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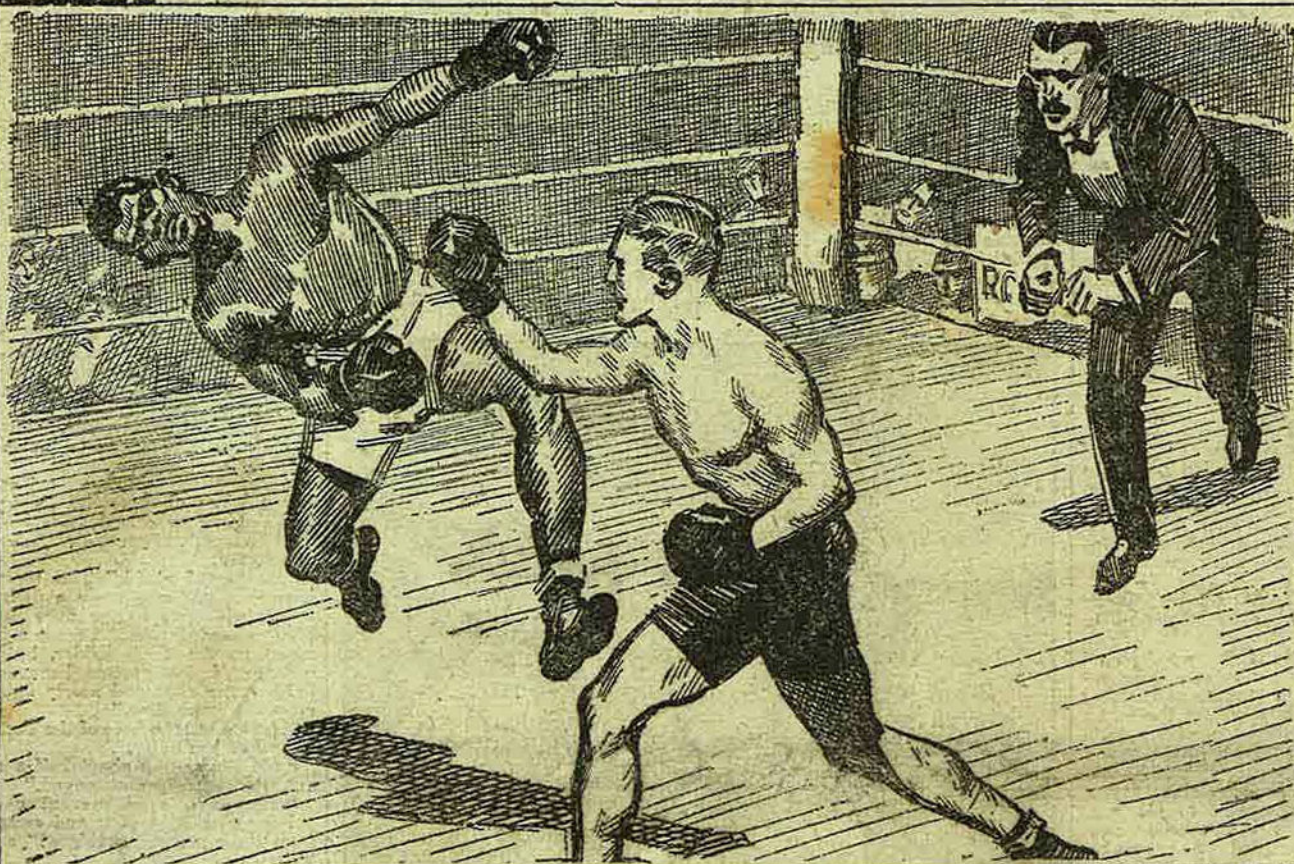
The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

No. 1,136. Vol. XXIII.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending March 17th, 1923.



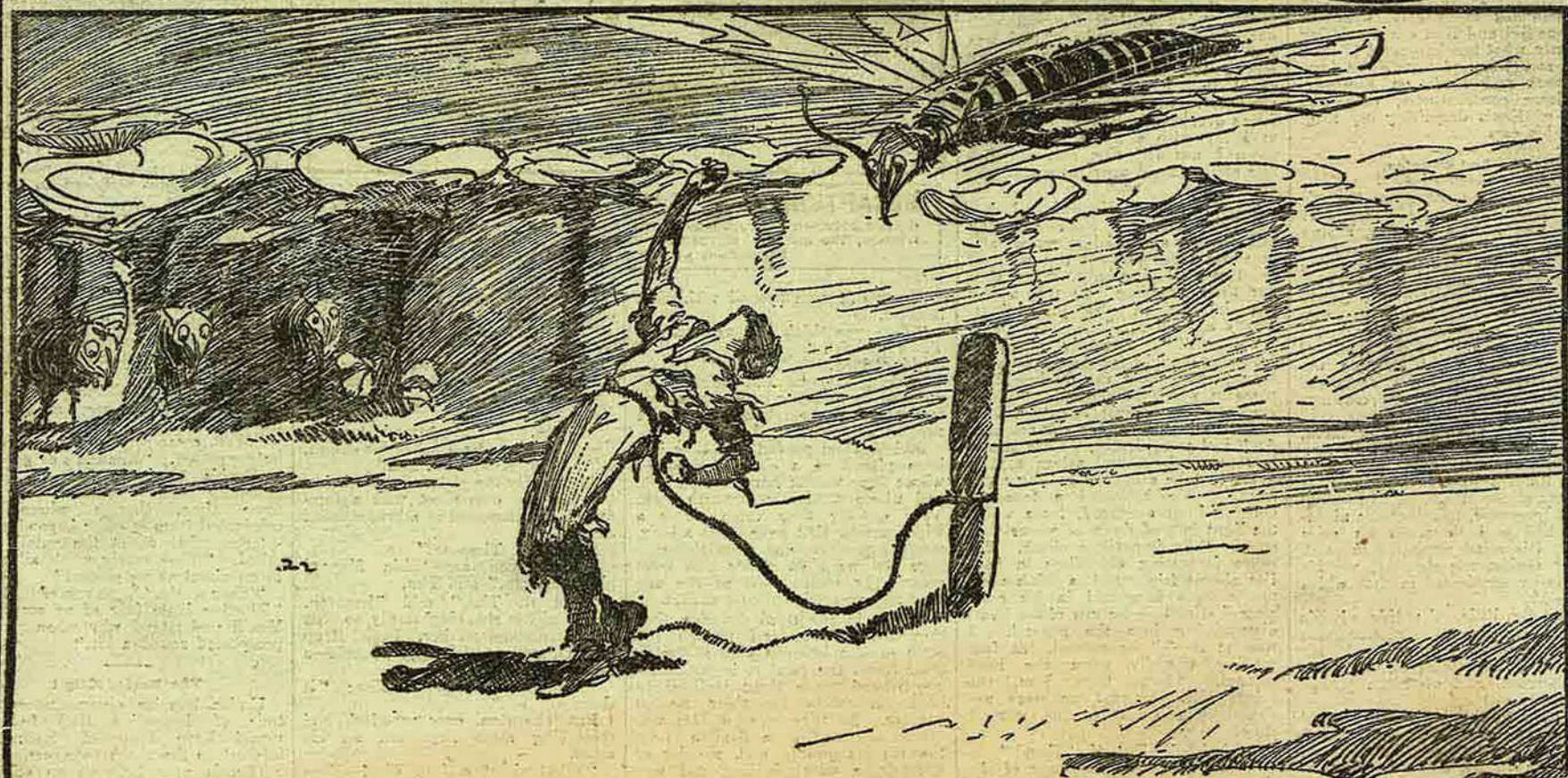
THE SENSATIONAL DEFEAT OF THE COLOURED CHAMPION!

(A dramatic incident from "The Colour Line" in this issue.)

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NUMBER!



JOHN MARSHALL
(Middlesbrough).



SID KENNEDY'S ORDEAL—AT THE MERCY OF THE GIANT DRAGON-FLY!

(A breathless moment in "Scud the Eternal!" Lester Bidston's great story of modern adventure!)

"SAVING THE SHERIFF!" A Great Wild West Story by GORDON WALLACE in this Issue!

A MODERN ADVENTURE STORY—CRAMMED FULL WITH
BREATHLESS INCIDENT!



By LESTER BIDSTON.

(Author of our recent success "The Space Destroyer!")

The youthful voyagers from Earth meet a young Venusian girl in the stronghold of the monster ants!

The 1st Chapter.

Britain is in a panic because a large part of Lincolnshire has disappeared in a night, leaving behind a blackened and charred coastline. Similar reports are received from China, South America, and South Africa. Miles Belmain, an American scientist, puts forward the theory that these calamities are the results of projectiles from another planet, and in this he is supported by Charles Wilfred, editor of the "Morning Sun." Belmain is approached by three youths, Ken Thornton, Sid Kennedy, and Tim Baynes, who offer to explore the void to seek the origin of the strange occurrences in a spaceship known as Pearl II. This ship, they inform Belmain, is built of a gravity-defying metal of their own discovery, and similar to one in which they have already visited the planets Mars and Vulcan. Although he is dubious at first, the American finally accepts their offer. After some weeks' journey through space the three adventurous young men reach Venus, but no sooner have they landed than they are attacked by a monster dragon-fly which, but for the quick action of Ken Thornton, would have killed Tim Baynes. Sid and Ken commence a tour of inspection, but are trapped in a forest of giant orange flowers by a number of monster ants. These they succeed in beating off. By means of a combination of wireless telephone and cinematograph they are able to watch Tim Baynes endeavouring to fight his way into the Pearl, his antagonist being an ant. Suddenly the ground opens beneath the spaceship, and the Pearl vanishes, taking Tim and his antagonist with it. Then, as Sid and Ken are wondering anxiously what has happened to their chum, something plunges down from the trees and lands on Kennedy, who loses consciousness, with the sound of Ken's despairing cry ringing in his ears.

The 2nd Chapter.
A Strange Prison!

Kennedy's first struggle towards consciousness was the knowledge of a throbbing head and a dry, aching throat. He heard a murmur of water, knew that the place in which he lay held a dim, subdued light, that vaguely interested, yet barely troubled him. But, for the moment, he had no sense of wonder. He seemed to be still in the thrall of that nightmare flight through unending trees, his mind engrossed with the thought of the crawling horrors.

For several minutes he lay there, weak of body and lax of will, content to rest with eyes half-closed. If his brain held a definite idea, it was fear of the things he had vainly sought to escape, fear that the nightmare had still to reach its grim finale. His mind struggled in weak protest against the thought, yet his body lazily acquiesced in that which had to be.

Little by little, the tide of life within him began to flow, and, with awakening vitality, came dread. He thought of his comrades, of Ken's shrill scream, and of Tim's plunge into the earth!

He tried to rise, and with his first movement came dizziness and nausea. From sitting upright, he dropped full-length on his back, lay motionless until the vertigo left him, then rose and staggered a dozen paces aimlessly.

He stood, frowning with an effort of concentration. Slowly his reasoning brain reasserted its will. He

rubbed his eyes as if to dispel the last mist of stupidity and, with a shudder of apprehension, turned resolutely to the seeking of his fellow-voyagers.

Almost immediately his glance fell on Ken, lying without visible movement, quite close to him. Bending anxiously over his friend, Sid saw that he was unconscious, or drugged in heavy sleep, his breath coming in sharp, short gasps, his lips half-forming unintelligible words, as if he lived again that ghastly fight through the forest.

Attempting to ease the awkward angle of Ken's head, Sid disturbed him. His eyes came wide open and glaring in an instant. He jerked up with a suddenness that brought a groan to his lips, and, like Sid had done, he dropped back for several seconds. Then he recognised his friend, and a wry smile crossed his face.

"Hallo, Sid," he croaked. "Where are we? And what's happened to us?"

"Just what I'm wondering," answered Sid. "I can only remember pitching to earth and feeling a terrible pressure on my throat. I woke up a minute ago with a taste in my mouth as if I'd bitten into a century-old egg."

"Exactly my complaint," Ken agreed. He struggled to his feet, helped by Sid's sympathetic arm. "My goodness, Sid, I remember now. Those atrocious ants got us and drugged us as coolly as if we'd been patients in an operating-theatre!"

"They what?"

"Drugged us, I tell you," repeated Ken. "You pitched forward with one of them on your back, and I—I saw another dropping on me, a second too late, unfortunately, to avoid it. I let out a yell and struggled. But it was no good, for I was overwhelmed by numbers, and as I lay with a dozen holding me down I watched a—a sort of jelly-bag affair passed over your nose and mouth."

"And then—?" Kennedy asked.

"Why—nothing. Your plunging and heaving stopped like magic, and in about three seconds you were as quiet as a sleeping babe. Then they put their nose-bag on me, and I lost interest in the proceedings. That's all, old son."

"Humph!" Kennedy stood in frowning thought for several seconds, then peered about the dimly-lighted place in which they stood. "We're evidently up against insects a jolly sight too intelligent for our comfort. And, just as evidently, we are gaoled in some underground prison that is going to take a deal of getting away from." He indicated a four-foot opening high overhead, from which the light filtered down to where they stood. "An impossible climb. But we're forgetting old Tim; in fact, I'm almost frightened to think what might have happened in his case, after that picture we saw of the Pearl disappearing into the ground. I wonder if—" he paused, his foot tapping uneasily upon the hard ground. "Look here, Ken, the things that captured us were undoubtedly a species of ant, weren't they?"

"Admitted. But what then?"

"Well, following the ways of the thousand and one kinds we have on Earth, what more natural than to suppose that these creatures live underground like their smaller brethren? Anyway, I'm holding on to that theory for the present, and

I'm not going to give up hope of Tim's safety yet."

"But that doesn't account for the Pearl's mad plunge," Thornton answered dubiously.

"Doesn't it? I'm not so sure. Imagine an ant-hill at home, increased in size a million-fold! Why, Ken, it would mean a veritable underground city—its roof little better than a shell of soil."



RECAPTURED! Almost before the voyagers realised what was happening, a living wedge of ants had been driven between Sid and the others, and though he tried to rejoin his friends, the lad was warned of the futility of resistance by a quick threshold of one creature's forelegs!

Thornton's eyes opened with alert interest.

"Then you think that accounts for Tim's mishap?"

Sid nodded.

"Likely as not. But we're doing no good by standing here, and as our insect guards are not in evidence, I suggest we scout round a bit."

Investigation proved that they had been placed in a circular chamber whose floor was of hard, beaten soil, and whose walls were smooth rock. Very quickly they came across a wide opening that gave on to a long, straight passage, and from this passage the walls on either side were pierced by rooms such as the one they had vacated a minute earlier.

It was in the third chamber that they found Tim, and though the sight of him brought glad smiles to their faces, the comfort in which he was placed made them inclined to kick themselves for their wasted anxiety. As they entered Tim was lifting the end of a flexible tube towards his mouth, and, wonder of wonders, a stately-looking girl was sitting beside him, regarding him with a smile of unconcealed amusement; a slim girl, whose fair face was framed by beautiful coils of black hair, and who was clad in a loose tunic of blue, silky material.

"My stars, Tim!" exclaimed Sid. "We've been bewailing your sad end. And here we find you living in the lap of luxury!"

Tim dropped the tube, whirled round with eyes and mouth open to their limits, and sprang towards his chums with a cry of glad surprise.

"Oh you, you, you!" he yelled, grasping their hands and dancing round them with excited delight. "I'd about given up hope of ever seeing you again, and I've been as broody as a moulting owl." He stopped his wild dance as suddenly as he had commenced it. "But I forgot, boys. Let me introduce you to Miss Thin Slayer, the village beauty!"

Tim stood between them, bowing to right and left. "Miss Thin Slayer, my wooden-headed chum, Sidney Kennedy; and my pudden-headed pal, Kenneth Thornton."

The girl, who had been standing several paces away regarding them with quiet curiosity, apparently recognised Tim's action, if not his words, and inclined her head in response to their polite bows. She advanced, her hands outstretched in friendly greeting, murmuring words that were unintelligible to the chums. To the newcomers she looked very beautiful and very stately, yet her bright blue eyes were so frankly kind that the others were covered with shy confusion; and Sid, at any rate, was grateful for the dim light that hid his fiery blushes.

To relieve his feelings he turned sharply on Tim:

"Eat, drink, and be merry, boys; for to-morrow the well runs dry."

"What d'you mean?" asked Thornton, bewildered.

"It's there. Look! Food, drink, and about all you'll get in the eat line, my honny boy."

As Tim spoke, he picked up the tube and pressed his thumb on the bulging mouthpiece; in response, a thin stream of white fluid dripped from the tube, and this he invited the others to sample. Nothing loath, they tried it, to find it not unpalatable, a milk-like drink that was slightly bitter, yet gratefully refreshing.

Tim watched them with a grin. "Not bad, eh? And an unlimited supply, as far as I know. Her ladyship introduced me to it not long ago, and, but for her, I might have starved. But how do you fellows come to be here, prisoners in this nightmare place?"

Sid gave Tim a tabloid sketch of their adventures.

"And to end our unsatisfactory tale," he concluded, "I can only say that after the abominable drug that was forced on us, we woke up in a chamber twin to this; and, as yet, know nothing of the place we are in."

"And I cannot tell you much," Tim replied. "About an hour after you fellows left the Pearl I was pretty lonely and bored, when I was amazed to see Miss Thensla dash from a cluster of trees not far from the ship. Almost in front of me she stumbled and fell in a heap. Of course, I hastened to help her, and hardly made sure that she was in a dead faint, when I received your S.O.S. message. In the middle of it a crowd of the ant-beasts emerged from the same patch that had brought Thensla to light."

Tim paused awkwardly, and Sid had to ask him twice to finish his yarn, before he continued:

"Well, I couldn't abandon Thensla to the mercy of those evil things, so I picked her up as best I could—"

"Like a sack of potatoes," Thornton interjected.

"As best I could," Tim repeated impressively, "and made a dash for the Pearl. The things were just a bit too quick for me. I made a fight for it on the ship's ladder, but the collapse of the ground beneath us finished the fight and nearly finished us at the same time."

"And what's become of the Pearl?" Sid asked anxiously.

"Oh, it's resting about half a mile away, apparently undamaged."

"Then what's to prevent us regaining possession of it and escaping from these monstrous things?" asked Ken.

"Only that there's a young army of them encamped round it and—they look unkind at close quarters," Tim answered significantly.

"You mean that they have the sense to know that the Pearl would enable us to escape?" Ken persisted incredulously.

"I do. And why not, Ken?" Tim pointed to the food tube. "If they have the sense to make things like that, be sure they have 'Grade A' grey matter in their ugly heads. How much they do understand, I cannot say, of course; but from what I've seen they know sufficient to bar us out from the Pearl."

"Tim's right, I think," Sid exclaimed. "We're unarmed and pretty helpless, and we've already had some experience of the strength of these great ants. If ever we get away it will have to be by guile, not brute force, that's certain."

Thornton still appeared dubious, as if unable to credit that any insects, however big and numerous, were above their fighting strength. Noting this, Tim stepped towards the exit.

"Well, come and see for yourself," he suggested. "Thensla's as good as a Cook's tourist attendant. She's evidently been a prisoner here for some time, though where she originated from is quite beyond me."

"But what about the ants?" Sid asked. "They surely won't allow us to go about as we please?"

"They do," answered Tim. "They've little fear of us escaping. You'll understand why when you've prospected round a bit."

The Buried City!

Under happier circumstances the tour of inspection that followed would have been of fascinating interest to the three voyagers.

Thensla proved to be an efficient guide. She appeared to know every highway and byway, every intricate turn of what proved to be a veritable underground city. The place had certainly been built—or, rather, dug out—on a definite plan, and its size

and ramifications amazed the sight-seers.

At first the chums hesitated to cross the path of the giant ants who soon began to appear. But Thensla's serene coolness placed them at their ease, and they quickly grew accustomed to the cold, meditative stare with which the strange creatures regarded them. The place literally swarmed with the things; it is no exaggeration to say that thousands were concentrated in the buried city. But each one appeared occupied with its own particular task, and, beyond that one fixed stare, the prisoners were ignored.

It was a scene of frenzied activity. Here, a squad boring deeper into the soil, enlarging passages, making additional rooms, and always using the material excavated to press into a hard smooth floor that was a pattern of efficient road-making; farther on, they saw a company enlarging an aperture that led to the outer world, a hole fifty feet overhead, and one easy enough for the ants to approach with their sucker-like feet, but a way to freedom that was hopelessly beyond the reach of the humans.

Their eyes looked on many marvels during the hours that followed, so that, much as they hated the things who had captured them, they were forced to respect their intelligent activity. Thensla showed them huge chambers which proved to be resting-places; another series which held hundreds of stilled creatures of pathetic docility, whose only joy in life seemed to be the slow masticating of the orange-coloured flowers that grow in such profusion overhead, and whose use now became apparent. Later the chums realized that from these meek, green insects the ants obtained the life-giving fluid on which they had to depend for sustenance.

But to Sid and Ken by far the greatest surprise was the enormous central hall.

"Look, boys," Tim whispered, as they emerged into the great open space, "there lies the Pearl. Unbroken, but entirely out of our reach."

"Why, this hall is almost the replica of a Roman amphitheatre," exclaimed Sid. "See, tier after tier descending to the level where the Pearl rests. But—"

Sid abruptly ceased speaking as the clear, bell-like notes that had preceded their capture again broke on their ears—a sound impossible to describe, but one something like the quavering notes of the dulcimer that is loved by children because of its clear, rich tone.

The music agitated Thensla with curious unrest. She spoke a dozen quick words to the chums, shook her head impatiently at their obvious bewilderment, and finally grasped Sid's hand and tried to draw him back into the passage that stood behind them.

But now the way was blocked by numberless ants. Already from a score of roads that converged upon this central chamber the insects were crowding, and, whether by accident or design, the voyagers and Thensla were forced to descend level after level until they stood nervously in a corner of the open place that was the centre-piece of the huge hall.

Thirty yards away the squat bulk of the Pearl looked ridiculously insignificant in the vast chamber, its bronze-coloured hull as firmly anchored to the ground as if it was destined never again to soar into space. High overhead a jagged rent in the roof showed the cause of the terrifying disappearance that Sid and Ken had witnessed.

"So near and yet too far," Tim muttered. "Just think, boys, one touch of the lever and this scene would drop away like a bad dream."

"I'm almost inclined to make a dash for it," Sid replied. "A sudden break might take them by surprise, and—"

"Easy, Sid," Thornton laid a

detaining hand on his leader's shoulder. "See, two score of the things surround it, and we know they have the strength of bulls. Then look round you and you'll agree it's best to lie doggo at present."

Thornton spoke sober fact. By now the hall had filled, and thousands of motionless insects ringed them, rising tier on tier, almost to the roof. It was amazing the speed with which the musical signal had been answered, and the others realised the truth of Ken's words. Even before they could have reached the outer fringe of silent guards the surrounding throng would have overwhelmed them.

And now from an opening near the Pearl appeared three great ants whose size dwarfed even the guardians of the ship.

Admitted that they were merely swollen specimens of insects that we would thoughtlessly crush underfoot on Earth, yet at close quarters their coldly calculating eyes, great domed heads, and slow, considered movements, sent a thrill of apprehension through the unfortunate voyagers.

"Ugh!" shuddered Tim. "They look as full of kindness towards us as a starving sailor would look upon a cooked kipper!"

"They're certainly considering us pretty closely," Sid answered, "though I hardly think they have cook-pot designs in their minds, old boy."

Of that which followed the chums could gather little that was under-

others, and though he made a movement to circle round the intervening insects, a quick throat-hold of one creature's forelegs warned him of the futility of resistance.

"Stand still, Tim!" he cried to the Irishman, who was struggling madly to break away from the grasp of two of the creatures. "Drop it, boy! You'll only settle the fate of all of us if you persist in fighting the inevitable. Now, Ken, don't you join in. Don't, I tell you!"

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"But we're not going to have you dragged away to goodness knows what horrible end!" Tim panted.

"Do as you're told," Sid pleaded, seriously alarmed for Tim's own sake. "Calm down and remember I'm not dead yet. Not even in danger, as far as we know."

Every word he spoke saw him

that hung low on the horizon, yet never set! An open glade in the forest of exotic flowers, overpowering heat, and the knowledge that death might reach out a hand at any moment.

Such was Sid's unenviable situation an hour after he had been ruthlessly torn from his comrades. Now he knew the grim meaning of the meeting in Ant-town, knew that the three rulers had decided to make a terrible use of their prisoners.

It required all his fortitude to refrain from an exhibition of cowardly hysteria.

He closed his eyes, seeking vainly to shut out the penetrating glare that ate into his brain. He longed for the shade of the trees that surrounded the glade, but this measure of comfort was denied him by the fact that he was roped to a stake driven deep into the ground, and that a length of line allowed him a tantalizing freedom that always kept him six feet away from the nearest patch of shade.

Exactly as the natives of India use a roped goat to tempt the tigers of their land, so was Sid being used to attract the flying horrors that winged in this Venusian sky.

At first he had fought fiercely to free himself, but the rope—a strange thing of hair-coated hide—resisted all his puny efforts, and his struggles had but served to exhaust him. Now he crouched, in apathetic abandon, close to the stake that held him, and he groaned with the thought of the

whirling chain of heavy wood flow from the trees, hit the swiftly-moving body with a dull thud, and twined round and round it with a force that snapped the vertebrae of the vicious monster. In that instant it was turned from cruel power to a hissing, writhing mass lying at the mercy of those who knew not the meaning of the word.

Hardly had it touched ground before a dozen of the hidden ants left the shelter of the adjacent trees. Their first action was to rip away the damaged wings and plunge a pointed rod into the head. A merciful and instantaneous death. Then, dragging the vanquished horror with them, the great ants again sought the shelter of the trees, leaving Sid in isolated prominence, rubbing his eyes and hardly yet realising the meaning of the swift-moving drama in which he had played so prominent a part.

But why prolong the horror of that hour? Suffice it to say that only when six living torpedoes had hurled themselves to death did the skulking ants release Sid from his nerve-racking position and herd him back to the underground city. And, by that time, Sid had been driven half mad by the sun's terrible glare, his tongue was swollen and black from agonising thirst, and his hands visibly trembling with the ordeal through which he had passed.

Within the city he was guarded until he reached the end of the long passage that he now thought of as home. There, he was casually and contemptuously turned adrift to his own devices.

Dog-tired, dazed and aching in every limb, he was slowly staggering along its dim length when his chums swept down on him with a whoop of joy.

In an instant they had their arms around him and, with many exclamations of sympathy at sight of his white face and dragged appearance, they helped him into the chamber where Thensla stood in a anxious solitude. Only when he had drunk deeply of the delicious fluid and lay reclining in such comfort as their circumstances permitted, did they allow him to relate his terrible adventure.

"And, boys," Sid concluded, "I have a suspicion that that stake is in pretty constant use, and that Thensla's people have often been cast for the role I occupied to-day."

"The foul brutes!" exclaimed Ken. "Oh, that he useless in the Pearl!"

"But we haven't," answered Sid. "Unfortunately, we only have our own wit and agility to depend on. To-day, good fortune enabled me to escape the death-stabbing swoops of those terrible hornets. But I feel—I know—that such luck cannot last for long."

"Then it's up to us to find a way out of this mess without delay," Tim said. "There must be some loophole if only we can think of it."

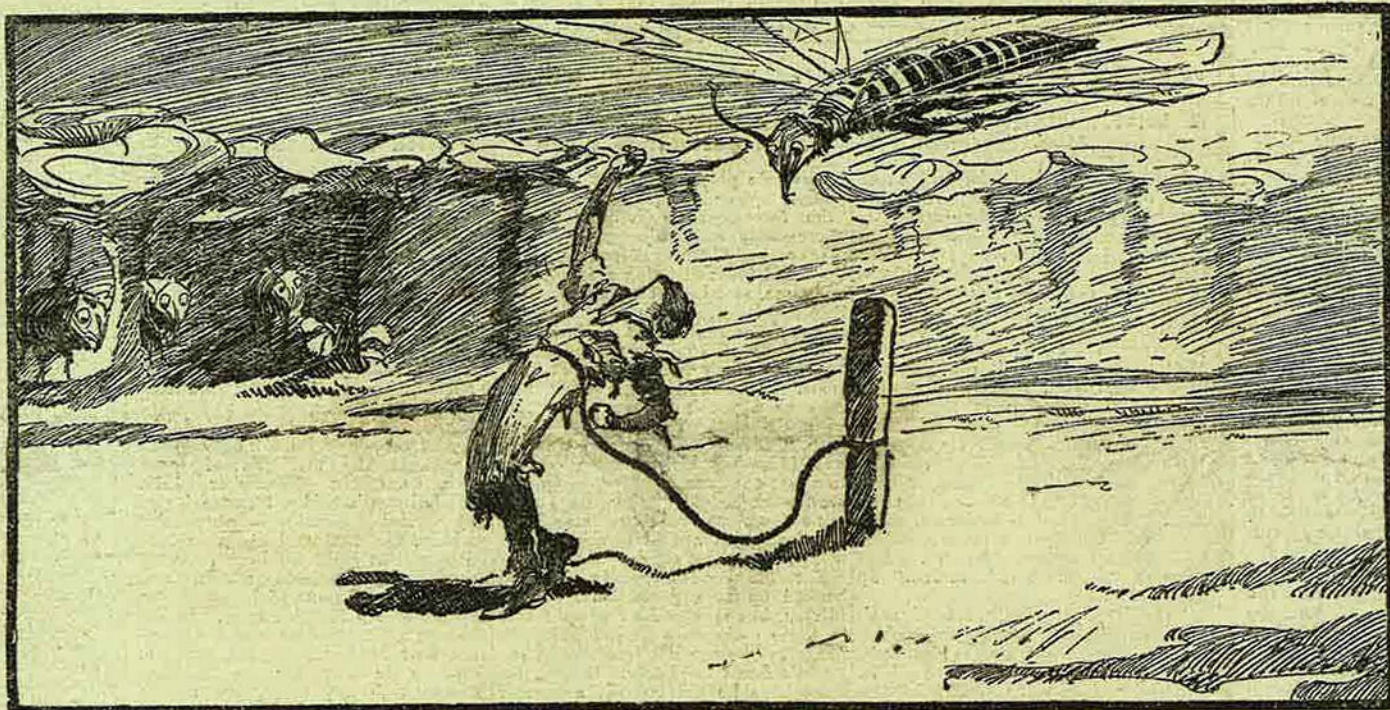
"Perhaps so, but the way's not apparent yet," Sid replied. "Meanwhile, my ordeal to-day may be yours to-morrow, for it's quite certain that these creatures will use us freely. Try to profit by my experience, and remember always to remain motionless until the swooping hornet is about fifty feet away, then dart up at right angles to its course. Chance taught me that in my first encounter, and it's about the only tip I can give you."

"But suppose several attack together?" asked Ken. "What happens then, old boy?"

Sid shrugged his shoulders. "A new goat wanted, I suppose." He smiled wanly. "But don't think of it, Ken. 'Sufficient for the day,' and so on. I'm fed-up, and going to have a sleep."

That was the beginning of a lengthy period of dread and anxiety. As Sid had feared, each of the voyagers was used as a decoy to

(Continued overleaf.)



THE HUMAN BAIT! As the monster dragon-fly dropped towards him like an arrow, Sid leaped aside, falling full length on the ground, so that the great insect passed within three feet!

standable. Certain it was that the ant leaders or rulers held a minute inspection of their prisoners and of the Pearl. Certain, also, that the connection between the ship and men was understood, and that their fate was considered in a lengthy touching of antennae.

One feature of this amazing scene was plain to the prisoners—that whatever decision was arrived at was communicated to the patient thousands by bell-music from an unseen instrument.

"It's worse than double Dutch to us," grumbled Tim, who was devaloured by thwarted curiosity.

"But that it is not impossible for the humans of Venus to understand," said Sid—"well, look at Thensla!"

The girl's face had gone deathly white. As the last silvery note trembled into silence she wrung her hands and uttered an exclamation of dismay.

The chums attempted to comfort her, but tears came unbidden to her eyes, and she took and pressed the hand of each of them, seeking to convey a sympathy she was unable to speak.

But now events moved rapidly. A single note rang through the hall that was a signal for a dozen of the Pearl's guards to separate from their fellows and to surround the prisoners.

Almost before the voyagers realised what was happening, a living wedge had been driven between Sid and the

hustled a step farther from his comrades.

"Do as I ask, boys. Keep quiet and guard Thensla if you have any love for me."

As he uttered the last word he disappeared from the eyes of his despairing comrades, hidden by the bulk of



ROBERT McNEAL, (WEST BROMWICH ALBION)

in next Monday's

"BOYS' FRIEND" TELL ALL YOUR PALS!

the Pearl. And though as yet but vaguely uneasy at the enforced separation, he was to undergo a grim test before his eyes again looked upon the faces of his chums and that of the girl who was their companion in misfortune.

Sid's Terrible Ordeal!

The white, blinding glare of a sun

disaster that had, thus early, overtaken their great adventure. He came near to tears as he remembered how the world he had left might yet suffer.

Sid's morbid introspection was broken by the sound of a shrill thin hum from high overhead. Shading his eyes as best he could with both hands, he failed for a time to distinguish anything out of the ordinary. But soon, at a height of two or three miles, he noticed a cloud of what looked like midges—little winged things that flew at an incredible speed, ringing and quartering the blue with rhythmic movement and definite purpose.

Praying that the giant hornets might pass him unnoticed, Sid watched them drop towards earth and swerve over his head at a height of over a mile. He was congratulating himself on his escape, listening gratefully to the diminishing hum of their wings, when suddenly a shrill whir made him jump round to see an isolated, and hitherto unobserved, monster dropping towards him like an arrow in full flight.

For one second he was spell-bound. Then the instinct of self-preservation made him leap aside barely in time to escape the outstretched legs that sought to hold him preparatory to the death-stab from the poisoned sting. Luckily for Sid, his mad spring resulted in his falling full length on the ground, and, as the great hornet shot past within three feet of him, a



(Continued from previous page.)

attract the ravenous, giant hornets. They never knew when the dread summons would come—never knew in which direction they would be taken, for on every occasion a fresh hunting-ground was chosen by the astute insects.

In time they came to recognise and hate the single, deep, bell-notes that floated through Ant-town, the invariable prelude to a nerve-racking experience for one or other of them.

Sometimes days—if the word can be used in this place that knew not darkness—would elapse in which the whole party was left in idleness. At other times the dread summons would be struck twice or thrice within the hour, so that they were constantly on the strain, never knowing from one minute to another when they would be hustled away into the terrible glare of the open—never knowing but that the departing one was bidding a long farewell to his comrades.

For one thing they were thankful beyond measure. Thensla was never forced to undergo the chained ordeal; not because of her sex, but, as they later learned, because she was a precious capture—a valuable hostage to be bartered in some time of future need.

Because of the impossibility of understanding a single word she spoke, the chums felt a certain shy awkwardness in her presence. But she left no doubt in their minds of her very ready sympathy; and that she had intelligence above the average she soon proved by patiently and cleverly evolving a method of teaching them her language.

For hours at a time she named every object on which she could lay her hand, and eagerly absorbed every word they spoke to her. It would be tedious to enter into details of those days, but hour after hour words and names were exchanged and committed to memory. With such goodwill did all four of them enter into this scheme that after five weeks of captivity the voyagers were able to converse slowly and haltingly with the beautiful Venusian girl.

It will be guessed how eagerly they strove to understand each other, and how amazed Thensla was when she realised that they were travellers from another planet. In the beginning she listened to them incredulously, as will be readily understood. But Sid's fortunate possession of a map of our world, one corner of which showed the sun and its attendant planets, finally convinced her.

"Look, Thensla," Sid explained. "This spot is Earth, where we come from. And here is Venus, where we are now being so unkindly treated."

Thensla's brow furrowed, and little ridges appeared at the corners of her eyes as she tried to understand Sid's words.

"Earth? Venus?" Her forefinger touched the star-shaped dots to which Sid had pointed. She nodded eagerly. "Earth—yes." Then her head shook emphatically. "Venus—no. This Atara—Atara."

"Well, we call it Venus, Goddess of Love."
"Venus, Goddess of Love!" Thensla repeated the words slowly and sadly. "But no, Atara, or Venus, knows no love. Hate—yes. Everyone hates everyone, almost. All fight. The only love we know is love of the kill!"

Sid, a born linguist, and far ahead of his comrades in his knowledge of the new tongue, translated Thensla's words.

"Bedad! I can well believe it," Tim agreed. "These anti-fellows seem to have a great skill in making all things into meat. And that's what they'll make of us, some day, if we don't jump quick enough."

"But ask where she comes from," Ken interposed. "It's certain that she doesn't belong to this ghastly crowd."

When Thensla understood the question her eyes filled with tears, though she answered readily enough.

"I am from Apadocia, from behind the Wall of Retreat," she explained. "One day, Scound, Lord of Tarp, demanded me from Uensl, Lord of Apadocia and my sire. I hate Scound,

I hate Tarp. To escape, I came outside the wall, with this result."

Her glance circled the ill-lighted cave, moodily despondent.

Although Sid was unable to grasp the meaning of many of Thensla's words, he understood enough to realise the unfortunate position of the harassed girl and to feel a great sympathy for her.

"But who is this Scound?" he asked. "Whence comes he, and why does your father fear him?"

"Tarp rules all, and Scound rules Tarp," Thensla answered simply. "We are slaves whom Scound takes, uses, and throws aside."

"Sure, a sweet gentleman!" Tim said. "It's a nice home-from-home world we've dropped into!"

And there, for the time being, the conversation ended abruptly by Tim being hustled away to what he termed "decoy duty."

Two hours later he staggered into the cave, his right eye an angry red bruise, blood dripping from his

Anything's better than the slow agony of this living death!"

One Chance in a Million!

It was easy enough for Sid to declare that they would regain the Pearl, but quite a different matter when it came to making the attempt. They had grown to hate the soulless things that held them. They feared the ordeal of the stake more every day, but even to themselves they were forced to admit that they were nursing a desperately forlorn hope.

"You see, chaps," Sid explained, "it isn't as simple as if we had a well-stocked arsenal hidden away, or as though we possessed some latent omnipotent power like popular heroes of fiction. We have our bare hands, and"—he studied the mixed collection from their turned-out pockets—"two electric torches, sixteen-and-threepence in loose cash, a dud penny—Tim's mascot—one box of matches, and one claspknife. A mongrel collection, you'll agree."

"And our rifles rusting in the forest," Ken added.

"And everything that's any good aboard the Pearl," said Tim. "Where, sure, it's no good at all."

"Then there's Thensla to be considered," Ken continued gloomily.

"I'm thinking of her all the time," Sid answered. He turned to the girl, and spoke in her own language.

"Thensla, we are anxious to regain our space-devourer. It's a desperate chance, an almost certain failure, but we cannot remain in the hands of

head department as ever you're likely to be, Tim, old boy. Still, it's all or nothing, and the sooner the better, I suppose."

Although this portion of Venus knows no night, its face ever turned towards the sun, the ants—or Spays as Thensla named them—had certain regular periods of rest. Not that the town was ever quite deserted, but, for three hours in every twelve, it quietened down, and, except for those engaged on urgent duties, the greater number retired to distant rest-rooms.

According to Sid's watch (the only one left in commission) this siesta-time was from eight o'clock to eleven, and, when next his timekeeper touched nine, they set forth on their desperate venture.

For a time fortune favoured them. The passage wherein they lodged was absolutely deserted; they even reached the path that gave on to the huge central chamber without seeing a single one of their enemy. Not daring to make use of the pocket lamps they carried, they crept noiselessly along the dim road until they emerged on to the uppermost gallery of the hall. And, at last, a hundred feet below, they saw the Pearl.

"Bedad, the Promised Land," Tim whispered excitedly.

"H-s-s-h!" warned Sid.

As if in answer Tim stumbled against an inevitable obstruction and sent a harsh rattle mockingly round the silent chamber.

With an exclamation of annoyance, Sid ventured a flash of his torch, to discover that the unlucky Irishman

ship had stiffened to attention—Ken and Tim were taking tier after tier in a series of hair-raising leaps that left the others far behind.

And well it was for the Venusian girl that Sid had reluctantly allowed his comrades to precede him. Their slower descent had hardly commenced than a dull thud immediately behind caused him to whirl round, to find his torch flashing straight into the eyes of a monster that had, apparently, jumped from the gallery overhead. Already it had reared to a height that brought its ugly face on a level with their own, its clawed forefeet even now advancing to tear Thensla from his side.

The glare of Sid's lamp momentarily dazzled the brute, and he distinctly saw the surprised fear that leapt into the saucer-like eyes. Beyond that negative sign, and a shrill, sour hiss, it continued to shamble clumsily forward, and Sid met it with a short-armed thrust of his spear; a shrewd jab that took it full in the middle of its thick, bull-like neck.

To his disgusted amazement, his vicious stab merely resulted in giving a sickening jolt to his own arm. He realised, with a pang of fear, that the monster was protected by horned plates that only a rifle-bullet could have penetrated.

In his surprise, Sid had allowed his spear to remain pressed against the Spay's throat. He saw its eyes turn on him with vindictive fury, and, in an instant, its fore-paw had struck the stick contemptuously aside. Again it advanced, its bestial wrath now turned from Thensla to himself, and, beyond doubt, it would have gone hand with Sid, but that Thensla, quick to see and seize an opportunity, thrust her spear deep into the gaping mouth.

In the madness of its agony the Spay's vertical jaws snapped on the tough wood and bit clean through it. But a good eight inches remained buried in its mouth, and, as the creature reared high in frenzied rage, Sid again drove his weapon so strongly against its neck that it toppled backwards and plunged into the depths below.

"Thensla, you've saved me from a terrible mauling," Sid began.

But the Venusian refused to listen. "Just as you saved me a moment earlier," she pointed downwards. "But look, our friends are over-pressed."

Sid was horrified at the sight that met his eyes. Somehow, the two indomitable fellows had forced a way to the Pearl's side; and now, their backs to its wall, they were fighting an epic battle; passionate, but pitifully one-sided.

Even as those above watched fascinated, Ken dodged a murderous stab and, the next second, received a blow that flung him heavily against the ship's metal plates. And though Tim pluckily covered his comrade's body with his own, it was evident that the end was perilously near.

"Keep it up, Tim," Sid cried. He turned sharply to Thensla. "Please remain here. Let ours be the punishment, if failure awaits us."

"A Princess of Apadocia knows how to die!" Thensla answered, and, to Sid's unbounded admiration, she was still beside him when they touched the lowest level, after a series of breakneck leaps.

The very unexpectedness of their hurtling descent and whirlwind attack enabled them to win through where bravery alone must have failed. Before the Spays realised that new foes were on them, Thensla and Sid had crashed a way through and taken their places beside their hard-pressed companions.

"Now, Ken," Sid shouted, "we'll try to hold them off. Up with you. Get rifles, revolvers, anything—only hurry!"

Shaken though he was, Ken lost no time in obeying; and whilst Sid and Tim momentarily dazzled the Spays with the glare of their lamps, Thensla pluckily thrust her spear at one too-pressing monster.

In those few seconds came a ghastly pause that sometimes occurs in the course of undecided battles, as though nature ordained a breathing space before final cataclysm. Except the panting gasps of the humans, the thin hiss of the Spays, and the harsh rasper of Ken's boots on the metal ladder, an ominous quietude gripped the actors in this nightmare drama.

Those below heard the glad cry that heralded Ken's entrance into the Pearl. One second of silence, then the sharp snap of pistol shots reverberated through the hall, and, as if this had been a looked-for signal, the things below surged forward in a last determined onslaught.

(Continued on page 492.)

"BOYS' FRIEND" FOOTBALL CELEBRITIES.

A brief narrative about JOHN MARSHALL, the Scottish International Full-Back of Middlesbrough F.C., whose portrait is given away with this issue.

It is doubtful if the football world of to-day knows a more dominating personality than John—otherwise Jock—Marshall, the right full-back of the Middlesbrough club. The minute he enters the field you cannot help being struck with the mighty proportions of the man, and when the play begins his air of calm assurance, his confidence in his own ability, simply compels the attention of the onlookers. Here is what a well-known winger who has played against Marshall, said of him recently: "In a way he resembles Downs, the Everton defender, for he bears a remarkable facial resemblance to the tough little ex-Barnsley man. There the resemblance ends, however. Marshall is taller and less spectacular in his methods. But what a 'brick wall' to run up against!"

"He is the embodiment of coolness, confidence, and cunning, the type of player who breaks the heart of the wing opposed to him. Finesse, and he will probably let you literally tie yourself in a knot, and then work away the verdict. Use force, and he is built to win in a canter. Speed seems the only hope of the opposition, and here his head

comes into play. Rarely does he lay himself open to be paced. The term 'the ferro-concrete full-back' very expressively meets the case."

Like many other defenders, Marshall had ideas of being a forward at one time, and he even played with a Scottish League team—St. Mirren—in the front rank. But he has without question found his proper sphere on the football field. Born at Saltcoats, he showed considerable promise as a youth while playing first with Saltcoats Victoria, and later with Sheelston. At that time he was following his exacting occupation as a miner, and probably the hard work he did in those days went some way to making those iron muscles which are so obvious in his make-up in these times.

For the 1913-14 season he was booked up as a professional for St. Mirren, but it must be confessed that in those early days he did not seem likely to blossom out into one of the world's finest full-backs. Indeed, for some time he did not get a regular place in the Scottish League side. But when the war was over, and the Scottish authorities organised a Victory Cup Competition, then the value of Marshall as a full-back of

the St. Mirren team became very obvious. His side was not expected to make any big show in the Victory competition, for their forwards were nothing to write home about. Marshall, however, now fully developed, proved an absolute tower of strength in defence, and when eventually St. Mirren returned winners of the Victory Cup, the general opinion was that Marshall was the man who had done most to carry the side through to success.

As might have been expected, the play of the powerful full-back began to attract the attention of other clubs, and in November 1919, Middlesbrough paid a transfer fee of two thousand pounds to obtain his services. In 1921 and again in 1922 he played as right full-back in every Scottish International match, and also had the honour of being chosen captain of the Scottish team. In the summer of 1921 there was a suggestion that Marshall did not want to continue to play for the Middlesbrough club any more, but as the Tees-siders were very keen to retain him, they managed to persuade the popular Jock to change his mind. In height he is 5ft. 10in.; and he weighs 15st. 7lbs.

forehead, one sleeve of his coat ripped from shoulder to wrist, and a jagged three-inch tear in the calf of his right leg.

"My stars!" Sid exclaimed, as he caught the stumbling youth and gently lowered him to the ground. "What's happened, old chap?"

"Just a second too late in dodging a flying horror!" Tim murmured. He smiled wanly. "But a second too soon to be altogether outed."

Sid was passionately and furiously angry.

"Hang them! This is about the finish! You rest, Tim, and afterwards we'll fight a way to the Pearl, or end our misery once and for all.

these abominations without having a go at it. Only—"

He paused awkwardly. "You hesitate because of me?" "Well, you're only a girl—" Sid began.

Thensla stopped him with a proud smile. "Only a girl, but a Princess of Apadocia, and one who fears not to take her share of risk."

"Hear, hear," cried Tim. "That settles you, Sid. An' if our human brains aren't clever enough to circumvent a lot of bloated insects, may they eat me and find me tender!" "Humph!" Sid frowned doubtfully. "Insects, yes; but as keen in the

had kicked against half a dozen of the heavy wooden stakes used by the Spays to despatch their winged foes.

"Ouch, boys, I've about broken it," Tim cried, aghast.

"We'd have done the same, not having cat's eyes," consoled Sid. "But the hunt'll be up in a moment. They're weapons of a sort, anyway. Now for the Pearl."

In an instant they had armed themselves, even Thensla pluckily snatching up an eight-foot spear. Beyond a momentary surprise at the weight and toughness of the sticks, their attention was all for the Pearl. Realising the importance of speed—for already the Spay guard surrounding the

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A STIRRING YARN OF THE RING, FEATURING THE HON. ROLLO DAYTON!



The 1st Chapter. The Visitor.

Justin Schwaab was born in a Kaffir kraal in Balfontein, South Africa, yet a few years later he arrived in London and engaged a magnificent suite of rooms at the Hotel Royale, in Piccadilly.

He was light-heavyweight champion of Europe at that time, having beaten Charles Durand, the Frenchman, in one of the most sensational and amazing contests in the whole history of the Ring.

Everybody had looked upon the affair as a walk-over for the champion, a form of gentle exercise, and so it had proved until the beginning of the second round, when a voice in the gallery accused the Kaffir of cowardice.

"Make a fight of it, blackie!" had been the words which rang through the hall; and scarcely had they died away than Justin Schwaab became a savage animal. He had suddenly reverted to type. With eyes glinting with a red light, and his lips drawn back from gleaming teeth, he had leapt straight at the champion and attacked him with a ferocity which was terrible to behold; and the dumb-struck spectators had watched the slaughter in open-mouthed horror.

Durand, by a superhuman effort, had managed to remain conscious until the end of the round, when he had collapsed, battered, bruised, and beaten, his handsome features almost unrecognisable, utterly broken in body and spirit.

And Justin Schwaab was the new light-heavyweight champion of Europe.

The following morning he opened his eyes to find himself famous, for France had deposed her erstwhile idol, the handsome Charles Durand, and the Kaffir reigned in his stead.

Schwaab was entertained right royally wherever he went, and the sudden popularity went to his head like wine. There was no holding him, and he was soon bragging of the fact that there was not a white man breathing who was capable of living in the same ring with him.

From Paris, where he began to make things rather hot for himself, he travelled to London, to find that a white man, in the person of the Hon. Rollo Dayton, was eager to fight him over any distance and for any purse, no matter how small or how large.

The challenge was unequivocal, straight to the point, and it did not please the Kaffir champion; and on the morning following his arrival he was discussing the matter with his manager, when there came a knock at the door of the private sitting-room.

"Come right in!" drawled Caleb K. Brindon.

The door opened, and a diminutive page-boy entered. He looked rather awed as he approached the grinning Kaffir, who was clad in a gaudy yellow and blue dressing-gown.

Justin Schwaab and his manager had just finished breakfast.

"What is it, son?" drawled Caleb, snicking off the end of a long cigar. "Has the world's celebrities called to see us?" asked the Kaffir. "If so, tell 'em we're busy."

"No, sir," answered the boy. "A gent has sent his card up."

The American took the neat ivory card and glanced at it; and then he flushed and frowned, muttering something under his breath.

"Say, who is this guy, anyway?" he drawled. "He ain't lost for nerve. Listen, Justin! 'You will see me without delay.' That's what he says. That's all: no signature, no nothing!"

Say, boy, you can tell the fellow that he can go and chop chins."

"But I don't wish to, my dear Brindon," put in a silky voice; and the American swung round in his chair, to find a smiling stranger standing upon the threshold.

The newcomer was dressed in faultless morning clothes, but Caleb did not notice them, for his gaze was fixed upon the clean-cut features, which had a curious ivory pallor.

The stranger's eyes, colourless and inscrutable, were now softened by a mocking smile; and they seemed to fascinate the American.

"Boy," purred the newcomer, "you can go. And remember that we are not to be disturbed."

The youngster seemed only too glad to make himself scarce, and a moment later the door closed behind him; and it was then that Caleb K. Brindon seemed to see the situation in its true perspective.

"Say," drawled the American, "I guess you ain't lost for nerve."

"I guess not," agreed the newcomer easily.

"Well, what's the circus, anyway?" queried Caleb K.

"Business, my dear Brindon," returned the stranger quietly. "Business. I wish to speak to you about Dayton's challenge to this—er—person."

He gave an almost imperceptible nod towards Justin Schwaab. It was a contemptuous gesture, and an ugly light dawned in the Kaffir champion's eyes.

"And what has the challenge to do with you?" demanded Justin, half rising from his chair.

"That is entirely my own business," answered the other man, fixing his questioner with inscrutable eyes. "Kindly remain quiet while your betters are talking."

This was too much for the Kaffir, who jumped to his feet and sent his chair flying backwards.

"What! You dare to talk to me like that, you white beast?" he shouted huskily. "D'you know who I am? Ain't I the light-heavyweight champion? Didn't I whip Durand? Ain't I the Big Noise?"

The stranger shook his sleek head.

"No, not the Big Noise, my friend," he returned; "merely a barbaric sound, an echo of the jungle."

"You beast! You white beast!" shouted the Kaffir, leaping across the room; and then he came to the floor with a thud as the other man snatched up a chair and flung it at his shins with terrific force.

With his eyes gleaming and his lips drawn back Justin Schwaab scrambled to his feet and prepared to hurl himself upon the stranger, who was regarding him with a contemptuous, taunting smile. Yet that wild rush was never made.

Little by little, every vestige of courage seemed to ooze from the Kaffir's finger tips, and in a very short while he was cringing before the hypnotic gaze of those uncanny eyes.

The stranger, to the native mind, appeared to be something scarcely human, and the Kaffir's voice was little more than a whisper when he spoke.

"Who—who are you?" he gasped, unable to tear his eyes from the pallid features.

"I am known as the Duke," answered the other man tonelessly, "and should you again so far forget yourself as to call me a 'white beast' I shall drill a neat hole between your eyes and send your soul winging back to the African jungle, from whence it comes. Sit down—before I knock you down!"

The 2nd Chapter. The Duke's Plan.

Both boxer and manager gasped when they learn the identity of their visitor, for the name of the infamous criminal was known throughout the world.

A social pariah, an outcast, with every man's hand against him, he was "wanted" for crimes in every part of the globe; yet here he was



ROLLO'S RUSE! The big negro gave a grunt of satisfaction and clasped Rollo Dayton's outstretched hand; and, even as he did so, the youngster brought over his mighty left fist and sent it crashing into the evil features!

in the Hotel Royale, right in the heart of London!

An acknowledged prince of the underworld, a man whose word was law in the criminal haunts of every big city, the Duke ruled with a rod of iron, and it went ill with anybody who was foolish enough to cross his path or question his authority.

The crook was accustomed to being feared, he expected his fellow-men to cringe before his gaze, so it is not surprising that he received an unpleasant shock when he met the Hon. Rollo Dayton, of the Clean-Sport Crusaders, a youngster who snapped his fingers under the Duke's aristocratic nose.

Some months before, upon returning from a "business" trip to America, the criminal had looked round for a means of striking a subtle blow at Society, and eventually he had decided to bring sport, the national institution, to the dust.

To this end, therefore, he set out to corrupt racing, cricket, football, and boxing, and so ingenious were his schemes that he soon began to make his sinister influence felt.

Using violence, bribery, and blackmail as his weapons, he managed to get certain officials and professional sportsmen into his power;

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and it was not long before there were rumours of "faked" fights and "crooked" running of horses.

And the Man in the Street began to suspect that everything was not "on the level" in the sporting world.

The Duke chuckled to himself as he watched the success of his campaign; and he merely shrugged his shoulders contemptuously when he learnt that certain well-known sportsmen were banding together to combat his activities.

He had not heard of the Hon. Rollo Dayton at that time, but it was not long before the fair-haired young giant crossed swords with him.

It was war to the death, and in the encounters which followed the Duke was compelled to admit that he had matched his strength and wits against a worthy foe; indeed, he vowed that his youthful enemy would have to be put out of the way—"destroyed" was the word he used—once and for all.

Yet all his murderous attempts came to naught, and the youngster was still very much alive when London received the news of Justin Schwaab's sensational victory over Charles Durand.

The days passed, and it soon became obvious that the Kaffir was not a fit person to hold the light-heavyweight championship of Europe; and it was for this reason that Rollo challenged Schwaab.

consequence, he was soon reeling before his opponent. And then it was that an insult had been hurled at him; and a moment later he was fighting with the ferocity of an enraged tiger.

Caleb K. Brindon had been present, and he realised that in the Kaffir he had found a possible champion. So he had approached Schwaab and taken him in hand, but the youngster did not do anything of outstanding merit until he met Charles Durand; and it was entirely due to the American's cunning that the Frenchman did not bring off an easy victory. For it was Brindon who placed the man in the gallery, and Brindon who gave the signal for the taunting words which had roused all the Kaffir's primordial passions.

Justin Schwaab did not know this, of course, so he had formed the idea that every white man was his sworn enemy; and the American let him think so, for it suited his plans.

"I'll smash 'em—smash 'em all!" repeated the Kaffir, again and again, his smouldering eyes fixed upon the Duke's pallid features.

"But you won't smash Dayton, my friend!" returned the criminal quietly. "Listen to me, you worm!" he snapped, as the champion was about to speak. "You've got about as much chance of beating Dayton as you have of changing the colour of your skin, for the puppy is a world-beater, and you're a second-rater at best—a second-rater with a streak of the animal in you!"

"Maybe so," drawled Caleb K. Brindon, as Schwaab writhed in his chair but feared to throw himself upon the Duke; "but I guess there are ways and means of fixing this boob. And there should be a whole heap of dollars in the business."

The criminal inclined his sleek head.

"I was coming to that, my dear Brindon," he purred suavely. "I have all the plans cut and dried. Listen."

The 3rd Chapter. Held Up!

The news that the Hon. Rollo Dayton had been matched against Justin Schwaab, created a storm of controversy, and hundreds of enraged and indignant citizens snatched up their pens, dipped them in acid, and wrote long letters to the papers, demanding that the fight should be banned.

Homer Winterholme, editor of the "Sporting Herald," and the promoter of the contest, was bombarded with protests, threats, and insults, yet he managed to retain his usual unruffled demeanour through it all.

Homer was that type of man.

Like the majority of the sporting public, he saw that it was impossible to allow the Kaffir champion to strut about Europe proclaiming the superiority of the coloured race; and it was equally impossible to deprive him of the light-heavyweight title unless he transgressed very badly.

And this Schwaab had not done.

He had merely stated that, in his opinion, there was not a white man breathing capable of knocking the laurels from his narrow brow; and the fact that his tone was sneering and arrogant, was but a small point against him.

The obvious and most sensible manner of ridding the mitting game of its unpopular champion was to find a white boxer who could beat him decisively within the roped square, and it was for this reason that Winterholme was not swayed in his determination to stage the contest between Rollo Dayton and Justin at the earliest possible moment.

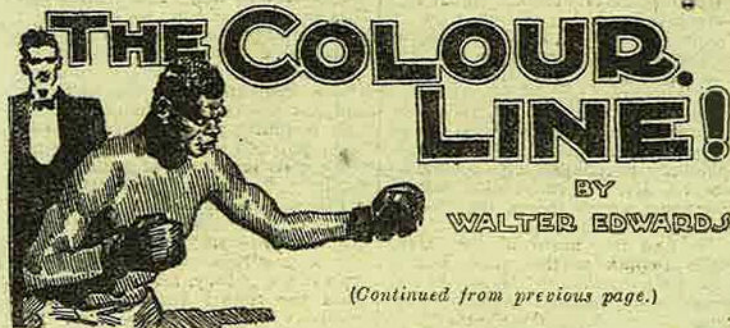
Rollo took up his quarters at Joe Floyd's training camp at Emberley, an out-of-the-way village on the Sussex downs. Joe was a lean-limbed, bald-headed man with a clean-shaven face which bore the trace of a hundred hard-fought battles. The ears were large and misshapen, the nose was flat and had a decided list to starboard, and the thin-lipped mouth just missed bisecting the battered countenance.

Yet Joe, although anything but a matinee idol, was not displeasing to gaze upon, for his clear, slate-grey eyes gleamed with intelligence and strength of purpose.

Many were the champions who had passed through his hands; and many were the fighting men of all grades who sat at his feet and listened to his words of wisdom.

Temperate in everything, including meat, drink, and language, there were, nevertheless, times when he felt compelled to express himself forcibly; and it was then that he

(Continued overleaf.)



(Continued from previous page.)

called upon a vocabulary as blistering as any in the country; and more than one champion had been known to wilt under his flow of home-truths.

The old "pug" had no fault to find with the Hon. Rollo Dayton, for the youngster entered into his training with all the zest of a schoolboy; for, after all, he was little more.

He spent his time in the well-equipped gymnasium and upon the road, and a matter of days found him fit to fight for a kingdom.

Floyd granted his satisfaction; and twenty-four hours before the contest he was seen to grin.

The affair was to take place at the Star Boxing Hall, in Tottenham Court Road, the purse being of a very substantial nature. Caleb K. Brindon, the Kaffir's American manager, had started negotiations by demanding the earth before he would allow his principal to enter the ring; but, finding Homer Winterholme adamant, he had climbed down. Yet Justin Schwaab was to have the long end of the purse, win, lose, or draw.

Rollo's share was to go to a charity.

The Kaffir champion was in training at Mardon, on the Thames, yet he was frequently seen about town in the evenings, the idol of a crowd of scoundrels. That he was confident of an easy victory over Rollo Dayton was obvious, and he never met a newspaper man without saying exactly what he was going to do with the "white beast" who had dared to challenge him.

Rollo read the reports with a somewhat puzzled expression in his mild blue eyes, and on the eve of the contest, when he, Dr. Dagnall, and Joe Floyd were having a quiet meal together, he commented upon Schwaab's super-confident attitude.

"You know, old eggs," he drawled, in his tired way, "I really don't understand this Kaffir johnnie at all. He must surely realise that I'm not a—child in arms, and all that sort of thing, yet he seems to be rotting about in town every evening. It's jolly rummy, to say the least of it!"

Joe Floyd's thin lips tightened as he nodded his bald head.

"You're right, old son!" he growled; "and I don't feel altogether happy about it."

"You mean that everything isn't straight, Joe?" put in the Harley Street man, who had been on intimate terms with his host for years.

"That's about the size of it," admitted the "pug." "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if there was some underhand work afoot. A boxer's got to be fit—clean through and through; and you can't kid me that the black's anything like fit at the moment."

Rollo gave a light laugh. "Well, in that case, old egg, the 'mill' will be a walk-over for me," he said. "I feel that I could beat Mr. Schwaab under any circumstances, but to-morrow's contest looks like a gift!"

"Huh!" grunted Floyd, frowning. "It certainly looks like one, but things ain't always what they appear to be."

"But—but, hang it all," protested Rollo, "what can he do now—on the eve of the fight? I'm as fit as a fiddle; the boys guard me as though I were a Derby favourite, and I shall travel from here to the Star Hall in a closed-in car. There can be no question of foul play, and as for the scrap itself—well, you can leave that to your Uncle Rollo!"

Again the old "pug" grunted. "I don't wish to dishearten you, son," he began, running a gnarled hand over his shining dome.

"You're not exactly a ray of sunshine, old man," smiled Dagnall, putting a match to his briar.

"I don't wish to dishearten you," repeated Joe doggedly, "but we've got to keep a weather eye open for that fighting machine! Both he and his manager know that the scrap means everything to them, so it ain't likely that they're going to give the title away with a pound of tea, is it? There's something fishy about this business, and it's no good blinking at the facts."

"Let them do what they like, old man," said Dagnall, his massive jaw tightening. "They won't get much change out of us!"

Joe nodded and glanced at the clock upon the mantelpiece.

"Son! Get to bed!" he growled, turning his slate-grey eyes upon Rollo.

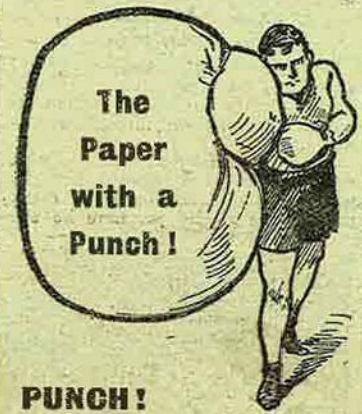
"But, hang it all, it's only half-past nine, old egg!" protested the fair-haired youngster.

"Get to bed!" thundered the old "pug," rising to his full height and pointing towards the bed-room. "I'm boss of this establishment, an' don't forget it! Hop it!"

"All right dad!" smiled Rollo, hopping across the linoleum. "I'd tell you to keep your hair on—if you had any! Nighty-night, Daggers, old egg! I'll see you in the morning!"

He spent the following morning playing billiards, and after lunch had a nap, sleeping as peacefully as a child. Six o'clock found him up again, all smiles and showing no trace of nerves.

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That describes the magnificent stories that appear in next Monday's Bumper Issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. In addition a superb HAND-COLOURED REAL GLOSSY PHOTO of ROBERT McNEAL (West Bromwich Albion) is given FREE WITH EVERY COPY!

Joe, running expert eyes over the magnificent young giant, grunted.

"It's wonderful what you can do with 'em!" he said, addressing Dr. Dagnall. "When he came here he was a bag o' bones—"

A big cushion whizzed across the sitting-room, and caught him full in the face, almost sending him off his balance.

"Now then—now then!" growled the "pug." "Don't you bust my property!"

"Still, it was a bit of luck, wasn't it, Daggers?" asked Rollo, ignoring Joe's remark.

"What was?" asked the doctor, shamming innocence.

"Why, that that old egg kept his mouth shut," explained the youngster. "He might have lost his priceless old cushion altogether!"

This indelicate reference to the size of his mouth made Joe Floyd grunt again, but inwardly he was delighted that his man was in such high spirits.

The big contest at the Star Hall was billed to take place at half-past nine, and it was on the stroke of seven when Rollo, Daggers, and the "pug" stepped into the former's powerful grey car.

Emberley is right off the map, and to strike the main London road the car had to follow a winding lane across country. The night was chilly and cloudy, but occasionally the moon broke through and beamed down upon them.

They were doing a good thirty miles an hour when there came a sudden jarring of brakes which jerked them from their seats; and a second later the doors were swung open, and four masked figures covered them with automatic, which glistened threateningly in the moonlight.

The 4th Chapter. To the Rescue!

"Get out!" rasped a husky voice. "An' don't you white beasts try to get fresh!"

"Negroes!" grated Joe Floyd between his set teeth. "Blessed blacks!"

"Come on, out of it!" rasped the same unpleasant voice. "We don't want to shoot you, but—"

There was no mistaking the meaning of the threat, and the men in the car, not wishing to run any unnecessary risks, obeyed the command; and no sooner were they standing in the narrow lane than they were surrounded by a score of coloured men, many of whom seemed to be the scum of dockland, ragged, unkempt creatures who grinned unpleasantly.

Rollo Dayton was the first to recover from his astonishment. He jammed his gold-rimmed monocle into position, and glanced round at the crowd.

"Er—what exactly is the trouble?" he asked quietly, playing for time. "What do you—er—gentlemen want? If it's the washing baths—"

"Cut that out!" rasped the leader, a big African negro with a deep scar across his cheek. "You're Dayton, aren't you?"

Rollo bowed. "That is so" he returned, "but I have not had the inestimable pleasure of knowing you, Mr.—er—"

"My name don't matter!" grunted the negro, his bloodshot eyes blazing with anger.

He knew that he was having his leg pulled, and his trigger finger twitched. He would have given much to have filled Rollo with lead.

"Oh, quite—quite!" smiled the youngster pleasantly.

And he made a mental vow that he would get even with the fellow later. But at the moment he had still to play for time, for half a dozen sparring partners from the training camp were due at any moment.

"Listen!" rasped the leader.

"Say on, O Inky!" prompted Rollo, straining his ears to catch the sound of the other car.

"You're due to fight Justin Schwaab to-night," grated the negro, "and you stand a good chance of winning—if you are allowed to get into the ring!"

"Go on!" said Rollo, a hard light creeping into his blue eyes. "I presume that you and—er—these others are—"

He nodded towards the shadowy figures.

"Stow it you white beast!" growled the leader, thrusting his automatic within an inch of the youngster's smiling face. "It's our job to stop you getting to London, unless you listen to reason."

"Out with it!" growled Joe Floyd.

"Dayton can either promise to go down for the count in the third round," said the negro slowly, "or else we're going to give the three of you such a bashing that you'll all be in hospital for a month. That's all!"

"H'm!" pondered Rollo, after a short pause. "That's interesting. But I could easily give you my word and go back on it."

"But you wouldn't!" said the leader, conviction in his unpleasant voice.

"How do you know?" asked Rollo quickly.

"Because the Duke—" began the negro; and then he shut his teeth with a snap.

Rollo Dayton shot a quick glance at Dagnall.

"So he's at the bottom of it, is he?" he mused. "I might have guessed—"

"Come on!" interrupted the negro. "Will you do it or not? I give you five seconds!"

Three seconds passed, and then the youngster, making up his mind, held out his right hand.

"The Duke's got the better of us this time!" he declared, somewhat ruefully. "Rastus, we'll shake on it!"

The big negro gave a grunt of satisfaction, and clasped Rollo's outstretched palm, and even as he did so the youngster brought over his mighty left and sent it crashing into the evil features.

From afar came the purr of a motor-engine.

That terrific punch was the signal for a free fight, and Daggers and Joe, taking the risk, threw themselves upon the black fellows who were covering them with revolvers.

Three spurts of flame followed, and in the manner in which the trio waded into the fray proved beyond doubt (Continued on the next page.)



The Expert's Lot.

The greater my experience of football and the intricacies of the rules, the more careful I am to avoid the pitfalls which are set for the man who poses as an expert. But just recently, however, I fell into a trap which I suspect had been carefully set for me by a reader of the Boys' Friend. This young man sent me a question which looked innocent enough. He asked me if it was possible for a footballer, right from the kick-off at the start of a match, to score a goal, without either an opponent or a colleague touching the ball. My reply was "No," because the rules state that from the kick-off the same player must not touch the ball twice in succession, and that from the kick-off a goal cannot be scored direct. So you see how satisfactory the reply looked.

A One-Man Score.

Yet it wasn't so good as I thought. Back came a letter declaring that, in the opinion of the writer, it was possible for a centre-forward to score a legitimate goal following the kick-off from the centre-line without another player touching the ball. And this is how the thing can be done. The centre-forward, instead of kicking off from the centre in the orthodox way, takes a hefty lunge at the ball and sends it careering through the air

towards his opponents' goal. One of the centre-forward's colleagues dashes after it at top speed, and just as the ball comes down, before anybody else has played it, a full-back fouls him. A free kick is given, there is nothing in the rules of the game to prevent the centre-forward from taking the free kick, and if he scores direct from this kick, he will have



S. CASTLE (Charlton Athletic).

scored a perfectly legitimate goal without another player having touched the ball from the kick-off.

Problems.

Writing of little problems, here is another one which I stumbled against recently, and which is also quite ingenious in its way. As you know, the side against which a goal is scored has the privilege of kicking off from the centre of the field. Thus, on the face of it, one might say it would be impossible for the same team to score two goals in succession without any member of the opposing team touching the ball. And yet it can be done in this way. With the last kick of the first half, a player scores a goal. If the team which scored has the right to kick off in the second half when the game is restarted, it is obviously possible for them to score two goals in succession without a member of the other team touching the ball.

The moral of these little catch-questions in regard to football is just this. Whenever anybody asks you a question, think well before you answer. The probability is that in the question is a catch which you cannot appreciate without careful thought, and perhaps not even with thought.

The Babes of the South.

Without question, Charlton Athletic have been the sensational team of this season's Cup competition. The "Babes" of the Southern Third Division were expected to go out of the competition at the first round proper, for, in being called upon to face Manchester City, at Manchester, they were given about as hard a task as any club could possibly have been given. Yet they pulled through by

two goals to one, and then, in the second round, knocked out at Charlton Preston North End—the finalists of last season. It does one good to see these struggling sides doing well, and, so far as Charlton are concerned,



T. MAGEE (West Bromwich Albion).

we can say that in their case fortune has favoured the brave. On the books of the club there are two or three ex-Tottenham Hotspur players, and one of these is outside-right Stanley Castle, a player who has rendered his new club good service. In the old days Castle was an amateur player with Crystal Palace, and there was some little trouble between the Palace and the Spurs, when the latter signed him on. However, as he did not get many chances at Tottenham, he went to Charlton.

In the third round Charlton had West Bromwich as opponents, and in the Albion team there was at least one player who illustrates the truth of the old saying that the footballer himself is not always the best judge of his abilities. I refer to Tom Magee, the right half-back of the Albion. When he first became a "Throstle," Magee was a forward.

But gradually it was borne in upon the management of the West Bromwich Club that Magee had the makings of a half-back in him, and thus the player was asked to take up his duties in that department. At first Magee jibbed, but, being persuaded that it was for the good of his club as for himself, he eventually played at right-back, and the progress he has made in the position during the present season may be judged from the fact that he played for England against the South in the first trial match. Magee is only a little fellow, but he is extremely energetic, never tired, and is one of the many players on the books of the Albion club who have not been in any other first-class side.

The forecast of the matches to be played on Saturday will be found on the next page.



(Another splendid article next week.)

that no hit had been registered. The white men were sadly outnumbered, of course, but so mixed were the combatants that the further use of the revolvers was out of the question.

Rollo's punch had robbed the leader of consciousness, and it was not long before he had accounted for three more of the enemy; and, just as numbers were beginning to tell, the powerful headlights of a car swept round a bend in the lane, and the half a dozen sparring partners were upon the scene.

The car pulled up with a grinding of brakes, and two seconds later the boxers had leapt from the vehicle and were pelting toward the scene of the fray.

One glance was enough. Boiling with rage, they tore into the fight with the ferocity which spoke eloquently of their liking for Rollo Dayton, and in less than two minutes the battle royal was at an end.

It had been hot work whilst it lasted, but the black hooligans had no heart for punishment once the tide turned and the white men gained the upper hand.

Howling with pain and whining for mercy, they broke through the hedge and pelted off across the fields, leaving their wounded to take care of themselves.

And there were at least nine of the attacking party which had been placed hors de combat. They lay stretched in the dusty road, moaning and trembling with fear.

Rollo Dayton wiped his bruised knuckles with his silk handkerchief and glanced down at the wretched victims.

"And what shall we do with these bonnie little fellows?" he asked, turning to Joe Floyd as though nothing out of the common had happened. He appeared to be his usual unruffled self, and he was breathing easily.

"Do with 'em?" growled the old "pug" who had thoroughly enjoyed the "mill." "I'd like to duck 'em in the river!"

"But we haven't time," put in Dagers regretfully. "I suggest that we roll 'em into the ditch and leave them there. We don't want a police-court job."

"That's so, old egg," drawled Rollo; and he placed his toe under the leader's big body, twisted it over and over, and toppled it into the stagnant ditch, where it landed with a squelch.

The other negroes were disposed of with all promptitude, and then Joe and his party climbed into the cars and resumed their interrupted journey to London.

The 5th Chapter. The Great Night.

The Star, London's newest boxing hall, is a palatial building which does credit to the capital. Built by Captain Adrian Bland, the most progressive promoter of the day, it caters for sportsmen of all classes, from the aristocrat with his own upholstered chair at the ringside to the paper-boy who pays his shilling for a seat in the gallery.

Everything has been done to assure the comfort of the patrons who are able to get an uninterrupted view of the ring from any part of the lofty building. The lighting is perfect and the system of ventilation a triumph.

The night of the Dayton-Schwaab affair found every seat occupied by nine o'clock, for all who paid for admission meant to see the important contest right from the gong.

After all, much depended upon the outcome, for Rollo Dayton was going to do battle for the prestige of the white race. The purse and title meant little to him.

The evening papers appeared with a final interview with Justin Schwaab—the ubiquitous reporters having run him to earth in his hotel—and his tone continued to be bombastic and arrogant.

"I shall beat Dayton in three rounds," he declared; "that is, unless he gets cold feet and backs out at the last moment. I shall not be in the least surprised if he lunks the fight, in which case I shall collar the whole of the purse and will retain my title. This clause was in the contract which we signed. There isn't a white man in the game who stands a chance against this gentleman of colour!"

Justin knew all about the Duke's hold-up, of course, and he had been assured that nothing could go wrong. In his heart, he rather hoped that Rollo would save his face by choosing to go three rounds.

Then would not he, Justin Schwaab, have a laugh of the "white beasts," the people that had

despised him from his earliest days in the kraal at Balfontein!

Nine o'clock found him in his dressing-room, surrounded by his hangers on, and smoking a long black cigar; and a glance at his eyes showed that his present mode of luxurious living was having an effect upon even his iron constitution.

Caleb K. Brindon was also there, looking very satisfied with himself. He had just entered the room.

"He's just arrived, bo!" he announced, sinking into a chair and grinning across at his principal. "And from the look of 'em—the doctor, Joe Floyd, and the rest—there must have been some scrap before they gave in!"

"D'you mean that Dayton's here?" asked the Kaffir eagerly.

"Sure thing!" Justin Schwaab was out of his chair in a flash. He gripped his manager by the hand.

"We're in luck's way, Caleb!" he cried, slipping out of his evening coat. "I'll change!"

"The spectators are in for the shock of their lives!" chuckled the American. "Dayton will have to put up some sort of show until the third round, and then—good-night, all! Aw, boy, it's a peacherino of an idea!"

The contest which was to precede the big fight was already in progress, two promising lightweights giving of

flushed as he slipped through the ropes and bowed to the spectators.

It was a scene which will live in the memory of everyone present for all time, the excitement being indescribable. And never had a boxer received greater encouragement to do or die than did Rollo Dayton.

Four "seconds" followed him into his corner, where he seated himself in his swivel chair and waited for the Kaffir champion.

The vast hall was humming with excited conversation and heated argument, and all the while the seconds flitted by. One minute passed, then another, but there was no sign of Justin Schwaab.

"What's the idea, old man?" asked Dagers, who was in Rollo's corner.

"Oh, it's an ancient wheeze, old egg," smiled the youngster. "The American has put him up to it. He hopes to get me nerry, and he's got about as much chance of doing that as he has of winning a prize at a beauty show!"

The crowd, good-natured and tolerant to a degree, began to show signs of impatience.

"Now then, Schwaab!" yelled a hoarse voice from the gallery. "Show a leg, old son!"

"Schwaab! Schwaab!"

The din increased with each passing second, and it was at its height when Justin Schwaab, with a broad

smooth as marble, looked almost frail in comparison, yet there was a quiet air about the youngster which spoke of boundless confidence.

The M.C. slipped through the ropes and raised his hand for silence. The audience was in a restive mood, so he did not waste any time.

"A twenty-round contest—three minutes each round—for the light-heavyweight championship of Europe," he announced in ringing tones. "On my right, Justin Schwaab, the champion; on my left, the Hon. Rollo Dayton."

There came the command to the "seconds"; then the gong.

The 6th Chapter. Justin Schwaab's Defeat.

His features twisted into a taunting grin, Justin Schwaab emerged from his corner and touched Rollo Dayton's outstretched gloves; and a second later he went reeling with a punch which thudded against his thick lips and split them.

He was the most surprised person in the world at that moment, and a dangerous light leapt into his eyes as he covered up and crouched against the ropes.

He looked ominous and threatening, yet that did not appear to make the slightest impression upon the imperturbable Englishman, who followed up his initial advantage and

with the fact that this grim-faced white man had promised to take the count in the third round.

It was all very well for him to put up a convincing and realistic show, of course, but—

Thud!

The left shot out again, knocking his head back with almost paralyzing force; and a moment later Schwaab fell into a clinch, gripping his man with wild strength.

"Go easy, you white beast!" he breathed hoarsely. "Remember your promise!"

"Break! Break, Schwaab!" commanded the referee's stern voice.

Rollo Dayton's strong jaw jutted forward at the Kaffir's words, and his face was set and masklike when he leapt forward and brought over a right which thudded against the contused lips and sent Schwaab staggering.

The champion seemed to have the strength of ten men, for few boxers could have lived through that terrible round, and even Schwaab averted slightly as the gong having clanged, he walked to his corner.

A cataclysm of riotous shouts and hand-clapping greeted the end of the round, for Rollo Dayton looked as fresh as when he first entered the ring. Justin Schwaab, on the other hand, was taking great gulps at the towel-driven air, his muscular arms hanging limply over the top rope.

His gleaming eyes were staring fixedly at the cool Englishman in the opposite corner.

"The beast! The treacherous beast!" muttered Schwaab as his "seconds" worked frenziedly to restore him.

The one-minute intermission was all too short for him, yet he was comparatively fresh as he skipped from his corner for the second round, and scarcely had the gong sounded then a score of voices broke out from various parts of the packed building:

"Get into it, Schwaab!"

"Get going, blackie!"

"Booh! You've got cold feet!"

The Duke's hirelings were at work. Justin Schwaab stood quite still for a moment, as though the taunting words had turned him to stone; and then, with a savage exclamation, he tore straight at Rollo Dayton. The mere sight of him would have struck cold terror into the hearts of most men, but Rollo met the attack with a straight left which knocked the Kaffir flat upon his back.

Schwaab was only down for a second, however, and when he leapt to his feet there was a dangerous light glinting in his eyes.

The packed house was dumbstruck and transfixed, fearing for the fair-haired youngster in the ring.

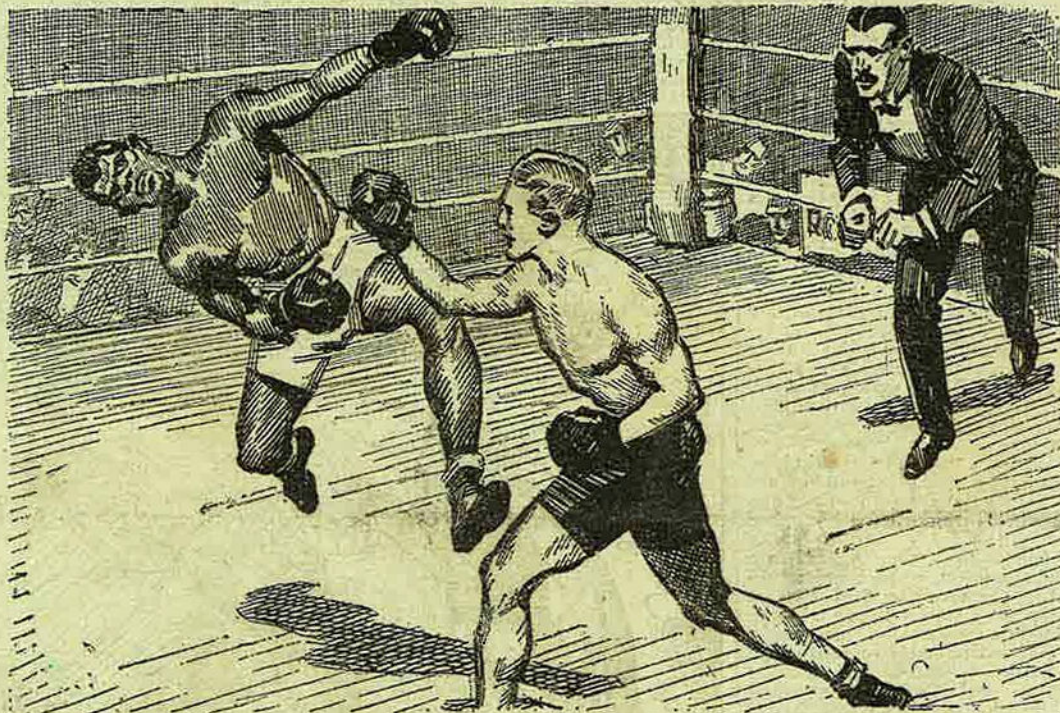
Yet they need have had no fear, for Rollo Dayton was the one self-possessed person in the building.

Measuring his man as he leapt, he timed his blow to a fraction of a second, and such was the force behind the punch as it connected with the jaw that the Kaffir jumped high into the air, twisted round, and crashed to the floor of the ring in a huddled heap.

He was "out," and the light-heavyweight championship of Europe had passed into the hands of a white man!

THE END.

"The Semi-Final!"—next week's superb footer story, featuring Rollo Dayton—is a yarn that you simply must read. Order your BOYS' FRIEND to-day, and see that you get the FREE Hand-coloured Photo of Robert McNeal, of West Bromwich Albion!



THE KNOCK OUT! Rollo Dayton timed his blow to a fraction of a second, and such was the force behind the punch as it connected with Justin Schwaab's jaw, that the Kaffir jumped into the air, twisted round, and crashed to the floor in a huddled heap!

their best; and at the end of six rounds, when the result was given to a stocky little fellow from Cardiff, the spacious hall rang with cheers for both winner and loser.

Then followed the restless stirring of bodies and feet which invariably proclaims the coming of the important event of the programme.

The big arc lamps over the ring spluttered and burst into life, whilst a small army of white-sweated "seconds" began to fuss about the ring, changing the water, cleaning the canvas and making everything ship-shape in readiness for the big contest.

Rollo Dayton was the first to make his appearance, and scarcely had the vast audience caught sight of his smooth fair hair than a roar of cheering, which made the rafters dance, broke from every side of the ring.

Never had there been such a scene of wild enthusiasm in the Star Hall, and Rollo's handsome face was

grin, kicked open the door at the end of the aisle and strutted to the ringside.

His whole mein was offensive, confident and taunting, and the cheers which greeted him would not have wakened a sleeping child.

The chilly reception did not seem to worry him, however, for his grin broadened as he climbed through the ropes and walked across to his corner, where he joined half a dozen negroes, his "seconds." They, also, were grinning, for was not Dayton going to take the count in the third round?

Justin slipped out of his silk dressing-gown and stretched himself, and there was no denying the fact that he was a splendid figure of a man. The discerning eye might have considered him a trifle too fleshy, but that he was still as strong as an ox was apparent.

Rollo Dayton, lithe, with skin as

slammed home terrific body blows which made his man wince.

Thud, thud! Thud, thud!

Right followed left with the speed of light, and it was only by rallying and fighting with the ferocity of despair that the Kaffir managed to get out of the ugly corner and dance into the centre of the ring.

Anger gleamed from the depths of his eyes, and he was muttering savagely as he waded in, both arms working like piston-rods.

Rollo was quite ready for him, and the left he pushed out struck the coloured fellow upon his badly-damaged lips and rocked him; and again he found himself retreating before such a shower of blows as he had not known even in his most horrible nightmare.

He dodged and ducked and used the ring, but he could not escape that terrible right and left; and all the while his mind was seething

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, March 17th. The likely winning side is printed in capitals. Where a draw is anticipated, both clubs are printed in smaller letters.

First Division.	Second Division.	First Division (Scottish League).
ARSENAL v. Oldham Athletic.	BARNLEY v. Wolverhampton Wan.	AIRDRIEONIAN v. Motherwell.
Birmingham v. Aston Villa.	BLACKPOOL v. Port Vale.	CELTIC v. Dundee.
BLACKBURN R. v. Nottingham Forest.	Bradford City v. Manchester United.	Alloa v. St. Mirren.
BOLTON WANDERERS v. Newcastle U.	Crystal Palace v. Leeds United.	HAMILTON ACADS. v. Raith R.
HUDDERSFIELD TOWN v. Burnley.	DERBY COUNTY v. Rotherham County.	HIBERNIAN v. Clyde.
CARDIFF CITY v. Middlesbrough.	FULHAM v. Stockport County.	KILMARNOCK v. Albion Rovers.
WEST BROMWICH ALBION v. Chelsea.	HULL CITY v. West Ham United.	RANGERS v. Falkirk.
Everton v. Sheffield United.	LEICESTER CITY v. Coventry City.	THIRD LANARK v. Ayr United.
Manchester City v. Liverpool.	NOTTSCHESS v. Clapton Orient.	Morton v. Hearts.
Stoke v. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR.	THE WEDNESDAY v. South Shields.	
SUNDERLAND v. Preston North End.	Southampton v. Bury.	

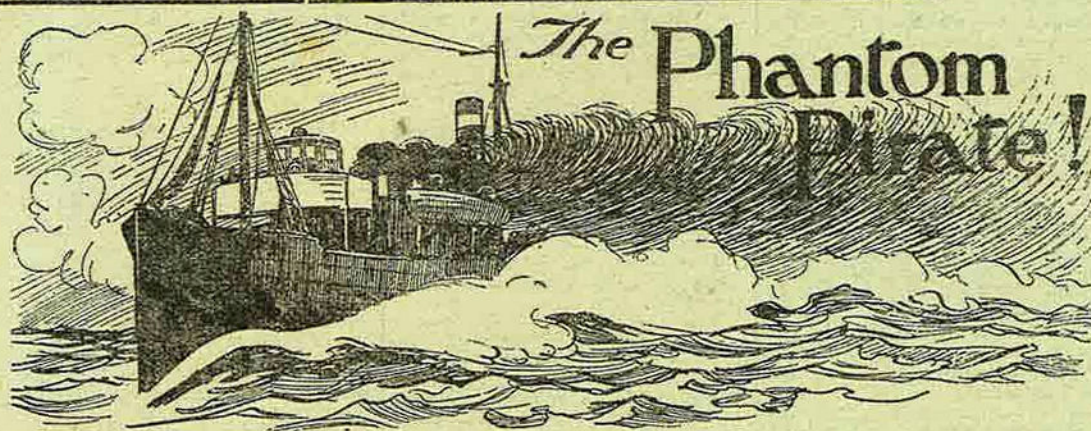
BOXING MADE EASY by *Bombardier Billy Wells*

Wouldn't you like Billy Wells to teach you how to box in the English way? Read his splendid article in this week's "Sports Budget" (out on Friday, March 16th), and pick up some of the tips that have helped the popular Bombardier in his ring career. Order a copy TO-DAY. Ask for

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MAURICE EVERARD AT HIS BEST IN THIS GREAT SEA STORY!



Frank Polruan makes a gruesome discovery in the saloon of the derelict vessel—and the Defiance has a rough journey through a terrible storm!

The 1st Chapter.

Hearing of the mysterious loss at sea of more than twenty ships within a month, Captain Joe Tremorne, the Polruan cousins, Frank and Dick, and Harry Rawson, their friend, set off on the Defiance, a camouflaged high-speed destroyer, to discover the modern pirate to whom is attributed the loss of the vessels. With them on the Defiance are Pieface, their negro servant; the crew of Joe Tremorne's old ship, the Enchantress; and Bunjie, Pieface's baby elephant. Before leaving England, Dick Polruan informs the Press that they are on a treasure hunt, thus hoping to more readily fall in with the pirate when the news gets about. The Defiance makes for the Cayos Islands, around which most of the vessels disappeared. One night, after they have been at sea some weeks, a mysterious ship is sighted, which upon being picked up by the searchlight makes off at great speed. During a storm they come upon a derelict vessel, which they discover is the Octoroon, of New Orleans. They stand off during the night, but at dawn Frank Polruan, despite the roughness of the sea, swims to her, and, after several unsuccessful attempts, manages to gain her well-deck. He makes fast the rope, which he has brought from the Defiance, and proceeds to search the derelict.

The 2nd Chapter.

An Ocean Tragedy!

Frank Polruan paused near the entrance to the charthouse to wave a signal to those on the Defiance; then, turning the handle of the door, he walked in. To his surprise there was no sign of disorder anywhere, save that a locker had been broken open, and whatever papers it may have contained were no longer there. The ship's chronometer and a number of charts had not been disturbed. There was nothing to show that the vessel did not carry her full complement of officers and crew.

In the teeth of a strong wind Frank worked his way, only halting when he reached the entrance to the saloon. It was closed and though the door had not been locked, he had some little difficulty in forcing an entrance. Something barred the way, something that rolled towards the threshold with every lift of the vessel and rolled away again when she dipped in the trough of the sea. He waited a moment and slipped in. The door closed and a heavy object slithered past and temporarily imprisoned him. He turned, and a gasp of horror escaped him, for the thing on the floor was the body of a dead man.

Death is always terrible, but oftentimes the manner of it is more dreadful still. Those who go down to the sea in ships meet it in many forms, but in none more dreadful than that of murder. For here was murder most foul—the culmination of a crime wickedly conceived and mercilessly carried out. The dead man lay as the motion of the vessel had carried him, his arms and legs sprawling, his body doubled, his face half hidden, turned as it were to the floor. And in the back of his head, a little above the base of his skull, was a small hole.

At first Frank felt too stupefied to do more than stand stricken with dread on the far side of the saloon, his right hand holding for support to the spring of the screwed-down port-hole. The Octoroon began to list again, heaved broadside on to a big sea, and trundled the dead man to the feet of the motionless boy.

It was then that the full significance

of this ocean tragedy dawned on him, for the upper portion of the forehead had been blown away where the bullet had emerged.

"Shot from behind," muttered Frank, dropping down on his knees. "And not so very long ago, either, for his clothes are still damp with blood. I wonder who he is. Certainly not one of the crew."

The slain man was well, almost extravagantly, dressed in a new lounge suit of excellent quality. As the boy drew back one side of his coat, a length of gold watch-chain swinging from a swivel trailed coldly across his hand. To one end a small gold match-box was attached; the other had been broken with considerable force, as the wrenched and twisted links testified. In the left-hand vest pocket was a chamois-leather case which had been used to enclose a watch. The watch, however, was missing.

"Robbery, evidently!" Frank reflected, starting to his feet to pick up something dark that lay under the saloon table. He held it to the growing light, a wallet of Russian leather ornamented with a crest and monogram in gold. The wallet, however, had been ripped open by hasty fingers, for the tiny gold clasp lay by one of the clamped-down table legs.

Frank felt a dreadful fear grip him, but he kept a tight grip upon himself, and faced with a quiet courage the dreadful task which he felt lay before him.

A door at the far end opened to a second apartment, which Frank recognised by the revolving leather chairs and the small marble-topped tables as a miniature smoke-room. Here was a scene of indescribable confusion—the woodwork splintered, the mirrors shattered, and the Lincrusta ceiling riddled with small black holes. Across a small settee clamped to the wall sprawled a second dead man, still clutching in his nerveless grasp a formidable revolver, while on the littered floor were three other bodies thrown together by the movements of the ship.

Each told the same story, but in a slightly different fashion. One had been shot in the chest, another had expired apparently from a blow on the head, the man on the settee had been shot in the back, while the one nearest the bookcase showed a bullet wound in his throat. And as with the man in the saloon, there was scarcely an article of value on any one of them. Their pockets had been turned out, and in the thick pile of the carpet a few stray coins gleamed in the cold light streaming through the shut-down ports.

One fact struck Frank as most curious. The signs of struggle were confined almost entirely to the saloon and the smoke-room. True, when he struggled to the deck, glad once more to be in the clean, fresh air, he saw a few deep furrows in the woodwork, and the side window of the chart-room had been shattered, evidently by a stray pistol shot.

A feeling of loneliness crept over him as he turned his back on the scene of tragedy, and looked to where the Defiance rolled heavily half a mile away. The silence that brooded over the death-ship, the knowledge that death had come perhaps without an instant's warning to the poor fellows whose cold hands he had touched, filled him with inexpressible horror. For an instant he was tempted to leap the deck-rail, and to swim back as fast as he could to the ship. Then a sense of his responsibilities filled him. He recalled Joe Tremorne's words before they had turned their backs on Polruan, that the venture on which they were

embarked would be beset with dangers and difficulties. It was up to him to show a stout heart even in the face of such horrors as he had just witnessed.

From the main deck he went to the lazarette, and thence to the fo'c's'le. Here, if anything, he found things worse than in the smoke-room or in the saloon, for every member of the ship's crew—eleven in all—lay dead where they had made their first mad rush for freedom. Death must have come upon them with amazing suddenness, for five lay in their bunks as



RAWSON IN PERIL! No sooner had Harry Rawson stepped beyond the shelter of the wheelhouse than the invisible hands of the wind clutched at him and flung him with stunning force against the stern rail!

though sleeping. The other members of the watch had evidently been shot down in the act of joining their assailed comrades.

Of the ship's officers there was no sign. The chart-room, like the skipper's quarters, was in a most orderly state—scarcely a thing disturbed. Frank hunted for the ship's papers, but failed to find them.

Between the fo'c's'le and the main deck the hatch-coverings had been removed, and a good deal of water had got in. Its surging and washing made a strange, melancholy sound. Otherwise the Octoroon was in apple-pie order—ropes coiled, deck machinery properly covered, and the wheelhouse untouched.

Frank had seen sufficient to visualise something of what had happened—a swift, unexpected attack; a feeble, astonished attempt at resistance, which stiffened on the part of the few male passengers, the dealing of death all round, and the abandoning of the vessel to the mercy of the sea. He made the line fast about his quivering body, and, balancing himself for a moment on the rail, leapt far out, and headed for the Defiance.

Just how he conquered the long half-mile of intervening water he never afterwards quite remembered, for his body, like his mind, was numbed by the awfulness of his

experience. He looked very white and beaten when at length willing hands assisted him on deck.

"Oughtn't to have let you do it. Thought you'd never make the last few hundred yards," said Joe sympathetically. "What's come over you, bye? Feeling a bit knocked—eh?"

"Yes, Joe," admitted Frank weakly. "I want to go below and get into warm clothes. Perhaps Dick and Harry will give me a hand. I'll see you later."

When the door was closed on them, Dick gave Frank a generous towelling, and helped him to dress. But all the while Frank's teeth were chattering, and every now and then his hand went to his eyes, as though to shut out some awful sight.

"What's wrong, old chap?" asked Dick, leading his cousin to the side of his bunk. "You look as if you've seen a ghost."

"Worse than a ghost," admitted Frank heavily. "The Octoroon is full of dead men. Don't give the game away for a minute or two. I don't want Joe to see me like this, and I don't want the crew to know until Joe thinks fit to tell them. Slip up on deck, will you, Harry, and, when you see a chance to get a word with the old man alone, say I'd like to have a talk with him in our cabin."

He could be induced to say nothing more until Tremorne joined them. Pieface had brought a pot of steaming hot coffee in, and Frank drank several cups before he could bring himself to speak of his discovery.

"Joe, we're up against something pretty dreadful!" he said, when at length he felt his power of speech

practically nothing of worth is left. Now, what's to be done?"

"Only one thing," replied Joe, looking very grim. "We must get a line on to her the moment the back of this storm breaks, tow her to the nearest port, and hand her over to the authorities for an inquiry." He glanced through the closed port to the heave of the grey water. "The wind is drawing off a bit, and the waves are going down. By this afternoon—"

Zoom! A ricocheting bang rolled round the heavens, and as they leapt to their feet it was followed by a second thunderous report, louder than the first.

"Gun-fire!" muttered Joe, starting for the door. "The phantom ship has found us, and we've got to make a fight for it."

The prophecy, however, proved wrong, for when they reached the deck and stared round, the horizon was an empty void, save for the dark mass of the Octoroon rolling heavily on her beam-ends. And above her hung a dense black cloud.

Joe raised his head and sniffed at the air. Down wind a smur of fine spray drifted, bringing with it a strange acrid odour.

"Gelignite!" he remarked shortly. "A bomb has exploded in her. Thank goodness, Frank, you got away when you did!"

Barely had he spoken when there was a third detonation, and this time a yawning hole, through which smoke and flame issued, appeared in the Octoroon's side. She rolled over like a wounded animal, and before the cloud of dark vapour had vanished they saw an immense stream of water pouring into her.

Joe was beside himself with rage. "The brutes!" he cried, shaking his fist in the air. "They've done us. No chance of getting a scrap of evidence against 'em. See! Those confounded infernal-machines are bursting under the water-line. Long before we can get to her she'll be down."

A dull sound, resembling the explosion of a big gun afar off, rolled over the sea, and pyramids of white foam rose and fell along the side of the stricken steamer.

Every man on board the Defiance lined the deck-rail, and watched with regretful eyes the tragic fate which had befallen a sister ship. The Octoroon had heeled so far over that the rail along her port-quarter was awash, and the deck slanted at such an angle that they could clearly discern the yawning opening where the main-hatch covering had been removed.

A heavy sea took her, and, breaking under her keel, drove her nose deep into an oily swirl. She thrust her bows slantingly down, recovered, and settled again with her upper works awash.

Joe broke the awed silence which had fallen upon the little knot of watchers.

"We can reckon we've had a lucky escape, lads," he said, addressing them. "Young Master Frank here tells me that men have been murdered aboard yonder vessel. We've decided it is the work of the pirate ship that passed us in the night. Now that we know we're in dangerous waters, night and day we must be ready for action."

By the expressions on their faces he could see that every man was deeply moved by the tragedy they were witnessing, and that every heart was registering its secret vow one day to be avenged for their slain brothers of the sea.

The Octoroon was settling fast. At the end of a quarter of an hour her forepeak was entirely submerged, and the encroaching water was almost on a level with the top of the chart-house. By ten o'clock she was up to her waist, with her stern lifting. Once or twice she seemed to make a gigantic effort to recover, but each upward heave was followed by a downward thrust which carried her lower. The end came some twenty minutes later. Her stern lifted slowly, swung to the vertical, showing the barnacles which clung to her keel, the motionless screw, and the rusted rudder-plates.

Then she began to slide, gently at first, but later gathering momentum, until with a loud sucking noise she dived, and so vanished from sight.

A swirl of eddying foam, some loose pieces of wreckage, and a thin film of oil iridescent in the sun—just breaking through a dark fringe of cloud—alone marked her last resting-place.

The Octoroon had been added to the long list of vessels which had disappeared without trace.

"A thousand pities I couldn't have had a few hours aboard her to collect

evidence," said Joe, when they were gathered in the saloon, making an unusually silent meal. "At least we might have found something to help convict the instigator of this dirty business."

Frank looked troubled. "I don't know what you would have found, Joe. From all I saw, I should say every passenger had been stripped of identification papers, the ship's log removed, and certainly nothing left behind to point to the authors of the outrage. If we decide that the strange vessel we saw last night was the pirate, then, considering we've lost track of him, we're not very much wiser than when we left England."

"Except this," suggested Joe grimly. "We've got something of the measure of our man. We know he's desperate, that his methods are drastic and carefully worked out—for believe me, it takes a lot of planning and a lot of working to sink a ship without trace. He carried not only arms, but plenty of bombs, and that raises another question—that somewhere on this side of the Atlantic he has a base from which to operate and secure fresh supplies. I suggest one of our first jobs will be to try to locate it."

This seemed a very sensible plan, and, the boys agreeing, the Defiance, after saluting the spot where the ill-fated vessel had vanished, went full speed ahead once more. Only from now onwards a very different spirit prevailed on shipboard. There was much work to be done, and everyone went about his task with a grim purpose.

Each day both boat and gun drill was held, the crew being practised in all the arts of the "Q" boats which had played such an important part in the late war.

They were acquainted with the mechanism controlling the masked guns, shown how to carry on as an ordinary cargo-carrying vessel, while all the time other members of the crew were lying at gun-stations, drilled in the use of rifles and small arms, and generally turned into a very efficient fighting machine, capable of putting up a very good show if called upon.

After much deliberation, Joe had decided not to report the meeting with the Octoroon when he made Nassau to coal and to replenish the fresh-water tanks. He was of the opinion that no good purpose could be served by giving publicity to a tragedy which was beyond recall or redemption.

As he explained to the boys, so far as they and the authorities would be concerned, the whole affair was shrouded in mystery and supposition. There was nothing actually to connect the fate of the Octoroon with the disappearance of the other vessels in the adjacent waters, or with the wreck of the Carol Deering on the Diamond Shoals. Nor had they established beyond doubt that the strange ship which approached them during the previous night was in any way responsible for the condition in which the Octoroon had been left.

"My own idea is that the vessel we saw is at the bottom of all this dirty business," Joe said. "But at this stage nothing is to be gained by making the world at large as wise as we are. We're not in a position to prove any evidence in support of our story, so the best thing we can do is to bide our time and see what turns up."

Four days later they sighted the easternmost fringe of the Cayos, which extended in all some six hundred miles in a north-westerly direction from the neighbourhood of the north coast of Hayti to the east coast of Florida.

Of coralline formation, they found the smaller islands to be generally of reef-like shape, long, narrow, and low, the highest point covered with luxuriant verdure certainly not rising to more than two hundred and fifty feet.

Joe pointed out to them Watling Island, now regarded as the most likely landing-place of Columbus when he discovered the New World, and, a little to the west, San Salvador, hitherto looked upon as the first land sighted by the great navigator. On the Sunday, Nassau, the chief port of New Providence, lifted out of a steaming heat haze, and here they stayed the best part of a week—as Joe explained, to give the modern pirate a chance to get news of them.

Into the Unknown!

The task that now faced the adventurers was to locate a spot which would conform to the facts given out

by Dick to the newspaper correspondents in connection with the supposed hoard of buried treasure.

In order to lend colour to the story, Dick had taken as a working basis the original plans made more than three centuries earlier by his ancestor, Sir Amos Polruan; and these made reference to a fair-sized island situated some four hundred and seventy miles south-west of the Bahamas. Accordingly, on leaving Nassau, the Defiance steamed for the Old Bahama Channel and set her course straight for the Gulf of Mexico.

As there was no need for immediate haste, steam was reduced and the Defiance kept to a steady twelve knots which continued until the evening of the fourth day. It was about sundown, following a broiling hot day, when Joe noticed a "whiffing" of the wind to the south and then back again to the east. It blew only faintly and with irregular puffs, but there was something in the presence of large numbers of birds consistently flying westward towards the distant mainland, that warned Joe the spell of fine weather was not destined to continue for very long.

Towards seven o'clock, not liking the look of a dark bank of cloud-wrack gathering low in the eastern sky, he rang down to the engine-room for a full head of steam to be got up, and from a leisurely pace the Defiance quickened until the welter at

time, unless we make Cathcart's Island before the worst of it breaks."

Before nightfall the breeze dropped away altogether and the air became as close and stuffy as an oven. And though the Defiance had so far behaved splendidly, due in part to the tremendous pace at which Mactavish was pushing her, she now showed a tendency to roll badly. First on one sea, then on another, she lifted to such an extent that at times the side of the cabin became the roof and those within were obliged to cling to every handhold for support.

Even so, to the unpractised eye there seemed little danger of extremely rough weather ahead, for the surface of the sea remained glassy and unbroken and the air continued swelteringly hot. And all this time, much to the surprise of the boys, Joe ordered Mactavish to keep the engines going at full speed.

Towards six o'clock the sun was hanging low, glowering like an angry red eye upon the world. And, as it dropped nearer and nearer to the horizon, dense masses of close-packed clouds seemed to rise to meet it, until with extraordinary suddenness the light snapped out and darkness fell. At the same time there was a remarkable drop in the temperature; the air began to stir as though the forward motion of the ship was fanning the blast from a gigantic furnace.

Familiar sounds, such as the throbbing of the engines, the creak of

a whistling amongst the spars, a humming in the rigging and the rattling of canvas sounded for all the world like the rapid discharge of guns.

A blackness such as none of them had ever before experienced, began to fill both sea and sky, so that it looked as though the Defiance were heading all the while for a wall. On either side the water began to rise, neither troubled nor foam-flecked, but in a dark glittering swell that looked oily and forbidding as it rolled past.

Now and again the scream of the wind would be broken by a shriller sound—the whir of the screws lifted clear out of the water, followed a few seconds later by a deep resonant note as the blades sank deep. And at such times the ship would quiver and stall, shake herself, thrust and roll, and then strike forward once more.

"I'm about fed up with this," said Harry, when at length his eyes had grown tired from staring into the pitch darkness. "If there's nothing we can do, we're better off below."

He made as if to move towards the saloon companion, but no sooner had he stepped beyond the shelter of the wheelhouse than invisible hands clutched at him and flung him with stunning force against the stern rail.

In all their experience neither Dick nor Frank had witnessed such an astonishing exhibition of the force of Nature. Harry lay where he had been flung down, a black crumpled mass

Towards nine o'clock there was a loud crash. The foremast had gone, dragging with it trailing aerials, ropes, and tackle that sagged over the side. At the same moment the engines were rung down and speed of the Defiance slackened perceptibly. If anything, this only increased their personal discomfort, for with each fresh roll of the vessel they were thrown from one side to another, until every bone and muscle in their bodies ached with the force of the concussions.

Whatever antics a small vessel is capable of, the Defiance went through them all—now swinging, now listing, next heaving, and then a long sustained roll which took their hearts into their mouths and left them feeling they had no insides at all.

Alas for Dick's pride. Never perhaps was it humbled quite so completely. Worn out from resisting, he simply lay where the next sea cast him, and abandoned himself to utter helplessness. Nor were Harry and Frank in any less pitiable plight. Certainly Harry managed to save himself from further personal injury by locking his arms about a support that ran from the floor to the roof. And in these relative positions of incapacity, they lay like logs while the necessary routine of the ship was carried on about them.

For Tremorne it was an anxious time. With Pengeley and the first officer he had lashed himself to the bridge, and although mountainous seas were running, he kept the vessel on a course which he decided sooner or later would bring them to Cathcart's Island.

The night wore very slowly away with the hurricane strengthening. Every hour fresh damage was recorded. All the wireless had long since been torn away, one side of the charthouse had been stove in by a heavy wave, the fo'c'sle and the lazarette were both flooded. But through it all one person preserved his amazing cheerfulness. Pieface revelled in this chance to show the best side of his character. Though quite early on the galley stove had been put out of action by a sea that swept him into the store-room, he managed by barricading the door with heavy wooden boxes, to get a Primus going, and with this he maintained a steady supply of hot drinks to the bridge.

The morning broke, dark and cheerless, with the sky like one immense thundercloud across which at intervals lightning played with a brilliance that lit the sea for miles. And after each successive flash, thunder rolled like the bourdon note of an organ round the heavens. Of other ships there were no signs, although once, a very long way off a rocket soared heavenward and burst with a dazzling cluster of green stars.

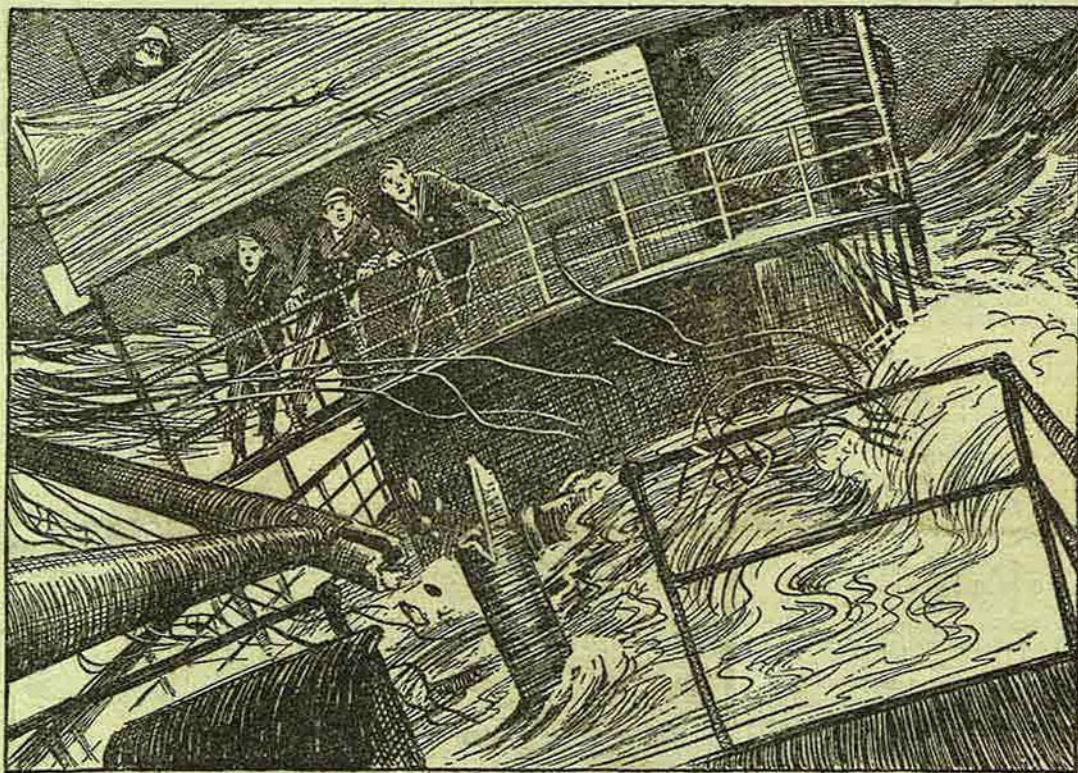
When noon came, Mactavish, grimed and oil-soaked, staggered up from below and grimly announced, that so far as he was concerned his work was at an end. In such a tumultuous sea it was useless to keep the engines going any longer for fear of a broken propeller shaft. There was nothing for it, he declared, but to run willy-nilly before the storm.

The wind had now increased to the force of a ninety-mile-an-hour gale, and every bit of gear that had not been tightly lashed down, had been washed from the deck. For a distance of nearly twenty feet on the port quarter the rail was down, the hatch combings had been badly knocked about and most of the ventilators smashed. At every fresh list the water poured in, and the floor of the saloon resembled a miniature mill-race dotted with floating wreckage.

It was a sorry end to the high hopes with which they had brought the trim little ship out of Plymouth, but the knowledge of peril looming every moment nearer was the thought uppermost in every mind. In the late afternoon the wind shifted somewhat and drew round to the south-east, driving the Defiance forward at a speed she could never have made under her own turbines.

This state of affairs continued through the night. Morning found everyone, including Joe, almost in a state of exhaustion. Practically the management of the ship had been taken out of their hands. Humanly-speaking, nothing more could be done, and the only question was whether the storm would thrash itself out before the vessel, with all on board, foundered.

(Will the Defiance be able to keep afloat during the terrible storm? On no account must you miss next Monday's startling chapters of this great story! Order your BOYS' FRIEND from your newsagent to-day, and avoid disappointment!)



IN THE HEART OF THE STORM! There was a loud crack and the foremast went, dragging its trailing aerials, ropes, and tackle that sagged over the side. At the same moment the engines of the Defiance were rung down and her speed slackened.

her bows lay back like two gargantuan horns banded with foam.

All through that night they drove on at ever-increasing speed, until every rivet plate and length of deck planking quivered and hummed with the terrific revolutions of the screws. And with the passing of the hours and their objective growing ever nearer, the quality of the atmosphere began to change. The sudden gusts, edged with the coolness of a sea breeze, gave place to a still moist heat from which even their rapid passage through the water gave little relief.

By day, the sun glowed like a ball of molten fire above a sea of glass. At twilight, it seemed to drop with a hiss over the edge of the world, but though its light was gone, its heat remained. The barometer bounded up and dropped back again with alarming suddenness. The temperature rose almost to suffocating point and, at Joe's suggestion, mattresses were brought up and laid out on the deck, for the heat below was almost unendurable. The following afternoon Joe permitted himself to leave the bridge for the first time in forty hours. He came up with the boys grouped amidships.

"Well, what's it going to be?" Frank asked, as he wiped the streaming moisture out of his eyes. "A heat wave?"

"West Indian hurricane," snapped the sailor, laconically glancing up at the arch of the sky, glowing like an inverted metal bowl. "And when it does hit us, we shall have a bad

timbers and the straining of plates as the vessel rolled heavily, gradually lost their individual character and passed unnoticed as the wind rose to a roar that seemed to shake the very heavens.

About an hour after his departure from the bridge, Tremorne appeared from his cabin and passed the boys still gathered in the lee of the wheelhouse.

"Take a tip from me, lads, and git below," he said tersely. "You'll only be in the way up here, and I wouldn't like to see any of you hurt."

"Still pulling our leg," laughed Dick when the old man had gone. "He loves to regard us as longshoremen."

It struck him with a shock of surprise that to make the others hear what he was saying he was forced to raise his voice, for now there was

save for the deathly whiteness of his face.

"Lucky he caught the rail, or he'd have gone over," shouted Dick, moving forward, his free hand clutching a hand-rail, his other arm linked through his cousin's. In this fashion they managed to reach Rawson, and, seizing him by the foot, dragged him into the shelter of the wheelhouse. A discolouration over one eye showed the force with which he must have struck a stanchion. When a few minutes after he sat up and looked dazedly round, he met the glances of the others with a look of blank astonishment.

"Just as though a thousand horsepower motor hit me," he muttered, rubbing his head. "I guess I went fast."

"Fast," laughed Frank. "You just hit the rail and dropped down and out. I believe Joe was right. We're in for something this time."

He switched on the light and followed the murky ray across the deck to where the inky waters raced beyond. The air seemed now alive with terrifying sound. Following each forward thrust the stern lifted, and when she came down she dropped into the trough with a bang like the discharge of a pistol. And on both sides, successive seas struck the plates sonorous sledge-hammer blows.

Speech was quite out of the question. The tumult was as fierce as a high-powered aeroplane in flight. And above it rose one distinctive note—the ceaseless falsetto screaming of the wind.

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ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL—RABY RETURNS TO THE CO.!

Chums Reunited!

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood
appearing in the "Popular.")

Raby rescues Jimmy Silver,
Lovell, and Newcome from
the hands of the Moderns,
and returns to the End Study!



The 1st Chapter.

Raby's Reply.

George Raby was feeling glum. There was a shadow on his plump face as he walked to and fro under the old beeches in the Rookwood quad.

It was a sunny afternoon, very sunny and mild for early March, and it was a half-holiday at Rookwood School. And George Raby, just then, sorely missed his old chums, Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Newcome, with whom he was no longer on speaking terms.

Raby had a grievance, there was no doubt about that. Like the prophet of olden time, he felt that he did well to be angry.

But he was wondering now whether he had done well in refusing his old chums' overtures towards a reconciliation.

Certainly he missed them; certainly he would have been glad of their company that sunny afternoon. But—

There was a "but."

His old chums had given deep offence. When he thought of that offence, though it was weeks old, Raby's cheeks still burned.

Deep down in his heart the old friendship was as strong as ever; but on the surface, at least, he was unforgiving.

Yet he was conscious that the breach would probably have been healed before this but for a certain want of tact on the part of Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell had an unfortunate way of putting his foot in it, as it were. Generally Lovell could be relied upon to say the wrong thing at the wrong moment.

Tubby Muffin came across the quad from the School House, and blinked at the solitary junior with a grin.

Raby answered the grin with a dark frown.

He was feeling annoyed, dissatisfied with himself and things generally, and he was in no mood for Tubby's grinning.

"Oh, here you are!" said Muffin. Grunt from Raby.

"Feeling down, what?"

"Oh, roll away!" snapped Raby.

"Feeling rather left, eh?" said Tubby Muffin sympathetically.

As a matter of fact, Raby was feeling rather "left." But he did not want to hear that remarked upon. And it occurred to him that, in the present state of his feelings, there would be some solace in kicking somebody. So he took the fat Classical by the collar and twirled him round.

Tubby Muffin, for once in his fat career, was coming in useful.

There was an apprehensive yell from Muffin.

"I say, hold on! I've got a letter for you."

"Oh!" said Raby.

He released the fat junior unkindly. Muffin hurriedly handed over the letter, and backed out of reach.

"There's an answer," he said.

Raby jerked the envelope open. There was no superscription on it, and he wondered why the dickens anybody at Rookwood should send him a note. He understood, as he glanced at the contents of the letter.

It was written in Jimmy Silver's hand, and it was signed by three names. It ran:

"J. SILVER.
"A. NEWCOME.
"A. E. LOVELL."

Raby grinned faintly as he read.

More than once there had been overtures from his old comrades, and he had rebuffed them.

So this time the overture was despatched in writing, which gave Raby time to reflect before he answered.

The junior stood with the letter in his hand, thinking.

He was tired of the present state of affairs, and nothing would have pleased him better than to join his old chums in a picnic up the river—on the old terms. But—

Tubby Muffin watched him curiously.

"Jimmy asked me to take back your answer," he said. "Buck up; he's going to give me a jam-tart for this."

Raby did not answer.

"I say, Raby—"

"Dry up for a minute."

"Yes, but I say, did you really funk the Bagshot Bounders that time?" asked Tubby Muffin.

Raby gave him a glare, and his face hardened.

His old comrades, misled by appearances, had suspected him of funk, of leaving them in the lurch in the hands of their old enemies of Bagshot School. They had learned their mistake, they had expressed their contrition, Raby had come out of the affair with flying colours.

But Tubby's remark showed that misapprehension on the subject might still linger in some minds, at least in obtuse minds like Tubby's.

Raby flushed, and a glint came into his eyes. That unfortunate remark of Tubby Muffin's was enough. Raby, like Pharaoh of old, hardened his heart.

He jerked a stump of pencil from his pocket, scribbled for a second on the letter, and replaced it in the envelope.

"There's your answer," he snapped.

He tossed the letter at Muffin, and turned his back on the fat Classical and walked away.

"Grumpy beast!" murmured Tubby.

He picked up the envelope, which had fallen at his feet, and rolled away to the School House. He rolled at an unusual rate, eager to annex the jam-tart that had been offered for his services as messenger. So keen was his interest in the jam-tart that Tubby did not even look into the envelope to read Raby's reply, which certainly the inquisitive Tubby would have done had not his mind been occupied by much more important matters.

He rolled into the end study in the Fourth Form passage, where Jimmy Silver & Co. were waiting for him.

"Oh, here he is!" said Lovell.

Jimmy held out his hand for the letter.

"Where's the tart?" asked Tubby.

"Oh, good!"

Reginald Muffin annexed the tart and rolled away with it before Jimmy had extracted the paper from the envelope. Jimmy unfolded the sheet and looked at it, and a change came over his cheery face.

"What's the answer?" asked Newcome.

Jimmy frowned.

"Look!"

He held up the letter that had been sent to Raby. Across it was pencilled, in large letters:

"RATS."

That was Raby's reply.

The 2nd Chapter.

A Raid on the River.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave an angry snort.

Newcome looked a little exasperated.

Even Jimmy Silver frowned with

annoyance, in spite of the placid temper that was a distinguishing characteristic of Uncle James of Rookwood.

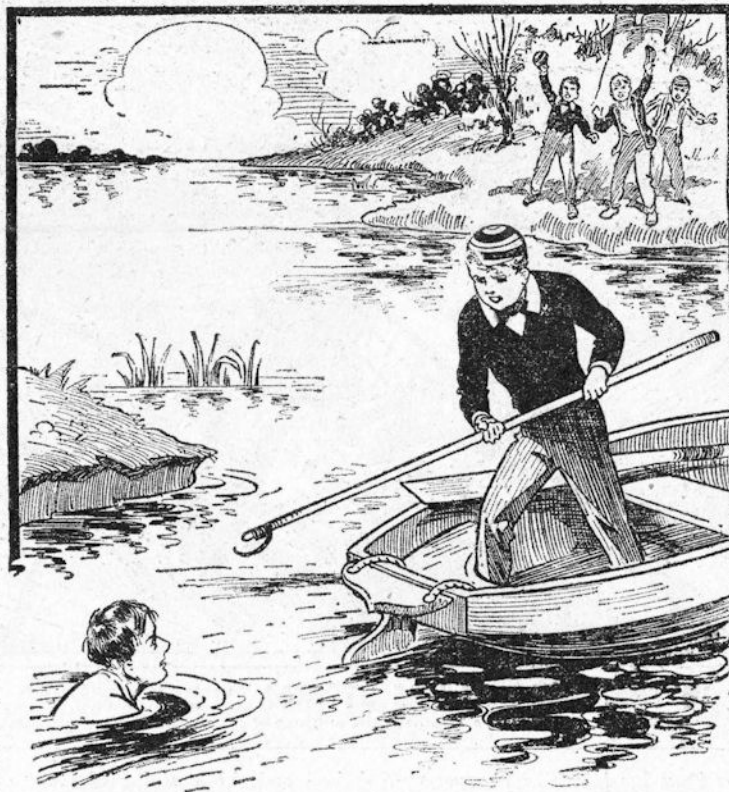
"Cheek!" growled Lovell.

"Dash it all, I'm getting fed up," said Newcome. "If Raby doesn't want to make it up, we may as well give him a rest."

"I believe he does, though," said Jimmy.

"Then why doesn't he?" snapped Lovell.

"It's all rot, you know," went on Newcome. "I know it was rough on Raby, and we made a rotten mistake; but we've apologised for it, and we



UNPLEASANT FOR TOMMY DODD! Raby flourished the boathook within an inch or two of Tommy Dodd's nose. "Come on," he grinned, "you'll get punctured, but come on." Tommy Dodd did not seem to consider it good enough, for suddenly he turned round and swam for the bank.

can't do more than that. He oughtn't to keep it up like this."

"Sulky ass!" growled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded slowly.

"I wish he'd come round," he said.

"The study isn't the same with old Raby out of it and keeping his blessed back up in this way. But it's up to us to keep patient, as we were to blame. No fellow likes being called a funk and poor old Raby feels very sore about it."

"That's all very well," said Lovell.

"But—"

"Anyhow, he won't come," said Newcome. "So we may as well get off."

"That's so."

The three juniors were ready to start; they had been waiting only for the answer from their estranged chum. Lovell picked up a packed lunch-basket, and Jimmy Silver a bag, and they left the end study.

"Just off," said Jimmy. "Made up your team yet, Morny?"

"Nearly. I've been looking for Dodd and Cook and Doyle—but the Modern asses have gone out for the afternoon," said Mornington. "They don't think the Third worth their while—like you fellows. But there's plenty of recruits."

"You might try Raby!" said Jimmy.

"Raby! Isn't he going with you?"

"Nunno. He might like a game of footer."

Mornington nodded with a smile.

"I'll ask him," he said.

It was just like Jimmy to think of his estranged chum "mooching" about by himself that bright afternoon—in spite of the curt and irritating reply he had just received from George Raby.

The three juniors left the House, and they caught sight of Raby under the beeches as they went down to the gates.

Raby glanced in their direction for a moment, and turned away at once. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked out of gates and took the path down to the boat-house.

They selected their boat and ran it out into the water from the raft, and jumped in. On that sunny afternoon there were several boats and canoes out. As the three Classical juniors pulled up the river, they sighted a skiff with three Modern juniors in it: Tommy Cook, Tommy Dodd, and Tommy Doyle, of the Modern Fourth.

Tommy Dodd waved a hand to the Classicals and hailed them.

"Hold on, you Classical chaps! We've got something for you."

"What's that?" asked Lovell.

The Modern skiff ranged closer.

reached at last, and the Classicals jumped ashore, tying the painter to a low-hanging branch.

"Here we are," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Nobody else here—that's luck. I wish old Raby was here."

"Oh, blow Raby!" grunted Lovell. The juniors pushed through the thickets that grew down to the water's edge.

It was a little island, thick with trees and bushes, much frequented in the summer by picnickers, but quite deserted now. The chums of the Classical Fourth had it all to themselves. They proceeded to picnic.

Sticks were gathered for a fire. They were damp, but a can of paraffin had been packed in the bag, and with the aid of the oil, a fire was soon going. Over it, from a leafless branch, a tin kettle was suspended on a whipcord, to boil. Sandwiches and a cake were sorted out of the basket, and tin cups, and other articles. It was early for tea, but the pull up the river had freshened the juniors' appetites. Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Newcome sat round the fire on fallen logs, and fully enjoyed the first open-air feed of the season.

They were busy, when Jimmy looked round suddenly in the direction of the boat.

"Some other party coming along," he remarked. "I think I heard an oar."

"I didn't!" remarked Lovell.

Jimmy stood up and looked towards the river. The bushes were leafless but thick, and shut off the view. A sound of a grating boat and a mutter of voices came to his ears. He was sure that he heard a chuckle.

"I fancy I'll look to the boat," he said. "Somebody's there—"

"It's all right, ass!" said Lovell.

"Br-r-r-r!"

Jimmy Silver strode back through the bushes towards the landing-place. He came quite suddenly in sight of the boat.

The Classicals had tied it up and left it empty. It was not empty now. A skiff was close to it, with Tommy Cook and Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle at the oars. Tommy Cook had boarded the Classical boat. Dodd had cast off the painter, and the two Moderns, with the oars in their hands, were pushing off shore. That was the startling sight that met Jimmy Silver's surprised eyes.

He rushed forward with a shout.

"You Modern rotters! Stop!"

Tommy Dodd looked up quickly.

"Buck up, 'Cooney!" he exclaimed.

"What-bo!"

Jimmy Silver rushed desperately towards the boat. The Moderns had not succeeded in getting it away yet.

But as he reached the water's edge, Tommy Dodd lunged with the oar, and caught the captain of the Fourth on the chest.

"Ow!"

Thud!

Jimmy Silver sat down, hard.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three Tommies.

Another shove, and the boat was off. The two boats rocked away on the shining river, while Jimmy Silver sat and gasped for breath.

The 3rd Chapter.

Stranded!

Valentine Mornington tapped Raby on the shoulder, as the estranged member of the Fistical Four was mooching under the beeches on his lonely own, with his hands in his pockets and a frown on his brow.

Raby looked round gloomily at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Want you, old fellow," said Mornington amiably.

"What's on?"

"Football," explained Mornington. "Jimmy's left me to make up a team to beat the Third. I want you to play in the front line."

Raby shook his head. He was feeling down and out that afternoon, and football would have done him good. But he was not feeling inclined for it—or for anything in particular.

He was sorry that he had sent so uncompromising an answer to the polite note from his old chums; he had realised, on reflection, that it was Tubby Muffin's obtuse remarks that had caused him to do so; which was quite illogical. But it was too late to think of that now. Mornington regarded him rather curiously.

"None of your old pals playin', if that's what's worryin' you," he said lightly. "It's my team—a poor thing, but mine own, you know."

Raby smiled faintly.

"Ed rather not play, thanks. You don't need any help to beat the Third."

"No; but—"

"Leave me out."

"You're an ass, old chap," said Mornington. "What's the good of moochin' and grousin'? Come and play footer."

Raby shook his head and walked away. Valentine Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and went to look for another man. There was no difficulty in finding one, and the foot-ball-match was soon in progress. George Raby walked round the quadrangle gloomily, and gave the players a look-in after a time; and as he looked on at the game, and heard the cheery shouts, he regretted a little that he had not accepted Morny's invitation. Better to have been playing footer, than mooching about by himself doing nothing—slacking away a half-holiday like Peele or Gower or Smythe of the Shell.

But it was too late again—really he seemed to be able to do nothing right that afternoon. He walked away to the gates at last.

There he came on Tubby Muffin. That fat youth came up to him with an ingratiating smile. Sergeant Kettle, at the tuckshop, had thrice refused that afternoon to part with jam-tarts on "tick." Every fellow whom Tubby had tackled on the subject had declined to lend him even a humble "tanner." So Reginald Muffin rolled up to Raby with a faint hope in his podgy breast.

"Raby, old chap—" he began. Raby glared at him.

But for Tubby's unfortunate remarks, which had revived his sense of injury and grievance so inopportunistically, he would have answered Jimmy Silver's note in the same friendly spirit in which it had been written—and he would now be up the river with his chums, instead of mooching around like a lost chicken. Tubby had arrived just in time to relieve Raby's feelings on that subject.

"Can you lend me a bob, old chap?" asked Muffin hopefully. "I say, old Kettle's got some lovely tarts. I—I say—Yaroooop!"

Bump! In the grasp of vengeance Reginald Muffin sat on the ground with a concussion that knocked nearly all the breath out of his podgy person.

"Whoop!" gasped Tubby. "You fat rotter—"

"Yow-ow-woop! Groogh!" Raby jerked off the astonished Tubby's cap, and rammed it down the back of his neck. Then he walked on, feeling solaced, leaving Tubby Muffin anything but solaced. The fat Classical sat and gasped and spluttered for a good five minutes after Raby was gone.

Raby strolled down to the boat-house; but he did not feel disposed to take a boat out by himself. Townsend and Topham were taking out a very handsome and elegant skiff belonging to Towny. They smiled as they saw Raby come down to the raft, and Towny called out: "Come and steer for us, Raby."

Townsend really meant it kindly, seeing the junior on his "lonely own." But Raby was irritated by any appearance of compassion, and he flushed and answered most ungratefully: "Go and eat coke!"

He left the raft and walked along the towing-path.

"Ass!" called out Towny politely.

"Horrid cad!" said Topham.

Raby did not heed. He jammed his hands into his pockets, and tramped up the towing-path with a gloomy brow. Round him the countryside was bright and sunny, the woods showing the first touches of the green of spring, the river shining in the sunlight. But Raby's face was shadowed. He was dissatisfied with himself for rejecting the overtures of his old comrades, and feeling at the same time that it was impossible for him to make the first advances. His old chums had wronged him, but they had made all the amends in their power; and by keeping up resentment like this he felt that he was transferring the wrong from their shoulders to his own. Which was a very uncomfortable reflection.

And he missed his old friends and wanted their company. He wondered whether they missed him and wanted his. He was sure of Jimmy Silver—sure of Newcome, too. And even Arthur Edward Lovell, tactless as he might be, was a good pal.

He came in sight of the island, and as he sighted it he remembered that his former chums were picnicking there, as the note had informed him. Two boats were rocking under

the branches by the island, and Raby looked at them with interest. Doyle of the Modern Fourth was in one of them; Dodd and Cook in the other. They had pushed well away from the island, and were looking back with grinning faces.

Raby stood in a clump of willows on the river-bank, and watched the island, realising that something was up. He saw Jimmy Silver scramble to his feet on the island. Jimmy's voice reached his ears.

"You Modern cads! Bring that boat back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Moderns.

Then Raby understood. It was a House rag; and the Modern fellows had captured the Classical boat, leaving the Classics stranded on the island. Raby grinned faintly as he stood among the willows and watched.

Lovell and Newcome appeared among the thickets on the island and joined Jimmy Silver.

The three Classics shook their fists at the Moderns in the boats. So far from reciprocating, the Moderns kissed their hands in return.

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath; but that rejoinder from the Moderns seemed to intensify the wrath of the stranded Classics.

"You cheeky rotters!" bawled Lovell.

"You Modern cads!" yelled Newcome.

"Bring back that boat!" roared Jimmy Silver. "By Jove! We'll

"Now, you really want this boat?" called out Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, you Modern worm!"

"Are you coming to terms?"

"Terms, fathead? What do you mean, ass?" roared Lovell.

"You've got to own up that you're licked—"

"Rats!"

"And write it down and sign it, for us to frame and hang up in our Common-room," continued Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Cook and Doyle, delighted with the idea.

"Something like this," went on the cheerful Tommy. "We—Silver, Lovell, and Newcome—own up that we're licked to the wide, and beg the respected young gentlemen of the Modern Side to take pity on us."

"You silly chump!" howled Lovell.

"Write that down, and sign your names to it, fair and square," said Tommy Dodd. "A leaf of your pocket-book will do. I'll pay out of my own pocket to have it mounted and framed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it to me here, and there's your boat in exchange."

"I'd sooner stay on this dashed island all night!" howled Lovell furiously.

"Please yourself, old bean!"

"Look here, Dodd—"

"Are you coming to terms?" demanded the Modern leader.

"No, you cheeky ass! But—"

That pertinent question seemed to take Arthur Edward rather aback. It did not appear to have occurred to him that the blame, if any, was not wholly somebody else's.

"Yes, why?" inquired Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

Lovell grunted.

"Oh, don't jaw!" he said. "If we ever land in a scrape, you fellows are bound to jaw. What good's jaw?"

"Well, you cheeky ass—" began Newcome indignantly.

"We're landed in it now," interrupted Lovell. "I'm jolly well not going to surrender, for one!"

"No fear!"

"Those Modern cads will have to let us have our boat before lock-up. They're only pulling our leg."

Jimmy Silver looked dubious.

"I'd like something more certain than that to rely on," he remarked. "They've caught us fair and square, and if we don't surrender—"

"Are you thinking of surrender?" bawled Lovell.

"Fathead!" was Jimmy's reply to that.

"Look at the cheeky rotters!" said Lovell, watching the Moderns across the expanse of river. "They're landing, and taking it easy. Picnicking under our noses, the cheeky cads!"

The three Tommies had pulled the boats up close under the willows, and both painters were tied to a drooping bough. Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle jumped ashore, watched from the islands by the exasperated Classics.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Lovell suddenly.

"What—"

"There's somebody at the boats!"

"My hat!"

And a startled ejaculation broke from all three of the stranded Classics:

"Raby! Old Raby!"

The 5th Chapter.

Raby to the Rescue!

George Raby had lain very low when the Moderns pulled to the bank, scarce six yards from where he was standing.

As the boats came across, Raby dropped on hands and knees among the willows, and, like Brer Fox, he lay low and said "nuffin'."

Utterly unconscious of his proximity, the three Moderns did not even dream of danger.

Tommy Dodd & Co., busy with sandwiches and ginger-beer, and enjoying their triumph over the Classics, had not the remotest suspicion that the bunch of willows between them and the river concealed the missing member of the Fiscal Four.

Raby grinned, in his cover, as he heard the popping of corks and the buzz of voices on the farther side of the towing-path. With the caution of a Boy Scout or a Red Indian he crept through the willows, closer to the water's edge.

His long-standing quarrel with his old comrades was forgotten now. His chums were stranded, at the mercy of the Moderns, and Raby's only thought was to go to the rescue.

But he knew that he had to be cautious. Once spotted by the enemy he was one against three, and he had no chance at close quarters. His design was to capture the boats before the enemy were aware of his presence.

He reached the nearest boat, crawling, and then raised his head to look back.

The straggling willows hid him from the view of the Modern juniors on the high bank. But he could not have risen to his feet without betraying himself.

Slowly, cautiously, silently, Raby crept over the gunwale and rolled into the boat.

There, as he lay, he drew out his pocket-knife and opened it. The keen blade was drawn across the rope, and the boat rocked free.

By that time the three Classics on the island had seen him. They watched him in tense silence.

Even Arthur Edward Lovell realised that it was a moment for caution. There was still time for the three Moderns to rush down to the boats, if the alarm was given, and the adventure would have ended in a ducking for George Raby.

Raby crept silently into the second boat, and gave the Modern skiff a powerful shove, which sent it rocking out into the river. There the current caught it and twirled it away.

Tommy Dodd's boat, with nobody in it, started on its voyage home to Rookwood.

Raby cut loose the Classical boat, seized an oar, and planted it against the bank to shove off.

At the same moment there came a shout from above. The Modern boat, floating out into the middle of the river, came into view of the Tommies beyond the willows.

"Boat's loose!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "You ass, Doyle!"

"Sure, I tied it safe—"

"Looks like it!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "Come on! We can catch it with the other."

Even yet the Moderns did not know that the boats had been raided. They concluded that the escaped craft had fallen loose. But as they ran down the bank, crashing through the willows, they sighted George Raby, upright in the remaining boat, shoving off with an oar.

"Raby!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Classical cad! Collar him!"

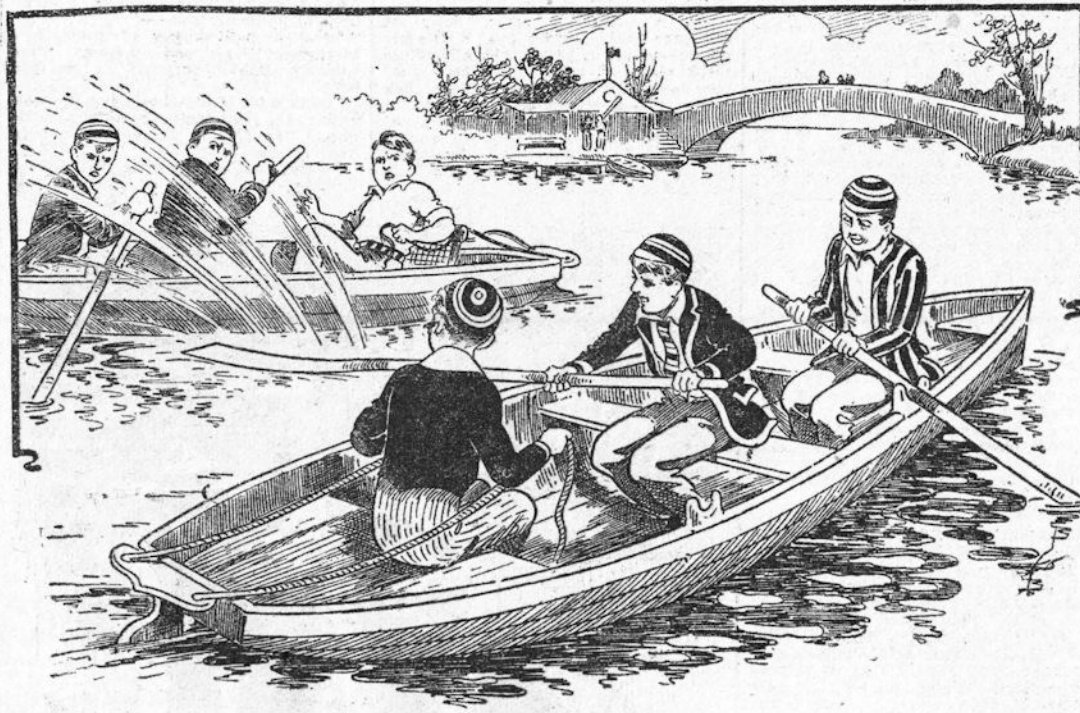
Tommy Dodd put on a desperate spurt, and his comrades followed him fast. Raby shoved with the oar, desperately, and the boat rocked out on the water. There was a widening stretch of water between the willows and the boat as the three breathless and enraged Moderns reached the river's edge.

Doyle and Cook came to a halt. But Tommy Dodd was made of sterner stuff. There was one chance—and Tommy took it! Without a second's pause, he made a flying leap as he reached the water's edge.

He fairly flew over the intervening water, and landed with both feet in the boat.

"Good egg!" panted Cook and Doyle.

(Continued on page 492.)



SPLASH! Jimmy Silver jerked in his oar and brought it down flat on the water close by the Modern skiff. There was a terrific splash and a terrific yell from Tommy Dodd & Co., who ceased pea-shooting quite suddenly as they were drenched!

jolly well mop up the quad with you when we come in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tommy Dodd, you worm—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies were almost doubled up with merriment. And Raby, in the willows on the river-bank, grinned and watched.

The 4th Chapter.

Tommy Dodd's Triumph.

Jimmy Silver & Co. shook their fists furiously; but they desisted at last from that useless demonstration. The shaking of fists had no effect whatever upon the playful Moderns.

"Look here, Tommy Dodd," called out Jimmy, calming himself at last. "This jape has gone far enough. We want our boat."

"Will you have it now—"

"Yes."

"Or when you can get it?" further inquired Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell.

"We've got to get back to Rookwood pretty soon. Bring that boat here."

"Swim for it!" suggested Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver glanced at the wide channel between the island and the bank. The river was deep, and ran swiftly; and the distance was considerable. The swim would not have been an easy one; and after that there would have been a tramp of two miles back to the school in wet clothes. That prospect did not attract the Classical chums.

"We'll give you time to think it over!" chortled Tommy Dodd.

"We'll pull over to the bank and wait half an hour. We've got some ginger-pop and sandwiches in our boat, and we can spare half an hour. When you decide to surrender, wave a cap to us."

"Never, you cheeky chump!"

"We'll see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two boats pulled away, slanting across the river towards the bank, heading for a clump of willows ashore. Neither of the contending parties was aware that that clump of willows concealed a watching junior of the Classical Fourth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. shook their fists again as the boats pulled off. They were tempted to rush into the water and make a desperate attack; but it was clear that they could not reach the boats. Instead of that, they brandished impotent fists at the Moderns, and bawled out uncomplimentary remarks, to which the three Tommies replied only with chuckles.

"Well, my hat!" said Newcome. "They've done us this time!"

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a snort.

"The boat oughtn't to have been left unguarded," he said.

"Well, we didn't know the Moderns were on the war-path," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"All the same, the boat ought to have been watched."

"Yes; but—"

"It ought to have been watched."

"Then why the merry thump didn't you watch it, Lovell?" demanded Newcome rather acidly.

They clambered up the steep bank and disappeared behind the willows.

They came into sight again in a few minutes, on the towing-path, where they turned to wave their hands to the Classics on the island. A shaking of fists from the island was the response to that.

"Poor little fags!" remarked Tommy Dodd compassionately.

"They think they can keep their giddy end up against the Modern side. I don't think!"

"No giddy fear!" chuckled Tommy Cook. "They'll surrender, right enough, when it gets towards lock-up."

"And we'll have the giddy document of surrender hung up in our Common-room, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle. "It will make all the Classics as wild as Huns!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Modern heroes were enjoying the situation. They sat on a grassy slope, on the farther side of the towing-path, and proceeded to discuss sandwiches and ginger-beer, in great spirits. From the island, across the gleaming river, came an occasional shout—conveying the Classical opinion of the Moderns and all their works. The Moderns, busy with their picnic, did not take the trouble to respond.

"Not much good yelling at the cads," Arthur Lovell remarked at last.

"What the thump are we going to do?" growled Newcome.

Jimmy Silver made a grimace.

"We're not going to do," he answered. "We're going to be done."

A WILD-WEST THRILLER—THIS MAGNIFICENT 12,000-WORD STORY!



Saving the Sheriff!

By GORDON WALLACE.

Frank Liversedge and Slim Danvers are captured by the law-men. They escape, thanks to Arizona Jim and

Bad Phil Hicks, and later are the means of saving Sheriff Wynott from certain death!

The 1st Chapter.

In the Hands of the Sheriff!

Frank Liversedge, Britisher and outlaw of the Wild Western State of Wyoming, eyed the goodly pile of canvas sacks that were arranged in a deep hole beneath the eaves of the shack he shared with Slim Danvers, his companion in outlawry.

"There'll soon be enough," he said, "to take us all to England, and then we'll be able to live decently, and at peace with everybody."

Slim Danvers smiled a little wistfully. He was a handsome fellow, some years older than Frank, who was yet some distance away from his twenties.

"Maybe so I shouldn't shake down very well in your England," he said. "I'm an American, bred and born; and a Westerner at that. Still, I'll allow I'd feel safer once I got under the Union Jack. They give a man a square deal in your country—and they don't out here, if they have a down on him."

"If we've only managed to keep on the right side of the law," said Frank, "I wouldn't have minded sticking out here in the West for the rest of my days—with an occasional visit to England thrown in, of course. But we got the wrong side of the law, Slim, and that finished us completely. However, we'll soon have enough to live comfortably on for the rest of our lives. So we'll all get out of Wyoming. You'll have to get your young brother, Slim, and so make up the family party."

"So so," said Slim slowly. "But—waal, I'd kinder like to get myself on the right side o' the law before I clear out of this State. After all, I'm an American, and I'd hate to think I darn't come back to my own country again. You're different; this ain't your native land."

"Anyhow," Frank urged, "with all the gold we've got scraped together, we ought to be able to hire honest lawyers to clear us. I didn't shoot Bull Kamloops, though everything's against me and the man who did the shooting's dead."

"We'd rather figure on the Governor o' the State workin' in our interests," said Slim. "We put him under a strong obligation, and with the help of Arizona Jim, we'd thought—"

"But unfortunately the Governor doesn't know what we did for him," said Frank. "He's been a mighty sick man ever since we saved him from King Charlie and his gang."

"And captured King Charlie, too," Slim put in. "He was an outlaw wanted much more than either of us. That stray bullet that hit the Governor during the rescuing process put Arizona Jim's schemes wrong."

"Halloo—oo!"

The call re-echoed along the walls of the deep "bow" in which these fellow-outlaws had made their camp. Here, in a deep hole in the mountains, they had lived for many weeks, with almost every man's hand turned against them; yet they had been busy, for a stream ran through this hollow, and the stream was heavily gold-bearing. There was only one way of getting to this spot; and that way was a secret known only to four people now, these two unfortunates who had got on the wrong side of the law, Bad Phil Hicks, a wild and woolly cow-puncher, and Arizona Jim, their magnificent but perhaps rather eccentric Indian agent friend. In this retreat, entered only by the most extraordinary means, they had found a safe refuge from their enemies, and most men seem to be outlaws' enemies! And, whilst hiding, they had managed to wash a handsome fortune out of the creek that flowed past their little camp.

Both partners turned their eyes in the direction from whence the hail came. There they rested on a cavellike opening, through which their little creek seemed to bore its way. That was the way out of, and into their retreat. By means of a long, low tunnel, they could creep out and into a wide canyon, from which they could get anywhere they desired. And in that canyon, people might ride close past the entrance to the tunnel and not notice it, for a huge rolling boulder blocked up the opening.

Hands on guns, for, of course, there was always the danger that strangers might stumble across their secret, these two waited to see who called. And as they waited, they saw a man, leading a magnificent horse, emerge from the depths of the tunnel.

"It's just Arizona," said Slim Danvers, with a sigh of relief. "D'rather see him than Sheriff Wynott, anyway. Howdy, Arizona?"

"Well, boys," said the visitor, breathing on a monacle that dangled from his neck by a silk cord, and jamming it into his eye, "so we're all fit? Good! But I'm afraid I've got disturbing news for you."

He was a handsome man, this Arizona Jim. He was tall and lithe, and about thirty-five years of age. He had longish, wavy hair of brown, and a short, well-clipped moustache. His dress was somewhat unusual; he wore a black velvet coat, as short as an English school-boy's Eton jacket. His shirt was of brilliant red silk. And he wore a pair of riding breeches that, surely, could have been cut out and built nowhere else but in Saville Row, though London was a city the Indian agent had never seen. His boots, too, were faultless polo-boots that would have made a sensation at Ranelagh, let alone in the Wyoming hills. But the boots now were waterlogged, for he had had a wet walk through the tunnel from the outer canyon. Upon his head he wore a Stetson hat that, instead of the usual snakeskin band, bore a bright-coloured scarf. Yes, a very picturesque man. But as these outlaws knew, he was not by any means all show. He was the "whitest" man in all that fierce, strenuous country; a power almost as great as the Governor himself. Sheriffs respected him. For he was not a State official. He was employed by the Indian Department at Washington, and his work was to watch the interests of the Indians, and also keep them quiet, their hatred buried.

"Bad news, eh?" Frank Liversedge asked quickly. "My mother—sis? They're not—"

"Oh, no," said Arizona Jim. "They're quite all right, still comfortable at Bitter Springs. And the sheriff isn't persecuting them at all. Bob Wynott wouldn't dare to, even if he wanted." And there came rather a steely light into Arizona's eyes of blue. "No. But I am afraid your hiding place won't be a secret very much longer."

"Oh, gosh!" cried Frank. "Mean to say somebody's spotted it?"

"Can't say that exactly," said Arizona Jim, "but I saw four of the worst toughs I've ever seen loafing about the valley outside, and, though I waited for them to vamoose, they hung around. One of them even seemed interested in the rolling boulder that shuts up the tunnel. He didn't know the trick of shifting it, of course. From what I have been able to find out, they are members of King Charlie's gang, who were absent at the time King Charlie was captured. They've come back, found their chief caught, and probably might start up on their own."

"Four of them, eh?" asked Frank Liversedge. He fingered his gun. He did not want his whereabouts to become known, not even to outlaws. For he was a different sort of outlaw from the rest. He was an honest, wrongly-accused man, who did not make his character worse by committing brutal acts, as did the majority of outlaws out here. And Slim Danvers was the same. All they did against the law now was to evade capture as far as possible, knowing that capture meant imprisonment, perhaps worse; without a dog's chance. For the laws of the Wild West are harsh and very swift. Until they could put themselves on the right side of the law, they just had to keep hidden, knowing that every time they showed their noses outside their retreat they would be likely to meet men who were quite entitled to take them, dead or alive.

Now, when they knew their hitherto safe retreat was likely to become known to others, these young outlaws felt considerably anxious. Arizona Jim saw their looks, and patted Frank on the shoulder encouragingly.

"If you are located here," said he, "I know of another safe spot in the hills where you can hide. But there's no gold in it! I would hate to see that rustler gang get wise to this mine you've got here. I'd rather see more honest men locate—if it's to be a secret no longer. However, those men may not find your camp. I only came in order to warn you. Got much loose gold about?"

"We were saying," said Frank, "that we'd almost enough now to take us all well out of this country."

"Then you intend to get out, leaving your names still unclear?" asked Arizona Jim, raising his eyebrows.

"Once home in England, what'll it matter?" asked Frank.

"Not much, I suppose—except that you'll be just one more Englishman for the people out here to sneer at," said Arizona Jim. And Frank flushed at that. He hadn't looked at it from that angle.

"But, as you say, once you're safe at home, what would it matter?"

"How's Clayton B. Bullfish, the Governor?" asked Frank.

"In a precarious state, down at Cheyenne," said Arizona Jim. "He's not allowed to see anybody, not allowed to think about anything. It'll be a long time before I can convince him that he's under such a strong debt of gratitude to you two that he practically owes you a free pardon. And then, of course, there's the possibility that he won't believe me—though not many men dare call Arizona Jim a—"



MISTAKEN IDENTITY! "Tap him on the head with one of his own guns and leave him!" said Frank Liversedge. "But—why—what?" He stared into the face of the man upon whom Slim Danvers was sitting. The mask had slipped, revealing the mournful eyes of Bad Phil Hicks, their partner!

He broke off suddenly, or, rather, his words were drowned by his own horse, which raised its beautiful head at this moment and let out a shrill, ringing neigh, that echoed and re-echoed amongst the towering sides of this basin in the mountains.

"Ah-h-h!" said Arizona Jim, and hitched the revolver he carried at his belt farther forward, so that it would be within easy reach of him; and the two young outlaws also rested hands on their butts, and looked again towards the exit.

"As I feared," said Arizona Jim. "They've located this—No, by gosh! They haven't! These aren't rustlers!"

Two men, leading their horses, came into view from the tunnel that ran right under a hill and came out in the canyon at the other side of it.

"It's the sheriff!" groaned Slim Danvers, and whipped out a gun forthwith. "Stand there, you!" And he took aim at the foremost of the approaching men, who had a gleaming sheriff's star on the bosom of his grey flannel shirt. It certainly was Sheriff Bob Wynott, a straight, incorruptible young man of the law, who was approaching, with one of his deputies. And this man, when he saw the three who stood on the creek-side, beside the little canvas bivouacs they had erected for their shelter, halted suddenly, and stared hard.

"Gosh!" they heard him shout. "We were luckier than we thought, Steve, when we decided to explore this tunnel. Their two men we want tolerably bad."

Then he came a few paces farther on, ignoring the gun that Slim Danvers covered him with. He was a brave sheriff, was Bob Wynott.

"Stand right there!" shouted Slim, and his face was white now. His was a desperate case—worse, perhaps, than Frank's. For there were almost untold crimes lying at his door, none of which he had committed, though he could not prove that. It would be the rope for him, without a doubt, for he was wanted on the capital charge in Colorado, and he would certainly be handed over to the authorities there if apprehended.

His finger trembled on the trigger, but as Wynott refused to stand, but came pluckily on, he waited until the lawman should come nearer; and his eyes took on an ugly glitter, such as the eyes of a hunted animal do when it knows it is cornered.

"Another step, Wynott," said Slim, "and I'll fire. By gad, you sha'n't get me! I'll—"

"No, you won't!" rasped Arizona Jim, and at the same time he shot out a slim, brown, well-manicured hand, and closed the fingers of it over Slim Danvers' wrist. A jerk—the revolver Slim held exploded harmlessly in the air; a shake, and the gun fell from the outlaw's hand—and Arizona Jim kicked it well out of Slim's reach.

Frank Liversedge's gun also was out now; but he was no man-killer, and it hung nervelessly in his hand, the while he stared in dismay at Arizona Jim. So Arizona had turned on Slim—was working for the law, was the first thought that flashed through the unfortunate youngster's mind.

"Darn you!" cried Slim Danvers, struggling in a grip that was amazingly strong, considering the slightness of Arizona Jim's build. "Judas! And we thought you were our—"

"Just drop that gun of yours, too, Liversedge!" snapped Arizona Jim. "Howdy, Bob? Surprised to see you here?"

"Quite a bit of luck," said Bob Wynott, eyeing the two outlaws with a little grin. "So this is where they've been hangin' out?"

"Seems so," said Arizona Jim briefly. "Why, you knew—?" Slim Danvers

He held a pair of gleaming handcuffs over towards Frank, and Frank submitted himself to them. When they were gripped about his wrists he looked down on them and groaned. So this was the end of his bid for liberty—and what a tame ending! Often enough he and Slim had discussed what they would do were they suddenly confronted by the sheriffs. But here they were, caught as easily as a couple of city pickpockets; and they had not been able even to make a fight for it, as Arizona Jim, the man they had trusted implicitly, had prevented them. What Slim Danvers was thinking about things Frank did not know, but he looked almost mad with rage and despair, as, after a little struggle, the sheriff's deputy got the bracelets about his wrists.

"Got your horses here?" asked Sheriff Wynott, looking around the location. "Nice snug place, this!"

"There are their horses," said Arizona Jim, and gave a peculiar whistle.

Crusty, Frank's faithful mare, and Dodger, the horse that was almost as a brother to Slim Danvers, came running up.

"I'll get their saddles," said Arizona Jim lazily. "You stay there and watch them, Bob." And the Indian agent went to hunt for their horses' equipment.

He entered the bivouac shelter, where Frank and Slim had stored their bags of gold, and emerged a few moments later with Frank's saddle and bridle. Then he kicked out a peg or two, and the bivouac was a flat thing on the ground. When he had secured Slim's saddle and bridle as well, he treated Slim's shelter in the same way.

With both heavy saddles and bridles on his arms, he returned to the horses, and Frank saw he was smiling a little.

Plainly, up to now, Sheriff Bob Wynott and his deputy were not suspecting that this location was a gold mine. They certainly would have shown great interest had they made this discovery. And once the sheriff knew there was gold there he would have to report his find, and there would be a stamped to this basin in the hills, all the ground would be staked out, and the place would become as well known to the state as Cheyenne itself.

Smiling inscrutably, Arizona Jim threw the saddles on Crusty and Dodger, clutched them up, affixed the bridles, then addressed Sheriff Bob Wynott.

"I'll help you through the tunnel with these fellows, Bob," he said. "They'll have to wade a bit. Lead the way."

Wynott glanced rather curiously at the Indian agent, but he complied with the suggestion. He led the way himself, after signalling to Slim Danvers to follow him. Then went the deputy, then went Frank, and lastly came Arizona Jim, who held a gun in one hand.

The deputy led two horses, his own and Frank's. Handcuffed though he was, Slim had to lead his own. Arizona led his, and so the procession entered the tunnel, wading knee-deep in chilly water. And soon they were in almost black darkness.

"Here's a light!" cried Arizona, thereby showing he was all out for the lawmen; and the rays of a powerful electric torch the Indian agent carried darted through the darkness.

"Good!" Bob Wynott shouted back. And so they splashed forward for several minutes, their horses carefully picking their way, throwing up spray that saturated the men.

At one point, Frank, marching along directly in front of Arizona Jim, felt a hand touch his shoulder. He wheeled sharply, perhaps angrily, and just at that moment the light went out.

"Trust me, lad!" Arizona Jim said, his voice just carrying to Frank's ears above the splashing of the horses made. "I'm your friend!"

"You seem like that, don't you?" asked Frank bitterly.

The hand left Frank's shoulder then, and the Indian agent muttered something under his breath. Then the electric light was switched on again, and the procession continued to splash through the tunnel to the canyon at the farther side.

"Caught," Frank groaned to himself—"caught when I'd thought my troubles were almost over. And I believe Arizona Jim's responsible for our capture. Yet I thought he was our friend!"

The 2nd Chapter.

Free Again!

Frank Liversedge and Slim Danvers sat together, manacled, their hands before them, on bunks, in the one and only cell of Bitter Springs' tiny calaboose. Night had fallen for some time now, and Sheriff Wynott was not allowing them a light. But they did not need a light. They were just as well able to talk in the darkness.

"I just hope," said Frank, "that they haven't let my mother know about this, Slim. It'll just about finish her. Seems odd that she should be only a few blocks away, while I'm here, waiting to be tried for murder!"

They had been prisoners there for the best part of three days, which was a long time for prisoners to be locked up without a trial. Wynott had done nothing to explain this, but Slim Danvers was of the opinion that the judge who would try them had gone out of the district, and that the trial would have to await his return.

"Seems to me, though," said Slim, who was still angry and bitter over the turn Fate had taken against him and his partner, "as we trusted that Arizona Jim too much! Never did like his dandy ways and the window-pane he carried in his eye."

"Which was not quite true, for, like Frank, Slim had come to love the debonaire Indian agent, the man who had so repeatedly helped them, who had engineered plots with a view of getting

Another jolly parlour game in "Chuckles," the Children's Champion Coloured Paper this week!

them both pardoned. For pardons had been the only hope they had had. Neither could ever have proved his innocence. What Slim said was said out of the bitterness of his heart.

"I don't like to think that about Arizona Jim," said Frank. "He might have seemed more of a friend if he'd come to see us. What about all our gold? That's there for the first man who finds it."

"Arizona Jim knows where it is," said Slim. "I wouldn't put it past him to get—"

But Frank would not have that. He, too, fancied the Indian agent had deceived him. But he would not think the same man would rob him and Slim of their hard-won gold.

"Let's talk about something else," said Frank.

But just then the key grated in the lock of their cell, and the sheriff, bearing a lantern, came in. In a very business-like manner, Wynott saw to the handcuffs of both of them, glanced about the cell, then looked gravely down upon them.

"Your trial comes off to-morrow," he said. "If you want a lawyer to help you—"

"Lawyer!" said Frank, with a shrug. "From what I know of lawyers out here, I'd imagine I'd be better without one."

"Guess ye don't think much of our laws!" said Wynott.

"Think they'd do with revision," Slim Danvers put in. "Why are you goin' to trouble to try us at all? It's a foregone conclusion that we're goin' to be found guilty."

"Guess you're due to be handed over to the Colorado folks," said the sheriff. "We ain't got no capital charge against you. But you're wanted bad in Colorado."

"Tell us something we don't know," said Slim. "That is, if ye know anything!"

"Arizona Jim," said Wynott, "has asked me not to let your ma know ye're here." He addressed Frank now. "Guess he's a queer guy, Arizona! But I've humoured him. Still, she'll hev to know to-morrow. Can't think why Arizona should want—"

"Guess you're not great on thinkin', any time," said Slim Danvers insolently. "And we ain't interested five cents' worth in Arizona Jim, who only worked for you against us, pretending to be—"

"Arizona's the straightest, whitest man in forty-eight states!" said Bob Wynott angrily. "Take my word for it, he'd nothing to do with your arrest!"

"Except that he stopped us from making a fight of it!" shouted Slim Danvers. "Think any two like you'd ever have naffed us two by yourselves? What sort of a tin god on wheels d'ye reckon yerself to be—?"

Wynott eyed him fiercely for a moment. He looked like forgetting he was a sheriff. Indeed, he raised a hand, as though to strike this presumptuous prisoner of his. Then he thought better of it, picked up the lantern from the floor, and left the cell, slamming and locking the door after him.

"That talking to won't do us much good," said Frank, shaking his head. "Fity we riled Wynott. Say, since we were captured, we haven't heard a word from a soul. Wonder where Phil Hicks is by this time? Here'd be a fine chance for Phil to be really 'bad.'"

He referred to the eccentric cow-puncher, tall and lanky, with a mournful face and a chronic desire to be a "bad" man. Phil Hicks had stayed with them for a while, jiving in sharing the lot of these outlaws, fondly believing himself a real "tough" case. But the tameness of an outlaw's existence had soon palled on Bad Phil, who, not finding enough chances to be "bad," had vanished one day some time ago, taking with him nothing but his gun, his horse, and the gold his partners had allowed him to wash from their location.

Remembrance of Bad Phil Hicks caused these partners to think of something more amusing than their present circumstances. While he had been with them, Phil Hicks had always given them entertainment, though his reiterated desires to be bad at times had got severely on the nerves of those two who were stamped really bad, yet who hated to be thought so.

They talked about Bad Phil Hicks and his eccentricities for a long while, until Frank, despite the forthcoming trial—which could have only one end—turned into his bunk and tried to sleep. Slim Danvers did the same thing. Silence fell on the cell. But neither slept a wink, though both lay there for a long, long time, with their eyes closed.

Suddenly, though, Frank opened his eyes, and stared into the almost black darkness of his cell. He was sure he could hear sounds outside his cell-door. He sat up in the bunk, manacled as he was, and listened. There was the slightest possible scraping. Then, suddenly, there was a very tiny little thud. Almost immediately followed the sound of something fairly light striking the rough wooden floor of the cell. Whatever this was, it struck the floor with an odd rattling sound.

Frank came to his feet and stepped softly towards the door. But as he did so, his boot touched something, which rattled again. He stooped, groped in the darkness, and his fingers encountered a matchbox!

"Slim!" he cried. And boldly enough he took a match out of the box and struck it. It was one of the sulphur "stinker" variety of matches. It spluttered for half a minute before the stick properly caught, and a steady flame showed.

"Matches, but what for?" asked Frank, striking another.

"Best not yell about it too much," said Slim Danvers, coming to his feet, as the second match brightened in its flame.

"And what'll this be?" For the light now caught something that gleamed on the floor—a tiny object that Slim picked up and examined closely.

"Why?" Slim muttered. "It's a hand-cuff key! Gosh, so it is. Hold your hands out, pard."

He was able to unlock one of Frank's wrists.

"But what's the good of these things? And who dropped 'em in the cell?" Frank asked. "Would it be the sheriff?"

Slim laughed scornfully.

"He's too blamed efficient and serious-minded to do a thing like that on the quiet. He's—Gosh, all hemlock! The door's open!"

It was, or ajar, anyway. They stared at each other in sheer amazement. The person who had tossed the key and the matchbox into the cell had forgotten to fasten the door after him, or had deliberately left it open.

"Hold that other hand out!" whispered Slim Danvers feverishly. "Guess I'm not worrying about why and wherefore. But all this looks mighty good to me, partner. Let's have that other bracelet off."

Frank's heart was beating heavily now. There was a wild hope there that had not been there five minutes before. And every moment the hope seemed to grow. When the handcuffs were off his wrists, he felt a free man already. When he had repaid Slim that service done, he went to the door and pulled it wider open. There was a corridor outside, which was as dark as the cell. He scraped another sulphur match on the box, and looked out.

Everything seemed quiet. He went along the corridor, followed by Slim, and came to another door, which gave to his touch. The whole thing was amazing. He found himself in a room which he knew to be the sheriff's office. And there he saw a sight that almost made

"P'st!" hissed Frank suddenly, and crouched in the shadows, and drew Slim down with him. For a dimly-to-be-seen figure had stepped out from another shadow across the street, and then, silently, furtively, had stepped across the road.

"Somebody astir," said Frank. "Might be Bob Wynott."

"Can't help who it is," said Slim: "even if I've no gun, no sheriff's goin' to put me back in there alive."

"Keep as much in the shadow as you can—our own horses might be in the livery-stable, and I know Dan, the liveryman, isn't always a light sleeper. Come on, Slim."

Both kept their eyes very alert as they crept up the sidewalk towards the livery-barn, which Frank, an old resident in this little timber town, knew so well. They saw nothing of that shadowy figure they had seen for a moment, but they kept a sharp look out for him. And at length they came to an alleyway that led up one side of the barn to a corral, where ranchers and farmers of the district put their horses when they visited the town and were too stingy to pay livery fees.

As they came to this livery stable, both heard a sudden snort, followed by the slight champing of a horse upon its bit. They stole up the alleyway. And they saw three horses standing hitched to a rail.

Hurriedly they looked about them. There was nobody to be seen in this buggy yard at the back of the livery barn. Before they got near enough to the three horses to touch them, two of them broke into loud whinnies, and Frank almost exclaimed aloud when he recognized the equine voice of one.

"That's Crusty," he whispered. "My hat! Saddled and bridled, too, and all ready for the trail."

"And here's Dodger as well," muttered

"Best not kill him!" said Frank hurriedly. "Tap him on the head with one of his own guns, and leave him. But—why—what—"

He stared down into the face of the man whose chest was now bearing all the weight of Slim. For the handkerchief had slipped down in the brief, sharp struggle, and the long, lantern-jawed face of the fellow could be seen; the dark, mournful eyes of him stared up mutely into the convulsed face of Slim.

"It's Bad Phil Hicks!" Frank said. "Don't kill the man!"

"Huh!" said Slim, but released the pressure he had on Bad Phil Hicks' throat. "So it is! But, say, Phil, what's the big idea? You workin' for the law, too, now?"

Phil Hicks sat up, gagging painfully, and nursed his throat.

"I'm real bad!" he gasped. "I'm a she-wolf, and it's my night to howl to-night. Bad—ugh! Ye needn't 'a' been so blame' rough about it!" he ended aggrievedly. "Ye can't see a joke."

"Joke—had sort o' joke it would have been for you if the mask hadn't slipped!" said Slim grimly. "Waal, I'm off now! There's my horse, and I ain't hankerin' to stay around here longer'n I can help. C'mon, Frank!"

He stooped and picked up one of the guns Bad Phil Hicks had dropped, examined it, then slipped it into the hip-pocket of his breeches. He handed the other weapon to Frank.

"An' what about my guns?" asked Bad Phil Hicks. "How in Sam Hill can I be bad without a gun?"

"Oh, pshaw!" said Slim Danvers. "We're in a hurry. We got to ride hard to-night. There'll be a fine hunt for us when our escape is known."

He went to Dodger, patted the horse affectionately on the neck, saw to the cinches of the saddle, and swung himself aboard.

A new sensation. Guess if ye'd saw the look on that deputy's face when I asked him to elevate his hooks, ye'd ha' smiled some! Came to hanc like a coo'n dove, he did; let me tie him up and gag him, an' help myself to his keys, just like Mary's little lamb. But that's the advantage o' bein' real bad, I guess."

"The deputy didn't see you, I hope?" Frank asked quickly.

"He had no wish to see his own friends putting their heads into nooses on his account. And gaol-breaking is reckoned a very serious thing in the Wild West."

"Guess nix!" said Bad Phil. "Did ye ever know of a real bad man as didn't wear a mask?"

"But how did you know about us? Where have you been all these weeks?" asked Frank.

"Tryin' to be bad," said Phil Hicks. "But there ain't much opportunity these days. So when I gits a message from an Injun to the effect as Arizona Jim wants to see me about you, I goes, and he asks me right out, he asks: 'Do you really want to be bad, Phil?' 'Cos, if so, here's yer chance! You betcha, I jumps at it.'"

"And so Arizona Jim was working for us all the time?" said Frank; and felt a keen regret to remember that he had at one moment quite misjudged his Indian agent friend. "And we're to meet him at noon? What for?"

"He's got another place where we kin hide," said Phil Hicks.

"And what about our gold?" asked Frank.

"Guess I don't know nothin' about it," said Hicks. "But we might as well go lookin' for it."

"And with it," said Frank. "I reckon we'd best get right out of here. We'll break away, then send word to our folks to come an' join us. Now let's ride!"

Steadily they rode westward till dawn streaked the sky. Frank, when daylight came, wondered what the authorities would say when they found how the "desperate" prisoners had escaped. He guessed that Sheriff Bob Wynott would forget all else that he had to do, and concentrate on their recapture. And Bob Wynott, not being a particularly brilliant man, would certainly do the obvious thing—ride straight to that basin in the hills, expecting the fugitives would return to their camp. Therefore, it behoved them to hurry.

They reached the tunnel and splashed their way through it. They found the bivouac shelters that Arizona Jim had struck, still lying on the ground anyhow. But when they sought under the sheets, they could see nothing of the gold they had left.

"Huh!" said Slim Danvers. "It was some optimistic of us to expect to find it here."

"But who could have taken it?" asked Frank. "Arizona Jim couldn't have done so. And—"

"Expect Wynott and his deputy paid this place a visit after our arrest, looking for evidence against us," said Slim. "He may be found it—and only bein' a sheriff, bug on to it without lettin' the town know gold was here."

"Don't think Wynott would do that," said Frank thoughtfully. "He's a white man. If he'd found the gold, he'd have let us know, and would have asked if it had to be handed over to my mother. Anyhow, that gold's ours legally. It came from my father's mine."

"Shore," said Slim. "Then Arizona took it."

But at that Frank got angry. He himself had almost misjudged that splendid Indian agent; but what Bad Phil Hicks had told him later had served to convince him that Arizona Jim was always his friend.

"Don't be a fool, Slim!" he cried. "Have some sense! Why, Arizona could be a millionaire if he wanted."

"What's the use o' gettin' het up about it, pard?" drawled Bad Phil Hicks, interposing. "For the nerves of both Frank and Slim were certainly somewhat on edge, and when men are like that, quarrels frequently take place. This was no time for them to quarrel. "You're goin' to see Arizona at noon, at the forks of Three Creeks. He'll tell ye whether he got that gold or not."

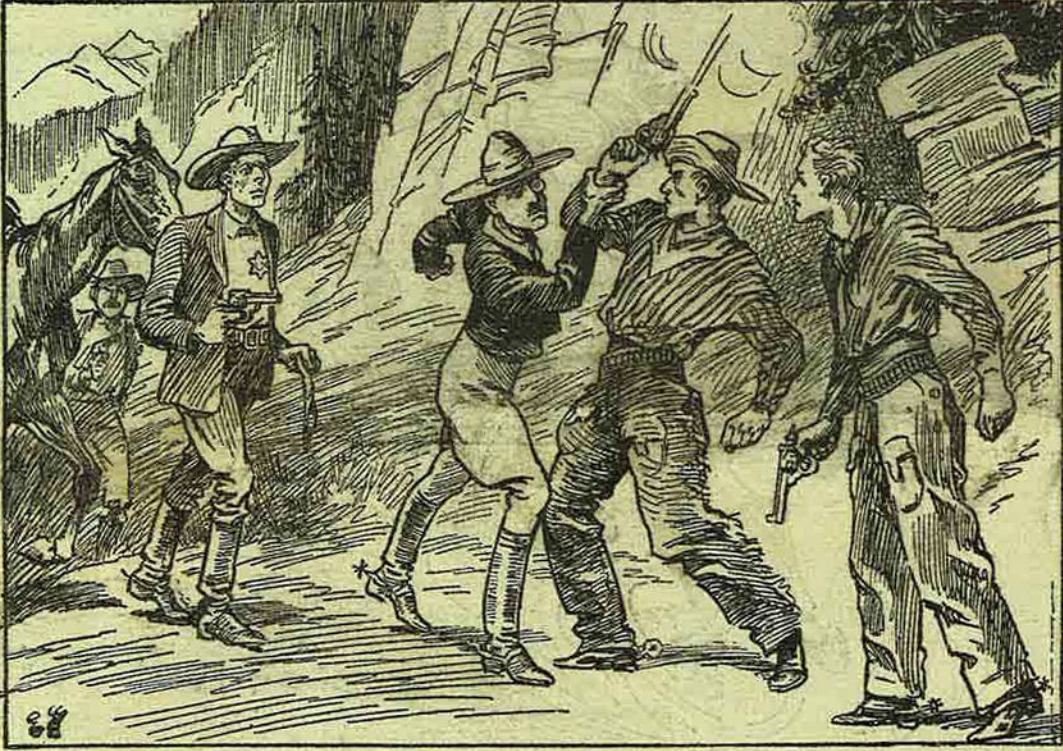
"I ain't goin' to meet Arizona," said Slim angrily. "I'm suspicious as the gink's jest playin' with us. He's a vain, self-opinionated dude, who delights in showin' his power. Who knows? He might have some more sheriffs—"

"You're a fool, Slim!" said Frank impatiently. "Anyway, I'm going to meet Arizona. He might have some clue as to this gold. And I'm not going to let the stuff slip out of my hands so easily as this. If it's still in the State, I'm getting it back—even if, as might be possible, Wynott's lifted it and claimed it for the State."

There was anxiety in Frank's heart now. He rolled on the gold he had been digging from the creek to support his delicate mother and sister during his outlawry. Without that, what could they do? It was bad enough for them to have an outlaw son and brother—but to starve on top of that, would be unthinkable. Frank, just then, felt almost like deciding to be a real outlaw, a like rustler, a hold-up man, if he didn't get his gold back. For his mother and sister must live. Nor could he stay here at the mine now and pan out fresh supplies; though there was gold in plenty there. For he knew this place would be watched by the sheriff from now on.

"Well," said Slim Danvers, at length. "I'm through with Arizona Jim and this part o' the country. I'm goin' back to Colorado." And he began to pack together certain belongings that were his, stuffing them into his saddlebags.

"You don't mean to say we're parting, Slim?" asked Frank, holding out his hand



THE OUTLAWS CORNERED! "Another step, Wynott, and I'll fire!" said Slim Danvers, as the sheriff advanced. "No, you won't!" rasped Arizona Jim, and he shot out a hand and jerked the revolver from the outlaw's grasp!

him shout aloud. For Steve Washington, Wynott's deputy, was sitting up in a chair, bound to it securely, while a gag was fixed over his mouth. Very scientifically was Steve trussed up, only his eyes could move, and his shoulders as he tugged and strained at his bonds. And when he saw the two prisoners, he wriggled more, so that he overturned the chair upon which he sat. With a thud he struck the floor of the office, and there, quite helpless, with the chair tied to him, he lay on his side, and could only glare at those prisoners he knew were escaping from his custody. Plainly, Steve had been doing guard over the two outlaws that night.

Frank, under less tense circumstances, might have been inclined to relieve Washington from his uncomfortable plight. But he did not stay to lift the deputy now. He went to the main door of this little gaol, and tried that. Wonder of wonders, that door also opened to his touch, and he found himself in the open air, looking up and down the darkened main street of Bitter Springs. That is to say, the street was dark save for one light, which burned in an upper window of a house some distance away. And Frank swallowed a lump in his throat, as he knew that that light was burning in his own mother's bed-room window.

But here was no time for sentiment. Some quite unbelievable luck had fallen his way, and though his heart ached to go and see his mother, where that light was, he pulled himself together, and when Slim followed him into the street, carefully closed the gaol door after him. Then they pondered what to do.

"We'll want some horses," said Slim. "If we can't find our own in this town, we'll borrow some."

Slim Danvers, naming his own magnificent black. "Who's the third? Why, I know the horse! It's—"

"Stand right there and put them hands o' yours right up!"

Frank and Slim wheeled sharply as the harsh voice struck upon their ears. They were entirely unarmed, and automatically their hands went above their heads when they saw the shadowy figure of a man, a gun in each hand, standing there, not six feet away from them. It was a lanky, loosely-built figure, and when the two escaping outlaws looked harder they could see that his face was almost entirely covered by a handkerchief, only his eyes showing beneath his Stetson hat.

The guns were unwavering as they pointed at the two young outlaws. A bitter word broke from Slim Danvers' lips, and a groan of absolute disappointment came from Frank.

"Right there, ye stands—I caught ye!" said the handkerchief-masked man.

"I don't think so," growled Slim Danvers, and leaped forward all at once. Anyway, he argued, it would be better to die by the bullet of this unknown man than to die by the rope for crimes that he knew he had never committed.

And it seemed as though Frank Liversedge had caught the same notion at the same moment, for he also braved those levelled guns, sprang forward, and closed with the masked one.

They were fortunate. Probably he who had them covered had never dreamed that they would be so bold.

Each caught a gun-filled hand; each gave a jerk that disarmed the man very effectively. Then Slim Danvers gave him a back-heel that fetched him on his back with a thud. Before the fellow could shout, Slim's hands were on his throat.

"Trying to stop us from makin' our getaway, are ye?" growled Slim.

"Waal," said Bad Phil Hicks, still rubbing his throat, "taint often I gits the chance to be had enough to break a gaol, but I'll allow it ain't illus the best-rewarded job. When the fellers as ye've rescued turns on ye—"

"Mean to say it was you who got us out of there?" asked Frank. "Why, of course, I'm seeing it all now!"

"Oh, come on, man!" Slim Danvers urged. "It'll be daylight before you've stopped your face-wagging. Talk while you're riding!"

Frank flung himself into Crusty's saddle. And Bad Phil Hicks mounted his own horse. Side by side, riding carefully whilst they were in the precincts of the little cow-town, these three made their way westward, heading towards the hills

The 3rd Chapter.

Frank Saves Sheriff Wynott's Life!

"We aren't goin' back to that old spot of ours, not to stay," said Slim Danvers. "We got to think of a new place. The sheriff, he knows all about that now."

"At the same time," said Frank doggedly, "we're going there first, to get our gold. We've been figuring on that a long while."

"Guess I got a message for you," said Bad Phil Hicks. "It's from Arizona Jim. He wants ye to meet him at the fork of Three Creeks, at noon to-morrow—today, that'll be, seeing it's past midnight now."

"Arizona Jim?" asked Frank Liversedge. "Why, does he expect to see us free, then?"

"He shure do," said Bad Phil Hicks, smiting himself on the chest. "Ye see, he knows a real bad man when he sees one. Say, boys, I been bad enough in my time, but I never broke a gaol afore!"

(Continued overleaf.)

to his comrade in outlawry. "You're povered about something. Buck up, man, and let's go to meet Arizona Jim. Bet you, Arizona's got something up his sleeve for us."

"A sheriff or two, maybe," said Slim. "No, sou—"

"But remember if it hadn't been for Arizona we'd never have got out of gaol at all," said the youngster.

"Gee! I ain't allowin' that," said Bad Phil Hicks, jealous of the reputation he imagined he possessed at once. "I guess I done all that gaol-breakin' an' schemin'. Arizona jes' told me ye was in gaol and— and suggested I done what I done."

"Well," sighed Frank, "if you break away like that I'll go right back to Bitter Springs, and I'll give myself up."

"I'll break ye out o' the calaboose again if ye do," said Bad Phil Hicks eagerly. "Geo, I enjy bein' bad!"

He hadn't meant to act the part of peace-maker, but his words caused Slim Danvers to laugh. The cloud rolled by. He held out his hand to Frank, and gripped it.

"We'll stick it out together, pard," he said simply. "I guess I'd not like to see you in gaol—alone. Nor with me, neither," he added. "Well, let's meet Arizona an' see what he's got to say."

Frank sighed. He didn't want a rupture with his splendid partner added to his many other troubles. Slim and he had been through a lot of trial and tribulation since they had met that night when Frank had bolted from Bitter Springs accused of shooting Bull Kamloops, his late father's partner, and crook.

It was a long ride to the forks of Three Creeks. Indeed, it was very close to the boundary of Sheriff Wynott's responsibilities. Before setting off they partook of a rough meal prepared from what food Bad Phil Hicks had packed in their saddlebags, and what was left in their camp. By the time they had set off to meet Arizona Jim they had only just about enough time to get there and be punctual. But they had good horses, and two of them had rested for three days while their masters had languished in the calaboose at Bitter Springs. And so they rode at a brisk pace.

Bad Phil Hicks seemed to know the way, and led them on that ride. And he took them through some very wild, trackless country. Mostly he kept to valleys, but occasionally he took them over some hillcrest; and when they got to some particularly high altitude all three went the surrounding country with their gaze, for they knew riders might be met with, and, in their present state, any honest man was entitled to molest them, to arrest them, if he could.

They saw nobody for many miles. But, when they had well entered one of the deepest defiles Frank had ever ridden through in all Wyoming, they suddenly heard the sound of an approaching horse's footsteps. Loud and clear the ironshod hoofs rang on the rocky bottom of this deep, perpendicular-sided ravine. And they all drew rein and they all put their hands to their guns. For one rider, at least, was approaching them. Bad Phil Hicks had another gun now; for those his comrades had taken from him had been obtained to give Frank and Slim.

There was a sort of alcove in the ravine's side just where they halted, and into this Slim Danvers urged his horse. He signed to the others to follow him. There was just room in that hollow space for their three mounts to crowd closely together.

"Might not see us here," muttered Slim; but he drew his revolver out and looked ready enough to use it in his own defence. And then, rounding a slight bend in the defile, a horse dashed towards them; came at a pace that told Frank Liveredge at once that this rider was not travelling like this because he wanted to do so.

The rider dashed right past the three partners. Nor did he turn his head their way as he tore by.

Three things Frank noticed in the quick glance he was able to get at the man. First, he was Sheriff Bob Wynott; second, his right arm was hanging limply to his side, while with his left hand he tore at the reins of the horse that was running away with him; and, third, Wynott's foot had got thrust too far through his stirrup, so that the stirrup was now playing the part of a bracelet about his ankle. And these things told Frank that Wynott was in a desperate plight. His horse was running away with him, nor did he dare throw himself from the saddle; that would have meant serious injury for the sheriff. Yet, one-handed as he was, he could not check his horse's pace one jot.

"It's Wynott, and he's in trouble!" roared Frank. "What's wrong?"

"Guess we're shore lucky, then, that he is in trouble; or we might have been that!" said Bad Phil Hicks heartlessly.

But Frank Liveredge was not heartless. When ever he saw a fellow in distress it was his nature to want to help. And this time his real nature showed itself. He forgot that he was an outlaw, and that this man was out to capture him, and get him hanged for a crime he had never committed. All he cared about was that a brother-man wanted a helping hand.

He touched Crusty up with the spur, and actually urged her to follow Wynott's galloping horse. And as he went Slim Danvers rubbed his chin perplexedly, while Bad Phil Hicks scratched his head in sheer amazement.

"Gosh!" yelled Bad Phil Hicks. "Arter all the trouble I had ter git him out o' gaol! Goes and wants to be put back again!"

"I understand the kid," said Slim Danvers, who also had a heart, even though he was an outlaw. "And, Phil, if Frank manages to stop that horse,

Wynott'll not be able to do much against the three of us, will he? Let's go!"

"Sufferin' catfish!" said Bad Phil Hicks. "It's suicide; but it'll gimme another chance to be bad! Here's how!"

And he followed Slim as Slim dashed off after Frank.

In the meantime, Frank, who had an unbounding faith in his beautiful mare's speed, let her have her head, and she thundered along hard after Sheriff Wynott's botting mount. When he came to a long, straight piece of the defile and could get an unobstructed view of the imperilled man ahead, he knew very soon that Crusty was gaining on the raking red roan of the sheriff. For he saw the roan wasn't going quite soundly on all its feet. Indeed, when he cast his eyes to the ground he could see blood spots there, fresh ones, showing him that either the horse or the man was bleeding—probably both were.

But he did not overtake the sheriff before both had got well out of that defile. By then he was, perhaps, fifty yards behind Bob Wynott. And Crusty was going beautifully, though Wynott's horse was still travelling insanely on.

Now out of the ravine the going was less even. The ground was craggy, rocky in places; at other times the horses plunged through soft, loose sard, that clouded the air. Many a time Wynott's horse stumbled, though Crusty kept her feet as surely as any goat. And Frank, even though he had not much cause to love the sheriff, hoped those stumbles would not cause Wynott to lose his seat, for then he would be dragged along over those rocks and boulders.

Gradually he gained, and, so well did Crusty run, gradually Frank's comrades in the rear dropped farther and farther behind. For even Slim Danvers' Dodger could not keep pace with Crusty when that gallant mare was stretched all out.

Nearer to Wynott Frank got, until he could hear the sheriff shouting to his horse. But the man was helpless.

Several narrow escapes the sheriff had, as his horse floundered, though always regained its feet and dashed onwards. Each time that happened Wynott, now undoubtedly frightened, gave a yell.

Frank had not worked out in his mind what he would do when he caught up the runaway. Just now his attention was concentrated on catching up to him. But when Crusty's nose was almost up to the tail of the sheriff's horse he began to think about what to do.

Before he could decide, the thing both Frank and Wynott had feared happened. The horse gave a bad stumble, and went on its nose. Frank had to swerve Crusty aside to avoid a collision. And, with a yell, Wynott shot out of the saddle.

As Frank had feared, the sheriff's foot remained in the stirrup. His horse started to run again; but now Wynott was dragged cruelly over the rocky ground, shrieking each time he struck a projecting boulder. And even then the maddened horse did not slacken pace, but bore steadily on, plainly ready to run till it dropped and died.

Now Frank was galloping level with Wynott's horse, on the side on which the sheriff was being dragged.

"I've got it!" cried Frank.

He whipped out his revolver.

He could not get too close in, lest Crusty's hoofs should beat the dragging Wynott to pieces. He could not rope the runaway horse, for that would mean pulling the animal back, and so, a hundred to one, causing Wynott to be crushed beneath it. There was just one chance, Frank thought, and thanked his stars his father had taught him how to use a revolver.

He raised his weapon—he purposely

dropped behind the runaway again—and, from the heaving back of Crusty, took rapid but sure aim at the stirrup-leather that held Wynott's foot.

One shot he fired, and he knew from the paler-coloured gash he saw there that he had hit, though not quite severed, the strap. Again he fired. Wynott's horse, also hit by the bullet, swerved suddenly, and reared almost upright. And at the same instant the stirrup-leather snapped. The horse came down to all-fours again, neighed shrilly, and dashed on.

But Frank was not interested in the horse now. He drew rein on the lathering Crusty, and looked down on the sheriff. Wynott's leg was badly twisted beneath him now, as well as his arm. He lay there, eyes closed, white face turned upwards towards the copper Wyoming sky. And a great compassion entered Frank's heart for this man—the man whose duty it was to track him down and bring him to justice. But Frank was not as other outlaws; he was an outlaw with a heart.

He dismounted, leaving Crusty's reins trailing, and the mare stood quietly there, while her master bent over Bob Wynott. As Frank examined the sheriff his comrades galloped up.

They had seen something of what Frank had done, and Slim Danvers nodded approvingly at his partner; though Bad Phil Hicks seemed to feel disappointment that this meeting with the sheriff should not have meant a fight.

"Badly smashed up," said Frank. "That's a bullet that's broken his arm."

"He's not dead, but he's in a bad way," said Slim, who had a better knowledge of rough first-aid than Frank had. "Guess he won't be trailing us for a bit!"

Just then, as a result of some spirit that came from Bad Phil's flask being applied to the sheriff's lips, Bob Wynott

opened his eyes. He stared up at the outlaws stupidly for a moment, then showed he was a sheriff first, last, and every time, for his hand went to his belt, though only to find his revolver was not in its holster.

"Come out after you fellows," he gasped, "but ran up against another gang of rustlers. And they fired at me—frightened my horse. And now what are you going to do, boys? You've got the sheriff at your mercy, ain't you?"

"Could you hang on behind me if I lifted you on to the mare?" asked Frank.

"I'll try not to shake you up too much, sheriff."

"What you goin' to do, lad?" asked Wynott.

"Oh, take you to some place where you can get looked after!" said Frank. "We couldn't leave you here. We're miles away from a trail, and more miles away from Bitter Springs."

"And I'm the sheriff, and you're my meat!" muttered Bob Wynott.

"Ain't claimin' no reward for anything," Slim Danvers put in; "but you ought to know as Frank saved ye when ye was throwed. Ye'll see the stirrup still round your ankle, cut right through by Frank's bullet. Some shootin', too!"

"By gad! I'd not mind a fight with them, to get that gold back. We need it."

Had they gone as far as the forks of Three Creeks, where they had to meet Arizona Jim, they would have been hours late. But they did not require to go so far, for, when they had still ten miles to go, they met the Indian agent riding their way.

Arizona Jim, as handsome and as debonaire as ever, raised his eyebrows in sheer surprise when he saw whom his friends had with them. But he simulated surprise at meeting the outlaws, too. Here was no time to do any playing-acting. He at once took charge of the sheriff, who was developing fever as a result of his wounds and the heat of the sun.

"One thing again in your favour, you fellows," said Arizona, when he knew their story. "Gosh! Will you ever stop doing good turns to folks who want to hang you? And so you managed to get out of gaol?"

He grinned across at Bad Phil Hicks, who barked like a wolf.

"Through the badness of Phil," said Frank, also amused. "And also," he added honestly, "through the decency of you, Arizona."

"Oh, shucks!" said the Indian agent. "Who did this on Wynott?"

"He described four rustlers, whom he said he was not particularly interested in, seeing he was out after us only," said Frank. "And they were sharing out bags."

"Bags? Of gold?" asked Arizona Jim, and his eyes narrowed a trifle. "So they found their way into your camp, eh? Well, as a matter of fact, I was afraid they would, and so tracked them, with the aid of some of my Indians, so I

know exactly where to find them when I want them. They are survivors of King Charlie's gang, as I told you just before your arrest. We'll have to see about getting that gold when we've got Wynott somewhere comfortable. There's an Indian camp not far from here. We'll take Wynott there."

"And then I'll get another chance to be right bad," said Phil Hicks, examining the loading of his revolver. "Guess I had my share of that gold, and blowed it in; that's one reason why I want to see my pard's get their own, too. Show me them rustlers, and if they're as big as houses, I'll—waa! I'll be bad to 'em!"

An hour later, and Sheriff Bob Wynott, raving in fever now, was settled as comfortably as possible in the wigwam of a lone Indian and his squaw. But he was very sick, and Arizona Jim shook his head gravely over him.

"I wanted you to escape," said Arizona, "because I knew your trial was coming off to-day, and you wouldn't have had a chance—not until the Governor of the State's better. The latest reports I had were that Clayton B. Bullfish was very slowly improving. So maybe in a week or two I may be able to put his pardon into your hands."

"In the meanwhile," said Frank, "where are those men with our gold, Arizona?"

Arizona Jim very carefully described a spot in the mountains.

"Manage the job yourselves?" asked Arizona. "I'd like to stay and look after Bob. But I'll help—"

"Help!" snorted Bad Phil Hicks. "Why, I'd do the job lanchanted, jest for the sake o' showin' King Charlie's four guks as they ain't all the works as bad men around these yer parts!"

Undoubtedly he was willing to do that. But Frank and Slim were not willing to let him. So the three, remembering the directions of Arizona—and Frank wondered what on earth they would do without Arizona to play the part of friend to them—they eventually found themselves in still another of those natural hiding-places for men who wanted to keep out of sight of men.

It was down in a ravine. At the bottom was a cave in a hillside, and before this a fire was burning. From above they could see four men sitting around the fire.

Careful horsemanship was necessary ere they could ride down the treacherous slope of this ravine. But they got down without attracting the attention of any of these four.

"Now give me my chance," said Bad Phil, pulling out his gun.

A moment later he was about as "bad" as he could want to be. He gave a howl like a mad wolf, and rode his horse straight for that camp-fire. Three shots he fired before those four men had even time to come to their feet. A man fell back, his shoulder broken. Then he lifted his horse, and the brute came down again on all fours, striking another man down. The other two dashed into the cave to escape that fury of a horseman, who blazed into the cave till his gun was empty.

Came no shots from the cave. These men of King Charlie's gang had, in their panic, left their weapons outside.

"If ye don't come right out," roared Phil Hicks, "I'm goin' to shoot away into that cave till ye won't be able to come out, 'cept toes first. Get me? I'm bad, I am! Hear me how! I'm a wild wolf. Ow-ow-owool!!! Jest same as that!"

All four were hurt to some extent when Bad Phil got them lined up before him. And they were sullen. But, despite their wounds, the "bad" man tied them up with their own lariats.

The missing gold they found in the cave—every bag of it. The touch of it felt good to Frank, for he knew that there was now no danger of his mother and sister wanting whilst he was an outlaw.

"I'll apologise to Arizona for all I ever thought of him," said Slim Danvers simply. "I was a fool, and you were right to call me one, Frank. Now, what shall we do with these?"

He indicated the captured rustlers.

"Best take 'em to where we left Arizona, Jim," said Frank, with a laugh. "Set an outlaw to catch an outlaw, eh? Seems to me this'll be another good turn we'll have done the sheriff. But I'm not going to do a third, and give myself up to him. Are you?"

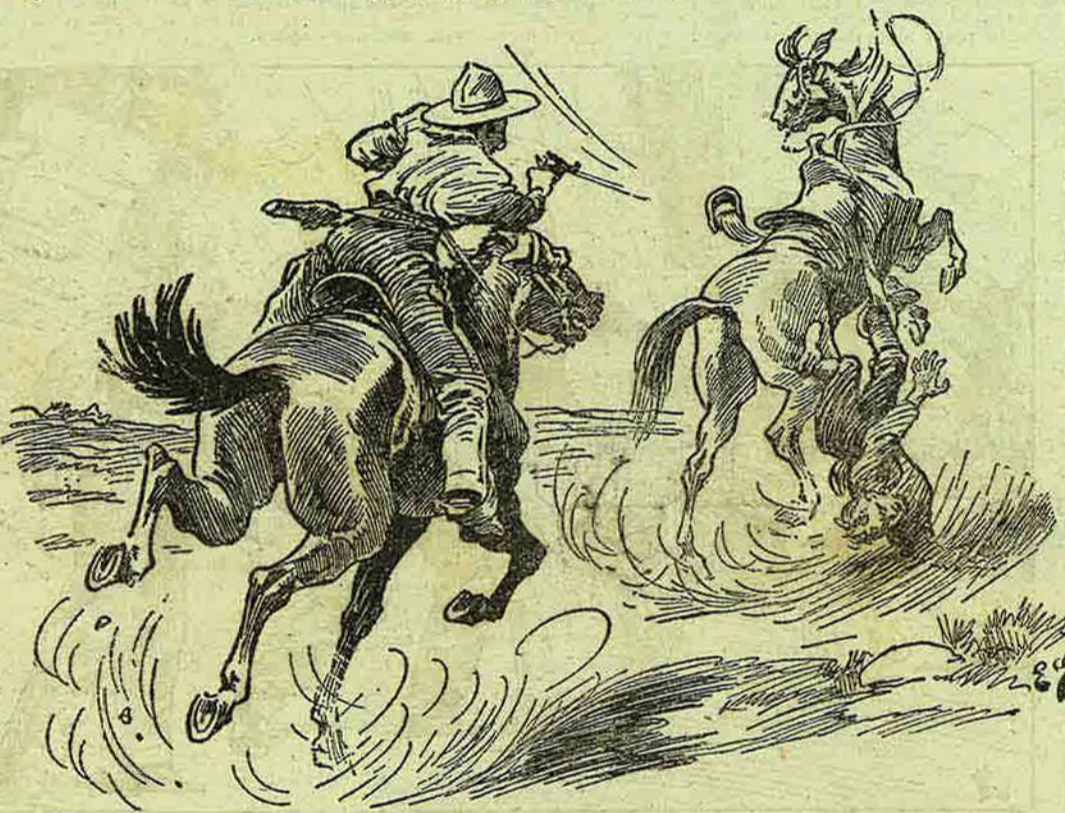
"What-me! Not a-tall!" said Bad Phil Hicks.

Arizona Jim laughed when Slim Danvers apologised.

"Don't worry," he said; "I understand you. I did seem to help Wynott to arrest you that time, didn't I? I stopped you from shooting him. If you'd done that, I suppose I shouldn't have troubled about you at all. Same with you, Frank. Be an outlaw, certainly, but don't give the law any real reason for hanging you. Then we might be able to get you out of your tangle yet." He smiled, and rubbed his monocle. "And what was a little imprisonment, anyway? Haven't I got plenty of folks ready to do anything I ask them? Haven't I even got the 'baddest' man in the world?" He looked at Bad Phil Hicks, who grinned.

"Why, as soon as I suggested breaking the gaol, Phil was on to it like a wagon-load of bricks! It's useful to have a bad man at hand sometimes!"

"Guess I ain't been as bad yet as I want to be," said Phil Hicks discontentedly.



FRANK TO THE RESCUE! Frank Liveredge fired at the stirrup-leather that held Wynott's foot, and he knew from the paler-coloured gash that he had hit though not quite severed the strap. Again he fired, and the sheriff's horse, also hit by the bullet, reared almost upright, and at the same instant the stirrup-leather snapped!

Free Hand-Coloured Real Photo of ROBERT McNEAL, of West Bromwich Albion, in the "BOYS' FRIEND" next Monday.

Tell ALL Your Pals!

THE END.

(Your old favourite, Alpha Always, reappears next week in "A Rank Outsider!" a thumping fine story of the Grand National! Make sure of reading this great yarn by ordering your BOYS' FRIEND from your newsagent TO-DAY! And see that you get the hand-coloured photo of Robert McNeal, presented FREE with every copy!)

In Your Editor's Den



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

A GREAT SPORTS NUMBER!

Next week's BUMPER SPORTS NUMBER of the BOYS' FRIEND is bound to have a big appeal to everybody. As you all know, next week is set down for some of the biggest sporting events of the year. Tell all your pals that the BOYS' FRIEND is doing full justice to these record fixtures. I want to emphasise the fact that the OLD "GREEN 'UN" is the best and breeziest all-round story paper on the market, and next Monday's magnificent programme gives it a better claim than ever to the unique position it holds. So when you have read next Monday's copy just show it to a chum. You have no idea what a long way the recommendation of a friend will go. It will, as a matter of fact, travel THOUSANDS OF MILES. A word dropped in season is not forgotten. It travels with the chap who hears it. But this is by the way. There are BIG TREATS COMING!

ANOTHER MAGNIFICENT COLOURED PORTRAIT!

One of the splendid attractions for next Monday is a topping likeness of ROBERT McNEAL, the International left half-back of WEST BROMWICH ALBION. This portrait is indubitably the best the BOYS' FRIEND has yet given. Make sure of this splendid picture.

THE GREAT EVENT OF THE JUMPING SEASON!

A real look-alive, over-the-sticks, long, complete twelve-thousand-word story of the GRAND NATIONAL takes a notable place in the long list of contents of next Monday's number of the "B. F." Popular Alpha Always figures in this ripping yarn. The title of the wonderful story is "A RANK OUTSIDER!" and the brilliant author not only features our old pal Alpha, but also brings into

the picture a band of consummate rogues who are neck-or-nothing fellows. Whether they get neck or nothing you will see, but, as you are aware, the astute Alpha is slim to a degree. He finds himself up against a perfect surprise packet of machinations. His adversaries have vowed that Alpha shall not get his horse to AINTREE; but Alpha is a wily bird, and you will experience very considerable pleasure as you read of how the subtle strategist disguises the jumper and outwits the plotters, thanks to a friendly caravan. You must not miss the BIG RACE AT AINTREE!

"RIVALS OF THE RIVER!"

This is the title of the story about the ROOKWOOD BOATRACE! It is a stunner. The struggle is Classical v. Moderns. There is a crafty attempt to get at the Classical boat, but Jimmy Silver & Co. frustrate the plot. You won't think any more of Knowles after reading this seasonable yarn, but you will say that Owen Conquest is a genius of the first brand.

For the old sporting spirit of Rookwood is the dominating feature of this out-of-the-way yarn of the famous school. Everyone has been banking on this race—Jimmy Silver and his chums among the rest. Uncle James has a lot to do in the business, as you will see.

"THE SEMI-FINAL!"

This is great! If you are keen on CUPTIE FOOTER you will feel your enthusiasm kindling as you read this splendid story of the big contest. The glory of the Cup is something indescribable. The whole business sends a magnetic thrill through the country. Everybody is excited about the result. No sporting fixture in the whole twelve months beats this for intensity, and you get the swing and magic of it all in "THE SEMI-FINAL!" I have had plenty of

occasions for extolling the good work of WALTER EDWARDS. This time he has done even better than usual. Read next Monday the gripping account of CHELSEA VILLA in the tremendous fight. It is a meeting of Tritons. You will have your feelings stirred by the insidious and shady work of an unscrupulous member of the BELGRADE CLUB.

We have heard plenty up to now of the relentless opposition which ROLLO DAYTON has to face. But there's no one like Rollo for facing the music, and putting in a good workman-like show, notwithstanding a ton of difficulties and handicaps. I must impress on you that next Monday's story of the popular hero is prodigious. "W. E." gets there. He presents some flashing pictures. He has a deep-set knowledge of sport. I can heartily recommend "THE SEMI-FINAL!"

"THE PHANTOM PIRATE!"

This is the dashing sort of serial which grips you. It is full of first-class thrills, and, what's more, it has an air of reality all through. Maurice Everard writes about pirates who have genuine spirit about them. No milk-and-water fellows! There is an eerie mystery, too, hanging over this yarn of MODERN BUCCANEERS. They bring to bear the wonders of up-to-date inventions to assist them in the carrying out of their nefarious schemes. Maurice Everard proves his case. Piracy in the bygone was a menace to maritime trade. Modern piracy might sweep the world.

FETCHING FEATURES!

But I have not said half what is really necessary about next Monday's grand SPORTS NUMBER. Keep your eye on Lester Bidston. He has another tremendously sensational instalment of his romance, "SCUND THE ETERNAL!" Once again the intrepid adventurers are plunging through the wonders of space on the track of big discoveries. Lester Bidston writes of the SECRETS OF THE STARS!

Looking through the proofs of next week's instalment, I was enormously impressed by the power shown in the handling of this story. Now, as you will realise, the business of running a paper like the BOYS' FRIEND means ceaseless endeavour. My work is never done, but it is lightened more than a little by the unfailing loyalty of my chums. The rest does not matter. I am satisfied so long as I can present such a number as next week's issue of the grand old paper, with its first line yarns, and those extra features like FOOTER

COMPETITIONS, HEALTH AND SPORT, to make up a record bill of fare.

KEEPING ABREAST OF THE TIMES.

One of the most important things to be considered in the case of a paper like the BOYS' FRIEND is the urgent need to keep well up to the line of modern progress. Fiction has to be up-to-date like everything else. The old "Green 'Un" has always been in touch with the mighty achievements which lie to the credit of science and discovery, and that is just one reason for the immense popularity of the old paper, and the unswerving loyalty of the supporters of the brightest and best boys' paper in the world.

RESULT OF PLYMOUTH ARGYLE COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

L. WOODFORD, Dinton, Near Aylesbury, Bucks.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following six competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

A. Adams, 1 Herbert Rd., South Willesboro, Ashford, Kent.
Francis Morton, 7 Ayre St., Pallion, Sunderland.
H. Knighton, 46, Wellingboro Rd., Northampton.

F. Howarth, 17, Churset St., Collyhurst, Manchester.
E. Marshall, Sunnyside, Elm Grove, Thorpe Bay Essex.
L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Rd., Levenshulme, Manchester.

Twenty-one competitors, with two errors each divide the ten prizes of 5s. each:

Charles H. Morton, 7, Ayre St., Pallion, Sunderland; Cyril Darbyshire, 8, Bennett St., Higher Broughton, Manchester; R. A. Camp, Baddow Park, nr. Chelmsford; R. Cole, 103, Sheen Lane, Mortlake, S.W. 4; R. B. Curtis, Hillside, Taplow, Bucks; Richard Wimberley, 15, Wheatfield St., Edinburgh; Annie Ringham, 45, Petersburg Rd., Stockport; John Campbell, 148, Kensington St., Knebly, Yorks; E. Shooter, 15, Manor Rd., New Village, Askern, nr. Doncaster; Alex. Welland, 237, Winchester Rd., Highams Park, E. 4; William Ramsdale, 3 Foundry St., Stourport, Worcs; Donald Rains, 15, North Evesham Rd., Reigate; Ted S. Newton, Littleover Lane, Normanton, Derby; Mrs. Phillips, 27, Strelley St., Bulwell, Notts; W. Edgington, 45, Playford Rd., Finsbury Park N. 4; Albert E. Jeffrey, 14, Park St., Southend-on-Sea; E. McHugh, 6, Perth St., Belfast; J. B. Hughes, 6, Perth St., Belfast; Alfred Carr, 70, Bargate, Boston, Lincs; William Mitchell, 5, North Shore St., Campbeltown, N.B.; Dorothy Moore, 146, Vine Place, Rochdale.

SOLUTION.

Plymouth Argyle's ground is almost ideal. Few teams in this country can boast more delightful headquarters. The Argyle's success was mainly due to Mr. Brettell, its first manager. Although Plymouth has not yet been in the Final for the Cup, it may come their way in the near future.

Your Editor.

The £ s. d. Value of your Hair

Test "Harlene-Hair-Drill" FREE!

1,000,000 MAGNIFICENT HAIR-PROMOTING GIFTS

DO you know that your Hair has a certain monetary value of its own to you in your everyday business life?

Many people are put down as "too old" simply because the condition of their Hair makes them look and feel so, when in reality they are really in the prime of life and at the best age to give satisfactory service to their employers.

Do not let this happen to you! Beautiful Hair is the greatest gift Nature has to bestow, and is appreciated

3. A FREE TRIAL BOTTLE OF "UZON," a high-class Brilliantine that gives to "Harlene-Drilled" Hair the radiant lustre of perfect health, and which is especially beneficial in those cases where the scalp is inclined to be "dry."

4. THE SECRET MANUAL OF "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL," containing the discoverer's detailed instructions for the most effective method of carrying out the "Hair-Drill."

Post the Coupon at once—TO-DAY—enclosing 4d. in stamps to cover cost of packing and return carriage to your own door, no matter where you may reside.



Whether in business or social life, your Hair possesses a certain £ s. d. value of its own. What is the value of YOUR Hair? Do you possess Beautiful, Long, Lustrous, and Wavy Hair, which commands attention everywhere? If not, post the Coupon below to-day for a FREE "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL" GIFT OUTFIT and commence to raise the value of your Hair to 20s. in the £.

by everyone, whether in business or social life, and it is not even difficult or costly to obtain; in fact, you may start on the road TO-DAY, FREE of cost, by posting the Coupon below for a Valuable and Generous Gift Trial Outfit for the practice of "Harlene Hair-Drill."

Each of these Gift Outfits contains the following, and makes a complete Seven-day Course:—

- 1. A BOTTLE OF "HARLENE." The Hair Food and Tonic with a reputation of upwards of 40 years to prove its efficacy. It is used by leading Actresses, Cinema Queens, and Leaders of Society all over the World, and is the only Hair Food and Tonic which works Nature's way.
- 2. A PACKET OF "CHEMEX" SHAMPOO. This is an antiseptic purifier, which thoroughly cleanses the hair and scalp of all scurf, etc., and prepares the hair for the "Hair-Drill" Treatment. You should avoid greasy, hair-matting coconut oils.

After a Free Trial you will be able to obtain further supplies of "Harlene" at 1s. 10d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 9d. per bottle; "Uzon" Brilliantine 1s. 10d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle; "Chemex" Shampoo Powders, 1s. 6d. per box of seven Shampoos (single packets 3d. each); and "Astol" for Grey Hair, at 2s. and 5s. per bottle, from Chemists and Stores all over the world.

"Harlene" Free Gift Coupon

Detach and post to EDWARDS' HARLENE, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, & 26, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.C.1. Dear Sirs.—Please send me your Free "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit, as described. I enclose 4d. in stamps for postage and packing to my address. BOYS' FRIEND, 17/3/23.

NOTE TO READERS.

Write your FULL name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin the coupon to it, and post as directed above. Mark envelope "Sample Dept." N.B.—If your hair is GREY enclose extra 2d. stamp—6d. in all—and a FREE bottle of "Astol" for Grey Hair will also be sent you.

ANOTHER £10 OFFERED TO READERS!

THE HISTORY OF THE CLAPTON ORIENT CLUB.

FIRST PRIZE £5.

SECOND PRIZE £2 10s. and 10 PRIZES of 5s.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid footer competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of the Clapton Orient 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 "Clapton Orient" Competition, Boys' FRIEND Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, March 22nd.

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 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," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.



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

Name..... Address..... B.F.

Chums Reunited!

By Owen Conquest.



(Continued from page 487.)

The boat rocked violently, almost capsizing under the terrific shock as Tommy Dodd landed. It was a splendid leap. But Tommy Dodd rolled over helplessly in the rocking boat as he landed; and for the moment he was at Raby's mercy.

Raby dropped his oar, almost losing his footing; but not quite. In a twinkling he was upon the Modern junior.

"Ow!" gasped Tommy Dodd. Splash!

Before the Modern could put up a struggle, he was seized in Raby's grasp, and whirled over the slanting gunwale.

Tommy Dodd went head first into four feet of water and the boat rocked away, and was a dozen feet distant when Tommy's head came spluttering up. There was a yell of delight from the island.

"Well done, Raby!" Tommy Dodd spluttered and gasped as he swam. He swam a few yards after the boat, and Raby flourished a boathook. As the hook missed Tommy's nose by an inch or so, the Modern junior suddenly ceased his pursuit.

"Come on!" grinned Raby. "You'll get punctured—but come on."

Tommy Dodd did not seem to consider it good enough. He swam back to the bank and clambered out of the water, and rejoined his comrades. Three pairs of Modern flats were shaken after Raby.

Raby put the oars out, and rowed for the island. He grinned back at the defeated Moderns as he rowed.

Raby was not feeling "down and out" now. He was in great spirits, and victorious and gleeful. Loud shouts from the island welcomed him as he toiled the boat across.

"This way, Raby!" "Good for you, old chap!" "Good old Raby!"

Those welcoming shouts had a very pleasant sound in George Raby's ears. Bump! The boat's nose bumped on the island, and Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Newcome rushed down to seize it and pull it in—and then they seized Raby and

dragged him ashore on the island in triumph.

"Hurrah!" roared Lovell. "Good man, Raby!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Oh, my hat! What a stroke of luck! Good man!"

Raby laughed. "I thought I'd chip in." "Of course you did, old top! Just in time for the picnic, too," said Jimmy. "We'd only just started when those Modern worms crawled along. Come on!"

It was a merry picnic on the island after all, and all the Fistical Four were there—and all four of them enjoyed it. Especially they enjoyed the wrathful shouts of the Moderns, and the brandishing of infuriated fists by Tommy Dodd & Co. The Modern boat had disappeared from sight, and evidently was not to be recovered before it reached the Rookwood raft; and Tommy Dodd & Co. had a two-mile tramp before them to get back to the school, which was nothing like the programme they had mapped out. With a final yell to the Classics, and a final brandishing of fists, they started, and vanished from sight.

But on the island all was merry and bright. The Fistical Four seemed to have forgotten that there ever had been any division in their ranks—the trouble was over without a word being said on the subject. The chums of the end study were reunited, and that was enough. After the picnic, the Fistical Four pulled back to Rookwood in the highest of spirits—what time the hapless Moderns were still tramping on their homeward way.

Four juniors marched into the School House at Rookwood with their arms linked, in a merry row, with smiling faces. Which was an indication to all whom it might concern, that the end study was united once more—Raby had "come round."

THE END.

(You must not miss "Divals of the River!"—next week's splendid story of the Rookwood boat race. And see that you get your FREE Hand-coloured Photo of Robert McNeal, of West Bromwich Albion.)

Scound the Eternal

By LESTER BIDSTON. (Continued from page 480.)

"The eyes!" Sid yelled. "Stab at their eyes!" Thensia's spear was torn from her grasp, Tim's was broken to a jagged stump, and, altogether, things looked desperate, when Ken fell from the Pearl's deck. For one moment he sprawled helplessly between the Spays and his amazed comrades. Then, taking a grip on his dazed senses, he let loose a double stream of death-dealing bullets from the revolvers he had brought with him.

As shot after shot thudded into the dense mass, a complete change came over the scene. From being the triumphant attackers, the Spays became the attacked, and, after a momentary pause of stupefied dismay, the survivors broke in all directions, leaving half their number dead or writhing in agony of dissolution.

"Sid," panted Ken, "inside the ship I stumbled full tilt into the Spay rulers. I'd just time to grab these guns and settle one of the three when I was seized by unseen guards and flung down here."

"But we'll not be beaten by the last obstacle," Sid cried, helping himself to one of Ken's revolvers, and finding that it still held two bullets. Then he sprang up the ladder in a panic of haste to find, as he had feared, that the door had been closed and fastened against a fresh intrusion. The Pearl—and freedom—lay further than ever beyond their reach!

So keen was his disappointment that for several seconds he tore and battered at the locked door in a mad attempt to force an entrance. Then, realising the futility of his senseless rage, he desisted, and dejectedly descended to his companions.

Thensia pointed dramatically upwards. "See! The Spays come!"

One look was enough. The upper tiers of the amphitheatre were alive with a vindictive horde, whose unhurried, but carefully organised descent, was proof of the certainty they had of recapturing the helpless humans. There was something horribly repulsive in the cold deliberate method by which the terrible insects waited for a complete ring to be made on each tier before descending to the next, their evident intention being an attack from all sides at an agreed moment.

To the hopeless group below it appeared certain that the end had come, that their great dash for liberty had turned to bitter and complete defeat. It was no question now of being merely held as prisoners—the dead Spay ruler inside the Pearl was enough to condemn them, they knew, to some horrible fate. Ken's hold tightened on his half-empty revolvers, and, with a sigh, Tim retrieved his inadequate weapon of wood.

(There are plenty of thrills in next week's extra long instalment of this gripping story! Make sure of your BOYS' FRIEND by ordering it from your newsagent now!)

THE FEATURE THAT WILL KEEP YOU FIT!



HEALTH AND SPORT



Conducted by PERCY LONGHURST.

If you are in need of any information concerning health, sport or general fitness, write to Mr. Percy Longhurst, o/o The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for a reply. All queries are a confidence between Mr. Longhurst and the sender, and are always answered by a personal letter and never in these columns. The information is entirely free, and is the best obtainable.

Massage.

Sports loving readers are frequently writing to me with questions concerning massage, the value of which no intelligent person can have any doubt. Now, massage is best given by a professional masseur, who has thoroughly learned his business; but every fellow hasn't the opportunity of benefiting by the services of such, so will have to put up with some substitute. Half a loaf is better than no bread at all.

What I want to point out is that "a good, hard rub down" by some heavy-handed chum, who is willing enough but has not studied the subject, is not massage. That "good, hard rub" does not do much good. Learn a bit about it for yourself. A little real massage will do you more good than an hour of vigorous, ignorant scrubbing.

Do not massage when the body is dripping with perspiration. Wipe the skin with a soft towel first, rest for a few minutes well covered up, and then properly massage the most important of those muscles used in your sport, whatever it is. If you are a boxer, the arms from wrist to shoulder, for you cannot reach those back of the shoulders, the big chest muscles, and those across the stomach. If you are a runner, track or cross country, devote your efforts to the muscular parts above and on the inner side of the knee and the calves.

The muscles must be quite loose when massaged. Begin with a gentle stroking upwards, towards the heart or in the case of the chest muscles it will be from the middle of the chest towards the shoulders; then a somewhat firmer stroking, using the tips of the middle three fingers. Follow by a gentle pinching and squeezing over the whole length of the muscle; finish with a gentle stroking. It is this kind of massage that does good. The violent rubbing in of a gill of embrocation is not a massage at all. If you use some oil or spirit mixture do not suppose that the worse it smells the more effective it is. I have been in many a dressing room where the smells from the various "oils" have been enough to turn a fellow sick.

If you are a wrestler, and massage is a most valuable aid in this sport, be careful that no oil enters into whatever is the mixture used during the massage. The laws of wrestling forbid entirely the use of oil. Failure to abide by this rule means disqualification by the referee.

The Disastrous "Fag."

He was only a youngster, but he had an enthusiastic love of boxing, and he was one of the chaps that will learn. For this reason I was mighty sorry to see him come walking up to the gym, where the competition was to be held, cigarette between his lips.

"Keep on winning to-night, aren't you?" I asked him; and he said that he was. He added that he had been doing some training for the event.

"Well fit?" "Fine!" he answered, with a big, confident smile on his face.

Not wanting to discourage him, I did not ask him what he meant by that cigarette, but when it was all over and he had lost, I did put the question.

He did not know, he admitted, why he smoked at all. The best reason he could give was that "other chaps did it"—which is no reason at all. Then I showed him a cutting of a speech made recently by Lieutenant-Colonel Betts, boxer and all-round athlete. He is Physical Training Director of our Army in Germany, and has forgotten more about Army boxing than most men ever knew. And I think that youngster felt very sorry for himself.

"It surprises me," says the colonel, "to see competitors entering the world smoking cigarettes. Can one wonder that some of them had 'bellows to mend' before half the bout was over? If we wish to do any good at boxing we must practise self-denial. I don't say 'never smoke,' but I do say when one is training for any event one can't afford to neglect any detail, however small, and even the youngest soldier ought to know how harmful is the continual smoking of cigarettes. If you train, train well. The fit man is a credit to himself, to those belonging to him, and to the unit he has the honour to represent."

And quite right. If you are a club member and are due for a boxing competition, you are not only hurting yourself by that cigarette you smoke just before going into the ring, but you are disgracing your club by risking the chance of your club providing a loser rather than a winner. Ask yourself, "Is the 'fag' worth it?"

Result of "Referee" Competition.

This competition has proved most gratifying—not on account of the large number of solutions sent in, but because of the high degree of real judgment and knowledge of the laws of sport indicated by the competitors. Two readers succeeded in giving the correct answers to all six questions, while no fewer than six had but one mistake each. The prize-winners are L. J. Peart, 13, Uxwin Road, Gleggall Road, Peckham, S.E. 15, and Ralph Johnson, Toll Gate, Hurst, nr. Longton, Staffs, and I am sending a book to each.

Percy Longhurst

(There will be another interesting and instructive "Health and Sport" article in next Monday's Special Sports Number of the BOYS' FRIEND. With this issue a superb hand-coloured real glossy photo of Robert McNeal will be presented FREE!)

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