as well."

The offending cigar was now poised between Macdougall's fat fingers, and the stout proprietor of the Fistic Hall, half rising to his feet, leaned over the back of the chair.

"Here, you! What do you mean by it digging me in the ribs?"

To emphasise his point Macdougall waved a podgy hand in front of the youth-the hand which contained the cigar. Finally, he brought it to a halt within a few inches of the finely cut, aristocratic nose.

"You-you take-" Mr. Macdougall was going to say "a liberty," but sheer indignation choked him, and as he sought for a word to describe the insult the final amazing happening took place.

"Take it, old chap? Certainiy!" Easily and deftly the slim fingers took the fat cigar out of Macdougall's hand, and next moment the weed had been dropped on the floor, to be squashed beneath the small, patent-leather shoes. A howl that was half anguish, half

rage came from the pendulous lips of the proprietor of the Fistic. "My cigar-my beautiful cigar!" Macdougall wailed, rising to his feet and throwing his hands above his head.

"You young hound! I-I'll have you kicked out for that!" By this time the attention of the attendants had been drawn to the scene, and now a couple of burly fellows

on either side of the irate proprietor. Shaking with fury, Macdongall pointed towards the cool youth. "You kick him out! You hear me?

in blue uniform had appeared, one

Rick him out!" he raged, his heavy face quivering with anger. "My dear man, what on earth is the matter with you? Why this sudden outburst of ridiculous fury? Don't you realise that most probably you have a

slipped it back into his waistcoat pocket, then directed his attention towards the stage.

Price

Twopence

"Who on earth is that amazingly cool kid?" Lord Armyley's companion asked, as the tall, grey-haired man reseated himself.

"Never set eyes on him before," his lordship returned: "but for sheer cool assurance; I should think he's about the limit. I've never seen anyone dare to beard Macdougall in his own den before. He must have realised that there was a rough-house developing, yet, although I watched him very carefully, I didn't see the slightest sign of anything like fear on that calm face of his."

His lordship cast a side glance along the row of seats, and for a moment studied the clean-cut profile of the stranger.

There was something keen and alert about that youthful face, and the lines of the jaw were suggestive of indomitable courage. The head was small and well shaped, and was set with athlete's grace on the strong neck and shoulders.

"I should like to see more of this youth if I could," his lordship said, half to himself. "I have met many modern youths, but I must admit that this particular specimen seems to be in a class by himself."

He transferred his gaze to the stout figure of Macdougall, and saw that the heavy face was still wearing its scowl of

From the very way in which he hunched up his shoulders, it was obvious that the proprietor of the Fistic had by no means forgotten that cool youngster sitting behind him.

"Macdougall is likely to remember the loss of that cigar," Lord Armyley's friend remarked, with a quiet smile. "And think that youngster had better look after himself when the show's over."

"If he's wise he'll clear out before his lordship returned. "Macdougall's gang is a rough lot, and



Barny Wacdougall flung himself into the chair that Alpha Always had just vacated, and with a sweep of his hand sent the latter's hat and stick flying. The stick fell on the tea-cup, upsetting its contents on Alpha's hat!

"Why, of course! Didn't you ask me to get rid of that obnoxious weed? May I offer you a eigarette instead?" A thin gold cigarette-case was pro-

duced, and the youth, opening it, held it out to the stout boxing promoter. Macdougall looked at the row of fat, gold-tipped Egyptian eigarettes, then glanced up at the tall, greyhaired man. Lord Armyley was a well-known figure in the sporting world, and his intervention in the affair made just all the differ-

ence so far as Macdougall was concerned. Not for a great deal would the proprietor of that hall have quarrelled with his lordship, a member of the National Sporting Club, and a patron of the ring for many years.

"Your eigar was rather strong, Macdougall, to tell you the truth," his lordship said. "Not that that justified our young friend here in adopting such drastic measures."

The open cigarette-case was still held out over the chair; but although Macdongall might be prepared to call a halt in his dezire for revenge, he was by no means inclined to smoke the "fag" of peace.

He turned and nodded to the attendants, who went up the gangway between the seats, and, with a final scowl at the unruffled youth, Mr. Macdongall turned again, and flopped into his chair, ignoring the outstretched eigarette-case.

With a sad shake of his head, the imweak heart? A man in your state ought " maculate youth closed the case and

shouldn't like to fall into their ugly clutches."

"Seconds out! Time!"

The preliminaries had already been gone through, and now the warning from the ring, together with the boom of the gong, drew all eyes towards the lighted patch between the ropes.

One-Round Mike and Young Nipper from Anywhere were facing each other in the centre of the padded square.

The 2nd Chapter. Not According to Programme!

It seemed a very one-sided contest from the appearance of the two boxers as they faced one another. One-Round Mike Legan, a hard-bitten, toughlooking fellow, was head and shoulders above his opponent, while his body and arms were amazingly muscular.

Young Nipper was slim and rangy, and his skin was in startling contrast to that of his opponent, for it had the sating, pink sheen, which always goes with a fair complexion.

The battle began in startling fashion. for One-Round Mike, auxious to retain that somewhat doubtful name which he had chosen, set to work with fierce energy, and for the first half of the round his antagonist was almost overwhelmed by the shower of blows that rained on him.

Young Nipper gave ground slowly, and the two men fought all round the ring, Mike Legan getting in punch after

To the unobservant spectators it might have appeared as though the burlier man

covering and clinching in order to stem

the furious onslaught. was out for an easy victory; but the truth of the matter was that two-thirds of Mike's wild efforts were wasted.

He had not the least pretention to style, and his round-armed swings and wild plunges were more of the streetcorner type of battle than the more scientific, calculated efforts that make ringcraft the greatest asset to a boxer. "I say, Mr. Macdougall!",

The stout proprietor of the Fistic had leaned back in his chair. He was pretending an interest in the fight that he did not really feel, for Mr. Macdougall was a showman first and last!

It did not matter much to him how the battle ended, so long as it went well in the eyes of his patrons

However, he had to play his part as a sport, and he was all attention now; but the truth was that the mere battering of two lads in a square of canvas aroused no enthusiasm so far as the promoter of the contest was concerned.

He saw the fight from so many different angles, chiefly commercial.

And therefore, with the first round nearly over. Macdougall had ventured to lean back and close his eyes. He could do so safely, without betraying that fact to the general public, for the puckered skin around his nose and forehead hid this fact from view.

Now, however, the sound of that cool voice made him awaken with a start. "Eh, vot-vot do you want?"

"Why do you call that fellow One-Round Mike? Because he's always knocked out in the first round?"

Now Macdougall never liked to have any of his "boys," as he called them, criticised. They were to him his stockin-trade, and from their efforts he had made his pile.

Occasionally he himself might say a few caustic things to them; but under no circumstances would be permit others to indulge in that relaxation. His podgy face came round, and his

small eyes stared angrily into the clear blue ones behind him.

"Trying to be funny again, eh? Just you hold your gab! You don't know a good boxer when you see one!" The youth drew out from his pocket

a bulky pocket-book, and opened it. Macdougall's avaricious eyes saw a wad of crinkling banknotes which made his mouth water.

Very slowly and carefully the slim youth began to count out a number of notes. They were all ten-pound ones, and he selected five; then, putting the pocketbook away, he folded them into a little

"I bet you fifty pounds that this young Nipper person beats your One-Round Mike within the next four rounds!"

Once again the cool voice had drawn attention to Mr. Macdougall and the man behind. The clamour of the gong brought the first round to an end, and the two combatants separated.

"You'll bet me fifty quid that Mike is knocked out?" "Exactly!"

A podgy hand made a hawk-like swoop over the back of the chair, and Mr. Macdougall's fingers closed on that delectable, crinkling bunch.

"Right! I take you!" The slim hand holding the wad of notes

did not release them. "On one condition," the slender youth ended, "and that is that you permit me to go into Nipper's corner and help to second him."

"You can go into his corner and nurse him, if you like!" the thick voice returned. "I dare say he'll need it after the next round!" The wad of notes was handed over

then, and, possessing himself of his hat and coat, the youthful figure rose to its feet, and, clambering over the front row of chairs, walked quietly round the platform to Nipper's corner. Removing his dinner-jacket, and hang-

ing it at the back of the ropes, the cool youngster, in his shirt-sleeves, dived under the barriers and appeared by young Ninner's side.

The sponge was fished out of the bucket, and, stepping in front of the amazed second, the newcomer set to work on the lad leaning back in the chair. "Great Scott! Look what that fellow's

up to now!" Lord Armyley's companion whispered. "I've seen it already, old chap."

Armyley returned dryly, "and I've just heard him make a wager with Macdougall that explains his move." One or two of the rougher element up

in the gallery had not failed to notice the advent of this slim, white-shirted figure, and a cat-call or two sounded. "What abaht it. Mac? Who's the bloke in the topper-one of your new seconds?" The hoarse voice of the wit from the

gallery sent a roar of laughter through the packed hall, and the slim youth, straightening up, waved a friendly hand towards the grinning faces. Most people would have felt uncomfort-

able under the circumstances, but there was no sign of perturbation on that cleancut, insolent countenance.

Having completed his work with his sponge and water, the newcomer took the towel out of the original second's hands. and set about waving it gently in front of young Nipper. The second—a burly fellow in a greasy

sweater-clenched his fists, and seemed about to make some angry remark; but one of the attendants, coming up near to the platform, nodded to the man.

"It's all right, Bill! Mr. Macdougall's orders! You've got to let this young gent lend a 'and!"

So when the second round started, it was the young stranger who slipped the punch, and his rival countering and I chair away from Nipper and patted the

lad on the back as he went out to meet | and that office had been specially One-Round Mike again.

There was another gruelling battle, and, evidently inspired by Macdougall, One-Round Mike did his best to register a victory. He made use of his strength, and followed up each wild punch by dropping into a clinch, smothering his opponent by his extra weight.

Towards the close of the second round a full-armed drive from the swarthy man saw Young Nipper go down for the count of five. But he was up again, and the deft way in which he stalled off Mike's rush indicated that there was still plenty of fight in the slim, wiry body.

Again the gong brought the round to a close, and this time, when Young Nipper sought his corner, he found the whitesleeved stranger its solitary occupant. The burly second had chucked up his job in disgust, and had gone off to the dressing-room, fuming with rage.

"I say, Stanhope, that fellow knows his job all right!" his lordship remarked. "Just watch him at work now!"

Young Nipper's side was being massaged with quick, deft touches, and, working steadily, the immaculate figure in the dress-clothes soon removed all traces of that heavy punch.

The audience noticed that just before the gong sounded the stranger was leaning across Nipper, talking very quietly and earnestly to him: for now and again the young boxer would nod his head and grin, as though he was accepting instruction. And that that was the case was revealed in dramatic fashion in the third

round. Even his most enthusiastic admirers knew that One-Round Mike possessed a great failing. So long as his opponent would allow him to carry the battle on in his own way. Mike could put up quite a decent show; but, while he was fairly good at attack, he had no idea of defence, and for that reason he always chose the

rushing tactics. Now, in the third round he once again adopted his hurricane-like methods; but, instead of Nipper retiring under the onslaught, the slim, wiry youngster met him half-way, and, countering one wild swing. Nipper sent a smashing left into Mike's neck, then followed it up by driving a short-armed jab into his

opponent's body. Young Nipper's arm was lean, but the muscles were made of sinew and whipcord, and when he punched it hurt.

That jarring shock on his ribs made One-Round Mike drop back a pace, and stare for a moment at his opponent.

Then he half dropped his hands, and, swifter than eye could follow, Young Nipper took advantage of that ridiculous His left glove came round clean and sure, and smote his heetle-browed rival full on the point of the jaw.

It was a punch that could be heard all over the hall, and One-Round Mike went down, to roll over on his back, with the glaring electric light falling on his twisted, ugly face, on which the look of amazement still lingered.

"One-two-three-four-" The timekeeper by no means hurried that count, but the longest ten seconds that ever happened was not nearly long enough to cause that inanimate figure to regain strength.

"Out!" Young Nipper, standing in the centre of the ring, was approached by the referee, who waved his right arm above his head as a signal that he was the wictor, and from all parts of the packed house there went up a genuine roar of

applause. The whole thing had happened so unexpectedly that it was not until they saw One-Round Mike's seconds carrying the senseless boxer away that the majority of the audience realised what had happened. And, like honest British sportsmen, they rose to their feet, and gave vent to their satisfaction with cheer after cheer.

Slipping into his dressing-gown, Young Nipper dived under the ropes, and, accompanied by the slim youth in the evening-clothes, he made his way up the passage between the seats, heading for

the dressing-rooms. Hands were reached up to pat the youngster's shoulders, and Nipper's face twisted into a look of quiet satisfaction as he grinned and returned the kindly

words of encouragement. At the entrance to the dressing-rooms his second halted for a moment.

"You're all right now, Nipper," he said. "I think, if you don't mind, I'll leave you. I have an interesting little cere-

mony to perform." They parted, Ninper making for the dressing-room, while the slim youth sauntered back into the hall. And presently he was standing in front of on what was taking place therein. For

Macdougall. "You see. I was right, my dear chap." he said. "I'll trouble you for that little wager of ours!"

Macdougall was a wealthy man, but he was of that type which hates to part with money; and, by the look of his face. he might have been lying on an operatingtable as his podgy hand crawled to his pocket-book and came out with the stranger's five ten-nound notes.

"I haven't got fifty pounds on me. But if you'll come to my office I'll give you a cheque. I suppose that will do?"

The youth smiled blandly. "Your cheque is as good as gold, Mr.

Macdougall," he said. The fat man rose to his feet, and,

with the youngster behind him, moved out through the line of seats to one of the wide doorways. As he passed the attendant on the door, Mr. Macdougall gave the man a quick wink, and a silent signal passed between them.

Opening the door, the Fistic proprietor led the way up a narrow passage into a small office on the left. The door of this office was covered with green baize, and as it closed behind the youngster he heard the lock click. Green baize is a poor sound-conductor, I visiting-card.

arranged for Mr. Macdougall as a place where he could have a tete-a-tete without interruption.

He crossed to the desk in the centre of the room, and, seating himself, fumbled in a drawer and drew out a thick cheque-book. Taking a pen in his right hand, Mr. Macdougall leaned over the desk, twisting his body round so that his back was presented to his companion.

Mr. Macdougall's left hand slid under the desk, and sought a certain button which was concealed there. His podgy fingers began to play on the concealed button, rapping out a message.

"Vot is your name?" "You may make the cheque out to Alpha Always," the cool voice returned. You had better leave it open."

"Right." The pen scraped on the slip of coloured paper, and Mr. Macdougall seemed to take a remarkably long time

over what is usually a quick business on the part of financial experts. Finally, the cheque was made out and torn from the counterfoil. Then Mr.

Macdougall swung round in his chair. "You're a clever fellow-eh?" he said. "And a bit of a joker, too! You come here to have a rise out of me-eh?"

"Yes-a fifty-pounds' rise, my dear man," same the quiet reply, as the youth reached for the cheque and took it from the podgy fingers.

At that moment the telephone on the desk whirred, and Mr. MacDougall raised the receiver. "Yes? All right. I'll come along

He replaced the receiver and stood up. "You'll have to excuse me for a minute," he said. "Don't go away yet. I want a few words with you. I'll be back in a moment."

Breathing heavily through his thick nostrils, Macdougall stooped, and lifted the card. Engraved in the centre of it in neat characters was the name "Alpha Always," and under it were a few pencilled words:

"Next time you tic-tac a message, don't use Morse."

Macdougall, raising his heavy head, said many and sundry things to the cold white light of the electric bulb.

A groan at his feet made him turn his eyes on Kennerly. The rough-house merchant was just in the act of rising to a sitting position, and, placing one hand to his aching head, he groaned. "What-what-what hit me, guv'nor?"

Kennerly breathed.

Macdougall snarled. "I'll hit you in a moment, you great rotten boob!" he rapped out. "Get up! You've let that skunk get away with fifty of the best-fifty of the best! Do you hear me?"

Kennerly rose to his feet, clutching at the edge of the desk to steady himself. "'E got me just as I came through that blinking panel!" he explained. "I know he only hit me once; but, lummy, guv'nor, it was like the kick of a mule! Who was he, anyhow?"

Macdougall studied the card. "You know as much about him as I do!" he said. "But I think I'm going to know more about him before I've finished with him!"

Kennerly stooped, lifted the sandbag, and put it into his pocket. Then he turned towards his employer again.

"What about Nipper now?" he asked. Mr. Macdougall counted out three dirty Treasury notes and handed them to his henchman.

"Take them to him," he said, "and I Barny had been trying to "touch" his

the meagre fee into Young Nipper's hand, and at the same time slipped his fist into his pocket where the sandbag reclined.

"Are you satisfied?" the bully snarled. Young Nipper, in his shabby clothes, picked up his handbag and pocketed the notes.

To Kennerly's amazement, he was showing no signs of fight

"I'm quite satisfied, mate," he said. "It's just what I expected. Good-

#### The 3rd Chapter. Alpha Wins Again!

Mr. Macdougall was seated in his shirt-sleeves in the dining-room of his sumptuous house on Park Lane. He was having lunch with his son, and there being no strangers present, Mr. Macdougall had made himself comfortable by removing his coat and tucking his table-napkin into the folds of his collar. Mr. Macdougall required no music for

his meals; he ate noisily. Opposite him sat Barny Macdougall,

his son. It must be admitted that Barny, although a chip of the old block, was a somewhat polished chip. Harrow and Trinity College are calculated to leave their mark on the least promising specimen of modern youth. If Barny's taste in socks was somewhat loud, and the pearl that he wore in his loose, flowing tie was rather too large to be decent, these were mere minor details, and, under ordinary circumstances, Barny Macdougall could comport himself with the outward semblance of a gentleman.

There was a dissatisfied scowl on Barny's sallow face as he sat opposite

his parent.

to which was attached a printed receipt-

"Read that," he said, flinging it across the table at Barny, who unfolded the sheet and read the message aloud.

The sheet of notepaper was embossed with the address: "The Voyagers' Club, Pall Mall," and the message ren as follows:

"Dear Mr. Macdongall,-I have pleasure in enclosing you herewith receipt-form from Young Nipper Grey for the prize of fifty pounds, being the amount of the advertised prize for the ten-round contest between the said Nipper Grey and One-Round Mike, at the Fistic. You will note that the receipt is for fifty-three pounds, as Nipper Grey informs me that he received the odd money from your manager, Mr. Kennerly. I suppose the extra three pounds were for travelling expenses .-Yours very sincerely,

"ALPHA ALWAYS."

The slip of paper attached to the note was a formal receipt for the sum of money mentioned, and was signed "Nipper Grey."

Barny Macdougall's face was perfectly blank as he looked up.

"I can't see anything wrong with this, dad," he remarked. "I suppose you do keep receipts from these fellows?"

"Receipts be blowed!" the elder Macdougall rapped out. "That isn't a

receipt, it's an insult, that is!" He snatched the letter from his son's hand again, and thrust it into his pocket.

"You don't think I'd give fifty pounds to a fourth-rate young fighter like Young Nipper Grey?" he said, in his thick tones. "Why, it's all bunkum, you young fool! We say we give them fifty pounds. Hang it, they'd faint if they were to get that much for the fight!" He leaned back, his chair creaking under his weight, and scowled across the

table. "You listen to me, and I'll tell you what happened," he went on. "I know now that it was a hold-up. It was all planned-a trick against your poor old father-and he fell into it good and

He began, then, to give his son a rough account of what had happened at the Fistic, omitting no desails.

"But why didn't you stop the cheque, dad?" Barny put in, when his father came to the end of his story.

"I did try to stop it!" the boxing promoter rapped out. "But they were too darned quick for me! I got round to the bank first thing in the morning, but they'd been round before and cashed the cheque. From what I can hear of it, it must have been Nipper Grey who collected the cash. I asked the clerk to describe the man to me; but the day after I got this letter, and it explains everything. That young hound made the bet with me just to get my fifty quid to hand over to that fourth-rate leather-pusher, Nipper Grey!"

He groaned. "If any of my boys hear that I paid out fifty pounds for a dud fight like that they'll all want it!" he quavered, waving his hands above his head.

His sleek-haired son rose languidly to his feet, and stretched himself. He was a hulking youth was Barny Macdougall, bordering on six feet, and well on to the fourteen-stone mark. In his energetic moments Barny had occasionally gone down to the Fistic, and had been given a few lessons in the gentle art of fisticuffs.

He was by no means a bad boxer, but was much too lazy to indulge in the more severe training that the lip-top man needs.

"Huh! Standing there, stretching yourself!" the elder Macdougall went on. "If you were worth two pennyworth of fish you'd go and search for that skunk, Alpha Always, and beat him into a jelly, that is what you would do!"

He leaned across the table. "You belong to the Vovagers' Club, anyhow, don't you?" he said. "Yes, dad."

"Then why don't you look for this Alpha Always, and-and knock his head off? That's what a real son would do." The proposition seemed to interest Barny Macdougall. He took a turn up and down the room, then halted again in front of his father. "Look here, dad," he said, "supposing

I do manage to run across this Alpha Always, and give him a darned good hiding, what will it be worth?" "It will be worth just what he got

out of me-fifty pounds." The stout, many-chinned boxing promoter rose to his feet, and caught his

son by the sleeve. "Do you think you can cow him, Barny?" he said. "He's a slick bit of

live wire stuff, I warn you!" Barny Macdougall laughed. "I'm not going to make any rash

promises, dad," he said: "but I'll do my best. You know there's a gym at the Voyagers' Club, and quite a lot of the members use the gloves. If this Alpha Always chap should happen to be there while I'm about, I dare say I could manage to work up something that wouldn't do him any good."

The broad face of Macdougall widened into a smile, the first that had crossed it for the past few

"Look here, Barny, my son," he said, "I'm sore-darned sore-with that fellow! I want him beat-put out, You're big enough to lick him, by the looks of you, and if you get half a chance I'll expect you to hammer him into a pulp."

He chuckled away down in his throat. "You get busy on this right away," he went on. "And if you can try to

(Continued overleaf.)



Alpha Always leaped at Barny Macdougall, and the power behind his punch was amazing. The burly man's jaw cracked, and he staggered back as a paralysing numbress took his limbs.

He sidled round the tall, supple figure, reaching the door and opening it.

"Have a drink," he said, pointing to a little sideboard on the left. "I won't be very long."

The stout figure slid out of the door. closing it behind him, but instead of going on down the passage Mr. Macdougall simply took a couple of paces forward, then leaned against the wall opposite, and waited, his head craned forward, his ears on the alert.

Not that he expected to hear any sound from that carefully padded door, but all his interests were concentrated Mr Macdougall knew that there was a certain secret panel just behind the sideboard, which could be deftly opened, allowing a certain Tim Kennerly, Mr. Macdougall's henchman and rough-houser, to enter.

Kennerly's ways with a sandbag were the utmost artistic efforts, as many dissatisfied boxers had already discovered in that same little room.

Five minutes passed, and Mr. Macdougall began to wax impatient. He was waiting for Kennerly's signal-a double knock on the padded door-to indicate

that all was well. Another minute dragged past, and Mr. Macdougall, at the end of his patience, went to the door and gripped the patent catch. As the door swung open he gave a gasp, for the room was

in darkness. Feeling for the switch on the left, his podgy fingers pressed it down, and the electric lamp above the desk leaped into

Tim Kennerly was lying flat on his back beside the sideboard, and with a quick run Macdougall reached the sprawling figure. On Kennerly's chest lay the sandbag, and under it was a small ivory

tell him to clear out! If he makes any fuss, stop his blubber!"

It will be remembered that the tenround contest between Mike and Young Nipper had been advertised as being for a prize of fifty pounds. Only the professional boxer can tell how very, very seldom the advertised prize-money is ever given in the lower-class boxing-halls such as the Fistic.

Kennerly's ugly face widened into a grin as he picked up the grimy notes. "Right you are, guv'nor! I'll see to him! You can leave 't to me!"

That Kennerly evidently expected trouble was obvious from the manner in which, two minutes later, he pressed

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old man, and had been received with abrupt and chilly refusal.

"You'll get no more money out of me until the end of the month!" Mr. Macdougall had said angrily. "What do you think I'm made of-Fishers?" It was obvious to his son that Mr.

Macdougall was particularly put out that day, and presently Barny attempted to find out the reason thereof. "What troubles you, dad, anyhow?"

he asked, over coffee. Mr. Macdougall pushed back his chair, and glanced from under lowering eyelids at his son.

"What's troubling me, eh?" he repeated. "I can tell you what's troubling me. I haven't a smart man to rely on. All my staff are just duds. Do you hear? Duds! And as for you, Barny-well, you're less use than any of them!"

He brought down his podgy fist on the

"If you were a decent man I could rely on you to do things for me, then I'd know how to reward you." "What do you want me to do, any-

way, dad?" Barny Macdougall demanded "Oh, get busy, and save me from the sharks!"

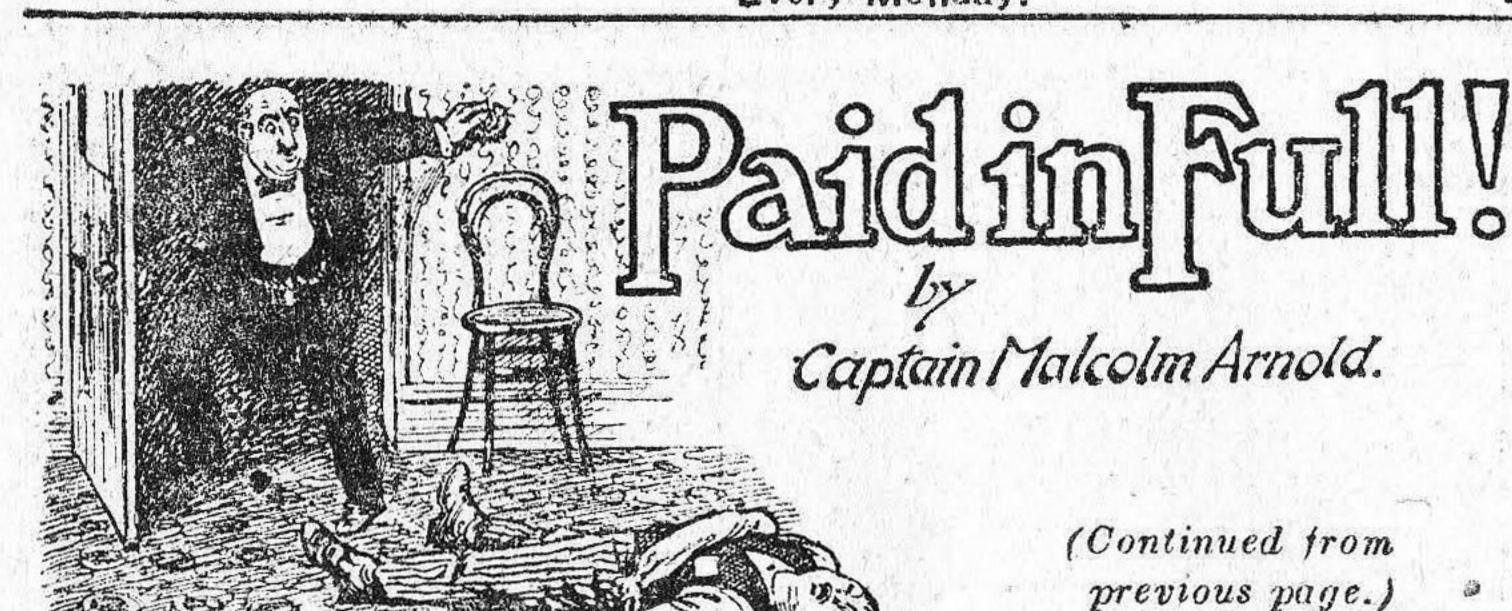
Barny flung back his head and laughed. "Save you from the sharks! Ha, ha ha! By James, that's good, dad! You mean to tell me that anyone's got the better of you recently?"

"That's just what I do mean to tell you!" the boxing promoter returned angrily "If you'd been at the Fistic on Monday night it might never have happened.

"What did happen, dad?" Barny asked. His father slipped his hand into his pocket, and produced an envelope from which he extracted a sheet of notepaper l

Price

Twopence



arrange that I should watch the proceedings. This will be another fifty pounds for me. Barny; but you can take it that this time I'll pay with a good heart."

330

And thus it was arranged, father and son shaking hands joyously on the grim

Later on that afternoon Barny rang up the Voyagers' club, and inquired if Mr. Always was on the premises. The reply came back that Mr. Always happeded to be in the smoke-room at that very moment. The porter offered to go and fetch the member, but Barny told him not to trouble.

"I'll probably look in later on," he said, as he replaced the receiver.

It took him just tifteen minutes to get from Park Lane to the wide doorway of the Voyagers', and he sauntered into the smoke-room, glancing around that comfortable, well-furnished place.

There was the usual assortment of elderly gentlemen nodding over the afternoon papers; then presently Barny, whose real name, by the way. was Barnato Macdougall, espied a slender figure in a check suit lounging over the tape-machine.

Macdongall senior had given Barny a very accurate description of the cool youth who had caused him so much mental vexation, and, recalling the details, Barny Macdougall was satisfied that the check-suited individual was the person he was in search of.

He certainly did not appear a very formidable object. Beyond the fact he was wearing a suit which fitted him like a glove, he was hardly a person whom Barny Macdougall would have considered to be a live wire.

#### TOPPING FOOTER STORY.

"Here goes for an easy fifty quid!" soliloquised Barny Macdougall, as he lounged slowly across the smoke-room.

He noted that near to the tape-machine stood, a chair, while on the table was a cup half filled with tea. There was also a hat and stick propped up against the arm of the chair-mute tokens of occupancy.

Barny Macdougall saw an immediate line of offence, and took it.

Sauntering up to the chair, he flung himself into it, and, with a sweep of his hand, sent the stick and hat flying. The stick fell on the teacup, upsetting

it, and the contents splashed on the soft grey velour hat.

The youth in the check suit had glanced over his shoulder as the burly, blackhaired man seated himself, and he had missed no details of that deliberate act. Another member in the chair opposite

had also seen the happening. He was a grey-haired old gentleman, and he leaned forward, with a little gasp of indignation. For the average member of the Voyagers' Club is a gentleman, although occasionally money and influence allow

men of the Barny Macdougail type to get past the ballot-box. The slim youth in the check suit took

a couple of paces forward, and halted in front of the armchair. Barny Macdougall looked up, uncon-

sciously twisting his sallow face into its

most formidable scowl. A pair of steel-blue eyes were looking

into his brown ones, and for a moment there was silence. But in the end it was Barny's eyes which first began to flicker and shift.

"Do you know, Mr. Barnato Macdougall, that that wasn't at all necessary? You spoiled a perfectly good velour hat, and you could have had your quarrel without that!"

The cool, drawling voice came from lips that were smiling, but it was a very

grim, very threatening smile. "What do you mean? Are you trying

to bully me?" The duestion was a rather low one, and Barny Macdougall paled. He was in the act of rising to his feet, talking as he did so; but he had not quite straightened up when, with a quick movement, the youth in front of him slapped him across

his mouth. It was a vigorous slap, and it sent Barny Macdougall back into his chair, to skipping-rope exercises, but they halted sprawl there for a moment, taken completely aback.

The sound of that smack was like a pistol-shot in that quiet smoke-room, and somnolent members were aroused by it. One or two of them rose from their chairs, and came hurrying forward to the scene of the disturbance: but the silverhaired man who had witnessed the opening stages darted forward, and was standing between Alpha Always and the red-faced, glowering man in the chair.

"I can assure you that this young man was quite justified, gentlemen." the old fellow said. "I saw Mr Macdougall deliberately occupy his chair and knock over his stick. A most caddish act, in my opinion!"

Barny Macdougall, gripping at the arm of the chair, rose quickly. His burly figure towered over the slim one on the other side of the grey-haired member.

"There's no need for any of you gentlemen to interfere!" Barny Macdougall said in an angry tone. "This affair is between we two alone!"

"Oh, indeed! That is what you think, my dear sir!" the grey-haired gentleman rapped out. "But I happen to be a member of the committee, and I consider your conduct just now most disgraceful -most disgraceful!"

He turned to Alpha Always. "If you care to make a complaint concerning the matter I shall be very pleased to take it up for you."

Alpha had stepped back a pace, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he shook his head. There was a bland smile on his clean-cut, handsome features as he looked at the circle of members.

"I don't think it is a case that the committee need inquire into, gentlemen," he said. "The truth of the matter is that Barny Macdougall, here, has a grievance against me-a fifty-pound grievance which will probably be handed over to him by his father!"

"You-you leave my father out of this!" Barny Macdongall snarled, his sallow face flushing uncomfortably.

His slim rival bowed. "I've no doubt he'd prefer to be in the background, my dear Barny!" came the galling response. "But, tell me, am I right, or am I wrong? Is it a fiftypound grudge which he has against me?"

The slim fingers slipped into his walstcoat-pocket and produced a crinkling

"It is very early in the afternoon, gentlemen." he said, addressing the little group of interested members, "and I've no doubt that the gymnasium at the moment is vacant. Mr. Barny Macdougall has spoiled a perfectly good velour of mine, and, therefore, asked for what he receives! Four days ago his father, most unluckily, lost a small wager to me, the sum of fifty pounds. If Mr. Barny would like to have that sum returned to the family coffers, here is his chance!"

He opened the crinkling notes, revealing the fact that it was worth fifty pounds, and placed it in the hand of the silver-haired gentleman.

"Let us adjourn to the gymnasium," Alpha Always said. "and if Mr. Barny covers my bet, either by a note or an IOU, we'll settle our little differences in the good old English way!"

The old fellow holding the note glanced first at Barny Macdougall, then across at Alpha Always, and shook his

"You are a newcomer to the Voyagers', Always," he said, "and perhaps you are not aware of the fact that Mr Macdougall is an amateur boxer of more than ordinary ability. Apart from that, he is a much taller and heavier man than you are. I do not consider the match a fair one in any way."

One or two of the other members agreed, but Alpha Always interrupted

He turned and looked at Barny for a moment, then shook his head cheer-

"I'm afraid that Mr. Macdougall is out of condition," he remarked dryly. "He looks flabby, fat, and I am quite sure that he could not stand a decent

Barny Macdougall's face went a mottled red, and he lunged forward. "Confound you for a young nincom-

poop!" he blared, shaking his fist in front of Alpha Always. "I'll-I'll knock your head off for that! Fat and flabby, am I? By James, we'll see!"

He snatched a cheque-book out of his pocket, and, crossing to one of the small desks, wrote out a cheque to "Bearer" for fifty pounds, then handed the cheque

to the grey-haired man. "Let's get this over quick," he said. "I've got an appointment in half an

hour!" He brushed past the little knot of

members, and headed for the door. Alpha Always picked up his stick and tea-stained hat and followed. After a moment's hesitation the rest of the members trooped out after the two men, and, going down into the basement, they entered the wide, lighted gym.

A couple of stout men were engaged in as soon as the invasion took place. few hasty queries enlightened them as to what was going to happen.

One of the twain came up to Alpha Always, looked at him for a moment,

then held out his hand. "I think I saw you at the Fistic the other night," he said. "My name is Stanhope."

Alpha was leisurely removing his coat and waistcoat, but he halted in that process to shake the proffered palm. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Stanhope!" he said. "If you were at the Fistic, then you've every right to be here this afternoon, for this is what you would call the aftermath of what happened there."

"By Jove! Of course, that is young Macdougall!"

BOYS' FRIEND

Stanhope's eyes suddenly twinkled.

"After the father, the son!" he said. "By the way, I hope you were paid that

"Oh, yes! I received it all right, and Mr. Barny is trying to get it back again -as a dutiful son should."

Already a set of gloves had been brought into the little roped-off space in the centre of the gymnasium, and Barny Macdougall, stripped to his undervest, and with a belt round his waist, he made his first attack. It was a wearing a pair of gym-shoes, was standing in one corner, adjusting a pair of gloves on to his big fists.

Alpha Always contented himself with removing his coat and waistcoat and turning up the sleeves of his shirt.

"I should take off that collar and tie if I were you, old chap," Stanhope said. He received a languid smile and a

shake of the head. "It takes me ten minutes to tie this bow of mine," Alpha explained. "It is a highly complicated knot, as you'll observe. I don't think I'll disturb it."

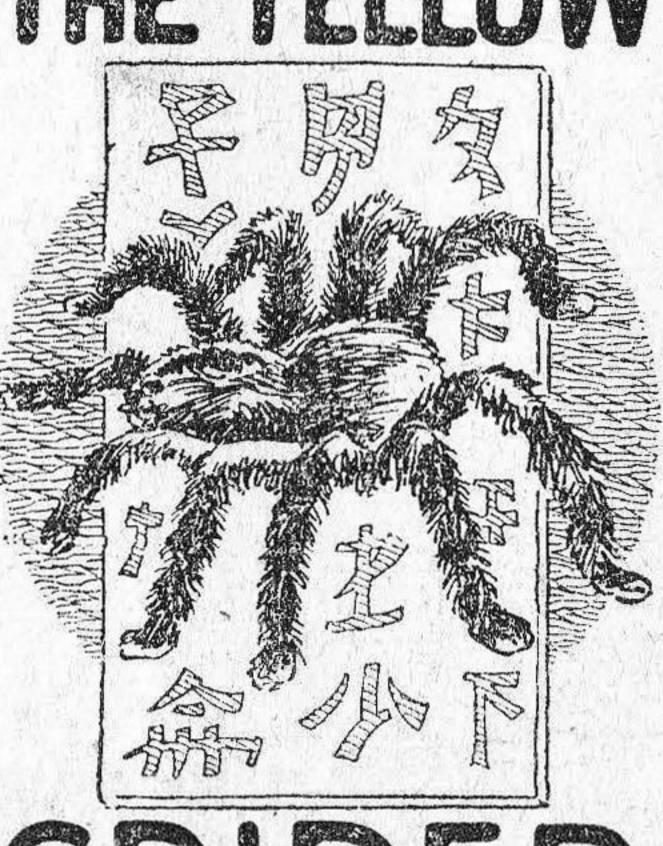
The amazingly cool drawl, the air of complete unconcern that was obviously natural made Stanhope chuckle again.

"Who the dickens is that fellow?" the grey-haired old man whispered, as he came up to Stanhope's side. Stanhope shook his head.

"I haven't the foggiest notion," he returned. "But whoever he is, I hope he'll give that thundering bully over there the licking of his life-although I don't think there's much chance of it, unfortunately."

Barny Macdougall came lounging into the centre of the ring and halted there,

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nodding across to the slim figure in the

"When you're ready!" he called. He certainly looked a fearsome opponent. He had arms like a navvy, and his chest and shoulders were of the

gorilla type. Stanhope crossed to the ropes, taking out a watch, and his quiet, level gaze rested for a moment on Barny.

"I suggest three-minute rounds, with a minute interval," he said. "If you fellows are going to settle your-erdifferences in the good old English way, you might as well have some semblance of etiquette in the affair."

Barny scowled, but he saw that the rest of the members of the Voyagers' were distinctly on Stanhope's side, and so he agreed with a surly nod of his

"Make any arrangements you like!" he returned. "I don't think that you'll require much time-keeping once I get started!"

#### FIRST ROUND!" By WALTER EDWARDS.

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cules Samson and the mastercriminal, the Duke. Tell all your pals about these splendid characters who appear in the

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Stanhope glanced at his watch for a moment, then raised his hand in signal. "Time!" he said; and Alpna Always, coming out of his corner, fell into guard. He stood very square and straight, in the old-fashioned English style; while Barny Macdougall, although a taller

man, adopted that half-crouch which the American type of pugilist has introduced into this country.

Barny came slouching forward, his arms held almost level with his eyes, and as soon as he came into distance fierce onslaught, calculated to intimidate his opponent.

He lunged at Always blindly, aiming a shower of blows at the slim youth, and his rival began to give ground-give ground deftly, easily, countering and evading the rather wild swings which were directed at him.

If Barny Macdougall had been less angry he might have realised that this method of onslaught was calculated to defeat its object. No man can adopt rushing tactics and yet expect to have accuracy of aim and delivery.

Barny had forgotten pretty well everything he had been taught in the way of ringcraft and boxing. His was a real street-corner type of pugilism rather than scientific boxing.

If any one of his powerful blows had landed on the slim, quick-moving youngster in front of him they would to his feet, to stand there swaying. have told; but it is much easier to aim a blow than to land one, and Barny, lumbering after his light-footed opponent, wasted two-thirds of his efforts and much of his strength without registering a hit

Once he managed to work Always into a corner, and landed one or two punches on the youngster's body; but they were cramped, awkward hits, easily muffled, and as Barny drew back a pace to deliver a more telling punch, the young, slim figure in front of him ducked under his great arm, slipping out of the danger zone. Next instant, quick as a cat Alpha Always swung round and delivered his first punch.

It was a meaty, full-armed delivery, and it crashed through Barny's guard, landing dangerously near to the point of the jaw. The whole of Always' strength had been put into that beautifully timed effort, and the way in which the heavy head of Barny Macdougall went back indicated the power behind the blow.

Barny fell against the ropes, and he took advantage of the elasticity of the cord to make a return spring; but again his effort was of the lumbering order.

His fist passed harmlessly over Alpha's shoulder as that swift-moving youth ducked, and they fell into a clinch, to sway out into the centre of the ring.

Barny Macdougall dropped his other hand over the slender shoulder, and something like a wrestling match developed.

Here, and here alone, Barny Macdougall had the advantage. He was pressing with all his weight on his young adversary, and his mottled face, scowling over Alpha's shoulder, revealed its surly satisfaction.

Once he tried to trip up his young opponent, but again that deft body was too quick for him.

"Break away, there!" The two locked figures reeled against the ropes, and once again Stanhope's voice sounded.

"You hear, Macdougali? Break away! This is a boxing match, not a jazz

contest!" Very reluctantly, Barny Macdougall released his hold on his rival and lumbered out to distance again.

Almost immediately he returned to the attack in another whirlwind effort, in which his rage and spite revealed themselves in all their ugly strength. He waded into his young opponent with both hands, and, although Alpha fought back for all he was worth, he took a great deal of punishment during that fierce onslaught.

The gloved fists drummed on ribs and shoulders and chest, and he gave ground, slipping back deftly round the ring. It was swift, deadly work, and Barny

Macdougall, fancying that his adversary was on the run, kept him to it. They fought all round the ring again, and the dull thud of the padded gloves echoed and re-echoed through the quiet gym. There was another brisk melee in a

corner, out of which Alpha came with a bruised lip. Then they fell into another clinch, and twice in quick succession Barny punched his rival's body while they were still in the lock-foul tactics of the type that only the lower-class boxer indulges in. "Break away! Break away!"

Once again the warning voice of Stanhope brought Barny's underhand efforts to an end, and this time Stanhope, slipping into the ring, walked between the twain, forcing them apart.

Barny fell back, his mottled face scowling, and as soon as Stanhope was clear the hefty bully, without warning, made another effort to close with his antagonist.

But the quick moving about the ring had begun to tell on the heavier man. The quick, hard punching and ceaseless shifting to and fro about the ring was

troubling Barny Macdougall's breathing apparatus, and he was drawing deep, heavy breaths now as he dropped into his guard again, then made another He missed with his left, and tried to

hook his right over on to his opponent. Alpha Always blocked that blindly aimed punch with his left arm, and instead of dropping to distance again he leaped in. Changing his feet with lightninglike speed, round and up came his bent right arm.

perfection, and Alpha's body was in the your newsagent TO-DAY!)

air when his fist came in contact with the great jaw of his antagonist. He had leaped full at Barny Macdougall, and the power behind that punch was amazing.

The burly man's jaw cracked to it-a quick report which seemed to echo across the gym.

A paralysing numbness suddenly took Barny Macdougall's limbs. He staggered back, his knees giving way beneath him, while his arms beat flail-like in the air. Then he made a last ineffectual effort to reach the slim figure in front of him.

But, even as he lumbered out to punch at it, Alpha drove in another blow-a straight, short left which crashed on to Barny Macdougall's mouth.

The gymnasium seemed suddenly to reel in front of the heavy man. Then there came a mist which spread before his eyes, and he had a sensation of dropping through space, through interminable space, with the noise of water rushing in his ears

He came gradually to consciousness to find himself sprawling in a corner of the ring, with one of the members of the Voyagers' holding a glass of water to his lips lips which were very, very bruised and very sore.

Slowly, as his eyes cleared and he realised what had happened, the burly man thrust the glass of water aside. and, clawing at the ropes, drew himself On the other side of the ropes was a little group of members gathered round

a slim, smiling youngster. Alpha Always had removed his gloves, and was chatting to the stakeholder. Barny Macdougall came staggering

across the ring. "I--I haven't finished with you, confound you! Put 'em up again!"

As he got within distance of the youngster, Barny made another rush. aiming a vicious blow at the lad's head. But before that blow could fall a couple of members of the Voyagers' had leaped in and dragged Alpha Always aside; then Stanhope and another man caught Barny Macdougall by the arms and pinned him against the ropes.

"Quite enough of that, Macdougall!" Stanhope said. "You were beaten, and fairly beaten! If you want to continue the fight, it will be in the proper way! I am quite sure our young friend here will oblige you!"

#### IN NEXT MONDAY'S BOYS' FRIEND"!

For a moment there was silence. Then the beaten man dropped his arms and scowled.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I can see how the wind lies! Let me go! I'm through!"

They released him, and he walked off unsteadily, dipping under the ropes, to vanish into the dressing-room.

It was Mr. Stanhope himself who helped Always to get dressed again-a very quick process-and presently the little group of members had returned to the smoke-room, where, with an air of grim satisfaction, Alpha Always handed Barny Macdougall's cheque over to the secretary, who promptly cashed it.

"Nothing like making sure, gentlemen," Always remarked dryly. "This makes the second fifty pounds which I've taken out of the Macdougall tribe, but the last one was ear-marked long before received it."

Stanhope smiled. "I overheard your wager at the Fistic," he commented, "but I could not quite understand it. What made you interfere in that quarter, anyhow?"

"I butted in, gentlemen," said Alpha. "It just happened that I was coming" up to town that morning, and I travelled up in the same train as a youngster. called Nipper Grey. He told me he was going to the Fistic, and he also gave me another item of information which -er-rather roused my ire."

"What was it?" "Well, Grey had fought at the Fistic. previously, and had won a competition which had entitled him to a prize of ten pounds. Mr. Macdougall called him into his office after the fight, and handed him just exactly two pounds. He had a couple of his bullies with him, and when young Grey protested they set about the lad and gave him a hammering, finally throwing him out of the

premises. "As Mr. Macdougall had no intention of handing over that fifty pounds to Young Nipper, I made sure of his doing it in another way."

A shout of laughter went up that came to the ears of a bruised, battered man crossing the wide hall. Barny Macdougall stopped, and glanced into the smoke-

He saw the circle of members gathered around the seated figure in the light check suit; then, turning, on tiptoe the burly son of the Fistic proprietor stole quietly away.

But from that time onward the struggling young boxers who provided the programme of entertainment at the Fistic Club perceived a very welcome change in the methods of the management.

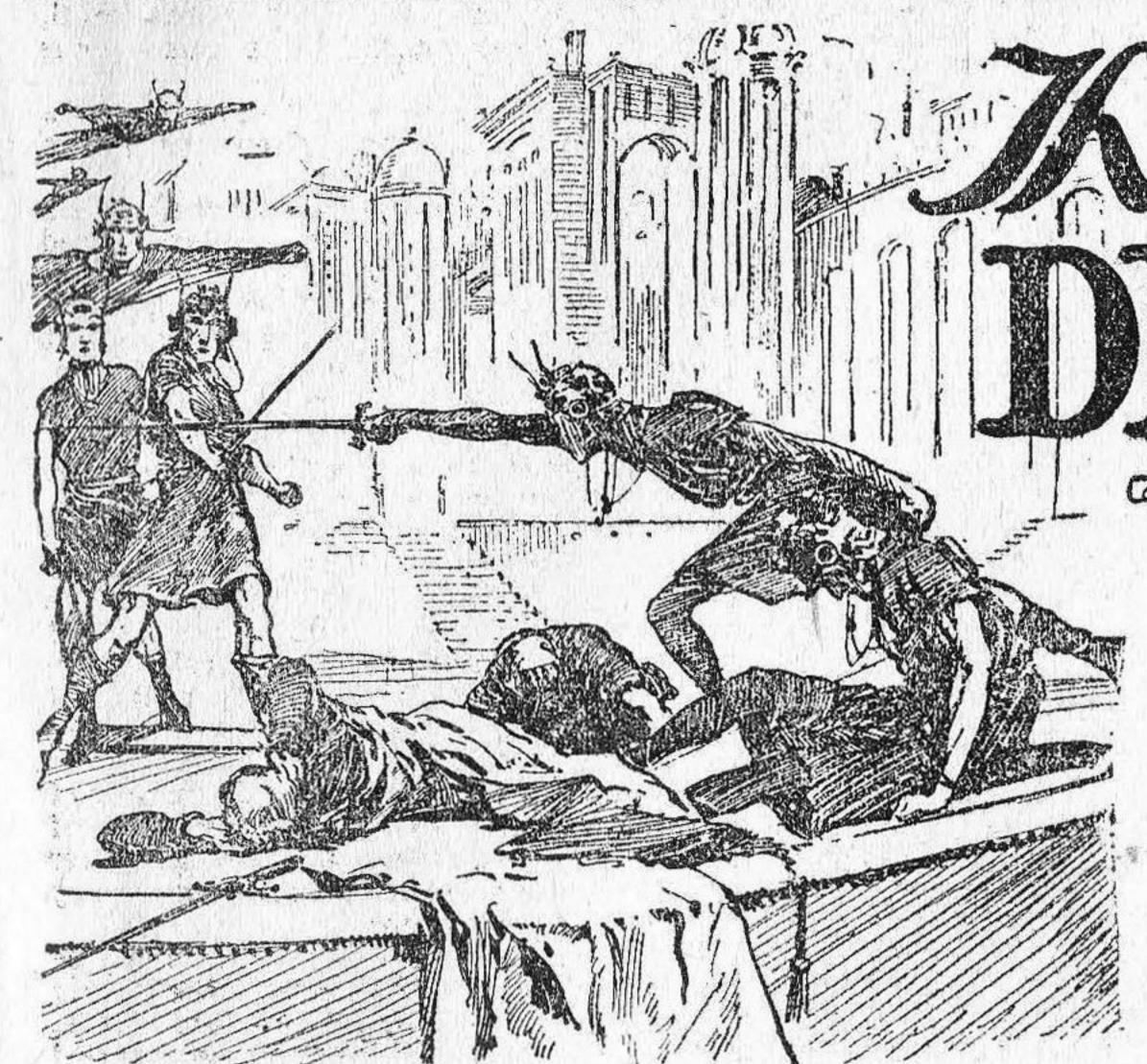
Mr. Macdougall paid the full amount of the purse as advertised! THE END.

(No reader of the Boys' Friend can afford to miss "A Man of His Word!" Sidney Drew's gripping story of mystery and adventure on land and sea. It's a regular stunner, so order your copy of It was a beautiful hook, timed to next Monday's Bumper Number from

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An Amazing Story of Adventure in Far-off Worlds!

The 1st Chapter.

Sid Kennedy, Tim Baynes, and Ken Thornton have discovered a metal upon which gravitation has no pull. With it, they build the Celestial Pearl, an airship, and set off to explore the void. Successfully skirting the moon, they land upon Mars, where they are accorded a friendly welcome. They find that the Martians have solved the problem of individual flight, and each man is provided with a pair of wings. They are guests of Senama, the President of the Martian Republic, and with him they attend the Yumen, or governing council of eight. During their stay the chums have picked up a smattering of the Martian language, and Sid is quite able to explain to the Yuman about the Celestial Pearl and the earth from which they come. The Martians can hardly believe Sid's story of the illimitable seas of their own planet, as on Mars the water that they have, is slowly but surely drying up.

Civil war breaks out between the citydwellers and the Videri, or countrymen, who are led by one, Agnoji. Agnoji takes Ken away as a hostage, and Sid and Tim throw in their lot with the town-dwellers. Sid invents a gas-mask through which the vapour pellets of the Martian "tube of death" cannot penetrate, and, in consequence, is placed at the head of a squadron of Martians, all thus protected. This "hooded squadron does great havoc amongst the Videri when they attack the city, and it is mainly due to their efforts that it is saved. Maanwhile, Senama has been kidnapped, and a Videri youth, whom Tim has male captive in the fight, brings news that the President and Ken are imprisoned in the deserted town of Axmeuni. Sid and Tim, together with Urmun, Tim's captive, and Nonun, a Martian youth, set off to the rescue, arriving just as Senama and Ken are about to be shot by the followers of Agnoji. Three of the firing-party are killed, but unfortunately Agnoji and his lieutenants escape. The two prisoners are released, and after a rest the little hand set out on its return journey to Pelemonae.

Tho 2nd Chapter.

The Return!

detail, for it varied but little atward flight in its monotony. esire for haste, it was soon the speed of the whole regulated by the needs of and Ken, for it was quickly aptivity had sapped their vitality more than they had admitted, and that they would be forced to descend for frequent rests. Ken, indeed, bad been singularly quiet ever since his dramatic reprieve, except when he had warmly thanked his chums for their efforts on his behalf, and within a couple of hours of the start the sight of his white face frightened Sid into calling a

inuecessary to recount the return

peremptory halt. "Now, you just lie still for half an hour, Ken, and don't argue," Sid said, in reply to Ken's shakily expressed wish to continuenthe journey. "We can all do with a rest, and it's time we had another feed. This flying business is thirsty work, so hold your head up, old chap, and drink

He attended to the needs of Ken, and the food and rest brought a semblance of colour back into the white cheeks. "I hope you will allow us to revisit

that wonderful dead city, sir, ere we return to Chenurm?" said Sid to the President, as they reclined at ease in the bed of the derelict canal.

-: Speak not of the day when you return to Chenurm, for that day is still far off. I hope." replied Senama. "Once accounts are settled with Agnoji, I myself will gladly accompany you to Axmeuni, for there is much that I am curious to learn regarding the long-vanished civilisation of that city." He fell silent for a moment, then looked thoughtfully at the afar, all that you have seen of this. our world, must seem strange. would that you could have visited this planet a thousand years back, for that which we now can show you is but the strinks yearly. Our people each day ways were undreamt of, for the peoples grow more uncouth; time saps at their were too busy warring and killing. The

vitality. But once-- But perhaps I

weary you, friends?" "No, sir; go on, please." The answer came not only from the chums, but also from the Martian youths. Aside, Nonun whispered to Sid that the President was the recognised authority on all that pertained to the vanished greatness of their

"Very well: but your imagination must colour that which my poor utterance fails to convey. You must picture this world as teeming with myriads of people, all busy with their work, their hopes, their disappointments. I think that in those days, voyagers, this planet must have been much as yours is at present. At that time we attained our highest pitch of culture, and the people we honoured above all others were our artists, our writers, our musicians, and our architects.

"Aerial flight by individuals was unknown, but we had great ships of the air, capable of circling our globe in ten days, and able to carry passengers by the hundred. Dead lands such as now surround us were unknown; peace was universal, discord a relic of our barbarous day-or so we thought, and the awakening, when it came, was all the greater shock. Understand that we had learned to worship beauty. Our ancient faith had withered and died of the ridicule poured on it, and beauty-the beauty of feature and form-had become our religion.

"Disease had, to a great extent, been overcome by the skill of our medical forces, and it was seldom that any of our people died but of extreme age. Even then our doctors were urged to greater efforts, and rewards and decorations were showered on all who promised greater immunity from death, for, by some strange irony of Fate, as disease and sickness vanished from amongst our people, the horror of death increased.

"It was about this time that our priesthood first chose to speak of this cataclysm that would overwhelm this world. They lectured openly of some mysterious disaster, but they were scoffed at and derided, for the twin gods of pleasure and idleness had claimed the people.

"But enough of those days. I will carry you on a period of-well, several thousand years, but exactly how many even the preciously guarded tomes that | are enshrined in the Yumen do not state."

Senama paused, and his listeners forbore to break the silence, though Sid thoughtfully handed him a water-bottle. with which he moistened his lips gratefully, ere he resumed his word-picture of the fall from grace of the civilised world of Mars.

"No, those days could not have proved attractive to an onlooker, but so they continued for ages. The priests warned with ever-increasing vehemence, and the masses merely found amusement in their tirades, for still the sun shone with undimmed splendour, life was idle and pleasant, death afar off. But now whispers began to trickle to the cities from lands far away-whispers that for many a day received scant attention. These hints persisted and grew, however, and eventually the people listened, became uneasy, and at last demanded that the scientists should prove them, yea or nay. The day arrived when the scientists spread their report broadcast, They told the peoples the plain truththat the waters of our world were disappearing, the land itself dying and withering.

"That was the beginning of fear-fear that spread like fire, for I think that the grisly spectre of a whole world ending became an obsession that bred a worldmadness. Disputes and recriminations were flung to and fro. A dozen wars broke out between as many of our cities. None knew their origin or their cause. Disease and pestilence once again reared their twin heads of hideousness. There came an awful outbreak named the pale death that carried off untold numbers, before which the vaunted skill of our medicals proved useless.

"So our world lived for several genera-"To you three voyagers from tions. Where once our pride had been beauty, and our gods pleasure and ease. so now our thoughts were all of slaughter, of how to overcome this

enemy or that. "The culminating horror, I think, ghost of our one-time greatness. Now, must have been the time when the as our world draws towards its eventide, rapidly vanishing waters actually began our land becomes even more desolate; to leave the districts of several of the the small portion that is still fertile | largest cities. In those days water high-

lust of frenzy had obliterated all sense of the great danger, and all thought of the morrow. The first of the cities to realise that its day was over was one named Ulthea, nigh to the Middle Belt." Senama paused as he noticed the be-

wilderment of the chums. "How can I describe it to you? It is the land the sun touched most lovingly, or so my records tell me, for none have lived there, or even visited it, these centuries past."

cities. The lesson of these places showed those that survived the fate that threatened them all too plainly, and at last it was this fear that brought about the conclusion of the inter-city warfare. "There followed a period of gatherings of the keenest intellects we possessed,

and eventually it was, recognised that the last of our waters would be those of the polar regions. From that, the suggestion for the construction of the great waterways was a natural sequel; but no sooner had the announcement been made, and the borings commenced, than the country classes—now known to us as the Videri-sprang into revolt, for the openings of these centralised waterways meant the instant ruin of the industry on which they existed. They obstinately refused to understand, or to admit, that the rapidly disappearing liquid must end production in many places; nor could they be brought to see fluid would allow them to carry on their necessary cultivation, even though it meant the moving to strange parts for many families.

"In the past each city had fought its neighbours from sheer lust of lunacy; now they were forced by dire necessity to combine and fight the Videri, for the boring of the waterways represented their last chance of existence, and must be persisted in.

"I have already snoken of how the waters were eventually imprisoned, and only allowed to flow where we willed; but by the time this huge work was completed the populations of the cities were so reduced, and the Videri attacked with a fury so persistently vindictive, that it was resolved to make one last stronghold of Pelemonae.

"At the last the Videri were defeated and subdued; but they remained viciously sullen, so that the strangers "Oh. I understand, sir!" exclaimed within the gates of Pelemonae made Sid. "The land you speak of as the | that city their homes, for strength Middle Belt we would name the alone held the Videri in subjection. That was a thousand years back; but

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us, sir, for your citizens are taking care the dying off of many of our greatest of the Pearl, and we merely wish to warn them that Agnoji is still at large, and doubly dangerous."

The President seemed strangely reluctant to leave the chums, but finally they prevailed upon him to continue his journey in the company of the Martian youths, whilst they wended their way towards the valley.

"You seem very anxious to get rid of Senama," said Tim, as they flew slowly onwards. "That's all my eye about the safety of the Pearl. What's

worrying you, Sid?" "Only this, old son," replied Sid. When the President enters the city the people will go wild with delight, for there is no question of their love for him. Now, they would naturally want to fuss about us for the bit we have done, and old Ken is hardly in good form for that kind of joy business. Once aboard the Pearl we can look after him that the conservation of the precious properly, then sneak quietly into Pelemonae when things have quietened down a bit."

"Thanks, old man!" said Ken quietly. "It's the truth that I'm about all in. However, there's the Pearl."

In the depths of the valley the dusk had deepened almost to night, and the bulk of the space-ship could be seen merely as an indistinct blur. From its deck rang a clear call-the Martian watchword:

"Who comes?" "Friends!" answered Sid loudly. "The voyagers!"

They alighted on the Pearl, and could just distinguish the shadowy blur of a motionless Martian sentry at either end of the deck.

"Anything happened during our absence?" inquired Sid.

"Nothing, voyager!" "Right! Remain on guard, for soon we return to Pelemonae." "Now, chaps," continued Sid briskly,

"off with the flying kit, or we might easily tear the flimsy wings in this darkness. Leave it on deck, then it will be handy when we are ready to resume Sid felt carefully for the ladder.

descended, switched on the lights, then called to his chums to follow. "Well, chaps, I suppose the first thing

is a pot of good hot tea for you, Ken," said Sid, as the others sprang down the ladder. "Then an hour's rest, and afterwards-Pelemonae."

"Not yet, friends, not even in an hour!" said a sneering voice. "Possibly not ever again!"

Sid, Ken, and Tim stood as if petrified. They might have been turned to stone, so great was their astonishment as Agnoji and Parlat stepped quietly into view, with deadly tubes poised for instant readiness.

"Trapped!" muttered Sid stupidly, glancing first at Agnoji, then instinctively aloft to the open deck door.

"Oh, you need not trouble about your door," sneered Agnoji, "for see, that is already well guarded by our dear friends, Noma and Renue."

"But what means this. Agnoji? The outrage can avail you nothing, and you will pay dearly for it."

"He that is poor is rich in opportunity!" smiled Agnoji, quoting a common saying of Pelemonae. "You see. voyagers, thanks to you, death awaits us wherever we turn in this our dear world, so we have seized our chance and your space-devourer at one and the same time. This planet has no further use for us, nor we for it, and you have providentially provided us with a means of leaving it for ever!"

"You mean that you expect us to carry you away with us?" demanded Sid. "I mean, that you have no choice but to take such orders as I give. Your helmets dangle uselessly from your belts. and so these tubes we hold are once more deadly!"

"For the moment you hold the whiphand," conceded Sid frankly; "but the secrets of the Pearl are still ours, and without those secrets you are helpless."

"At the risk of wearying you, I must. again remind you that we are desperate men, on whom sentence has already been passed. If we remain here our end is death, and we prefer to meet that end by our own hands rather than give Senama that satisfaction."

Agnoji was standing close to the switchboard, and he rested his hand lightly on it as he spoke.

"At least, we know that these handles will either take us to safety, or to speedy annihilation. Only if it be the latter, rest assured that you journey to that long sleep in our company!"

He beckoned to Noma and Renue, who still held guard at the door. "Enter and close the wall of metal securely, for we have looked our last on this dying world. Now. dwellers from Chenurm, decide quickly! Either start your devourer-of-space at once, or this hand of mine will try to unravel your secrets without your help!"

Agnoji spoke quietly, and without trace of rancour, and because of that, his words and bearing became doubly im pressive. As Sid still hesitated, he again

"Come, voyagers, have you any choice left to you? If. by any chance, I do start this space-eater on its journey, your help will be unnecessary to us, and you know we only offer you a chance of life because you can be of use to us. If, on the other hand, I am unlucky when I touch these handles, that will not henefit you, for you die with us. Now,

"I'm hanged if I will give in to the skunk!" muttered Tim, as he prepred. to spring at Agnoji. "Don't be a fool. Tim!" cried Sid.

jumping in front of his chum. "We are absolutely helpless, and our only chance (Continued overleaf.)



Sid quietly deflected the lever that once again started the Pearl on its travels. Agnoli smiled sarcastically. "Now we await the start, voyager." "We have started," replied Sid, as he deftly uncovered the sheath beneath their feet. At the sight of Pelemonae, far below them, Agnoji and his fellow Martians retreated with shrill screams of fear!

Senama replied I there, I think, the greatness of this thoughtfully. "Well, name it what you will; but this city that needed the water most was the first to feel its loss. The inhabitants would have fled to other cities-many, in fact, did so-but because of the war that raged 'twixt one city and another, and the growing fear of their own supply of the lessening liquid, none would give them shelter. That which followed was too horrible, and will not bear retelling. Suffice it to say that so one city died, and the fate that one was the fate of others. Even now the worst was still unborn, but of that I must speak again.

"Time passes, and Pelemonae is still many leagues away. If you have now recovered somewhat of your strength, voyager Ken, we must resume our

"I'm quite ready, sir!" answered Ken brightly. "The rest has put me all right. But I would like to hear the end

of your story." "So you shall," Senama smiled; "but later, voyagers-later."

It was afternoon when fatigue again forced them to descend and rest. There still remained a small store of food and water, which proved very acceptable, and after this had been disposed of, Sid turned eagerly to President Sepama.

"While we rest," he asked, "can we beg of you to continue the story of your people, sir?"

"Our stay here can be but short," rebriefly if I am to tell you what followed I return to your city alone. Fear not for

planet ended. We had passed our zenith, and now we incline gradually to our end." "But can there be no possible revival

of hope?" asked Sid.

"No," replied Senama sadly. "Nothing can belie the long-certain truth that always the waters grow less. With that dread fact ever before us, ambition is futile. Without the mainspring of ambition, business, art, science, all our desires have gradually fallen away from us. It is as if our people, knowing they are doomed, await the end with indifferent resignation, though that end is still centuries ahead."

Soon afterwards commenced the last stage of the return to the city. They reached the junction of the Great Waterway towards sunset, and as they drew near the valley, wherein the Pearl rested, Sid felt an overwhelming desire to see that everything was in order. He asked the President's permission to leave the party, and this Senama reluctantly agreed to, though only after offering to accompany the chums.

"No. sir," replied Sid. "Pelemonae is awaiting your return; and you, we know, are anxious to be with your people. I promise that we will follow you within the hour."

"Then Nonun and Urmun must remain with you," Senama said. "They are your only guard," Sid plied Senama, "so that I must speak | smiled, "and it is not fitting that you

You like good stories, so do your pals. Then tell them to-day about the BOYS' FRIEND and its wonder programme!



is to obey for the present, at any rate, Later, perhaps, the luck will change." He turned to Agnoji. "You hold all the winning cards! You order, we perforce obey! You wish to travel-where?"

leave here without delay. But first, your hands above your heads! Now, Noma, possess yourself of their headgear and the knives at their belts. Now, voyagers, whilst Noma destroys the vapour protectors with the knives you you can step over here-you alone, voyager Sid-and let this pleasant trip commence at once!".

Inwardly furious, but striving to hide his better feelings, Sid crossed to the switchboard, first throwing his chums a glance of warning to remain passive. A last gesture of helplessness, then his hand grasped and slowly deflected the all-important lever!

#### The Ninth Planet!

The Martian traitors watched Sid's every movement with a tense expectancy that belied Agnoji's professed indifference as to whether he lived or died, and, as Sid quietly deflected the lever that once again started the Pearl on its travels, Agnoji smiled sarcastically.

"So that contrivance does help to control your actions!" he said. "Good! Now we await the start voyager!"

"We have started," Sid answered curtly, "and you are already many miles from your planet."

"That is not true, for one cannot move without movement! I counsel you, voyager, fool me no longer, for my patience wears thin!"

"I repeat, we have started," said Sid wearily. "Oh, don't trouble to be abusive, Agnoji; but if nothing else will convince you, look down through the floor on which you stand, though I warn you that I risk smashing the Pearl through your obstinate disbelief."

As Sid spoke he deftly uncovered the sheath beneath their feet by means of the controlling switch, and, to the intense enjoyment of the chums, Agnoji and his fellows retreated to the limits of the chamber, with shrill screams of fear.

Far beneath them lay the great city of Pelemonae, once more illuminated with the beautiful golden sunset-glow that had so entranced the chums on their first introduction to its delights. One last, lingering glance wherein sadness mingled with regret at their abrupt departure, then the sheath slid silently

back into its place. The Martians, looking white and shaken at the totally unexpected and nervewracking demonstration of the actuality of their flying start, regained their

dignity when the view was again hidden. "So you spoke the truth, voyager!" said Agnoji. Then his swarthy face wrinkled, and he chuckled sardonically. "I fear the old dotard Senama will search long for his dear friends from Chenurm, and longer still for his intended victimsour humble selves!"

"Or, perchance, dear voyagers," sneered Noma, "our heaven-gazers have already sighted this space-eater, and are even now reporting to Senama that you ungrateful youths have tired of his com-

"To-morrow's sunrise will reveal the truth," Parlat interrupted, "for the silent forms of Zornul's guard will give them a clue that will show them how we have outwitted these simple voyagers!"

"Pah! What matters Senama and his rotting world to us?" sneered Agnoji contemptuously. "We have finished with it, and already its interest to us is dead! Our future lies onwards!

"For the present, voyagers," he continued, "we have decided to spare your lives, but our mercy depends on your conduct. Obedience-unquestioned obedience-to our commands, and you live; but one sign or hint of treachery, and your end comes quickly!"

"You can threaten, Agnoji," answered Sid, "and at present we must listen; but your threats do not frighten us, and the end is not yet in sight."

"No, voyager," agreed Agnoji cynically, "the end is not in sight. But unless you obey my orders your end will be I frenzied Martian dauntlessly. "Kill us,

very much in sight! And now you will explain thoroughly the secret of this

Pearl's motive power." "No, no! I tell you, that we will never do!" Sid shouted, in a sudden "Wherever you please, so that we fury, his control forgotten at the insolence of the Martian's request. "That secret is ours, and that secret we intend to keep!"

"Good on you, Sid!" cried Tim. "And let me tell you, Agnoji, that we've had enough of you and your beastly bullyhave so generously presented to him, ing, and you-you can go and drown yourself—the whole bloomin', frowsty lot of you!"

> Sid and Ken stared at their excited chum in open-mouthed astonishment. though Ken was secretly amused at Tim's wish that the Martians would go and drown themselves. It is doubtful if Agnoji understood one-half the defiance the chums hurled at him, but their tone was sufficient at least to show him that in this they were firmly resolved to refuse him all information.

Agnoji, and by that deed-sign your own death-warrant!"

"Kill you? Yes, voyager! But ere that happens your tone will change! Think you to pass painlessly, helped to the shadow-world by the easy path of the vapour-pellet? No, no! Continue to I ness. cross my will, and I will teach you such agonies of torture that you will pray to me for death!"

"But what mean you, voyager, by threatening that your end signs our death-warrant?" Renue interrupted: and the chums were quick to perceive the shifty uneasiness in his eyes.

"I do not threaten. I merely state a simple truth," replied Sid "You watched me start the Pearl, but you do not as yet understand that it is now dropping through the void at scores of thousands of miles each hour. You know not how to guide it; you are absolutely ignorant of how to stay its progress. Unaided, you rush through space for ever, unless blind luck befriends you; and even then that luck can but enable you to draw nigh to some other planet, for you to crash into it, and, in the crashing. to be ground to a fine powder of dust!"

The three subordinates of Agnoji were visibly impressed by the assured certainty of Sid's words, and their leader alone continued to mouth imprecations.

"Do you take us for fools or babes?" he demanded. "We know that all your secrets are hidden in the handles of this wall, and we are fools indeed if we fail to solve their mysteries!"

"Then try!" snapped Sid. "Try now! Why hesitate? We are far into the void by this time, so prove your boasted intellect by returning to Mars-or, as you dare not do that, at least see if you can reduce our speed!"

many minutes, and eventually the combined arguments of his followers seemed to have some effect or Agnoji, and he turned to Sid with a considerable reduction of his previous blustering superiority, although his voice lost none of its bitter-

"My friends appear to think that we are to some extent still dependent on your aid. For my part, what I have threatened I would have performed, but perforce I bow to the majority. Well, keep your secrets, voyagers, for at the finish our interest in this space-devourer ends when this journey does. One promise only we ask of you."

"And that?" "Your promise that you seek not to return to the world that you name Mars -at least, until after we separate from

Sid glanced at his chums; but they remained silent, content to leave the issue in his hands.

"Very well, we promise," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "Though remember, Agnoji, treachery on your part absolves us from our promise. And Senama would be glad to see you again, however long the interval."

"No doubt he would; but for to-night let that suffice," replied Agnoji. "Tomorrow, voyagers, I have a proposal to unfold that will interest you."

Next morning-after a breakfast that brought exclamations of surprise from the Martians, for they were now introduced to the tinned foods of Chenurm -Agnoji returned to the subject he had hinted at the previous night.

"I suppose you are now cutting a direct path to Chenurm?" he asked. "At the moment we are making a path for nowhere in particular," Sid

"That is finished, so why waste time in puerile explanation?" objected Sid. "What is the proposal of which you wish to speak?"

Agnoji looked reflectively at each of the chums in turn. "You will perhaps recall in Senama's house the miniature reproduction of the heavens which one of his rooms

contained?" "We remember it," agreed Sid. "And if my memory serves, you were

amused to count nine planets on tho map, maintaining that there should have been eight only?" "That is so," replied Sid. "There are

eight only, else our astronomers are blind men." "At least, your astronomers are in error, as indeed ours were for long. But now we know better." Agnoji paused impressively. "Senama's heaven-chart

speaks truth, voyagers. Nine worlds revolve round the Great Fire, though the ninth is visible only at rare intervals." "That cannot be," Sid replied emphatically. "See, I have here a chart which distinctly shows but eight planets,

and all our scientists cannot be in error." "Yes, your plan agrees with ours, except in one respect." Agnoji studied the map silently for a moment. "See, here is the path of your world, here the path of ours." He placed his finger on a point which would have found the apex of a triangle, had Mars and Earth been taken for the base. "Somewhere in the vicinity of where my finger now rests, lies the planet of mystery that has puzzled our wise men for ages past. But hereabouts it undoubtedly is; that, at least, is beyond dispute."

"But how is it our people have never sighted it?" exclaimed Ken incredulously. That I cannot explain-" commenced Agnoji, when he was interrupted by a startled exclamation from Sid.

"One moment. Ken!" he cried, his eyes wide with excitement. "I believe I've got a clue to the mystery!" He ran to a miniature bookshelf, and took down a ponderously thick volume. Hurriedly he turned page after page. "Yes, here we are! Listen to this: 'Fifty years ago astronomers believed in the existence of another planet, and Le Verrier, the French mathematician, announced that it was his opinion that another planet existed. Shortly after this announcement a physician at Orgeres, named Lescarbault, stated that on March 16th, 1859, he had observed an object pass across the sun's disc, which he had thought to be a new planet. He had not announced his discovery at the time, as he had hoped that he would have another view of this mysterious object. Le Verrier called upon the doctor. and came away perfectly satisfied that a new planet had been observed, and later this became known as 'Vulcan.'"

"Then it is possible that there is some basis of fact in what Agnoji maintains?" said Ken.

"It certainly seems so," Sid replied. Then he slowly translated the passage for the benefit of the Martians, they being obviously pleased at this unexpected corroboration of their story, "Then you will now credit my version

of a ninth planet?" Agnoji said. "Well, this object has been observed twice only from our world, and that many, many years ago. If it really exists, why have we no further record of its appearance? Planets neither grow in a day, nor do they vanish during a night."

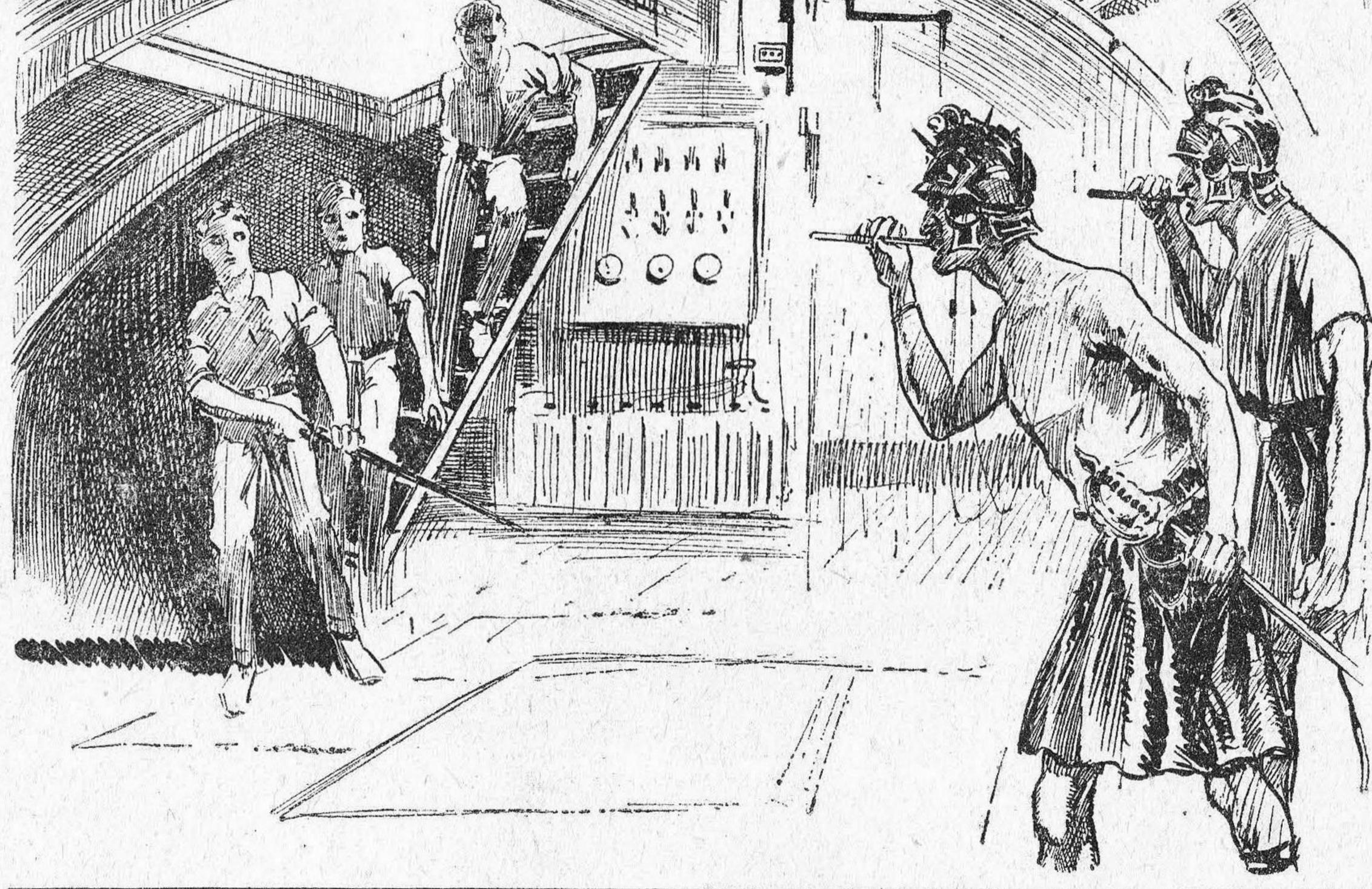
"That is exactly what puzzled our own savants," Agnoji replied, "for only at rare intervals did they ever glimpse this mysterious object, and, as you truly assert, worlds do not vanish overnight. For long our people understand its irregular ap. and the successive intervals of nothingness. Then Felian, or most advanced thinkers, chitheory that this ninth plat the rounded by mist-belts of let." density, and that we or indiaobject when, for some appear-

these mist-belts are par a That, at least, is the theory of relian -a theory which we have accepted as fact, for in that way only can we account for this mystery of the heavens."

"It sounds fairly reasonable," said Sid. "But even granted that Felian's are not confined to any particular theory is fact, what then?"

"We four strangers from another world know not how Chenurm would receive us when it hears the tale of how we come to be with you. Nor does your account of its commonplaces attract us. You see, voyagers, we hide nothing of our thoughts from you, and if I am not mistaken in your indomitable fearlessness, I ask not in vain when I urge you to journey to this world

of mystery and to leave us there!" (Will the three chums fall in with Agnoji's plan to visit Vulcan, the mysterious ninth planet? You must not miss next week's splendid long instalment of this gripping story. Order your copy of the Boys' Friend to-day!)



The three chums carefully descended the ladder into the Pearl. "We'll have an hour's rest and afterwards, return to Pelemonae," said Sid. "Not yet, friends, not even in an hour; possibly never again!" said a voice, and to the boys' horror Agnoji and Parlat stepped into view, with tubes of death at their lips.

"You defied me once, you Chenurm spawn, but this time, if again these hands embrace you, remember that Senama is no longer here to protect

Agnoji advanced threateningly until he stood within a couple of paces of the chums, and he glared balefully at each in turn. His eyes glistened as those of a cat preparing to spring at its prey; his hands, wrinkled like claws, opened and closed spasmodically as if itching to tear at the throats before him. His voice, usually hoarse and low-pitched, had risen to a savage shriek that plainly revealed some hitherto hidden trace of madness.

"You refuse! You defy me! Doltsimbeciles-think you that I have forgotten what I owe you? But for you and your cursed interference I had been ruler of Pelemonae ere this! Because of you, I stand here, an outcast from my world! No, I have no cause to love you, and at this moment your hold on life is as stable as a burnt-through thread!" "Then do your worst!" Sid faced the

Not one of the Martians moved, and Sid smiled cynically.

"No, no, Martians! Without our knowledge this room becomes your deathvault! And be sure of this, that if we come to harm through your machinations you will journey onwards through space

"Until we decide to end our voyage in our own good time!" sneered Agnoji. "Until this ship of space drops to pieces through old age," Sid continued, "or, if the gods, of their kindness, pity you, until you hit something far more solid than the Pearl!"

As Sid became silent Agnoji's followers gathered round, arguing and cajoling him to a semblance of reason, and the chums could perceive that dread of the awful fate pictured by Sid entered largely into their arguments. Ken and Tim were delighted with the resolute attitude of their leader, and they themselves entered into a solemn compact to back him up, without doubt or question, whatever the future held for them.

The Martians whispered together for

replied. "Soon we will be far enough from Mars to set our course; then, undoubtedly, we turn for home."

"So I thought. But tell me, voyager, have you no fear of your motive power failing you ere you reach your journey's

"Our motive power will never fail," replied Sid steadily. "Good! Then I take it your travels

distance?" "You are quite correct." "Then listen, voyagers; but before proceeding I must express my regret for

our unfortunate quarrel of last night." Agnoji's voice was now singularly ingratiating. "I ask you also to remember that the way we escaped from Senama's vengeance was the only way that remained to us, else we had been hunted down like vermin."

"And you would have merely received your deserts," began Tim hotly.

"Softly, my young friend. You heard but one side of the story, and I would that you had dwelt amongst the Videri, judgment would then have been different."

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