

"THE ROOKWOOD TENDERFEET!" AN EXTRA-LONG STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST! **IN THIS ISSUE!**

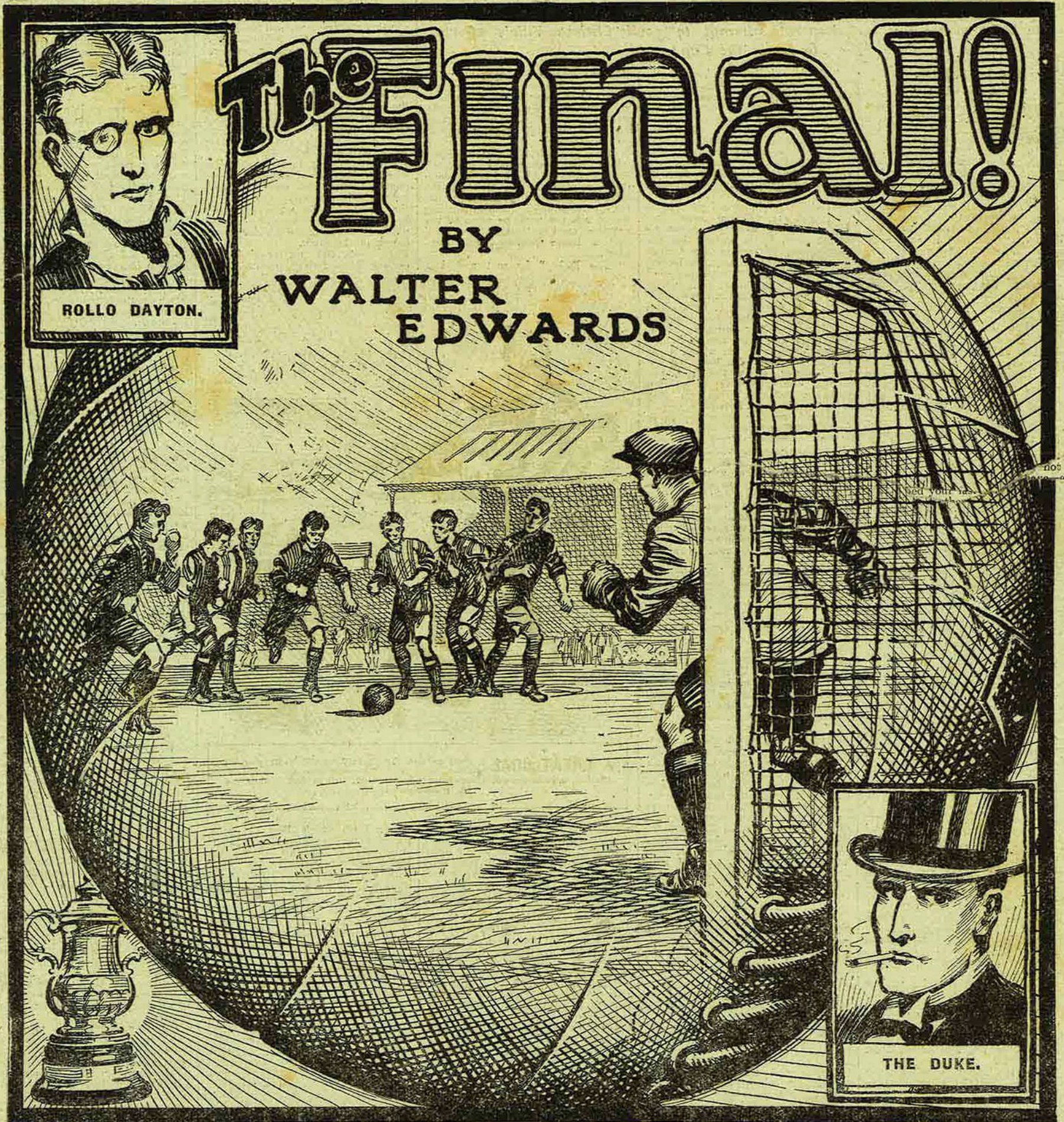
The BOYS' FRIEND 2c

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

No. 1,142. Vol. XXIII.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending April 28th, 1923.]



ROLLO DAYTON.

The Final!

BY
WALTER
EDWARDS



THE DUKE.

THE PENALTY! A Breathless Moment in the Great Cuptie Story in This Issue.

A TIP-TOP CUPTIE STORY CRAMMED WITH THRILLS!



The FINAL!

BY
WALTER EDWARDS

The Duke makes one last desperate attempt to spoil Chelsea Villa's efforts to retain the Cup!

The 1st Chapter.

"Most Important!"

Victoria Station presented its usual scene of bustle and animation on a certain bright day in late April, yet many were the people who found time to stop and gaze with frank interest at the dozen or so tanned young men who had alighted from a first-class Pullman of the Brighton express.

Some folks, total strangers to the smiling, healthy-looking party, even went so far as to say "Good luck, lads!" or "Don't let it go North, boys!" to which the young men laughingly expressed their thanks for the good wishes, and promised that they would hang on to "it" like grim death.

"It," of course, was the English Cup, and the smiling young men were the Chelsea Villa team, which was to meet Huddersford Town in the Final at Wembley Stadium on the morrow.

The Londoners had been down to Brighton for a week's special training, and their appearance of perfect physical fitness bore eloquent testimony to the treatment they had received at the hands of the famous South Coast "doctor."

Long walks across the rolling Sussex Downs, a daily round of golf, and seven days spent upon the "early to bed, early to rise" plan had worked wonders, and the eve of the great day found them as fit as a team could be.

The eleven players who had carried the Villa into the last round of the competition were to do battle on the morrow, and the small army of newspaper men which met them at Victoria, and bombarded them with questions, hurried back to Fleet Street and wrote glowing accounts of their appearance; and each scribe emphasised the fact that if physical condition stood for anything there seemed every possibility of the holders retaining the Cup.

One scribe, a rather weedy-looking youth with an important air, approached Hercules Samson, the eccentric little winger, who laid a modest claim to being the greatest footballer the game had ever known, or ever would know.

Hercules, a law unto himself in the matter of clothes, was again wearing his kilt of many colours, his natty little jacket, and a large bowler-hat, which lodged snugly upon his protuberant ears.

His sharp, birdlike features were still pale, and the round eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses were shining with a mischievous light.

"Er—Mr. Samson," began the newspaper-man briskly, "I represent 'Sporting Pars,' a paper which is, of course, well-known to you."

"Oh, quite—quite, my dear sir!" returned the winger, in a voice which echoed through the lofty station. "I am deeply interested in your serial, 'The Lad With Two Left Legs.'"

The scribe frowned slightly and rubbed his chin. "H'm! I'm afraid you've made a mistake, Mr. Samson; but that doesn't matter," he said. "Now, sir, I have a question to put to you."

"Put it, my dear sir!" invited Hercules, with a side glance at the handsome, smiling face of the Hon. Rollo Dayton.

"What are Chelsea Villa's chances in the Cup Final?" asked the scribe, notebook in hand.

The diminutive winger placed a skinny forefinger to his forehead and pondered.

"My dear sir," he cried, at length, "I really think that we shall win"—the newspaper-man wrote steadily, nodded, and beamed—provided we are ahead when we shoot beneath Hammersmith Bridge. Of course, there is just the possibility that they may gain upon us at Tattenham Corner before we get into the straight; but in a balloon race, as you know, the tricky air currents tell."

"But," the bewildered newspaper-man put in, feeling sure that Hercules must have misunderstood his question, for it seemed that the winger was mixing up the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-race, the Derby, and a balloon race, "I asked you—"

"Exactly, my dear sir!" interrupted Hercules, with a wave of his hand. "I am coming to that. As I was saying, they may win the toss, in which case they will elect to bat first, of course, using the cleft, and if this happens I am afraid there will be nothing for it but to throw the hammer, swing the lead, and swallow the javelin. It is not improbable, however, that we may trump their ace, in which case I think we can rely upon Dayton to break away and score a try. What is your own opinion, my dear sir?" concluded Samson, with a wintry smile.

The weedy-looking youth was regarding the little fellow strangely, as though not certain of his sanity; but it was not until the winger produced an enormous jack-knife, and ran his thumb along a murderous-looking blade that he turned swiftly, gave a warning yell, and raced away towards an exit.

The spectators who had witnessed the little pantomime were shaking with laughter, but Samson's birdlike features remained as funereal as usual.

"Come along, old egg!" drawled Rollo Dayton, taking the little fellow by the arm. "That's enough for one day! That johanio thought you were goin' to harm him!"

"I would not harm him in any way, my dear Dayton!" protested Hercules, as they made for an exit. "I was merely going to cut his head off!"

Passing out into the station courtyard, the players waited to hear what big John Vaughan, the Villa manager, had to say to them.

"You fellows had better toddle home now," said the bearded giant, in that rumbling voice which seemed to well up from his boots. "And I rely upon you to be between the sheets by ten o'clock. As you know, we kick-off at three o'clock, so we'd better meet at Chelsea about half-past one. Is that quite clear?"

"As mud, old egg!" smiled Rollo Dayton. "Well, so long, you cripples! Anybody coming my way?"

The fair-haired amateur had already hailed a taxi, but nobody required a lift; so, with a hearty handshake all round, he swung open the door, gave the address of his flat, and was soon bowling towards the Albany.

It was not a long journey, and the porter of Raphael Mansions seemed really pleased to see him again.

"Are there any letters for me, old egg?" asked the youngster, with a bright smile.

"Five, sir," answered the man. "There's one marked 'most important,' which was delivered by hand about half an hour ago."

Rollo took the little bundle and mounted the stairs, taking them three at a time. Letting himself into

the comfortable sitting-room which overlooked the street, he threw the letters upon the table and passed into his bed-room, and it was not until he had rinsed his hands and face that he gave another thought to his correspondence.

Then, sitting before a cheery fire— which the porter had prepared, Rollo's manservant being on holiday—he glanced idly through the little pile of envelopes, amusing himself by recognising the handwriting; but it was not until he came to the envelope marked "most important" that a frown puckered his broad brow.

"The Duke!" he muttered, half

due warning that by to-morrow evening Chelsea Villa will be vanquished in the dust, as I have always intended that they should be.

"One last word, my dear Rollo. Before the clock strikes twelve to-night you will be a prisoner in my hands."

"Here's to our next meeting, you puppy!" THE DUKE.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Blow!

The Hon. Rollo Dayton sat quite still for fully two minutes, staring fixedly at the letter which he held in his hands, the words of which seemed to stand out in letters of fire.

The Duke again! He had threatened to strike one last, desperate blow to bring about the downfall of Chelsea Villa. He vowed that the holders should not retain the Cup.

A lump of blazing coal fell into the fender, and caused the youngster to give a slight start; and then, when he had replaced it in the heart of the glowing embers, it seemed to take the shape of the sinister features which belonged to the amazing criminal who was known to the underworld of three continents as the Duke.

Rollo imagined that he could see the delicate, finely-chiselled features, the cruel, thin lips, and the uncanny eyes which seemed to gleam with a terrible reptilian light, and a little involuntary shudder ran through the youngster's magnificent frame.

His mind went back to the days when he had first encountered the phantom man, who was "wanted" by the police of almost every city in the world, for the master-criminal's lawless activities were universal, his tentacles reaching to almost every corner of the earth.

His was the master-mind, the corrupt genius which planned every

He arranged certain "faked" fights and "crooked" football matches, after which he deliberately set out to sow the seeds of suspicion, and it was not long before the man who paid a shilling to see a football match or two or three shillings to witness a boxing contest, began to ask himself if everything was "straight."

Matters went from bad to worse, until at last the Hon. Rollo Dayton, Dr. Dagnall, and other prominent members of the Belgrade Sporting Club formed themselves into a band known as the Clean-Sport Crusaders.

The object of the Crusaders was to fight the Duke, and bring him to book, and many were the encounters which took place; and it was not long before the master-criminal had to admit that there was at least one person in the world who did not fear him, who did not shrink before his sinister gaze.

This person was Rollo Dayton, little more than a schoolboy, and the Duke declared that he would destroy his youthful enemy. He was in the way.

The destruction proved a far more difficult task than the criminal had anticipated, and on two occasions he found himself in the grip of the police, having been beaten hands down in a battle of strength and wits.

That he managed to escape did not lessen his black hatred of the fair-haired youngster, and he never tired of planning to bring about Rollo's death. But in his youthful enemy he met a foeman worthy of his steel, and the football season arrived and found Rollo still very much alive. Time after time the master-criminal exercised all his diabolical ingenuity to gain his ends, but on every occasion he found himself foiled.

And now, on the eve of the Final, he declared that he was going to strike a blow which would rob Chelsea Villa of the Cup.

Rollo Dayton read the amazing letter for the fourth time, and a little smile flitted across his smooth features.

"So the priceless lad is going to kidnap little Rollo before midnight, is he?" he mused, glancing round as though expecting to find the sinister criminal already in the room. He rose languidly to his full height and stretched his magnificent young muscles. "Perhaps it will be as well to get ready to receive him."

Crossing to a writing-desk in the corner, he unlocked a drawer and extracted a Service revolver, and a swift examination proved that it was loaded and in perfect working order.

"I don't mean to take any risks with the precious old lad to-night," muttered the youngster, placing the weapon upon the table, "so I'll take a leaf from his book by shooting first and asking questions afterwards."

It was nearing dusk, and mystic shadows were already stealing into the room.

"I'll take a squint round, just to make sure, and then light up," thought Rollo, his strong fingers closing round the butt of the revolver.

Treading stealthily, with every nerve upon the alert, he padded from the apartment and entered his bedroom, but a thorough search did not bring either the Duke or any of his hirelings to light.

He next visited the kitchen and bath-room, but they also were empty, so he returned to the sitting-room and locked the door, after which he crossed to the bay window and drew the curtains together.

"Now for a light, a read, and a patient wait for my distinguished guest!" smiled the youngster, crossing to the electric switch by the door.

He placed his thumb on the little brass projection and pressed, and the next instant there came a loud report, and a blinding flash of purple light. He threw up his hands and crashed to the carpet.

The 3rd Chapter. Kidnapped!

Rollo Dayton gave a little groan and opened his eyes, to find himself enveloped in Stygian darkness—black, impenetrable, clinging. So he closed his eyes again, thinking—in a vague, indeterminate sort of way—that the whole thing was an unpleasant nightmare.

Yet, try though he would, he could not sleep, and, little by little, the mist cleared from his throbbing brain and he found himself trying to piece together the sequence of events which had led up to the present situation.

He remembered the arrival at Victoria, the ride to the Albany, the bundle of letters— Ah, the letters!



A GREAT GOAL! Just outside the penalty area Rollo Dayton let drive, and so unexpected was the shot that the ball was in the net before Low flung himself full length across the goalmouth!

aloud, running his thumb along the flap and extracting a sheet of good quality notepaper; and as he read the message, penned in a neat calligraphy, a tinge of colour overspread his clean-cut features, and a hard light dawned in his clear, blue eyes.

"My dear Dayton," ran the letter, "permit me to congratulate Chelsea Villa, and you in particular, upon having reached the Cup Final, an event which is sending this sport-crazy country into a state of disgusting hysteria."

"As you know, I have followed your progress with the utmost interest. You have triumphed over me. You stand an excellent chance of beating Huddersford Town and retaining your beloved Cup."

"At least, my dear Rollo—I trust you don't object to my calling you Rollo—you imagine you stand a chance, but you do not, for it is my wish that you should be soundly trounced."

"You know that it is not my habit to make idle threats, so I give you

daring coup which filled the newspapers with staring headlines, and he ruled the underworld of London, Paris, and the cities of the States with a rod of iron. His slightest word was law, his glance a command.

And because he was a criminal genius, and could snap his contemptuous fingers under the nose of authority, he waxed rich, and eventually the day dawned when he fired of safe-breaking, blackmail, robbery, and worse.

Ordinary crime began to bore him, so he decided to strike at Society through another channel.

And his sinister choice fell upon sport, the sport of the man in the street—boxing, football, cricket, racing. He decided to smash these institutions, to bring them to the dust in disgrace, and to this end he succeeded in getting certain trainers, promoters, footballers, and the like into his power, using threats, bribery, or violence for his purpose.

Your pals are looking for the BEST Boys' Paper in the World! Why not show them a copy of the BOYS' FRIEND?

They gave a clue, he felt sure of that.

He closed his eyes and tried to collect his scattered thoughts, but his head was aching as though it would split, and his burning temples felt as though they would burst.

Setting his teeth, and by sheer will-power, he concentrated upon the bundle of letters. And then, in a flash, everything came back to him.

The Duke had threatened to kidnap him before midnight!

That was the key to the situation. He remembered the electric switch, the report when he pressed the brass projection, and the blinding flash of purple light. And after that—

The youngster peered into the inky shadows, and he imagined he saw vague forms passing before him.

"Is anybody there?" he asked, his voice little more than a husky whisper.

But his words sounded hollow, unreal. He felt a shudder run through his cramped frame.

Then, as full consciousness returned, he heard a sound, faint yet distinct, even familiar, and he held his breath and strained his quick ears.

Lap! Lap, lap, lap!

The air of the place—cellar, dungeon, whatever it was—was cold and damp, and its dank, nauseous odour made him feel physically sick.

Lap! Lap, lap, lap!

"It's water! The river, perhaps!" The thought came to the youngster in a flash. "But what am I doing here?"

Stretching out his hand, he ran his fingers over the slimy floor and walls, and it was not until he made an effort to get up that he found that an iron band encircled his right ankle and that he was chained to a staple in the wall.

He fell back, with something very like a groan upon his lips, for he realised that the Duke had carried out his threat to the letter. But what hurt him most was the fact that Chelsea Villa would have to take the field without their centre-forward.

"The despicable hound!" he muttered, tugging at the chain, but only succeeding in scraping the skin off his leg.

He remained still for some minutes, and then, with a light shrug of his broad shoulders, he gave a little laugh.

"Well, he's made a big mistake if he thinks the old Villa can't win without me!" he mused. "They've still got Dagggers and Hercules and old Giles, to say nothing of the other fellows! I think the cheery lad is going to have the surprise of his life! What's more, I—"

A sound came from the opposite side of the place—the sound of shuffling footsteps—and a moment later a door which seemed to be set high up in the wall opened very slowly, and the bloated face of a dark-skinned Chinese was illuminated by the flickering light of a candle.

And as Rollo watched, with bated breath and parted lips, the fleshy features, greasy in the light, puckered into an evil smile, mocking, sinister, repulsive.

"This way—this way!" purred the Celestial. "Bring the pretty boy down here! His bed is waiting for him!"

Broad wooden steps led down to the dank cellar, and Rollo Dayton almost gasped aloud as he watched the little procession descend. First came the Chinese, waddling from side to side, and grinning until his slit eyes disappeared altogether, and behind him came two younger Chinese who were carrying a burden between them.

And when the light fell upon that burden Rollo recognised it as Dr. Dagnall, the Villa inside-right!

Dagggers was dumped—none too gently, to judge by the sound—in another corner of the cellar, and the clank of metal told Rollo that he, also, was being chained up to a staple.

"Leave him there! Let him have his beauty sleep!" purred the fat man, with a deep chuckle, and, turning ponderously, he led the way back up the steps.

Rollo Dayton watched the whole affair like a person hypnotised, and it was in vain that he tried to shout. Not a sound would pass his lips!

Then the door closed, and all was darkness once more. He heard a key grate in the lock, and nothing but the monotonous lapping of the river came to his ears.

"Dagggers! Dagggers, old egg!" He had found his voice at last, but no answer came from the vague form in the shadows.

Five minutes passed, then ten, and the Stygian darkness, added to the uncertainty and mystery, began to get upon the youngster's nerves.

And he gave a start as he heard a deep groan and the metallic clank of a chain.

"Dagggers! Answer me, old egg! I'm Rollo!"

"Eh? What's that?" came from the other corner of the cellar.

"What the dickens is up? Where am I? Confound and—"

A low laugh broke from Rollo. There obviously was not much the matter with old Dagggers!

"I'm Rollo, you ass!" whispered the fair-haired youngster, regaining his usual spirits. "We're kidnaped, old egg! Like the precious old Babes in the Wood, and all that sort of thing, you know!"

A grunt came from the doctor.

"But what the dickens does it all mean, old man?" he asked. "I received an urgent phone call from Lady Dennington, of Great Adney Street. Something the matter with her kiddie. Would I slip round at once? Said I would. It's only a step from Harley Street, so I didn't trouble to get the car out. Well, a taxi was crawling past my place, and I hailed it; but no sooner had I stepped inside than two fellows—both about as big as Jack Dempsey—followed me. I fought and shouted; but the car was already going at a dickens of a lick, and it was already dark, of course. I'm sure I closed one fellow's eye before

and the eyes of both Rollo and Dagggers bulged in the darkness as they recognised the diminutive form of Hercules Samson, the winger, and Giles, the Cockney, one of the safest custodians in the country!

Rollo pinched himself to make sure that he was not dreaming, but the sound of the Celestial's purring voice assured him that he was very much awake.

"Ah, the Duke's very clever!" said the Chinese, as he watched the two latest captives being chained to the wall. "He's almost as clever as Ah Sing!"

He waddled across to the steps and commenced to ascend, muttering to himself and chuckling: "It will soon be midnight, and then drip, drip! Inch by inch! Human rats! Ah, he's clever, is the Duke!"

A light step sounded from the top of the steps, and the rays of a powerful torch cut through the gloom.

"Out of the way, you yellow scum!" rapped a harsh voice; and because Ah Sing did not move quickly enough, a slim hand shot out, and the palm thudded against the fat man's flat features, causing him to fall backwards and land at the foot of the ladder with a thud which seemed to shake the whole place.

A second later a slim figure in evening-dress ran lightly down the steps and flashed the torch round the cellar, and its powerful white light came to rest upon the flushed features of the Hon. Rollo Dayton.

up, you nasty little toad!" snapped the amateur.

A low chuckle, mirthless and grating, broke from the master-criminal's thin lips, but he did not immediately reply to the taunt. Instead, he swung round upon the Chinese.

"Clear out, and quickly, you heathen!" he thundered, aiming a vicious kick at the man nearest him.

His hirelings needed no second command, for they scampered up the steps, squealing like frightened rabbits.

Ah Sing, however, shot a murderous sidelong glance at the tyrant before he waddled towards the door.

"Now," smiled the Duke, as he put a match to a tiny, silk-tipped cigarette, "we can talk."

"Talk?" came a Cockney voice from the darkness. "Jest let me get my 'ands on yer windpipe, Mister Dook, and I reckon you won't talk any more!"

"Good old Giles!" laughed Rollo Dayton. "Don't let this rotter get your tail down! And what about our tame winger?"

"Dayton, my dear sir," came a deep, bass voice, which reverberated round the cellar, "I strongly object to the disrespectful manner in which you refer to the greatest footballer the world has ever known, and were it not for this abominable chain, which tends to hamper my movements, I should feel obliged to give you the thrashing of your life. Enough!"

The door at the top of the steps opened and the figure of the man who called himself the Duke was silhouetted against the light behind him. He folded his arms across his chest and waited for the Celestial to turn; and this Ah Sing did, very slowly, almost paralysed with fear.

"Welcome to my mansion, my dear Dayton!" purred the man who called himself the Duke. "You are in good company!"

"I certainly was until you turned

chance of winning the Final without the help of such shining lights as yourselves. Also, the fact that you have disappeared will play upon the minds of the—er—muddled oafs who will take your places.

"Secondly, gentlemen, it may be of some interest to you to learn that you will never play football again; indeed, you will not see the light of another day!"

"You murderer!" growled Giles, tugging at the chain attached to his angle. "I'd give a year of my life—"

"A rash statement, my dear Giles!" purred the master-criminal; and the goalkeeper's words seemed to amuse him. "To continue," he ran on, after a short pause, "if you will kindly follow the rays of my torch you will observe that a grating has been let into the top of the wall, just above you, Dayton."

The eyes of the captives followed the white light, and a terrible fear, a horror, seemed to clutch Rollo Dayton's heart.

"You—you don't mean, you rotter—" he began, in hoarse tones.

"But I do, my dear Rollo!" smiled the man who called himself the Duke. "At high tide this comfortable little cellar is filled with water—and most unpalatable water at that—and should anybody happen to be locked in here they would be drowned like so many rats!"

The criminal glanced at his luminous wrist-watch. "It will be high tide in less than an hour," he announced.

The four captives were too stunned to say anything. The horror of their position, of the terrible death which awaited them, seemed to turn them to stone. They could only glance from the white, merciless face of the criminal to the grating in the wall.

"You—you wouldn't dare do this, Duke!" said Rollo, at length; although, in his heart, he knew that the fellow was capable of any crime, no matter how cold-blooded and diabolical.

The criminal gave an amused laugh.

"And why not, my dear Dayton?" he inquired lightly. "Nobody knows you are here, and I assure you that it will take more than your flat-footed police to get to the bottom of the mystery. You see, my dear fellow, the bodies of you four distinguished persons will be washed up by the next tide, and the verdict will be 'found drowned.' You will not be left here, once you have—er—breathed your last! I may need this cellar for other guests who are in my way!"

He again glanced at his watch. "I trust you gentlemen will excuse me for rushing away in this unceremonious manner, but I have arranged to relieve the Duchess of Beaulaugh of her diamond necklace to-night. I would that I could say 'au-revoir,' my dear Dayton, but this time, I fear, it must be 'good-bye!'"

He was chuckling as he strode across to the steps and mounted them, and he halted in the open door to fire his parting shot.

"A pleasant—er—death, gentlemen!" he cried.

And slowly—very slowly—the door closed, and the sound of the key grating in the lock came to their ears. Then, nearer, ever nearer, came the song of the river:

Lap! Lap, lap!



AN UNTIMELY APPEARANCE! The door at the top of the steps opened and the figure of the man who called himself the Duke was silhouetted against the light behind him. He folded his arms across his chest and waited for the Celestial to turn; and this Ah Sing did, very slowly, almost paralysed with fear.

I stopped a pile-driver with my jaw, and after that—well, here I am! My head feels as though somebody's hitting it with a mallet, and from the taste in my mouth I gather that I've been eating sawdust! And what about you, old man?"

It did not take Rollo long to tell his story, and the mere mention of the Duke's name brought from the doctor a flow of pungent language which would have shocked his aristocratic clientele.

"The low-down, pigeon-toed little rat!" he growled. "Of all the—"

"Shut up!" snapped Rollo. The sound of shuffling footsteps came from the direction of the door.

The 4th Chapter. The Duke Explains.

Slowly—very slowly it seemed to the two silent watchers—the door opened, and the greasy face of the fat Chinese was again illuminated by the flickering light of the candle.

"More of them—more of them!" he chuckled, as, wheezing like a badly sprung cart, he commenced to descend the broad wooden steps.

"Old Father Thames will have a feast to-night!" He chuckled anew as though at a good joke. "Dear old Father Thames!"

Following the fat man came four younger Chinese, and between them they were carrying two limp figures,

"Silence, you dolt!" snapped the Duke, flashing his torch upon the pale, birdlike features of Hercules. "Don't interrupt your betters!"

"Look here, my dear sir—" began the winger, blazing with indignation; and the next instant the criminal darted across the damp floor, and struck the little fellow a vicious blow across the mouth with his open hand.

"Silence, you fool!" ground out the Duke. "Another word and I'll fill you with lead!"

Samson, who realised that the criminal had made no idle threat, thought it policy to hold his tongue for the time being, although he mentally registered a vow that the man should pay dearly for the insult.

"Now, gentlemen," purred the Duke, with a characteristic change of tone, "I feel that, being your host, it is my duty to let you know what—er—entertainment I have provided for your amusement whilst you are under my roof."

The words were mocking and sinister, and the helpless captives writhed in their impotence.

"Go on, Master Gaolbird!" prompted Rollo Dayton; and he had the satisfaction of seeing his arch-enemy flush to the roots of his sleek, black hair.

"In the first place," continued the captor, "I think you will agree that Chelsea Villa stands a very poor

Half an hour, an eternity—the longest half an hour any of the four had ever known—found the captives standing upright, with ice-cold water swirling round their legs. And with each passing minute the water rose steadily, stealthily, until Giles was compelled to reach out and hoist Hercules Samson into his arms, an indignity which the eccentric little winger resented even in the face of death.

"Well, old eggs," drawled Rollo, after a long silence, "it seems as though the Duke is going to have the last laugh, after all! It's jolly hard that we've got to go west without being able to make—"

"Hist!"

A sibilant voice came from the direction of the door—the voice of Ah Sing, the fat Chinese.

"What is it?" whispered Rollo. A match flickered at the top of the stairs, and cast an eerie light upon the sluggish waters.

"Ah, what is it?" purred the Chinese, his slit eyes glinting. "You saw the dog strike me? You heard him call me heathen? The white pig-dog! He shall pay for that! I am going to set you free! The rats shall escape, and Ah Sing will disappear! Hee, hee! Strike Ah Sing, will he!"

(Continued on page 579.)

THE OUTLAW KING MORTON PIKE A THRILLING TALE OF ROBIN HOOD and his Merry Men STARTS IN THIS WEEKS POPULAR THE FAMOUS SCHOOL STORY PAPERS Order YOUR Copy TO-DAY

The 5th Chapter. Rescued!

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(Continued on page 579.)

ANOTHER EXCITING STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST!



The Rookwood Tenderfeet!

By Owen Conquest.

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

Jimmy Silver sets out to prove to the cowpunchers of his cousin's ranch that he and his chums are not so green as they are painted!

The 1st Chapter. On the Ranch!

Woo Sing, the Chinese chore-boy at the Windy River Ranch, tapped at Jimmy Silver's door, and entered with a big tin can of steaming hot water. Jimmy Silver sat up in bed and blinked at him. A day's ride on the Alberta prairie had tired Jimmy out, and from the moment his head had touched the pillow till Woo Sing knocked at the door Jimmy had been deep in dreamless slumber. But he awoke fresh and cheery in the bright morning.

"Hallo, kid!" said Jimmy cheerily.

Woo Sing blinked at him with long, almond eyes.

"Molnin', Mass' Silvel!"

Woo Sing set down the can beside the white-enamelled iron washstand, and Jimmy stared at him.

"Say that again, will you, kid?" asked Jimmy.

"Molnin'."

"Don't you speak English?" asked Jimmy. Woo Sing was the first Chinese Jimmy had come across in Canada.

"Speakee English!" said Woo Sing. "Boss Smedley say breakfast ready at eight."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy.

Woo Sing glided from the room, and Jimmy grinned. He remembered having read somewhere of the Chinese trick of turning the "r" into an "l." "Molnin'" was evidently Woo Sing's way of saying "Good-morning."

Jimmy looked at his watch. It was a quarter to eight. One minute more, and the Rookwood junior was splashing merrily in a big zinc bath.

He came out of his room fresh and bright, and met Lovell and Raby and Newcome on the broad landing.

"Here we are again!" said Arthur Edward Lovell cheerily.

"Looks jolly!" remarked Raby.

He pointed from the big landing window. Outside, the early sun was shining on a wide stretch of grass-land.

In the distance, towards the river, could be seen the long bunkhouse where the cattlemen slept, and the cookhouse near to it, and the long range of corrals for the horses. Big, lanky Pete Peters, the foreman of the ranch, was standing in view, talking to three or four of the "hands." The Rookwood juniors looked at them with interest—at their healthy, sun-tanned faces, open-necked shirts, wide Stetson hats, big boots. These were the "cowpunchers" of whom they had heard. Among them was a lad who looked about sixteen, with a sharp nose and a jaw like a vice. This youth caught sight of the schoolboys at the window, and muttered something to his companions, jerking his thumb towards the window and grinning. The cowpunchers glanced across, but Pete Peters quickly brought their attention back to business. Jimmy Silver & Co. drew back from the window.

"Cheeky young cad, that fellow!" grunted Lovell. "Pointing us out as tenderfeet, I suppose!"

"Like his cheek!" said Newcome.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver. "Let's get down to brekker!"

The Fistical Four of Rookwood went downstairs. Mr. Hudson Smedley greeted them cheerily. Jimmy Silver's Canadian cousin was all kindness and hospitality to his schoolboy guests from the Old Country.

"Had a good sleep?" he asked.

"Topping, thanks!" answered Jimmy Silver.

"Still tired after your ride?"

"Not in the least!"

"Not the least little bit!" said Lovell. "We're not made of putty at Rookwood, you know, Mr. Smedley!"

The rancher laughed.

"All the better!" he said. "Sit down, my boys!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. sat down to an ample and substantial breakfast. Woo Sing poured out steaming coffee.

"How do you like Canada?" Mr. Smedley asked, with a smile.

"Ripping!" said the four juniors together.

"Rather a change from Rookwood School, I guess?"

"Well, rather," said Jimmy. "Of course, we're jolly fond of old Rookwood. But I think we'd like to put in a year or two in Alberta."

"I guess so!" said Lovell. "I say, Mr. Smedley, you're not going to keep us in a bandbox? You're going to let us help on the ranch?"

"Hum!" said the rancher dubiously.

"We can handle horses, you know!" said Raby. "I—I think I could learn to milk a cow, too!"

"And drive steers!" said Newcome.

"You see, cousin Smedley, we want to learn the game," said Jimmy. "We're not going to hang around and eat the bread of idleness. I've heard that in Canada there's lots of work for every pair of hands."

"Sure!" assented Mr. Smedley.

"Well, then, here's four handy fellows, fit as fiddles, and keen to learn the business!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'll have to make use of us somehow! We're not really soft, you know!"

"I guess we'll see!" said the rancher, smiling. "Anyhow, you can ride, and you seem to have been able to find your way here from Mosquito yesterday on your own. I'm glad you didn't get lost on the prairie!"

"Not likely to get lost, I hope!" said Lovell loftily. "We were coming straight here when Mr. Peters fell in with us!"

"Pete thinks you were wandering around lost."

"Pete's an ass—I mean, he would be an ass if he wasn't your foreman, Mr. Smedley!"

"I guess I haven't heard what happened on your way here," said Hudson Smedley. "Pete has mentioned that you spun him a yarn about meeting that half-breed Pequod le Couteau."

The rancher looked keenly at the juniors. Jimmy Silver & Co. had turned in the previous night immediately after a sleepy supper, and as yet the rancher had not heard from them the exciting happenings of their journey from the township.

Jimmy flushed a little.

"Mr. Peters thought we were drawing the long bow," he confessed. "He doesn't know us yet. But we did fall in with the half-breed Pequod, and he tried to steal our horses."

"And what happened?"

"We downed him!" answered Jimmy.

"Jimmy—"

"We did!" exclaimed Lovell warmly. "Jimmy biffed him with a stone bottle, and we collared him and downed him and took his knife away! Dash it all, Mr. Smedley, I suppose you know we should tell the truth?"

The rancher made a soothing gesture.

"Of course, I take your word," he said. "But you can't be surprised if the boys don't swallow a tall story like that. Pequod le Couteau is the all-fiercest ruffian on this side

of the Rocky Mountains. Even the Mounted Police wouldn't care to drop on him without a gun handy. He's got a murderous reputation, and he's more or less suspected of having killed half a dozen galoots, and he's pretty well known to be a horse-thief and a cattle-thief. I guess it sounds tall for Pequod le Couteau to be downed by tenderfoot schoolboys—"

"Well, it happened!" said Lovell rather gruffly.

"It did, if you say so," assented Mr. Smedley amicably. "But—but

"When I found you—"

"You didn't find us!" howled Lovell. "We weren't lost! We told you so at the time!"

"Well, you can ride," said the foreman, with an amiable grin. "Let it go at that. Hyer, Kentuck!"

The youth whom the juniors had seen from the window came lounging over from the bunkhouse. On closer view, they liked that youth still less than before. His sharp nose and vice-like jaw were not prepossessing, and his mocking look was still less

make yourselves useful," he remarked, giving the juniors a droll glance.

"Just that!" said Lovell, not very amiably.

He did not see any reason why the long-legged foreman should conclude that they were helpless, useless tenderfeet simply because they were fresh from school in the Old Country, but it was obvious that that was just what Mr. Peters did conclude.

Jimmy Silver & Co. would have been very glad of an opportunity to show Mr. Peters the stuff they really were made of, but it did not seem likely that there would be an opportunity. Pequod le Couteau was not likely to come along to the ranch, to be "downed" again, as an example of what they could do, though, as a matter of fact, the chums were not anxious to encounter that ruffian again. They realised now, more clearly than before, that they had been fortunate to escape at his hands.

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over I set eyes on such a set of pesky greenhorns! But orders is orders, so hump it with me!"

"You're not a Canadian?" asked Jimmy Silver, as the juniors followed the young cattleman.

Kentuck glanced at him over his shoulder.

"I guess not! I'm American! I guess I was raised in Kentucky!"

"Are they all as nice-mannered in Kentucky?" asked Newcome.

Kentuck stared at him, but did not reply. He led them to the corral. Two cowboys were standing by the rail, and they saluted the juniors civilly.

"I guess I'm looking for horses for the tenderfeet," said Kentuck. "Suhin' tame that they won't fall off'n! You 'uns had better stand by to lift them on!"

The cowboys grinned.

"We can manage without that," said Jimmy Silver good-temperedly. "Just trot out the horses!"

"I fancy I could ride anything you could ride, Master Kentuck!" said Lovell warmly.

"Same here!" said Jimmy Silver.

Kentuck chuckled.

"Shall I give the galoot Blazer?" he asked, addressing the cowboys.

"Don't you play the guy with the boss' guests, Kentuck!" said one of the cattlemen.

And he strolled away.

The other remained, grinning. He was a tall, sunburned fellow, with a shock of red hair, and the juniors learned that he was called Red Alf, nicknames being almost universal among the ranch-hands.

"I guess the young gent wouldn't care for Blazer!" said Red Alf, with a chuckle. "I kinder reckon Blazer would light out over the Rockies with a tenderfoot on his back!"

"Has Blazer been ridden before?" asked Jimmy.

"I guess the boss has rode him, but he's a tough lot!" said the cowboy.

"You let him alone!"

"I guess you'd better!" sneered Kentuck. "I reckon what you want is a clothes-horse!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes glistened. He really was a good horseman, and he was very keen to "show up" creditably in the eyes of the cowpunchers, who so obviously looked down upon tenderfeet from a lofty height of scorn.

"Trot out your Blazer!" said Jimmy. "I'll try my luck with him, at any rate!"

Red Alf became serious.

"Give it a miss, youngster!" he said. "Don't you pull the kid's leg, Kentuck! It ain't safe for you, young Silver!"

"Course it ain't safe!" grinned Kentuck. "It wants some pluck to put a leg over Blazer!"

That remark settled Jimmy Silver's determination. He was going to show these cowpunchers that tenderfoot or not, there was no lack of pluck in the case.

"I'm going to mount Blazer!" he said quietly. "Will you point him out?"

"Sure!" grinned Kentuck.

He winked at Red Alf, who laughed. Two or three other men gathered round the corral gate, and all of them were grinning. Jimmy Silver did not need telling that the cowpunchers expected him to "back down" as soon as he saw Blazer led out for riding. And at that moment Jimmy would not have backed down to save his life or a dozen lives. He was going to ride Blazer, if Blazer killed him!

His chums looked serious, but they did not speak a word to dissuade him. Jimmy was the best rider in the Rookwood party, and it was up to him to play up for the honour of Rookwood and the Old Country.

"You mean it?" asked Red Alf, grinning.

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"I guess we'll cut him out for you!"

"Oh, we'll cut him out!" said Kentuck.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not know in the least what they meant, but they soon discovered.

Kentuck and Red Alf and another man entered the corral. There were more than twenty horses inside the pine rails in a bunch, and Blazer was among them. Separating the horse from the rest of the herd was "cutting out."

With brandished whips, the horse was driven out of the herd, and then the juniors had a clear sight of him. Jimmy's teeth set.

Blazer was a rather bony and extremely wiry beast of about thirteen hands. His head was small and well-shaped, his eyes gleaming with malice and bad temper. His

it sounds too tall for the boys, so I reckon I shouldn't talk about it too much."

Jimmy looked at the rancher. Mr. Smedley did not disbelieve in the exploit of the schoolboys, but it was very probable that he supposed that some exaggeration had crept in. The juniors, indeed, had not realised at the time quite what an exploit it was to "down" the dangerous ruffian they had encountered on the prairie.

Mr. Smedley rose from the breakfast-table, and the subject dropped.

"Now, you youngsters want to have a look about the place, I guess," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!"

"I've got to ride over to the Sunset Ranch this morning on business. I guess I'll hand you over to Pete to show around."

"Any old thing!" said Jimmy.

And the Rookwood juniors followed Hudson Smedley from the ranchhouse.

**The 2nd Chapter.
The Buck-Jumper!**

Pete Peters, foreman of the Windy River Ranch, ducked his head politely to the Rookwood juniors, and grinned. Mr. Smedley, after a few words to the foreman, mounted his horse and rode away on the prairie trail. The juniors were left with Pete.

"Boss says you youngsters want to

pleasing. His contempt for the tenderfeet was still more obvious than Mr. Peters', and it was not so good-natured.

"These hyer are the boss' guests, Kentuck," said Mr. Peters. "Pick out horses for them from the home corral, and show them round the ranch. I guess I'll see you later, gents."

And the tall Canadian strode away with his long, swinging stride. Jimmy Silver & Co., thus handed over for the second time, looked at Kentuck. From his name, or nickname, they guessed that he did not belong to Canada.

Kentuck did not seem pleased with his duty. He looked the juniors up and down, and shrugged his shoulders and grunted.

"Wal, this is good!" he said.

"Where are the horses?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Kentuck grunted discontentedly.

"Setting a galoot to look after dandy tenderfeet!" he mumbled.

"You needn't look after us!" exclaimed Lovell warmly. "We can look after ourselves!"

"And what'll the boss say if you fall into the pond and get drowned?" asked Kentuck.

"Do you think we're likely to fall into a pond?" howled Lovell wrathfully.

"I guess it's jest about what you would do!" answered Kentuck coolly. "Carry me home to die! If

make yourselves useful," he remarked, giving the juniors a droll glance.

"Just that!" said Lovell, not very amiably.

He did not see any reason why the long-legged foreman should conclude that they were helpless, useless tenderfeet simply because they were fresh from school in the Old Country, but it was obvious that that was just what Mr. Peters did conclude.

Jimmy Silver & Co. would have been very glad of an opportunity to show Mr. Peters the stuff they really were made of, but it did not seem likely that there would be an opportunity. Pequod le Couteau was not likely to come along to the ranch, to be "downed" again, as an example of what they could do, though, as a matter of fact, the chums were not anxious to encounter that ruffian again. They realised now, more clearly than before, that they had been fortunate to escape at his hands.

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teeth looked capable of shearing off a man's limb—indeed, his jaws, when they opened, made the Rookwood juniors think of a shark.

Blazer tore fiercely round the corral, seeking to escape. He came thundering down to the gate where the Rookwooders stood. Instinctively they jumped aside out of the way of the thrashing hoofs and tossing head.

There was a roar of laughter from the other onlookers, who had not stirred an inch. Red Alf's lasso had shot out, and circled the tossing neck, stopping the flying horse a few yards from the corral gate. The cowpunchers had seen that the horse would be stopped, or they would have jumped aside fast enough. The juniors, naturally, had not seen so much, and their sudden movement was natural. But they flushed crimson as the laugh went up.

Every fellow in the little crowd was good-natured with the exception of the malicious Kentuck. But evidently they were all disposed to make merciless fun of the tenderfoot, and Jimmy Silver & Co. felt annoyed and exasperated and far from cordial towards any of them just at that moment.

Later on they were to find good and cheery friends among the Windy River cowpunchers, but for the moment they would have enjoyed a general punching of noses.

Blazer had been stopped, but not subdued. Red Alf and Kentuck were holding him, with the lasso tight on his neck, and Blazer was submitting because he did not want to be choked. But the gleaming of the whites of his wicked eyes showed that he was only waiting for his chance.

A saddle belonging to Kentuck, which was about the size for Jimmy, was secured upon Blazer. Jimmy had shown no sign of weakening so far, and he had no intention of doing so. As he looked at the savage horse he realised that he had taken on a terrible task—a task that was undoubtedly dangerous, and might even be fatal. But no danger could have made Jimmy Silver eat his words now, in the presence of the grinning cowpunchers.

"I guess he's ready!" chuckled Kentuck.

"Leave it alone, kid!" said Red Alf.

Jimmy Silver stepped forward. "Let's see that the stirrups are right before you let go, please," he said quietly, determinedly, subduing a slight shake in his voice.

"Making out that he's reely going to ride him!" grinned Kentuck.

"I am going to ride him!"

"Haw, haw!"

"Well, you'll see!" said Jimmy Silver coldly.

"Jimmy—" muttered Newcome. Jimmy did not heed. He carefully adjusted the stirrups; he was not taking any unnecessary chances. The horse quivered under the holding hands, the eyes rolling with suppressed fury.

"Now, if you mean it—" said Red Alf, still unbelieving.

Jimmy's reply was in action, not in words. He leaped lightly into the saddle.

The horse quivered and shook under him with fury. Red Alf shoyed the reins under the lasso where it gripped the horse's neck, and Jimmy took them in his hands.

"Now let him go!" he said.

"Bluff!" said Kentuck.

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"Let go!" he shouted.

Red Alf, convinced at last, in sheer wonder at the tenderfoot's temerity, cast loose the lasso. He leaped away instantly, and Kentuck leaped still faster as the horse shook himself free. Jimmy Silver was left alone with the unbroken beast beneath him, and for a second nothing happened. Then what happened next seemed to Jimmy Silver like the last crash of the universe.

The 3rd Chapter.

Jimmy Silver's Wild Ride!

Crash, crash, crash! Blazer was leaping and foaming, and his hoofs came down like thunder in a series of lightning-like jumps.

How Jimmy Silver kept the saddle he never knew.

But he kept it—though half the time he was half out of it—and the wonder was that he was not tossed away like a pip from an orange.

Up and down the horse went rocketing, with crashing hoofs on the hard ground—crashing swift and sharp as pistol-shots.

Blazer no doubt expected to hurl off his presumptuous rider with that volcanic exhibition of buck-jumping,

a new experience to Jimmy Silver. But Jimmy clung on.

His teeth were set, his hands hard on the reins, his knees gripping. He was holding his own—so far, at any rate.

Blazer's nose almost touched the ground as he crashed down on his forefeet; then it soared into the air, and his mane flooded over Jimmy as he rose on his hind legs till he almost tumbled backwards. Up and down, up and down, with movements that seemed as swift as lightning to the hapless rider.

The cowpunchers had crowded back out of the way, Lovell & Co. with them, for at any instant the horse might bolt, and a wrist of iron could not have stopped Blazer then.

There was a shout as Pete Peters came striding towards the scene, his brow dark with anger.

"What the thunder's this? Do you call it a joke to kill the tenderfoot? You ornery fools, you!"

"The tenderfoot wanted Blazer!" said Kentuck sullenly.

"You young rascal! He'll be killed! Haven't you any more hoss-sense than this—you, Red Alf, and you, Spike Thompson?"

"I guess—"

"Rope him in!" shouted the foreman.

But it was too late. Blazer, finding that he could not unseat his limpet-like rider by buck-jumping, bolted.

He came through the gateway of the corral like an arrow.

Red Alf made a cast with his rope, but it fell wide as the frantic animal fled by with lightning-like speed.

"He's killed!" gasped the foreman. "You'll answer for this to the boss!"

All eyes were on Jimmy Silver. His chums were white as chalk. Jimmy himself had no time to be conscious of fear. He was fighting for his life, and he knew it, and all his faculties were concentrated upon the struggle with the savage horse.

Blazer was heading for the bunkhouse as if he intended to dash himself to death upon the pinewood walls. Jimmy dragged at him in vain. He could as easily have stopped a locomotive with full steam on.

But it was not Blazer's intention to commit suicide in that way. Six yards from the bunkhouse he swerved to the right so suddenly that Jimmy was almost torn from the saddle.

But not quite. He held on as the horse dashed along furiously by the fence of the outer corral and headed for the open prairie.

Clatter, clatter, crash! went the beating hoofs on the hard trail.

"Jimmy!" panted Lovell.

Blazer stopped suddenly.

It was one more of his tricks—to send his rider shooting over his head. But Jimmy Silver held on.

Pete Peters came speeding up, lasso in hand. But long before he was near enough for a cast Blazer had leaped into motion again and was tearing away at frantic speed.

"Bring my horse here!" roared Peters.

Pursuit was useless, and he knew it. There was no animal on the Windy River Ranch to equal Blazer in speed when the savage horse was fairly going. And already Blazer and his rider were little more than a speck on the prairie. But Peters meant to do what he could.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver was speeding across the grasslands at a rate that took his breath away. It was a calm morning on the Alberta prairie, but it seemed to Jimmy Silver that a fierce torrent of wind rushed down upon him.

Blazer, having failed to throw his rider, was apparently depending on speed to tire him out. Stopping the horse was out of the question, and Jimmy could only sit tight and give him his head.

The speed of the savage animal was amazing to Jimmy; he had never supposed that four legs could cover the ground at such a rate. Yet, in spite of the incessant danger, there was something exhilarating in that wild ride. His hat was blown away, and his hair tossed out in the wind. There was colour in his cheeks and brightness in his eyes. And, almost to his own amazement, he found himself enjoying that furious gallop.

Windy River Ranch had vanished in the distance behind, if Jimmy had thought of looking back—which he did not. The Windy River was out of sight, around the racing horse was the rolling prairies—unmarked even by a tree—and to the west the soaring ridges of the Rocky Mountains. And the great mountains

were drawing visibly nearer as Blazer raced on and on into the west.

How many miles he had already covered Jimmy could not even guess. Mile upon mile flashed back under the tireless, galloping hoofs. Blazer was sweating now, and Jimmy was aching in every limb, though he was scarcely conscious of it.

Clatter, clatter, clatter! There was stony ground under the racing hoofs now as the horseman topped a rise, with the wide, stretching foothills of the Rockies before him. Jimmy Silver strove to turn the horse, but Blazer kept on regardless. His strength and determination were too much for the schoolboy. All that Jimmy could do was to stick on his back and wait for his fury to exhaust itself.

On right and left of the rider now rose sweeping hillsides. He was riding along the verdant bottom of a valley, where a creek glistened in the sun, with pinewoods beyond. He was in the outer foothills now, and many a long mile from the ranch. Blazer had slackened speed a little now, but only a little. Jimmy made another attempt to pull him in, and, to his surprise, Blazer allowed him to have his way. But he soon saw the reason. The horse was heading for the creek, and he allowed himself

to be stopped—to drink! The wild ride ended at last in that wild and solitary valley in the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, and Blazer, breathing hard after his exertions, sank his savage head to the glistening water, standing knee-deep in the stream as he drank.

Jimmy gave him his head; he could do nothing else. He did not venture to dismount, knowing only too well that it was unlikely that he would be able to mount the untamed brute again. Blazer was quiet for the moment, but his trickery might begin again at any second. Jimmy sat tight while the horse was drinking.

He glanced across the valley before him, at the thick woods that clothed the slopes and the high rocks beyond. He gave a start as he caught sight of a human figure in the shadow of the trees, standing motionless and observing him. The dark face, the black eyes, the coloured feathers twisted in the matted hair, and the blanket draped round the figure told that the stranger was a Redskin. Jimmy's heart beat a little faster as he wondered whether it was a savage Indian in that remote solitude of the foothills. As his eyes fixed on the red man, Blazer made a sudden movement, and Jimmy, his attention taken away for the moment, was taken by surprise.

The treacherous brute had beaten him at last. Possibly some instinct had told Blazer that his pertinacious and troublesome rider was off his guard. His hind-legs flew up, his head down, and, before Jimmy knew what was happening, he was plunging, head-first, into the middle of the creek. And Blazer, with a shrill squeal, clattered on the rocky bank and fled.

Jimmy spluttered wildly as

both hands, panting for breath. The bank at this point was high and steep, the rock slippery with wet, and Jimmy's heart sank as he looked up at it. A dozen feet from him the water roared over the cascade, falling thirty feet to its lower bed in seas of foam and spray.

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In the swirl and dash of the fierce water Jimmy Silver was near to losing his senses. It seemed inevitable that he must be swept away over the cascade, and the almost icy cold of the water was chilling him to the bone and weakening the desperate grasp of his hands. His despairing gaze swept upward again, and over the top of the rocks above him a bunch of brightly-coloured feathers showed against the sky. A dark, coppery face looked down on him from a height of twenty feet above.

It was the Indian.

Jimmy had forgotten the Indian, the sight of whom had been the original cause of his disaster by taking his attention off the treacherous Blazer. He wondered dimly whether the man was friend or foe; in either case, the Redskin could not reach him over the steep rocks. The dark-bronze face that looked down was expressionless.

The Redskin scanned him for a few moments, and then waved a hand. Then a hide-rope came hurtling down the rocks.

So skillfully was it flung that the end, uncoiling as it flew, dropped fairly upon Jimmy Silver. He understood at once, and, releasing one hand

he plunged in. In the middle of the mountain creek the water was deep, and it ran hard and swift. Jimmy came up to the surface in a twinkling, striking out, and he caught a glimpse of Blazer vanishing on the rocky bank. But he had no time to think of Blazer, or of the fact that he was stranded in the foothills at least twenty miles from the ranch. A much nearer and more pressing matter occupied his thoughts now.

The midstream current swept him away as he swam, and twice or thrice he barely escaped being dashed upon a sharp rock or a drift-log that rocked on the water. The murmur of the rushing water was deepening into a roar, and Jimmy realised that he was being swept down towards one of the numerous cascades that marked the descent of the stream from the upper slopes to the lower prairie.

He struggled desperately to reach the shore, but the current tore him away and dashed him onward. He was not a dozen feet from the gleaming, foaming edge of the waterfall when he caught hold of a jagged spur of rock, and hung on to it desperately. The water rushed and foamed round him, swirling over him, striving like a fierce animal to tear him away from his hold.

He held on to the rugged rock with

from the rock, he caught at the rope as it touched him.

He caught it, and wound it round his arm, and again round above his elbow. It was well that he secured a good hold, for the rush of the water tore his left hand from its hold upon the rock, and he was washed away towards the waterfall. Even as he was swept away, he clutched at the rope with his left hand also and caught it. Buffeted by the water that foamed and swirled over him, Jimmy clung to the rope, his last chance of life.

He felt himself dragged against the rocks, and slowly but surely pulled from the stream.

In a few minutes his wet boots were clattering on the rock to which he had lately clung.

He was too dazed and dizzy now to do anything but cling blindly to the rope and trust to his rescuer.

Like a fellow in a dream, he felt himself dragged up and upward, the sinewy arms of the Redskin pulling in and coiling the rope, in spite of the weight of the schoolboy hanging to it.

He was pulled over the top of the high rock at last, the Redskin grasping him with a muscular hand and landing him safely.

Jimmy sank on the top of the rock in a pool of water, and lay for some time without motion, panting for breath and trying to collect his scattered senses.

The Redskin coiled the rope, and sat on a boulder watching him. His dark, coppery face was grave and stolid, and he did not speak.

Jimmy Silver pulled himself together at last and sat up.

Then the Redskin moved. From a deerskin bag fastened to his belt he took a flask, unscrewed the stopper, and held it out to Jimmy.

Jimmy could guess what it contained, and he shook his head, with a faint smile. He was not far enough gone to need a dose of spirits. The Redskin raised his eyebrows.

"Fire-water!" he explained.

"No, thanks!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Good!" said the Redskin. "Make um warm! Firewater good water! Good, you bet! I have spoken!"

Jimmy shook his head again. The red man gave a shrug of the shoulders, applied the flask to his own mouth, and took a deep draught. He drank slowly and with relish, turning the flask up and up till it was upside-down, and the last drop had drained from it. Then he returned it to his wallet, and his grim features relaxed into a faint grin.

"Good!" he said. "Make um feel good!"

Jimmy eyed him curiously. The red man was a tall, stalwart, muscular fellow, clad in deerskin, with buckskin moccasins. His rifle stood against a pine-tree near at hand, and a game-bag that seemed well packed lay beside the butt. Apparently it was an Indian hunter that Jimmy had chanced upon in the foothills.

Jimmy Silver was well aware that there was a strict law against supplying intoxicating spirits to the Red Indians in Canada. The red man had obtained the contents of his flask in some surreptitious way from some "boot-legger" who found a rascally profit in evading the law.

"You speak English?" asked Jimmy.

"Blackfoot speak all same as white man."

"Oh, you are a Blackfoot!" exclaimed Jimmy, with interest.

He knew that in Alberta there were extensive "reserves" belonging to the Blackfoot and the Blood tribes of Indians.

The red man nodded.

"Cloudy Face, Blackfoot chief!" he said proudly.

"You've saved my life, I think!" said Jimmy.

"Cloudy Face see little white man fall," said the Blackfoot. "Follow along bank, and see um in water."

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, shaking the water from his clothes. The sun, climbing higher in the sky, was streaming down warmth into the little valley, and the junior, wet as he was, did not feel cold.


He was thinking of getting back to the ranch; but he was dismounted now, and Blazer was probably a dozen miles away by that time. And Jimmy was only too well aware that he would find it exceedingly difficult to discover the way back to Windy River on the trackless prairie.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Cloudy Face!" he said. "It was jolly lucky for me you were here! Do you know the Windy River Ranch?"

"Cloudy Face know."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Jimmy,

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Out To-morrow!



to be stopped—to drink! The wild ride ended at last in that wild and solitary valley in the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, and Blazer, breathing hard after his exertions, sank his savage head to the glistening water, standing knee-deep in the stream as he drank.

Jimmy gave him his head; he could do nothing else. He did not venture to dismount, knowing only too well that it was unlikely that he would be able to mount the untamed brute again. Blazer was quiet for the moment, but his trickery might begin again at any second. Jimmy sat tight while the horse was drinking.

He glanced across the valley before him, at the thick woods that clothed the slopes and the high rocks beyond. He gave a start as he caught sight of a human figure in the shadow of the trees, standing motionless and observing him. The dark face, the black eyes, the coloured feathers twisted in the matted hair, and the blanket draped round the figure told that the stranger was a Redskin. Jimmy's heart beat a little faster as he wondered whether it was a savage Indian in that remote solitude of the foothills. As his eyes fixed on the red man, Blazer made a sudden movement, and Jimmy, his attention taken away for the moment, was taken by surprise.

The treacherous brute had beaten him at last. Possibly some instinct had told Blazer that his pertinacious and troublesome rider was off his guard. His hind-legs flew up, his head down, and, before Jimmy knew what was happening, he was plunging, head-first, into the middle of the creek. And Blazer, with a shrill squeal, clattered on the rocky bank and fled.

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both hands, panting for breath. The bank at this point was high and steep, the rock slippery with wet, and Jimmy's heart sank as he looked up at it. A dozen feet from him the water roared over the cascade, falling thirty feet to its lower bed in seas of foam and spray.

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The Rookwood Tenderfeet!

By Owen Conquest.

(Continued from previous page.)

much relieved. "Perhaps you have met Mr. Hudson Smedley?"

The Blackfoot nodded. "Blackfoot know Boss Smedley." "He's my cousin," said Jimmy. "My relation, you know. Can you help me to get back to the ranch? I can reward you for your trouble."

The Blackfoot looked at him thoughtfully. He looked so imposing an Indian warrior, every inch a great chief, that Jimmy had felt some diffidence in mentioning a reward. But the noble red man was a business man as well as a great warrior.

"You gib um five dollar?" he said. Jimmy smiled.

"With pleasure!" he answered. "Five dollars and my very best thanks, Cloudy Face, if you can guide me back to the ranch!"

The Indian rose from the boulder. "It is good!" he said. "Let my little white brother follow the foot-steps of the Blackfoot chief."

"Will it take us long to get there?" asked Jimmy.

"The steps of the Blackfoot chief are like the wind on the hills," said Cloudy Face.

"Oh, my hat! Then you'll have to put the brake on a little for me!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Blackfoot looked puzzled. But he led the way up the creek, and Jimmy Silver followed, to a spot where the stream narrowed and could be jumped across. They crossed the creek and descended the opposite bank, reaching the spot where Blazer had thrown his school-boy rider. Jimmy Silver paused there and looked round; but there was, of course, no sign of the horse.

Cloudy Face led the way onward, but he did not lead the Rookwood junior directly back to the plains. Instead of that he led through a pinewood, and stopped at a little skin tepee built under the shelter of a towering rock in the hillside. Jimmy guessed that this was the camp of the Indian hunter.

"Eat first," the Blackfoot explained laconically.

It was past noon, and Jimmy Silver was hungry enough. He was glad to accept the Blackfoot's invitation. From the tepee Cloudy Face produced dried deer meat, which he ate with his fingers, Jimmy using his pocket-knife as an aid to that primitive method. The Blackfoot sat on the ground to eat; Jimmy Silver stood leaning against a pine-tree. He had quite recovered from the effects of his misadventure now, and was feeling very cheery, though he was anxious to get back to the ranch and relieve the fears of his friends. He could hardly imagine what Lovell & Co. would suppose had become of him.

The halt was brief, and the Indian, slinging his rifle on his back, started down the valley, Jimmy Silver trotting by his side. Jimmy was sturdy and strong, but his legs were soon aching with fatigue as mile after mile of rough prairie disappeared under his feet. Cloudy Face showed no sign whatever of fatigue, and Jimmy, feeling that there was nothing else for it, tramped desperately on. Jimmy would have given a great deal for a sight of Blazer just then. Indeed, he was soon feeling that he would have given all his worldly prospects for a mount. He would, like Richard the Third, have offered his kingdom for a horse.

He was a little worried as to what Mr. Smedley would say on the subject of Blazer. The horse was lost, and it was at least doubtful whether so wild and swift an animal would be caught again. That meant a loss to the rancher, through Jimmy's rather reckless essay as a horse-breaker. But considerations of that kind soon disappeared from Jimmy's mind as he tramped on after the tireless Redskin. After a time nothing occupied his mind but a painful wonder as to whether his hapless legs would hold out much longer.

It did not seem to occur to the iron-limbed Blackfoot that his young

companion was tired. He tramped on, with the grave stolidity of an Indian, without a word and without even a glance at Jimmy.

How many miles they had covered Jimmy Silver did not know. He felt as if he had covered about a hundred. But at last the Blackfoot came to a halt, and pointed to the north-east sky. Behind Jimmy the sun was setting in the west, and shadow was creeping over the eastern heavens.

"See!" said the Blackfoot. Jimmy stared at the sky.

"What is there to see?" he asked. "White man's house."

Jimmy started. "The ranch?" he exclaimed.

"I have spoken."

Jimmy scanned the sky to the east. There was no trace whatever of the ranch that he could see.

but keeping on resolutely. And the gleam of a lighted window cheered him at last.

The 5th Chapter. Jimmy Silver's Return!

Mr. Hudson Smedley stood in the porch of the ranchhouse, his brows knitted. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were with him, and they looked utterly dismal and miserable. Pete Peters had ridden up to the ranch, and he had just dismounted and was holding his horse's reins outside the timber porch. Night had fallen on the plains of Alberta, but from the bunkhouse there came a ruddy gleam of light. In the clear, dark sky a myriad of stars glistened.

"Well?" rapped out Mr. Smedley, as Pete Peters stood before the porch. "No news, boss!"

The rancher compressed his lips.

He had ridden home to the ranch soon after noon, to learn of what had happened to Jimmy Silver. Since then half the hands had been out on the prairie hunting for the lost schoolboy. But one by one they had ridden in at sundown, bringing no news. Pete Peters was the last to come, and his search had been as vain as the others.

"Then he's lost!" said Mr. Smedley.

blind to the terrible possibility. "More likely Blazer's carried him twenty or thirty miles and dropped him, and he's lost. He'll be found to-morrow, if I have to search the plains from here to the Rockies with a magnifying-glass, I guess. Keep a stiff upper-lip!"

He went into the ranchhouse. The three juniors could see plainly enough that he was more troubled than he cared to say.

"Rotten, isn't it?" muttered Lovell. "It's all the fault of that bony-faced rotter they call Kentuck! Jimmy would never have mounted the beast at all if that cad hadn't chipped him!"

"I dare say he's sorry now," said Raby.

"He ought to be!" growled Lovell savagely.

The juniors did not feel disposed for either supper or bed. They strolled away from the house towards the bunkhouse, where the cow-punchers of Windy River were gathered. Some of them were seated on benches outside, eating their supper and chatting; others were smoking, some leaning against the wall, two or three stretched lazily on the sward. One or two had already turned in inside the bunkhouse, which was lighted by a couple of swinging oil-lamps.

Kentuck was talking as the juniors

in yesterday with a tall yarn of downing Pequod? Wal, I calculate he's going to roll in with another yarn presently. He'll tell us that he's ridden right across the Rockies into British Columbia, and come back by way of the Yukon and Mackenzie this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lovell flushed with rage. The fear that his chum was lying out on the lonely prairie, injured or dead, was heavy at Lovell's heart. He was in no mood to listen patiently to the Kentuckian's mockery.

"That's a lie!" burst out Lovell savagely.

Kentuck looked round.

"Hallo! What's biting you?" he asked.

"You're a rotter and a rascal to talk about Jimmy Silver like that when he may be dead at this very minute owing to your rotten trickery!" shouted Lovell. "And if you say another word about him, I'll knock it back down your sneaking throat, and some of your teeth along with it!"

Lovell's eyes blazed at the cowboy. He was quite prepared to translate his words into action.

Kentuck rose from his bench.

He was a year or two older than Lovell, and a head taller. It did not look as if the Rookwood junior would have a good chance in a "scrap" with the American cow-puncher.

"You're shooting off your mouth a lot, young 'un!" grinned Kentuck. "Wal, hyer I am, ready to be knocked into the middle of next week if a tenderfoot can do it! Wade in!" "Shut up, Kentuck!" said Red Alf. "It's the boss' guest, Kentuck!" said Spike Thompson. "You're going on the way to get fired from the ranch!"

"I ain't taking lip from a tenderfoot kid!" said Kentuck. "And I says again, I guess that young Silver is very likely hanging out on the prairie, and meaning to come home with a tall story! I guess he couldn't stick on Blazer's back for ten minutes, so he ain't gone far!"

Lovell made a spring at the cowboy, with his hands up and his eyes blazing. A fight would have started the next moment, but a muscular hand grasped Lovell's shoulder and swung him back.

"Let up!" said Pete Peters quietly. It was the foreman of the ranch who had stopped Arthur Edward.

"Let me go!" shouted Lovell. "Do you think I'm going to listen to that rotter telling lies about Jimmy?"

"Easy does it!" said the foreman, still grasping Lovell, who was as helpless as an infant in his powerful hand. "I guess the boss wouldn't be best pleased by his guests rowing with the hands, young 'un. As for you, Kentuck, you'll keep your tongue between your teeth, or you'll get the weight of my boot!"

"Hallo!" shouted Red Alf. "There comes the kid!"

"Jimmy!" yelled Lovell.

An exhausted figure tottered into the light of the bunkhouse, and would have sunk down there had not Lovell caught him. Jimmy Silver had returned at last!

The 6th Chapter.

Straight from the Shoulder!

Jimmy Silver leaned heavily upon Lovell. He was so utterly fatigued that he hardly knew how he had held out to the end. Lovell threw an arm round him to support him, and for some minutes Jimmy was only half-conscious.

"Jerusalem!" ejaculated Pete Peters. "So he's got back!" "What did I say?" sneered Kentuck. "Now let's hear the yarn that he's going to spin!"

"Jimmy, old man!" whispered Raby.

"Jimmy!" muttered Newcome, with tears of relief in his eyes.

In that happy moment, seeing their chum again alive and well, though evidently worn out, the Rookwooders did not heed Kentuck.

Jimmy pulled himself together. He gave his chums a faint smile.

"I've been through it!" he muttered. "Let's sit down!"

Spike Thompson pulled forward a bench, and Jimmy Silver sank on it. His legs were scarcely equal to supporting his weight. Baldy, the cook—a plump gentleman with a head completely innocent of hair, and a

(Continued on the next page.)



THE RUNAWAY! There was a roar of laughter from the cowboys as Jimmy Silver and Co. jumped aside out of the way of Blazer's thrashing hoofs and tossing head.

"Smoke," added the red man.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy.

There was a faint blur which might have been smoke from the chimney of the ranch or the cook-house at Windy River. Certainly Jimmy Silver unaided would never have guessed that it was smoke.

"You watch smoke and you find um ranch," said the Blackfoot, apparently meaning to convey that he had guided the schoolboy as far as was needed.

"You're sure—" said Jimmy dubiously.

Cloudy Face looked at him.

"The Blackfoot chief has spoken!" he said, with dignity.

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy. "I'll chance it! Here's the dollars!"

He sorted out a five-dollar bill and handed it to the red man. Cloudy Face tucked it away in some recess of his deerskin garments.

"Good-bye, Cloudy Face!" said Jimmy Silver.

The red man gave a brief nod in farewell, and set his face to the mountains again. Apparently he was going to tramp back to the foothills; he seemed as tireless as if his limbs were made of iron and his muscles of steel. Jimmy Silver set his face to the north-east, and tramped on under the shadowing sky.

The blur that the Redskin had told him was smoke disappeared in the gathering shadows of night. But Jimmy had fallen into a trodden trail on the plain now, and it was pretty clear that it led to the ranch. He tramped along the trail, scarcely able to drag one leg after another,

"I hope it ain't any worse than that!" said Pete lugubriously. "That there hoss Blazer is a demon! The kid ought never to have touched him!"

"He ought not to have been allowed to touch him!" rapped out the rancher. "I left the boy in your hands!"

"My eye was off'n him!" said Pete. "The boys seem to have chipped him into making a fool of himself, like a darn tenderfoot! He ought to have known that he couldn't ride Blazer!"

"It's no good crying over spilt milk, anyhow!" said the rancher shortly. "Nothing more can be done to-night, but turn all the hands out at sun-up, Pete, for a big search!"

"There's the cattle to be drove to Mosquito—"

"Hang the cattle!" snapped Mr. Smedley.

"There's the bunch of steers to be fetched in from Lone Pine—"

"That's enough, Pete!"

"Jest as you like, boss! It's your say-so!" And the big cattleman slouched away with his horse, apparently under the impression that the rancher was making an unconscionable fuss over a mere tenderfoot.

"You kids had better come in to supper and bed," said Mr. Smedley, with a kind glance at Lovell & Co. Lovell shook his head.

"We're not likely to sleep, with Jimmy lost!" he said. "That beast of a horse may have trampled him to death on the prairie, for all we know!"

"I guess it's not likely," said Mr. Smedley, though evidently he was not

care up, and some of the cowboys grinned as they listened to him. If Kentuck were repentant of the harm his malice had done, his looks and words did not indicate as much. He seemed to be highly entertained.

"That there gee was worth three hundred dollars, now you believe me," he said. "The boss will never see him again! No wonder he's given some of us the rough edge of his tongue!"

"It's the tenderfoot he's bothering over, Kentuck," said one of the cow-punchers.

Kentuck sneered. "You can believe that, Skitter Dick, if you like! I kinder guess it's three hundred dollars' worth of hoss-flesh that's troubling the boss!"

"Oh, stow it!" said Skitter Dick.

"Sure, you stow it, Kentuck!" said Spike Thompson. "The kid wouldn't have ridden Blazer but for you, and you know it! It's too thick on a kid greenhorn what doesn't know the ropes!"

"I guess he was free to back out if he liked," said Kentuck. "And there ain't nothing happened to him, I reckon. Blazer pitched him off afore he'd gone a mile or two, and then he wandered about, without knowing his right hand from his left. I calculate he's wandered nearly as far as Calgary by this time."

There was a chuckle from some of the punchers.

"Like enough, he's sticking it out on purpose, too!" said Kentuck maliciously. He saw that Lovell & Co. had joined the group by the bunkhouse, and he raised his voice a little so that the Rookwooders should not miss his remarks. "Didn't he come

round, red, jolly face—brought a pannikin of hot soup from the cook-house, and handed it to the junior, grinning. Jimmy thanked him with a glance, and sipped at the pannikin. He felt better when the soup was inside.

"Where's Blazer?" asked Pete Peters at last.

"Blazer!" repeated Jimmy. He was recovering a little now, though his limbs were still heavy as lead with sheer fatigue. "I'm afraid Blazer's lost, Mr. Peters!"

"Where did he chuck you, then?" "In the foothills. I let him drink at the creek, and he took me by surprise and pitched me into the water," said Jimmy ruefully.

"Wal, carry me hum to die!" ejaculated Mr. Peters, staring at Jimmy.

There was a loud laugh from Kentuck.

"What did I tell you, boyces? The tenderfoot is telling us that he rode Blazer as far as the foothills—thirty good miles from here!"

"That depends on where he struck the foothills," said Spike Thompson. "Might be only twenty."

"I guess I can see him riding Blazer twenty miles!" chuckled Kentuck. "Twenty yards, if you like!"

Jimmy Silver reddened.

"And how did you get back if Blazer landed you twenty miles or more away, young 'un?" asked Baldy, the cook.

"Walked," said Jimmy. "There was no other way."

"You legged it twenty miles on the prairie!" ejaculated Red Alf.

"Yes."

"Oh Jerusalem!"

"Don't you believe me?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver savagely.

Red Alf grinned.

"Don't fly out at a man, young 'un!" he said. "Course I believe you! I can see you riding Blazer to the foothills and hoofing it twenty miles home!"

"If you don't believe me, you can do the other thing," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I don't want a row with you, so I'd better not say any more. You can go and eat coke!"

"No offence, lad!" said the red-headed cowboy soothingly. "But you do lay it on thick for a tenderfoot!"

"I guess I've heard some tall stories in my time!" remarked Kentuck. "Why, I've drawn the long bow myself occasional—"

"You have!" chuckled Spike; and there was a laugh.

"But this hyer caps the stack!" said Kentuck. "I takes off my hat to this tenderfoot, and own up beat! I do sure! A fresh kid from the Old Country downs the durndest rustler in Alberta one day, and the next day he rides an unbroken hoss to the foothills and walks twenty miles arter! Oh, I own up beat! There ain't a liar like that in Kentucky, and I own it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes glistened. He rose from the bench, seeming unconscious of his fatigue for the moment.

"You're calling me a liar, then?" he asked quietly.

Kentuck grinned.

"What do you call yourself?" he asked. "We ain't been raised in the Old Country, but we ain't soft enough to swallow a tall story like that! Make it easier! Tell us that Blazer dropped you a mile out, and you sat down and rested all day till you felt well enough to walk a mile home—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've told you what happened!" said Jimmy, his eyes burning.

"Oh, come off!" said Kentuck. "Give us something easier! You want galoots to believe that you could find your way back to the ranch from the foothills! And you fresh hyer!"

"I had a guide," said Jimmy. "I met an Indian in the hills—a Black-foot—who pulled me out of the creek and guided me back."

"Well, the galoot's got a ready tongue—I own up to that!" said Kentuck. "Where's the Indian?"

"He pointed out the ranch to me, and left me a mile out," said Jimmy.

"What a pity he didn't come on to the ranch and show up!" grinned Kentuck. "But I suppose he couldn't

have done that, seeing that there never was any Indian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let up, Kentuck—let up!" said Red Alf.

Pete Peters tapped Jimmy on the shoulder.

"Let's have it straight, kid!" he said rather gruffly. "Where did you leave Blazer?"

"I've told you!" snapped Jimmy.

"That there horse is a demon for temper," said the foreman, "but he's a vallyable animal. We've got to rope in that hoss if so be we can find him. Give us the office as well as you can, then, and spin your yarns arter! Where is Blazer?"

Jimmy turned his back on the foreman without replying. Pete Peters shrugged his shoulders and walked away to his cabin, which adjoined the bunkhouse.

Jimmy Silver looked round at the ring of grinning faces. In his anger and resentment, he forgot that he was tired. He made a step nearer to Kentuck.

That youth grinned at him mockingly. It was evident that he had taken a dislike to the English school-boy, as his conduct with regard to Blazer that morning had sufficiently shown.

"I don't care twopence for your opinion!" said Jimmy Silver, looking him in the face. "You can believe what you like, and be hanged to you! You've told me your opinion pretty plain, so I'll tell you mine! You meant me to be injured when you bantered me into mounting that savage horse this morning! That was a dirty trick—a rotten, dirty trick that only a cur would have played on a stranger new to the country! You're a cur—and if you say another word like what you've said already, I'll knock you spinning!"

"I guess I'll risk it!" said Kentuck, with a wink at his companions.

"I guess you're most chin-music, young 'un, and you can't do anything but spin tall stories! I guess I've said, and I guess I'll say agin, that you're the biggest liar—Oh!"

Kentuck got no further.

Jimmy Silver rushed straight at him, hitting out, and the Kentuckian caught Jimmy's knuckles with his chin. He staggered back, with a howl, and as there was a bench just behind him, he fell over it and went sprawling heels over head.

There was a roar of laughter from the cowpunchers.

"Kentuck's got it!"

"Well hit, tenderfoot!"

"The kid's got pluck, anyhow!" grinned Red Alf. "Bust me if I don't half believe his yarn!"

Kentuck scrambled up savagely, his hard face red with rage.

He came over the bench with a jump and rushed at Jimmy Silver.

It would have gone hard with Jimmy just then had there been no interruption, for he was almost sinking with fatigue, and he could not have stood up for ten seconds against the cowboy. But at that moment a sharp voice rang out.

"Stop! What does this mean?"

Mr. Smedley strode up, with an angry brow.

Kentuck dropped his hands at once. He gave Jimmy Silver a malevolent look.

"I guess I'll see you to-morrow!" he muttered.

"Any time and anywhere you like!" answered Jimmy Silver disdainfully.

Kentuck slouched into the bunkhouse. Mr. Hudson Smedley glanced round at the cowboys and then fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver. He made no further allusion to the rather startling scene which his arrival had interrupted.

"So you're got back, Jimmy?" he said. "I guess I'm glad to see you safe and sound! You look tired!"

"I'm tired out!" said Jimmy. "Where did you leave Blazer—where did he leave you?"

"In the foothills."

"Oh!"

Some of the cowpunchers grinned. "Come up to the house!" said Mr. Smedley abruptly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed the tall figure of Hudson Smedley as he

strode up to the ranchhouse. They heard a low laugh among the cowpunchers as they went.

"I'm getting fed with this!" Lovell muttered angrily. "Those dummies seem to set us down as a set of bragging duifers—"

"We've had bad luck!" said Jimmy. "They think a tenderfoot can't do anything but say 'Bo!' to a goose, and—and all that's happened to us hasn't happened where they could see it! But they may think a little differently to-morrow—Kentuck, at least!"

"You're going to scrap with him?" asked Raby.

"I suppose I must, after punching his features!"

"He's big for you—"

"No bigger than old Gunner at Rookwood, and I've licked Gunner!" said Jimmy. "I'm going all out to lick him, anyhow! And we're going to find Blazer somehow and bring him home! Those grinning asses are going to see that there is something in us somehow! It's no good getting ratty! We've simply got to show them somehow the stuff we're made of!"

"Quite a good idea, I guess!" It was Hudson Smedley who broke in.

"Now come in to supper!"

Jimmy Silver almost nodded to sleep over his supper that night. He was glad—very glad—to get to his room and stretch his tired limbs there in repose. He slept the moment he had closed his eyes—and dreamed that he was riding Blazer on the prairie, with a wild Blackfoot in full chase. But he awoke rested and refreshed in the morning when Woo Sing knocked at his door, and he came down to breakfast with a firm determination to keep his hostile appointment with Kentuck at the earliest possible opportunity.

THE END.

(Cheers for Jimmy Silver & Co. They score a great triumph in "The Tenderfoot Make Good!" next Monday's magnificent story. On no account miss it. Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND to-day!)

had not been able to get past Boyne and Horne.

The play—fast, bustling, and clean—had taken place mainly in the Town half, but the Londoners had not been able to increase their lead, try as they would.

Both Rollo Dayton and Hercules Samson had been very effectively "bottled up," for they were not permitted to move an inch without having a couple of the Town players upon their heels.

So half-time found the Villa leading by the only goal.

The second half started in brisk fashion. Mopps, the Huddersford winger, breaking away on his own account, and sending over a centre which dropped clean in Giles' goal-mouth.

A fierce scramble took place, during which a penalty was awarded against Storm. Stacey, the Town centre-forward, took the kick; but so nervous was he that he sent the leather flying quite three yards over the cross-bar—a feat which brought many derisive remarks from the Town's supporters.

The hands of the clock crept round, and still no other goal was scored. But, with ten minutes to full time, Hercules Samson snapped up a tricky pass from Rollo Dayton, and set off down the line with his usual kangaroo-like leaps.

And there was no stopping him.

He passed Mopps and Coyne like a flash of light, and Boyne he tricked with an ease which made that young gentleman mutter savagely, and call him a "blamed goggle-eyed monkey"—a rude remark which, fortunately, escaped the little winger's ears.

Reaching the penalty-area, Hercules put over his favourite oblique shot, and the unhappy Low might just as well have clutched at the moon for all the chance he had of getting his gloved hands to it.

Again the ground rocked with a tumult of sound, for victory for the Cupholders seemed a football certainty. And such it proved, for the Londoners still held a two-goal lead when the whistle shrilled for full time.

Disappointed, profoundly chagrined, the sportsmen from the North made their way homewards. But the most disgruntled person in the whole of the kingdom was the man who called himself the Duke.

THE END.

(Plenty of thrills in "The Last Throw"—next Monday's topping story of Rollo Dayton and the Duke. Make sure you read it, by ordering your BOYS' FRIEND in advance!)



"Hurry, man!" begged Rollo. "I have the key of the ankle-irons," continued Ah Sing. "I will give it to you!" He nodded down at Dagnall, who was nearest him. "You will unlock your irons, and then wade through the water to your friends. And then Ah Sing will show you the way out!" He muttered a strange word. "Strike me, will he? The pig-dog! Strike me—"

The door at the top of the steps opened, and the well-knit figure of the man who called himself the Duke was silhouetted against the light behind him. He folded his arms across his chest, and waited for the fat Celestial to turn. And this Ah Sing did very slowly, almost paralysed with fear.

His fleshy features were moist and distorted in the light which streamed through the open door.

"I meant nothing, master—" he began, wringing his fat hands.

"Silence, traitor!" thundered the master-criminal. "There is only one way to deal with such scum as you!"

A deafening report and a spurt of flame followed the harsh words, and the fat Chinese gave a wild shriek, threw up his hands, and toppled into the water. The master-criminal had had his revenge upon the traitor!

And the Duke had vanished by the time Rollo and the others recovered from the shock.

Nothing but the sound of the water pouring through the grating broke the tragic silence, for the captives felt too sick at heart to talk. Then, when they had given up all hope, a gruff, stentorian voice rang through the cellar:

"Below, there!"

"What the dickens—" began Dagnall, thinking that his imagination must be playing tricks with him.

"Below, there!"

Again came the voice, and a very human voice at that.

"Somebody's shouting through the grating!" cried Rollo excitedly.

"Hallo, old egg! Who are you?"

"The river police!" answered the stentorian voice. "We saw a flash and heard the report of a gun. What's the game?"

"It's no game!" cried Rollo in ringing tones. "Four of us are prisoners in this cellar! We're chained to the wall, and the water is already up to our waists! For Heaven's sake, get a move on! It's a matter of life and death!"

The police in the patrol-boat did not hesitate, for they knew that many queer things happened in Wapping.

"Hang on for a minute or so!" cried the voice. "We'll find you! You're in Ah Sing's place!"

Two minutes later there came the sound of running feet, and the river police reached the captives just as they were at their last gasp; for the water was rising rapidly, as though determined not to be robbed of its prey.

The ankle-irons having been removed, Rollo and the others were assisted up the wooden steps.

"What's the time, old egg?" asked the fair-haired youngster, swaying.

"Ten minutes to twelve," answered the stalwart policeman, who had his arm round the amateur.

"Ten minutes!" muttered Rollo, with a little crooked smile. "A near thing, old egg!"

The 6th Chapter.

The Match of the Season!

The magnificent new Stadium at Wembley was accommodating at least one hundred and twenty thousand spectators a quarter of an hour before the Finalists took the field.

It was a bright afternoon, with a stiff breeze which blew straight across the playing-pitch, and the jubilant spectators were looking forward to the match of the season.

Twenty special trains had been run from Huddersford alone, and the Town's red-and-white favours were very much in evidence. The sportsmen from the North were also very much in evidence, and they made it quite clear that they were going to take the Cup back with them.

The official programme gave the teams as follows:

CHELSEA VILLA.

Blue-and-white jerseys, white knickers.

Giles

Storm Gideon

Crispin Lewis Perno

(capt.)

Dagnall (F. G.) Britton

Samson Dayton (R.) Terle

o

Mopps Stacey Crooks

Fenton Bendon

Coyne Herman Druce

Boyne Horne

HUDDERSFORD TOWN.

Red jerseys, white knickers.

Chelsea Villa were the first to take the field, and the tumultuous shout which greeted them must have been heard in London, many miles distant.

The vocal explosion was something which had to be heard to be believed, for its magnitude was almost uncanny. It did not seem possible that human voices could be responsible for such a cataclysm of sound.

Low, the Londoners' skipper, punted a ball into an open goal, whilst the crowd amused itself by "spotting" the various players.

The four fellows who had been face to face with a terrible death but a few hours before looked little the worse for their experience, but they had the greatest difficulty in keeping their minds upon the business in hand.

The thought of the ice-cold water, rising slowly, treacherously, was ever with them, and the spectre of the murdered Chinese often floated before their eyes.

"We shall be O.K. when the game starts, old egg!" declared Rollo Dayton, as he strolled across the magnificent stretch of green turf with Dr. Dagnall.

Huddersford Town did not keep the vast crowd waiting, and they also

came in for a reception which left no doubt as to their amazing popularity.

Mr. Croft, the well-known referee, received a round of cheers all to himself, and no sooner had he inspected the nets than he whistled the rival skippers to the half-way line.

There followed a hearty handshake all round, after which the coin glistened in the warm sunshine.

Fenton won the toss, and set Chelsea Villa to face the sun—a fact which brought cheers and whistling from the football "fans" from the North.

Mr. Croft did not believe in wasting time, for only a matter of seconds passed before the whistle shrilled and Rollo Dayton touched the ball to Dagnall.

Fenton was upon the doctor in a twinkling, and so determined was his tackling that the inside-right was forced to pass back to Rollo, who touched the ball past Stacey and set off down the field, with the roar of the multitude ringing in his ears.

Both Herman and Coyne rushed at the amateur, but he swept past them with seeming ease, and the next person he had to contend with was "Tiny" Boyne, the left back.

This young man, who weighed a comfortable eighteen stone, thrust out a pugnacious jaw and scowled darkly as he toddled out to pay his respects to the famous amateur. But Rollo did not wait for the tackle.

Instead, when he was quite six yards outside the penalty-area, he let drive; and so unexpected was the shot, and such was the force behind it, that the ball was in the net before Low realised what had happened.

The crowd understood quickly enough, however, and the Stadium seemed to rock with the shout which threatened to split the skies and lift the roof clean off the grand-stand.

"Dayton!"

"Well done, lad!"

"Stick it, Villa!"

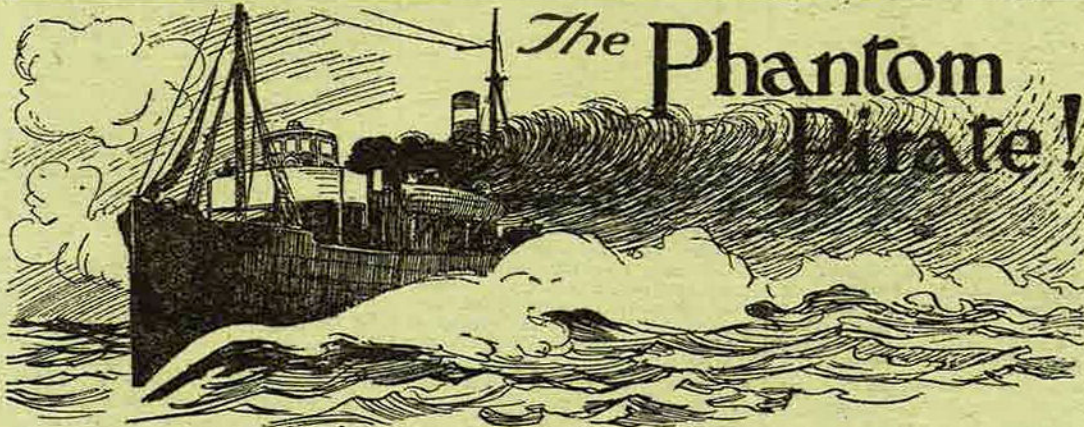
The Londoners' supporters were positively wild with delight, and they yelled their heads off as Rollo was almost carried up the field by his team-mates.

The amateur had scored in the first minute of the game—and that game was the Final!

Never had footballers looked more determined than did the Huddersford eleven as they lined up for the kick-off; yet, though they strained every nerve from that moment until five minutes to half-time, they could not break through the Chelsea Villa defence.

And the Villa, on the other hand,

THE MOST FASCINATING SEA STORY EVER WRITTEN BY MAURICE EVERARD!



Disguised as a deck-hand, Dick Polruan boards the pirate ship to obtain fresh evidence against the modern buccaneers!

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 chum, set out in the *Defiance*, a camouflaged high-speed destroyer, to discover the modern pirate to whom the loss of the vessels is attributed. With them is Pieface, their negro servant, the crew of the *Enchantress*, Joe's old ship, and Bunjie, Pieface's baby elephant. When they have been at sea some weeks, they come upon a derelict vessel, the *Octoroon*, of New Orleans, and find that the passengers and the crew have been murdered, and the officers are missing. The ship's papers, log, and valuables have been stolen. Suddenly time-bombs explode on the *Octoroon*, sending her to the bottom without a trace. Later when making for the Gulf of Mexico, the *Defiance* encounters a tidal wave which carries her into an inland lake of a mysterious South Sea Island. On the island the marooned seamen come upon one of the lost cities of the Spanish Main, and discover it is being used by the modern pirate as his headquarters. At night Frank and Dick and Harry Rawson visit a Spanish galleon, which is at anchor in the harbour of the city, and Frank has the good fortune to recover the ship's papers of the *Octoroon*. Joe Tremorne then plans to attack the pirates' stronghold, and he and his party take possession of one of the island forts. To discover the strength of the pirates, Dick Polruan and a young seaman named Rogers, visit the fortress occupied by the enemy. The place is destroyed by an explosion, and Dick, who fortunately escapes unhurt, is able to render assistance of one of the pirates. Dick then tries to persuade the fellow to join Joe Tremorne's party, at the same time asking him what brought him to the scene of the explosion.

The 2nd Chapter. A Daring Move.

The stranger looked at Dick Polruan in mild surprise. "What brought me here?" he repeated. "Wasn't there sufficient to bring half the universe here to see what caused that explosion. We were carousing, as usual, on the galleon, when this show went up. The report could have been heard miles away. Of course, we rushed to the spot, and a search-party was told off to look for the professor. I suppose you don't know him?"

Dick Polruan chuckled. "I suppose I do. I was with him when the—er—the accident happened—in fact, I shouldn't be surprised if I was the innocent cause of it."

"You?" said the other blankly. "That's about the size of it," Dick agreed. "I came here on a tour of investigation, and accidentally made the acquaintance of your friend, Professor Helferrich, whose work apparently seems to be the construction of infernal machines for blowing innocent merchantmen out of the water. Well, carry on, I'm entitled to your end of the yarn first."

The injured man smothered an exclamation. "It would have been a thundering good thing if the old ruffian had been blown to pieces. Instead, we found him, scarcely injured physically—at least, except for a few bad cuts caused, I suppose, by flying metal. But his mind, goodness, he was ten times madder than before—babbled a lot of nonsense about a visitation from the Most High, though what the old ex-Kaiser has to do with the business I don't

know. Clitheroe tried to question him as to what happened, but all he said was, the explosion was a punishment for his own wickedness."

"He said nothing about me?"

"You? Good gracious, no! No one knows you were here. Where were you?"

"Underneath a stone column, which saved my life."

The other laughed. "It certainly did that. If Clitheroe had found you, you wouldn't be here now."

"Did they find anyone else besides the professor?" Dick's thoughts flew back to Rogers, whom he had left some distance away.

"No," was the answer. "We didn't get here until a good half-hour after the explosion. Of course, we scurried round to recover some of the unexploded bombs. Luckily for you, only two had gone off. The rest were got together, and taken down to the Narrows to be put on board the yacht in the morning."

Dick heaved a sigh of relief. One thing was quite certain—Rogers had escaped.

"And you? How were you injured?" he questioned.

The sailor jerked his head in the direction of the wreckage. "Crawling about in that shell-hole salvaging bombs for Clitheroe. I saw one under a slab of stone. When I tried to get it, the stone fell down and pinned me. I was the last man left at work. Clitheroe came back and saw my trouble. As I told you, he wouldn't free me. One day—"

By the expression on his face Dick knew that deep down in his heart he nursed an implacable hatred against Clitheroe.

"One day your chance will come," he agreed. "But having got so far, you might tell me your name."

"Monroe—Alec Monroe! And yours?"

"Polruan!"

"Never heard of it. It sounds Cornish."

"I come from Cornwall. You're from Scotland."

"Glasgow, and I'd give my life to go back again. Shade o' Burns, but to walk down Sauchiehall Street on a summer morning. Well, never mind. I reckon before I'm through—as I said a few minutes ago—I'll be walking to the electric chair in Sing Sing."

"But you were talking of trying to get back to the States."

"Quite true, and if I could make America unhandcuffed, I'd chuck the sea for good, and work my way out Middle West where a chap does get a chance. And yet I don't know"—turning a saddened glance to the black void of the ocean dark beyond the faint line of the foreshore—"I was born to the sea. My father was a Clyde man bred and born, and I stowed away at fourteen. I never thought, though, that I'd come to this."

"Things aren't so bad that you can't get back, even when you've taken a wrong road," Polruan said sympathetically. "We're getting to some sort of an understanding of each other, and perhaps we can do something together. I was bred and born to the sea, Monroe, and because I love it, love every mile of it, and love, too, everything connected with a ship, I want to see an end to this business in which Clitheroe is engaged."

"You," said Monroe scornfully. "What can you do alone?"

"But I'm not alone," said the other cheerfully. "There's a whole crowd of us on this island, only waiting our chance to put an end to this pirate game."

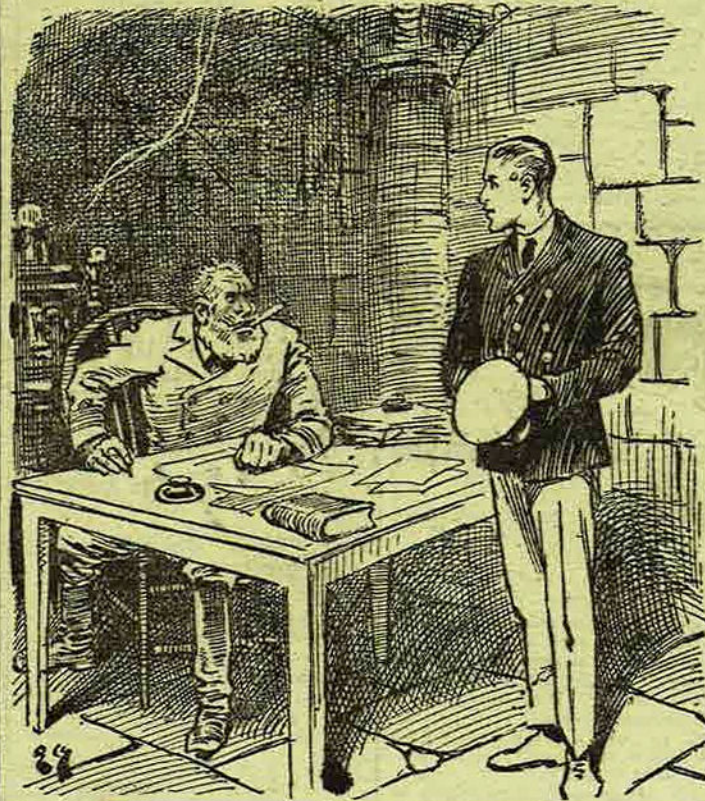
"Great Scott! You don't say!"

"I do say!" persisted Dick. "If you come with me to the big fort on the top of the hill, you'll see the sort of stuff we're getting ready for Clitheroe."

"If I come with you I put my head into a noose," was the quick reply.

Dick shook his head. "No; we're playing square. You've told me how you feel, and what you want to do—go straight."

"By Jove, I do. And yet"—making a grimace—"what chance is there to go straight when, if Clitheroe



IN THE PIRATES' STRONGHOLD! After the word of dismissal, the disguised Dick Polruan hesitated long enough to gain a glimpse of the pirates' wireless installation. Then he backed and made for the stairs.

finds me free, he'll bundle me off on the yacht. Here"—tapping the pocket in his reefer jacket—"are my instructions to the chap in charge of the fort at the Narrows. I'm supposed to report to him at sunrise and go aboard the moment the yacht lets her anchors down."

Dick was looking thoughtful. Monroe's story—at least, the last part of it—had started a curious chain of thought.

"I say," he said, breaking a silence, "that chap in charge of the Narrows fort. Does he know you?"

"He's never set eyes on me."

"Then he wouldn't be any the wiser if I showed up instead of you."

"He wouldn't," Monroe agreed. "But you would be both wiser and sadder, too. I told you what my job is to be—to go to sea with the yacht which is timed to meet a certain armed vessel on the high seas at the end of this week, to give her a few extra deckhands and a fresh load of explosive bombs. Do you know the sort of business in which that crowd is engaged?"

Dick laughed silently. "I haven't a bad idea. Waylaying unarmed steamers, taking everything of value on board, murdering the

crew and passengers, and then sinking the vessel without trace."

"Where did you learn that?"

Dick's voice dropped to a whisper. "I've seen something of it. My friends and I left England in an armed ship, to put an end to this sort of thing. On the way out we came across the *Octoroon*. What we saw there isn't very nice to talk about. You know?"

"Only from what my mates have told me," said Monroe, with a shake of his head. "Thank heavens, I've never seen any of this high seas butchery, although I know it has gone on. I signed on to the yacht at New York, and came straight here. When I began to learn things I told Clitheroe to his face I wanted to back out. Now you know why he didn't mind leaving me here to die."

"Monroe," said Dick, after a while, "I've got an idea. I want to take your place, to take your clothes, your papers, and board the yacht tomorrow instead of you. There's only one thing against it—is Clitheroe likely to find out?"

Monroe negated the suggestion with a wave of his hand.

"Trust Clitheroe to find out nothing if it means taking any trouble. When he finds I've gone, the most he will do is to phone over to the chap at the Narrows Fort and ask if I've reported there. But if you are there instead of me, everything will be all right. Only—"

"Only you're wondering what is to become of you?"

"Of course."

"I want you to throw in your hand with us."

"Deckhand, merely an ordinary deckhand," replied Monroe.

Polruan wrote in silence for several minutes. By the time he had finished, Monroe's clothes lay in a heap on the stones.

In a very little while Dick had effected the exchange. The day was already beginning to break.

"Here's the letter to Captain Tremorne," he said. "You can find your way to the fort, just as I can find mine to the Narrows. But work your way round by the far side, and when you approach, show a white handkerchief. That will simplify matters considerably. And don't forget to tell Captain Tremorne I am quite all right, as sound as a bell, in fact. One thing more. Say my advice is that all of them should lie low until I return; stick to the fort and do nothing until I get back with the evidence I want. That will be more useful in the long run than taking a whole cartload of prisoners."

"You really mean to go through with it?"

"At any cost," was the prompt answer. "The sooner this business is settled, the better. How often does the grey steamer come in?"

"Once a fortnight. She is bound to come back to revictual."

"Very well," said Dick, offering the other his hand. "Then you can tell Captain Tremorne to expect me back fourteen days from now. Good-bye, and good luck!"

"And the same to you," said Monroe, smiling for the first time. "You've given me a chance to make good, and I sha'n't forget."

With that they parted, and plunged down the slope in different directions. For Dick, just then, the world was a very wonderful place, with adventure waiting round the corner. But it was not altogether the lure of the unknown, the feeling that the very next moment might plunge him into a whirl of excitement that had prompted him to embark at short notice on such a stupendous adventure, as the subconscious instinct that Fate had given him the great chance to call "checkmate" to his enemies.

All his life through the outstanding trait in his character had been a certain reckless impetuosity, which sometimes turned out well, but at others let him down rather badly. He was, as Tremorne would have described him, a born taker of long odds. But of such stuff great men are made.

He faced the peril of the undertaking with the colossal assurance of youth. There had been no reason, so far as he could see, to doubt Monroe's sincerity. And if all that Monroe had told him was true, it followed, that somewhere at the end of the road, if only he could make it, victory waited. On the other hand, failure was a factor to be reckoned with, and a more experienced and cautious mind might have decided that the risks were too great to warrant the hazard.

To the latter possibility he turned a blank mind, and, plunging into the scrub clothing the higher reaches of the foreshore, he threw himself down, determined to rest until nearer day-break. The first grey flush of dawn followed by streamers of light turning the grey Eastern sky to tawny and gold, was the signal for action. He examined the papers Monroe had given him, memorised every detail, and striking out in the direction of a low stone wall which would effectually screen him from a chance observer on the galleon's deck, he reached at length the outer fortifications of the Narrows. These were neglected and overgrown, and long since had been abandoned to ruin. They were of sufficient interest, however, to warrant his making a small sketch map of the salient features, and this he hid away for future use.

As in the case of the other ancient Spanish forts, an open space or parade ground surrounded the central defence, and across this a number of men, dressed like himself in ordinary seamen's rig, were moving in scattered groups of twos and threes.

Nor was this the only spot which showed signs of human activity. Among the recently constructed sheds, above which blazed the flaring sign of the Trojux Film Company, little knots of workers were clustered, sure indication that on the part of the modern pirates the efficiency of deception was not neglected. Sets were being erected in the open, cameras mounted on trolleys worked this way and that, and every now and then a group of figures in quaint Elizabethan uniforms and trappings would move to an appointed spot under the direction of the camera man.

"Altogether a very ingenious wheeze, calculated to throw dust in

the eyes of anyone not in the know," was Dick's mental comment as he hurried forward to a central doorway, before which a smart-looking fellow was doing sentry-go.

"Come to report. No. 8 of working party told off to join yacht to-day," he announced coolly.

The announcement created no interest on the part of the sentry.

"All right. Get aloft and make your number to the first luff. I guess you've brought your papers?"

He nodded as Dick showed them in his hand, and a moment later Polruan found himself mounting a double flight of narrow stairs built between two walls of solid masonry. He paused in the semi-gloom to take stock of his surroundings, and noted that the inside of the entrance door was sheeted with thick steel, that in the high, domed entrance an overhead platform had been erected, and on this a serviceable-looking machine-gun was set.

Nor were these the only evidences of up-to-date defences. At every fourth step the outer wall had been perforated for a rifle slit, and in the recess beneath was stacked a recent pattern Army rifle and a box of ammunition.

A second door, steel-sheeted like the first, led to a long, bare room at the far end of which was a partitioned-off office. Through the open door Dick caught a glimpse of a heavy-jowled, bearded man bending over a sheaf of papers.

At the sound of the newcomer's step on the stone flags he glanced up, and an irritable frown settled on his unprepossessing face.

"Vell, vot must you vant?" he growled in a peculiarly Teutonic voice. "Get over vid de bisness fast pecos I am busy."

Dick forced a reluctant salute, and pushed his papers across the table.

"Monroe, No. 8, come to report for duty," he said briskly.

The other merely glanced at the name and index number, scribbled his signature in red ink, and pushed the document back.

"All right. She von't be in till twelve. Till then you're free. Git out!"

Dick hesitated, turning his peaked cap between his fingers long enough to gain a glimpse of the cabin-like wireless accommodation beyond the speaker. Then he backed and made for the stairs.

"Close dot door, confound you!" bawled the figure in the chair. "And don't forget, she leaves at four."

In the cool of the passage Dick heaved a sigh of relief. The ordeal, which might have been so difficult, had proved amazingly simple. He passed down the first flight, and satisfied of being secure from observation, set his eye to the nearest gun-slit and peeped out.

In the dusty square immediately below, deck-hands like himself were gathered, some in groups, one or two standing by themselves as though strangers to each other—suggesting that the modern pirate chose his assistants from various ports in different parts of the world, for here was a fair-haired, blue-eyed Scandinavian giant, there an under-sized, sallow-skinned Portuguese, and a little way off a high-cheeked Jap sat on the brown earth, with his long fingers clasped about his hunched-up knees.

Farther to the west, at the top of the sloping foreshore, was the grey-brown fort where Tremorne and his companions lay hidden. The uprising sun glistened on the long barrels of the obsolete guns, and cast black shadows upon the centre of the platform; but no human figure gave a touch of life to the desolate-looking building.

Dick heaved a sigh of relief, and descended as steps sounded on the stairs. A couple of hardened seamen, whose unpleasant features told of recklessness and dissipation, passed him without a word. He went out, and drawing apart, settled his back against the stone wall and calmly watched the progress of events.

There was a steady drizzle of men from the galleon who, after their papers had been cursorily examined by the first lieutenant, joined the others in the great courtyard.

As the sun rose high the quayside and the narrow streets of the old Spanish town awakened to life. On the wharf—the scene of the start of Frank's midnight adventure when he visited the galleon and recovered the Octoroon's papers—the long galvanised sheds were opened and bales of goods were brought out and carried away to the tumbledown houses.

"Making room for the storage of more things which the yacht will bring," was the conclusion to which

Dick arrived after watching events for the best part of an hour. "The yacht evidently acts as a carrier for the grey steamer, and when a ship is pillaged at sea everything of value is brought here."

The discovery—by reason of the use it might be later on—afforded considerable satisfaction. Further observation was cut short however, by a big fellow, apparently the bos'un or the mate in charge of the party, who made a brisk round-up of the courtyard, and shepherded his charges to a shed near the Narrows entrance, where spare kit was served out to each man.

After quite a passable meal, served at board and trestle tables, the party was marched along the shore of the lagoon to await the arrival of the yacht. So far, no one had taken any particular notice of Dick, from which fact he adduced one of two things—either that Monroe was a new recruit, or that he was not over popular with his associates.

At length the booming of the signal-gun far out to sea announced the vessel's approach. The Narrows fort replied, and an hour later the steamer glided as gracefully as a bird through the channel, and dropped anchor in the lagoon.

By four o'clock that afternoon the two boat-loads of deck-hands, relief firemen, and stokers, put off from the quay, and boarded the yacht. For Dick Polruan a new and amazing adventure had begun.

Here were cases containing Japanese goods and ivory carvings, there chests of tea in which egg-shell china had been packed, and, most curious of all, a consignment of rifles originally destined for a native chief on the West Coast of Africa. But to the young fellow helping to load them to the deck and lower away into the waiting boats for transportation to the shore, they told more than this—a silent tale of bloodshed and piracy on the high seas.

Don't Miss "THE LAST THROW!"
Next Monday's Topping Story of Rollo Dayton and the Duke!
Order your "BOYS' FRIEND" To-Day.

Nightfall came, bringing with it no rest. Orders were given for the work to be carried on until every hold was empty.

It was quite easy now to see that the yacht was kept in commission for the purpose of plying between the pirate vessel and the island. No sooner had the grey steamer stripped and sunk either passenger ship or merchantman than the yacht was wireless for to come and take away the cargo.

With everyone working a double shift, the holds were emptied soon

Dick's first impression was that their destination would be one or other of the West India Islands, but after a voyage of four days the vessel suddenly altered her course, turning her nose due south. For two whole days and nights the same monotonous progress was kept up. Then towards evening the engines were rung first down to half-speed, then to slow, until at length the churning screw came to rest altogether, and the stately ship lay heaving gently like a bird on the wild waste of water.

But all the time her wireless was working, bringing nearer and nearer to the appointed spot her consort, the pirate ship. She loomed out of the dusk that evening, and drew close in. There was an interchange of signals, and soon after, Dick found himself mustered with a dozen others on the yacht's poop. Their gear was brought on deck, a boat was lowered, and the transfer having taken place before darkness had fully settled in, the yacht had swung round in a half-circle, turning her bows to the north, while the pirate vessel, with the needful addition to her crew, went on her mysterious way.

Whatever fears Dick may have had lest his identity should be discovered were quickly dispelled, for no one of the slightest consequence took any notice of him. By the officer in charge of the watch he was instructed, with a number of others, in the duties expected of him, and almost immediately dismissed to

mind had been employed in some naval capacity.

And yet beneath the outward semblance of orderliness and monotonous regularity of duty, as the heavily-armed vessel steamed first on one course then on another, ran an undercurrent of suppressed excitement. Everyone on board, from the lowest deck-hand to the mysterious captain, who remained screened from the eyes of his own crew in his specially-constructed cabin behind the high bridge, became a potential look-out man, anxious to be the first to sight the appearance of fresh prey. All except Dick, of course, who, while no less alert than his strangely-assorted shipmates, hoped with all his heart that the first vessel to be sighted would be a heavily-armed man-of-war.

It was soon abundantly clear, however, that in her dealings with her brothers and sisters of the sea, the grey ship was as great a coward as she was a bully, for, having one evening sighted what at first glance appeared to be a floundering tramp, but turned out a squat, sensibly armed gunboat, she turned suddenly round, and packing on every spare pound of steam, made off at the top speed of her triple expansion engines.

For a whole week the Gulf was scoured in every direction, and the search looked like proving utterly fruitless, when in the early morning of the eighth day a gong brought every man to his appointed station.

Standing waiting to relieve the look-out man, Dick was a first-hand eye witness of all that happened.

Shading his eyes, and staring over the rippling water touched with the reflected hues of sun and sky, he made out, some two miles away, a black-hulled steamer of about sixteen hundred tons, proceeding steadily in a northerly direction. She flew the flag of the American mercantile marine, and the fact that her Plimsoll mark was well down, suggested she was pretty heavily laden.

At once the grey ship presented a scene of great animation. Crews were piped to quarters, gun-covers were quickly removed, and as soon as the heat haze, which previously had hidden the tramp from sight, had lifted sufficiently to afford the men crouching in the gun shelters a good sight, word came down the voice pipe for a stopping shot to be fired across the stranger's bows.

Dick was close to the ward-room door when he looked forward, and saw a small but neatly constructed gun hoist come into action. The next moment a long-nosed shell slipped into the yawning opening as the breech mechanism swung back. There was an instant's tension that seemed to run through everybody on shipboard, then a pencil flash of flame, a dull, resonant boom as the thunder of the gun rolled round the sea, and falling long, the shell raised a column of water fifty feet beyond the steamer's stern.

The warning, however, was sufficient. The tramp slowed to a dead stop, steam hissing from her exhausts, and as her stern came slightly round under the pull of the impeded momentum, they saw gleaming above her screw the name President Garfield, Charlestown.

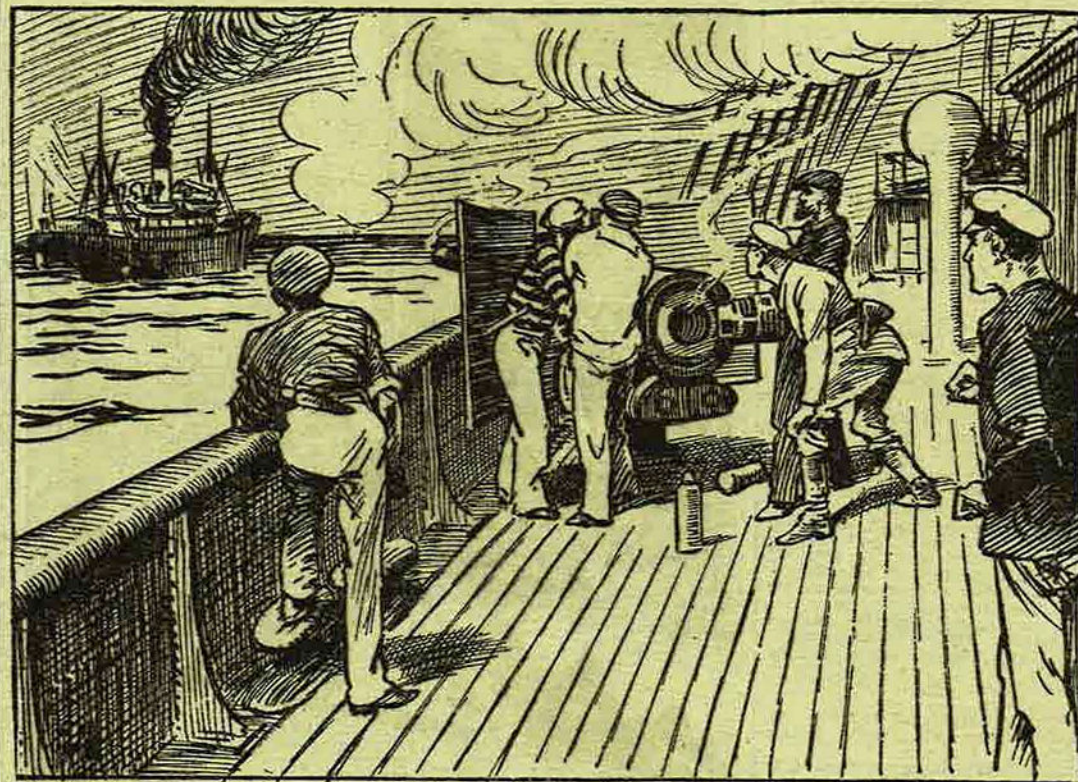
For Dick Polruan the first thrill of the startling experience was wearing off. The curtain had risen on a drama of the sea the climax to which must be a horror of bloodshed. A whiteness began to creep up about his lips—an instinct of loathing rather than of fear—when he recalled the fate which had befallen the luckless passengers of the Octoroon, and the temptation seized him to dash straight to the shuttered cabin high on the bridge, and with a quick shot from his pistol rid the seas for ever of the chief of the modern pirates.

The impulse, however, was quickly swallowed up, as events began to move rapidly. Signal flags fluttered from the grey steamer, and accoutomed as he was to the Morse code, Dick read the following message:

"We intend to board you. The slightest show of resistance will be instantly punished. Send no signals."

Barely was the warning sent than, following a second shot which lopped perilously across the Garfield's waist, a machine-gun from the pirate's deck shot her aerials away, leaving the luckless victim at the mercy of the pirates.

(Will the modern pirates succeed in capturing the Garfield? On no account must you miss next Monday's startling instalment of this great story. Order your BOYS' FRIEND to-day!)



THE WARNING SHOT! A dull resonant boom rolled round the sea as the gun was fired, and the shell raised a column of water fifty feet beyond the steamer's stern!

The Terror of the Seas.

The period of inaction had come to an end. No sooner did Dick step on to the yacht's deck than he found himself one of a gang told off to shift cargo from the main hold.

The nature of this cargo left no doubt as to the source from which it had been obtained. Bales of goods, cases of spirits, cabin-trunks, and passengers' luggage, were inextricably mixed up with small arms, chronometers, compasses, and elaborate saloon fittings. In fancy Dick saw them at no remote date widely distributed throughout the junk-shops of the world.

after sunrise the following day. Thoroughly tired out, Dick followed the rest to their quarters below, and throwing himself into the nearest bunk, dropped off to sleep.

How long he slept he never afterwards knew, but when at length he was awakened by the noise of many feet moving overhead he tumbled out, washed, and freshened himself up and went on deck, to find the day had fully come. During his sleeping hours the yacht had put quietly to sea, and now was steaming at some twelve or fourteen knots an hour, keeping a steady course to the east.

carry them out. These consisted of nothing more than the usual deck-hand routine—cleaning down the paintwork, and generally helping to keep the vessel spick and span.

Certainly the grey ship, for all the terrible nature of her calling, was a credit to her commander. From stern to stern she was a model of orderliness and smartness. Not a day passed but there was either boat drill, fire drill, gun and torpedo practice with dummy charges, and unexpected calls to stations. Everything was organised and carried out on a coldly scientific basis, suggesting that at no very remote period the master

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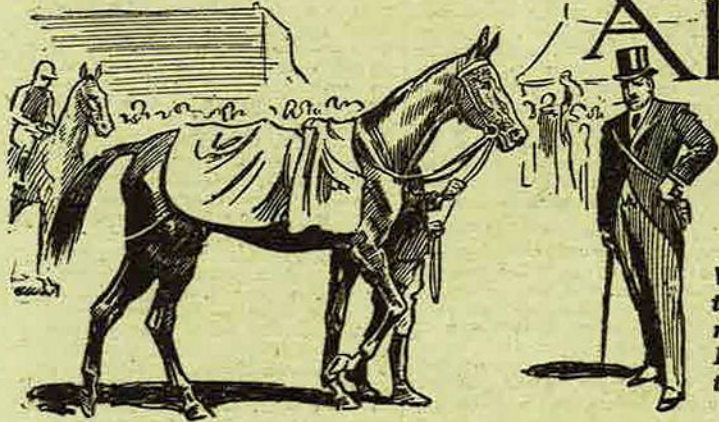
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A 12,000-WORD RACING STORY OF THE VERY BEST!



A ROGUE OF THE TURF!

By MALCOLM ARNOLD.
When Alpha Always steps in there is a marked improvement in the running of Dainty Lass, a horse that has hitherto been unable to win a race!

The 1st Chapter.

Concerning the Running of Dainty Lass.

On an angle of green turf to the left of the gates of the Aldwick Racecourse a raucous-voiced gentleman was manipulating thimbles and a small, unobtrusive pea on a green-baize folding table. He was inviting the world at large, and a handful of gawkish yokels in particular, to "find the lady!"

"You can't be lookin'! You can't be lookin'!" he cried. "It's easy, I tell yer!"

If the group of yokels were not looking, someone else was, for presently from the hedge there came a low, clear whistle.

Swiftly that table was folded, thimbles thrust into capacious pockets, and as the county policeman came round the corner there was a gap in the circle, and the hoarse-voiced man was making good time of it along the crowded road.

"Find the lady, eh? It wants some doing!"

A good-looking youth in tweeds, who had been standing on the fringe of the crowd, listening to the voluble orator, turned his head and smiled at the figure on his right—a figure in a light, check suit, with a clean-cut, expressionless face.

"That all depends," came the drawing reply. "Sometimes the lady isn't there!"

The throng dispersed, and the two found themselves walking down the road together. Half an hour had to elapse before the first race, and the thronged roadside, with its lines of vehicles and jostling racegoers, made an attractive scene to any student of humanity.

At the entrance to the grand-stand the figure in the check suit halted.

"Going in?" he asked.

The other flushed uncomfortably, and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Er—not to-day."

A pair of very keen, very alert eyes studied him for a moment.

"Broke?"

Ralph Salters laughed a trifle ruefully. "You've got it!" he agreed.

"I'm a member," the other observed, "and I'm here without a friend. I like to have company. Will you be offended if I ask you to come in with me?"

Ralph Salters hesitated for a moment, but there was something amazingly attractive about that clean-cut face, and he nodded his head at last.

"Very good of you," he said. "As a matter of fact I was really dying to see the racing to-day. I've walked from Alderton."

"Walked? But it's sixteen miles!"

"It's nothing if you start early."

Alpha Always slipped his hand under Ralph's arm.

"A fellow who can walk sixteen miles to see racing has no right to be disappointed, old chap," he said. "Come along!"

They entered the private enclosure, and presently found themselves in the paddock. The parade was already in progress, eight or nine thoroughbreds being walked round the rails.

When they were close to the rail Ralph Salters turned to Alpha.

"What has brought you down here, if it's a fair question?" he asked. "There's nothing much on the programme to-day."

Alpha Always had a programme in his hand, and he turned it over, indicating the third race. Half-way down the list was a pencil mark, and Ralph's eyes widened as he read the name.

"Dainty Lass," he said. "What the dickens do you know about her?"

"Not a great deal, Salters," Alpha returned; "but I hope to know a little more after the race. She's a two-year-old filly, and I think she has Spearmin blood in her."

"Do you—do you know Miss Raeburn, the owner?"

"No."

"Well, she—she—er—lives at Alderton. Dainty Lass has been trained by Cope, and is the only racehorse that Miss Raeburn possesses now. This is Dainty Lass' second time out this season."

Salters smiled ruefully.

"The first time she ran I came a cropper over her," he added. "and I haven't recovered from it yet."

"Let's go and have a look at her," said Alpha Always.

They made their way to the line of loose-boxes, and Salters grinned at the cool, assured manner in which his companion strolled along the line, chatting to the grooms as he went.

Dainty Lass was located at last—a beautiful, grey filly, with a small head

and shapely limbs. She was lean and rangy, and had that immature look that a fast-growing two-year-old sometimes reveals.

A dapper youngster entered the loose-box, then the filly was led out, and saddling operations were begun.

Presently Alpha heard a steely voice.

"Hallo, Salters! So you've got here, then!"

Alpha Always looked round. A burly, middle-sized man, dressed in rough riding clothes, had come up to Ralph, and there was the shadow of a sneer on his broad, hard features.

"Oh, yes, I managed to make the distance, Major Stapley," Ralph returned.

"Going to take another plunge on Dainty Lass?"

"No, not to-day!"

"That's a pity; she's going to win."

"I don't think so!"

Alpha Always' drawing tones drew Major Stapley's attention. There was something challenging in the look that Alpha directed on the burly man, and for some reason or other Stapley resented it.

His face flushed.

"Who's your friend, Ralph?" he asked. "He seems to be very cocksure!"

Ralph mumbled the necessary introduction.

"Mr. Always—Major Stapley!"

Alpha bowed.

"Merely a matter of opinion, major," he said coolly. "I say that Dainty Lass will lose this race, but that she'll win the next one she goes in for."

Major Stapley laughed.

"I'll certainly have to tell Miss Barbara about this," he commented. "Your friend seems to be something of an oracle, Ralph!"

Ralph's brows were drawn together in a frown. It was obvious that he most heartily detested the loud-voiced, prosperous-looking speaker.

"In any case, others don't share your opinion, Mr. Always," Major Stapley went on. "Dainty Lass is favourite now, and is likely to start at odds on."

"That's a pity. Whoever backs her will lose their money!"

Again a flush crossed the major's heavy features, and he leaned forward.

"Are you prepared to back your opinion?"

"Always," said Alpha.

Ralph nudged him.

"Don't do it, old chap!" he whispered. "Stapley knows what he's talking about."

If Alpha Always heard the warning he gave no sign.

Stapley nodded towards the cool-looking youngster.

"How much?" he called.

"My friend, Mr. Ralph Salters, and I will share in this," said Alpha. "We'll wager you two hundred that Dainty Lass loses to-day, on condition that you double that wager against her for the next race which she will win. I think ten to one is a fair price for a proposition of that sort!"

"I'll take you!"

The major drew out a notebook and pencil.

"Book it to Messrs. Always and Salters," said Alpha. "My address is the Voyagers' Club, Pell Mell."

The wager was duly entered, and closing the notebook with a snap Major Stapley thrust it back into his pocket.

"I shall have the pleasure of taking that two hundred from you shortly after two o'clock this afternoon, Messrs. Always and Salters!" he said, giving them a cynical glance as he moved away.

Ralph stuck his hands gloomily into his pockets, and looked at his friend.

"I say, old chap, you've landed yourself in the soup," he remarked. "Stapley knows what he's talking about. He owns a string of racehorses, and they train at the same stable as Dainty Lass. Besides, he's—he's very friendly with Barbara Raeburn—too dashed friendly!"

"That's just exactly what I thought," Alpha Always returned. "But it doesn't cut any ice!"

He glanced again at the tall, rangy filly, and smiled grimly.

"I don't know who are responsible for putting Dainty Lass into a seven-furlong race," he said, "but they were no friends of the owner!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Dainty Lass is not fit to run seven furlongs at racing speed. She's too rangy—too loose yet. She's got to barrel out, get more stamina, and that will come later. I didn't see her first race, but I'm certain that she must have faded out after leading the

field to well over three-quarters of the distance."

Ralph Salters pursed his lips and whistled.

"You're quite right, Always!" he said. "She absolutely slammed away from the gate. We thought it was all over bar the shouting. She was six lengths ahead at the distance, then—well, she just crumpled up like a pack of cards!"

"Exactly!" said Always. "Now, come along, and let's see the racing."

They crossed the paddock, and entered the members' enclosure. Presently Ralph indicated a small, dainty figure standing chatting to Major Stapley.

"There—there's Miss Raeburn!" he said.

girl turned her head sharply and gave Alpha her shoulder.

"Sorry that our opinions clash, Miss Raeburn!" Alpha drawled, in that quiet voice of his.

"You'll be much sorer after the race!" came the quick retort.

But the small hand holding the race glasses trembled slightly as they were raised and directed towards the gate.

It was a perfect start. They got away in a bunch, and twenty yards from the gate Miss Raeburn's colours came out of the ruck and commenced to forge ahead.

The beautiful long body of the filly came streaking forward, leaving her challengers behind her, and from the cheaper enclosures on the right voices commenced to rise.

"Dainty Lass! Dainty Lass!"

Alpha had his glasses glued on the race, watching every stride of the leader. Round the bend they came, Dainty Lass close to the rails, her jockey sitting motionless.

The finish was just opposite the members' enclosure, and at half distance Dainty Lass was still leading by a good four lengths. Then, with startling suddenness, came the change.

The great, rangy animal began to weaken, and its stride shortened. It was whip and spur now for the rider who bestrode her. With a rush the field drew up to her, and a yellow and black jacket appeared in front, followed by a blue and crimson one.

Barbara Raeburn's colours faded away into the ruck, and Dainty Lass finished nowhere.

"I'm sorry, Miss Raeburn!"

Alpha Always had dropped his glasses into the leather case, and he turned now to look at the girl by his side.

Her face was deathly pale, and her eyes were closed. She swayed slightly, and, with a quick movement, Alpha

"What do you mean, confound you—what do you mean?"

Major Stapley strode up to Alpha and glared at him.

"Warranta colt won this race, major," said Always. "Two days ago you wagered that he would win. Did you follow your fancy to-day as well, for if so you have had quite a haul!"

The heavy face was suddenly suffused with rage, and, clenching his fist, Major Stapley lunged at the speaker, swinging for the cool face.

Ralph Salters made a leap, trying to intervene, but he was too far away, and his assistance was not needed.

A deft side-step saw the major's blow slide harmlessly over Alpha's shoulder, then, with all the power of the lithe body behind it, Alpha Always drove his left fist round, hooking to the jaw.

"It caught Major Stapley full on the point, and the burly figure sprawled sideways, landing against the fence."

With an effort the major recovered his balance and made another blind rush; but again that quick-moving, lightning-like figure avoided the whirling fists, and another blow crashed in between the major's eyes, sending him sprawling on the turf.

By this time the other members saw what was happening, and a general rush was made for the scene.

"Come on, Always, let's cut! You've given the beggar something to go on with!"

There was a contented note in Ralph's voice as he tugged Always through the group.

Alpha adjusted his tie, smoothed down his immaculately-fitting coat, and strolled quietly across the enclosure.

"Was it true? Was it really true?" Ralph asked.

"Absolutely!" Always returned. "I happen to know the bookmaker that Stapley deals with. In fact, that was one of the reasons why I came down here. I am interested in racing. But I want to see it clean."

"But, by Jove, I can't understand it!" Ralph went on. "Stapley practically owns Cope's place, and Cope usually runs all his horses on Stapley's advice. You don't think that Stapley would double-cross Barbara Raeburn? Why—why, he wants to marry her, the brute!"

"That may be the real explanation, my dear Salters," Alpha Always returned. "But we've got to find out a little more about it yet, and we're going to do so, you and I."

The 2nd Chapter. Treachery!

Barbara Raeburn was pacing up and down the book-lined study of Mandate Grange. There was a troubled frown on her small face, and deep dejection was revealed in her dragging walk.

At the desk was seated her aunt, a grey-haired, thin-faced woman, who was watching the girl with nervous, anxious eyes.

"It can't be true, Barbara! It seems incredible, impossible!"

Barbara came to a halt and looked across the room.

"I don't know what to believe!" she said unsteadily. "But you know what it means to us, auntie? Oh, I know it was foolish of me to bet, but what could I do? Something had to be done, and everyone was so sure that Dainty Lass would win."

On the desk lay a litter of papers, accounts, documents, agreements, over which the women had been poring. It was ruin that stared them in the face, ruin that had been steadily threatening for the past three years.

Mandate Grange was mortgaged up to the hilt when Barbara's father had died three years before, and the struggle to keep the house going had been a tremendous burden.

That year Barbara had had hopes that the beautiful filly would have retrieved the family fortunes. She had managed to meet the heavy training charges so far, but that afternoon's race had come as a crushing blow.

When she had paid her losses Barbara knew that she would be bankrupt. Mandate Grange would have to go under the hammer, and with it all that Barbara loved in life.

"I don't know what to do," she repeated. "It seems almost incredible—impossible!"

She bit her lip, glancing at the thin figure at the desk.

"I can't ask Ralph about it," she went on, "after what happened last month."

Her aunt sighed.

She remembered that angry scene between Barbara and Salters, when the impetuous youngster had revealed his jealous rage concerning Major Stapley. Barbara, quick to resent any interference, had lost her temper, and these two, who had known each other from childhood, had quarrelled.

"I always liked Ralph," her aunt observed, "and you used to, too, Barbara. It's a pity you quarrelled!"

"He had no right to speak to me as he did," said Barbara hotly, "making it appear that I encouraged Major Stapley to come here!"

She crossed to the desk, seating herself on the edge, and leaning forward to put her hand on her aunt's shoulder.

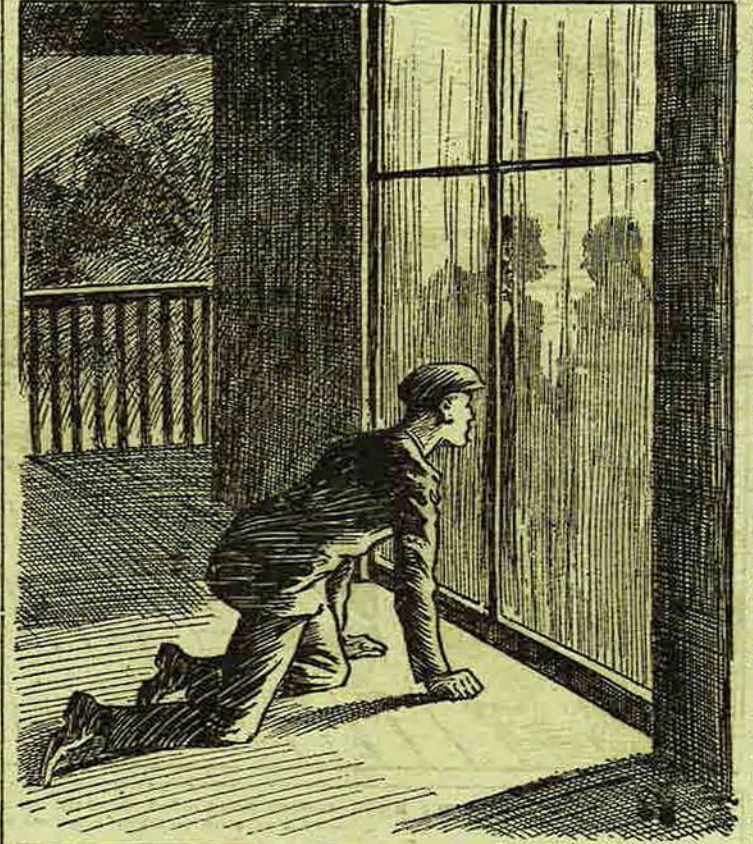
"I don't know what to do," she said, her voice breaking. "It simply means selling up and clearing out!"

A knock on the door sounded, and a maid-servant entered with a card. She crossed to Barbara, who took the card, sliding to the ground.

"It's—it's Mr. Always, auntie," she said, "the man I told you about."

Her aunt rose to her feet.

"You'd better see him, my dear," she urged. "We must get to the bottom of this."



ROGUES IN COUNCIL! Peering between the curtains, Alpha Always saw seated at a table Major Stapley and Cops, the trainer, deep in conversation.

It was evident that Major Stapley caught sight of the two, for the girl turned and looked in their direction. Ralph took off his hat, and Alpha followed suit.

The girl looked away after a slight, formal nod.

"That's meant for me," Ralph said miserably.

"It was probably meant for both of us," Alpha drawled. "The lady doesn't seem at all pleased."

The small head was tilted and the chin high.

Stapley, grinning maliciously, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself.

The first two races were run off, and then the third was hoisted on the board, and the two-year-olds cantered past the grand-stand on their way down to the gate. The long, easy swing of Dainty Lass as she passed brought an admiring look into the clean-cut face of Alpha Always.

"She's a flyer," he said to Ralph. "The short distance is her mark. She's built for speed, you know, and speed only!"

By this time the members' enclosure was crowded, and presently Alpha Always and his friend shifted their position nearer to the fence.

Alpha heard the rustle of a silk skirt close to him, and, looking round, encountered the brown eyes of Miss Barbara Raeburn.

Ralph had made a quick flanking movement, which had placed him on the other side of his friend.

There was a look of subdued anger on the girl's small face, adding to its attractiveness. As their eyes met, the

reached her side, putting his hand under her arm.

With an effort the girl recovered control, and turned to look into the strong, clean-cut face; then, with a quick, impatient movement, she broke away from him, leaning against the fence.

"You—you brought me bad luck!" she said, her eyes dimmed with tears. "Dainty Lass was winning. She would have won. I—I don't want to speak to you! Go away!"

There was something tragic in the poise of the tiny figure, and Ralph took a pace forward.

"It's—it's beastly bad luck on you, Barbara," he said; "but you can't blame my friend really. He had nothing to do with the result."

"You would take his part, of course! I suppose you're glad—glad!"

The burly, thick-set figure of Major Stapley came hurrying along the fence.

Alpha Always saw that he was fumbling with his pocket-book, which he carried in an inner pocket. The look of satisfaction on the heavy countenance changed swiftly as he reached Barbara Raeburn's side.

"Disgraceful bad luck, Barbara, outrageous! It looked as though Dainty Lass had the race in her hands."

Major Stapley transferred his glance from Barbara to the check-suited figure.

"You have won the first half of your wager, sir," he went on, "and I'm afraid you're a Jonah, so far as we are concerned."

"I have no doubt I have been a Jonah with Miss Barbara," Always returned, "but I'm not so sure about you."

Who is your favourite author? What type of story do you like best? Write and let your Editor know!

A few moments later the slim figure in immaculate dress-clothes came into the study. Barbara gave him a haughty little bow, and her aunt left the study.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Always?" Barbara asked.

Alpha's face was completely expressionless as he came across to the desk.

"Merely a little business arrangement, Miss Raeburn," he said slowly. "I want you to sell me a half share in Dainty Lass."

"A half share? Oh, no, no!"

"Let me explain. I will not interfere in the training of the filly in any way, but I will nominate the next race that she is to be entered for. When that race is over you may buy back my share, and the filly will be in your possession once more."

He took out a slip of paper and glanced at it.

"I am prepared to pay you five hundred pounds cash, and I have an agreement drawn out."

A flush crossed the small face of Dainty Lass' owner, for five hundred pounds was the exact sum that Barbara had ricked on the filly that afternoon, and she had been at her wits' end to know how to settle.

Was it mere luck that had made this extraordinary person name that figure?

"You understand, of course, that when I am part owner I shall have the privilege of seeing the filly at her training?" Always went on. "Otherwise I shall not interfere."

He drew out the agreement and placed it on the desk, then a bundle of crisp banknotes rustled between his long, flexible fingers.

"One race only, Miss Barbara," he urged, "to be chosen by me! Come, it's a sporting offer, isn't it?"

Something in the clean-cut face made Barbara suddenly make up her mind. She seated herself at the desk, glanced through the agreement, then, dipping pen into ink, she wrote her signature.

"I don't know you, Mr. Always," she said, with a little catch of her breath, "but I—I'm going to trust you!"

The agreement was folded and slipped into Always' pocket, then the little sheaf of notes were exchanged.

"There's one other point," he said. "I may have to communicate with you now and again, and I may have to appoint someone to act for me. I have chosen Mr. Ralph Salters. If you want to communicate with me at any time he will act as go-between."

And it was only after Always had gone that Barbara realised the subtlety of the arrangement.

A little twisted smile crossed her face as she leaned back in the chair. She was still in that position when her aunt returned to the room and caught sight of the notes lying on the desk.

"My dear, what on earth has happened? Where did you get that money?"

Barbara smiled.

"I got it from my partner, Mr. Always," she said.

Next morning there was a furious ringing at the telephone-bell, and Barbara answered it. Cope's voice sounded over the wire.

"Yes, Mr. Cope? This is Miss Raeburn speaking!"

Barbara listened to the violent protests from the other end of the wire.

"Oh, no, that's quite all right! Mr. Always has bought a half share in Dainty Lass, and is quite entitled to act for me!"

Cope slammed down the receiver and swung round in the little room in his training quarters, to stare surlily at the figure in the check suit.

"Well, are you satisfied?" Alpha Always asked.

"Yes, though it's a blinking funny business!" Cope returned sourly.

"Right! Now we'll get to work, Mr. Cope."

Always came across to the trainer and looked him steadily between the eyes.

"Dainty Lass is going to be trained as I want her to be," he said. "I'm entering her to-day for the Westminster Stakes, at Epsom—a five-furlong race, Cope."

The tanned, weather-beaten face of the trainer paled slightly under those searching eyes.

"That ain't her distance. She's never raced at five furlongs before."

"Quite so, but it's about time she did!"

An hour later, when Major Stapley came into the stable-yard, the string of horses were just parading for their morning gallop on the downs, and Stapley's jaw fell as he saw Dainty Lass pacing along in the line with Always in the saddle.

"Here, you—what the dickens are you doing? Get off that filly!"

Stapley hurried towards the gate and brought the line to a halt, as he reached up and caught at Dainty Lass' bridle, causing the filly to back.

Always tightened his hold on the thin whip he was carrying, and leaned forward.

"Take your hand away, quick!" he commanded.

Cope came running across the yard and grabbed Stapley by the arm, drawing him aside, making a swift explanation.

The look that crossed the major's heavy features brought a dry smile to the lips of Alpha Always.

Later, as the string of horses were cantering over the downs, a long, two-seater car came snorting past on the roadway, sending up a feather of dust behind its flying wheels. It was Major Stapley, driving as fast as he could for Mandale Grange.

"You're too late, old man!" Alpha Always muttered to himself. "I've got you—just where I wanted!"

Practice work began, and Alpha sent

Dainty Lass along at a sharp, warning canter; then he took the filly along with two four-year-olds, and tried her out for the five furlongs. It was a real race, for the youngsters bestriding the other horses resented the appearance of this calm stranger, and they made their mounts gallop for all they were worth.

Always, riding with an easy rein, waited until he had covered two-thirds of the way, then a touch of his heels sent Dainty Lass off like a flash of lightning, her stride lengthening, her lean, arched neck straining forward.

She went past her two challengers, and Alpha, steadying her, was three lengths ahead when they passed the five-furlong mark. A glance at the watch on his wrist brought a quick smile of satisfaction to the rider's lips. The filly had covered the distance inside the sixty seconds, a rare proof of the speed she possessed.

It was getting on towards one o'clock before the string of horses formed up again to start their return journey to the training stables, and Alpha, as he swung Dainty Lass into place midway in the line, had a little smile of satisfaction playing about his lips.

The 3rd Chapter.

Alpha Overhears a Rascally Plan.

"We're absolutely in the soup, Always!" Ralph Salters declared, sinking into a chair and staring gloomily at his companion. "That skunk, Stapley, has shown his real self at last, and he has got poor Barbara absolutely under his thumb!"

He turned and glanced at the girl at the desk.

"You had no idea that it was Stapley who held the mortgages, Barbara, I suppose?" Ralph went on.

Barbara Raeburn said unsteadily. "He came across here to see me about—about Dainty Lass, and when he heard what I had done—that I had sold half a share to you, Mr. Always—he was furious."

Her small lips tightened.

"He tried to bully me," she added, "and I found out then the manner of man he really was. When he realised that he could not make me break my promise he changed completely. He told me the whole truth. He had bought up every mortgage on the house and property here, and he showed me the papers. He swears that he will foreclose at once if I do not agree to his—his demands."

Ralph turned an angry face to Always.

"He wants to force Barbara into—into marrying him," he said, "and he also wants her to cancel the agreement about the filly. It strikes me he hates you like poison, Always, and this is his idea of getting his own back."

Always was lounging back in the easy-chair, puffing contentedly at one of his favourite Egyptian cigarettes.

He did not seem in the least perturbed at the amazing news he had heard.

"Going to foreclose on you, is he, Miss Barbara?" he remarked at last. "Then I see now what he was driving at this morning when he mentioned the Lass. For if he obtains your property on the mortgage, of course, your half-share in Dainty Lass will be his."

The cool, clean-cut face widened into a smile.

"A very clever scheme," Alpha Always commented. "Major Stapley stands to lose a big sum over Dainty Lass' next race, and it's well worth his while to try and get out of that if he can."

"But what can we do?" Barbara Raeburn asked. "I have allowed my payments for the mortgage to drop behind. I couldn't help it. I saw the solicitor only the other day, and he said I need not worry; but, of course, I did not know then that Major Stapley's hand was behind it all."

She looked round the book-lined room and sighed.

"It means the end of everything," she said quietly. "I will be sold up."

Ralph crossed to the desk and put his hand on the girl's slender shoulder.

"It's beastly bad luck on you, Barbara," he said.

Their hands clasped, and a look of quiet affection was exchanged. Evidently these two had made up their quarrel and were friends again.

"How much do you owe, Miss Raeburn?" Alpha Always asked.

There were several sheets of paper at Barbara's elbow, and she turned them over, glancing at the final list.

"There's over a thousand pounds due on the mortgage on the Grange. That is a sum that I must find, but the total amount is over six thousand. Major Stapley has given me until to-morrow to make up my mind," she went on. "He is coming here at two o'clock. If I refuse to do as he desires he will foreclose at once."

They chatted together for a few moments longer, then Alpha rose and gave a quiet nod to Barbara.

"Don't be downhearted, Miss Barbara," he said, in his calm, quiet voice. "A lot can happen in twenty-four hours. And you ought to be pleased to know that Dainty Lass can cover five furlongs in well under a minute. If we can get her in the Westminster Stakes she'll romp home, and there's a four hundred guinea prize waiting to be picked up."

When Ralph and his companion gained

line, and slip through the boundary fence on the left, then stroll back into the town and enter a small hotel on the outskirts.

Alpha Always booked a room, and, after leaving instructions that he had to be called at eight o'clock, retired apparently for the night. But as soon as he was safely inside the room he opened his valise, and made a swift change of garments. Then a small japanned box was taken out, and, standing in front of the little cracked mirror, Alpha set to work on his face. The long, deft fingers worked swiftly, and at the end of ten minutes it was a tanned, hang-dog, gipsy-looking countenance that was framed in the looking-glass.

An unkempt wig was pulled over the smooth, neatly-brushed hair, and a red-spotted handkerchief tied round the sinewy neck. In a shabby suit of corduroys, with riding-breeches and a pair of cloth gaiters, the immaculate Alpha Always was completely transformed into a cunning-looking vagabond of the road.

It was after ten o'clock when the lithe, dingy-looking figure slipped noiselessly out of the window of the bed-room, and, darting across the backyard of the hotel, slipped into the road that ran over the downs.

Always knew that Manor Court—Major Stapley's place—was half-way to Cope's training quarters and the little junction town, a distance of roughly three or four miles. His long, tireless stride saw him cover the distance in little over an hour, and, reaching the high stone wall that guarded the grounds of the house, he made a tour of inspection, finally discovering the back gates that led to the garage behind the house.

The slender, supple figure drew itself up and over the barrier, dropping quietly on to the drive.

He saw that there were lights shining from several windows in the lower part of the house, and, guided by these, he crossed the garden, to reach the wide veranda.

The strong aroma of cigar smoke came to him through the sweet night air, and later he heard the murmur of voices.

On his hands and knees Alpha Always crept across the stone floor of the veranda, and stretched himself flat in front of one of the wide French windows.

The curtains were drawn, but, raising his head cautiously, he was able to peer between them. At a table sat Major Stapley, and on his left was the stocky figure of Cope, the trainer. Stapley was leaning forward, talking heatedly to the man by his side, and from Cope's manner it was evident that he was being bullied by his patron.

Alpha thrust one of his long arms forward and tried the window. To his delight it yielded a little, and one half opened an inch or two.

"You'll have to do what I tell you, Cope!" Major Stapley said, his voice carrying clearly to the listener outside. "By to-morrow afternoon I'll be part owner of Dainty Lass, and she'll run on Saturday, at Leicester, in the six-furlong selling. Those are my orders to you. I've as much, or I shall have as much, say in the matter as that interfering bound!"

His heavy face lifted into a savage smile.

"You'll keep this to yourself, too," Stapley went on. "He hasn't to know anything about the race on Saturday. Box her up on Friday night after he's gone, and it'll be too late for him to interfere then. I'm going to see to it that Dainty Lass loses her second race. And after that I don't care how many she wins."

He thrust a decanter towards the unwilling trainer.

"You get that entry through at once," he went on, "and just keep your mouth shut!"

"I don't like the idea, major," Cope returned slowly. "I ain't seen much of this here Mr. Always, but what I've seen of him has stuch. He's a mighty hard nut to crack is that youngster, you take it from me! If he gets wind of this he'll play the very dickens, I can tell you!"

He did not help himself from the decanter, but rose to his feet.

"I've got my reputation to keep up, you know," Cope went on, "and I don't want to be mixed up with any fishy things. If it comes to a pinch I'd rather you took your horses away from me, major. I've always been square up to now, although I'll admit I've helped you a bit by allowing that filly to be run out of her distance. But, after all, Miss Barbara was the owner, and I reckon you persuaded her which race to enter for."

"I had my own reasons for doing that," Major Stapley returned, an ugly grin on his heavy face. "By to-morrow I shall have gained my ends."

He laughed savagely.

"Barbara Raeburn is absolutely in my power," he added, clenching his fists. "I'll crush her!"

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"There's two thousand quid in this," he said, "and I'm not going to take a chance of losing. You've got to play in with me, Cope, or, by heavens, I'll smash you!"

It was obvious that his bullying, dictatorial manner cowed Cope, for the trainer fell back, mumbling some indistinguishable words.

The two moved across the room and vanished through the doorway, the door closing behind them.

A slim shadow was silhouetted for a moment against the lighted window, the window creaked, then the figure disappeared.

The rumble of wheels on the carriage drive sounded as Cope drove off in the dogcart, and as he rounded a bend he looked back over his shoulder towards the lighted porch, where the burly, thick-set figure of Major Stapley loomed.

"You dirty skunk!" Cope thought to himself. "I know you've got me in a corner, and I'll have to do what you want. But, by Jinks, I hope some day that you'll meet your match, and he'll give you the lesson you deserve!"

For it certainly was a very shrewd trick that Major Stapley was out to play. His wager with Alpha Always hinged on the second race that Dainty Lass was entered for, and by slipping her away to the Leicester meeting and running her out of her distance again, he was assuring himself of her defeat. A very pretty scheme, indeed, and one that seemed to have all the elements of success attached to it.

"But I ain't going to do anything until I hear he is half-owner," Cope decided. "But I expect I'll hear that to-morrow afternoon all right. He's got that young lady in his clutches, and he ain't likely to let her go!"

The 4th Chapter.

A Great Victory.

Major Stapley had taken possession of Mandale Grange.

He had already assured himself of being able to do that by getting the solicitor to apply to the courts. There had been a grim interview between him and Barbara, but, much to Major Stapley's surprise, she had taken the matter very coolly at the end.

Mrs. Salters, Ralph's mother, had come across to the Grange, and had taken Barbara, with a few of her personal belongings, back to her own house, so although Stapley had scored a victory it seemed a rather hollow one. And the foxy-faced solicitor whom he had engaged, discussing the affair later on in the evening, indicated the difficulties in the position.

"The law's a queer thing, Major Stapley," the solicitor said. "And now that you have taken possession here you're liable for occupation rent, and you can't charge for the time and trouble you take in managing the place; besides, you have to keep it in repair, and from the look of it it will take some doing! It would have been much better if you had allowed me to apply for permission to the courts to sell outright."

Stapley gave the man a surly nod.

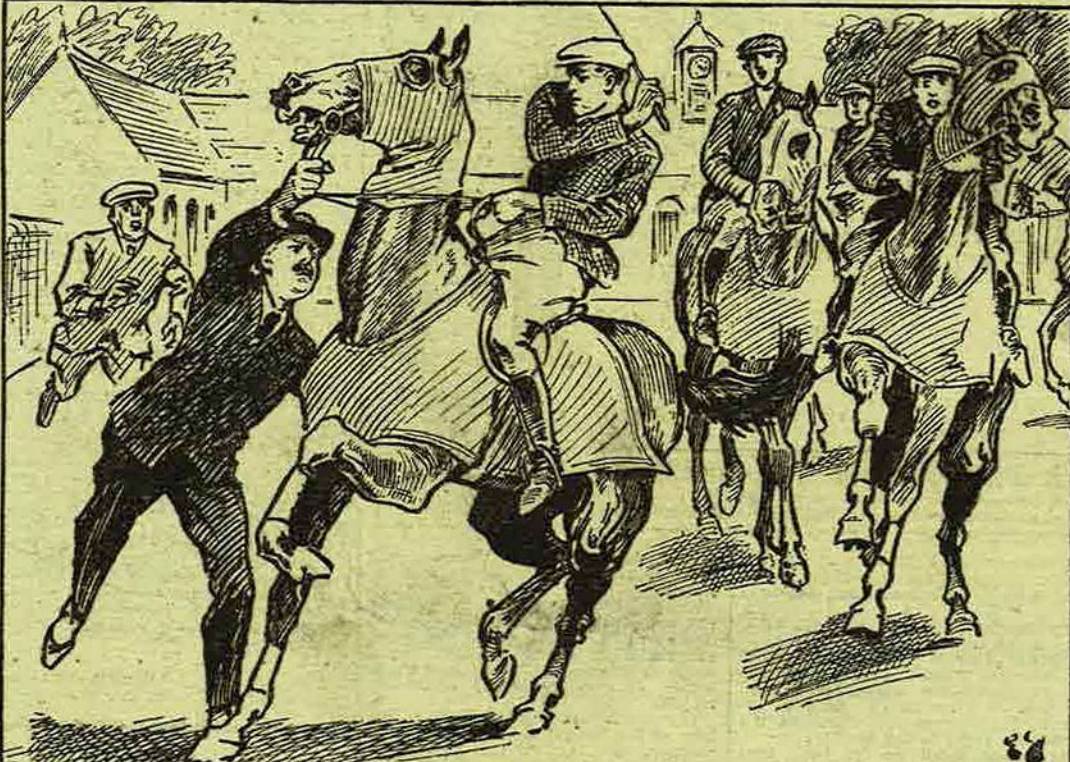
"I manage my affairs my own way," he returned.

He was furious over the result of the matter, for he had expected Barbara to cave in—to make any sort of terms in order to save her house and home. Even now he could not understand why the girl had acquiesced so quietly. Knowing her high-spirited nature, Stapley edged her brains to find out if there were any other reason for this sudden change of manner.

Next day was Thursday, and Stapley spent the greater part of his time at Mandale Grange. He met Barbara Raeburn and Ralph riding together on the road. He turned as though to speak to the slim girl, but Barbara tilted her small chin, and gave him the cut direct, riding past him as though he did not exist.

He looked after the two, muttering under his breath.

(Continued overleaf.)



MAJOR STAPLEY INTERFERES! As Major Stapley reached up and caught at Dainty Lass' bridle Alpha Always tightened his hold on his whip. "Take your hand away, quick!" he commanded in a threatening tone. "Otherwise there will be trouble!"

"I only found out this morning," Barbara Raeburn said unsteadily. "He came across here to see me about—about Dainty Lass, and when he heard what I had done—that I had sold half a share to you, Mr. Always—he was furious."

Her small lips tightened.

"He tried to bully me," she added, "and I found out then the manner of man he really was. When he realised that he could not make me break my promise he changed completely. He told me the whole truth. He had bought up every mortgage on the house and property here, and he showed me the papers. He swears that he will foreclose at once if I do not agree to his—his demands."

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the high-road and turned towards the town, Alpha Always set off at a sharp pace, and did not speak for the first twenty minutes or so.

Ralph's home was on the outskirts of the town, and he had offered to put Alpha Always up; but the latter had preferred to take a room at the station hotel.

"I think I shall go to town to-morrow morning, Ralph," Alpha Always said at last. "What I want you to do is to go up to the training stables and simply haunt them. Tell Cope that I've given you instructions to keep your eye on Dainty Lass, and to be there at my express wish."

"But hang it, old chap, are you—are you going to desert us now?"

"Not exactly, but I may be away for three or four days. The Epsom meeting doesn't take place until next Tuesday, you know. So we've ample time."

"Epsom meeting be blowed! What about Barbara? That's whom I'm worrying over. What is she going to do when that brute calls to-morrow? If I thought he was going to force her into marrying him I—I—"

"I don't think there's very much chance of Miss Raeburn marrying Stapley," Alpha Always broke in dryly. "I shouldn't worry about it if I were you."

They parted outside Ralph's house, and Alpha went on to his hotel, where he packed his valise, paid his bill, and went up to the railway-station, taking a ticket for London.

It was nine o'clock when the train pulled out, and half an hour later it halted at the junction some ten miles down the line.

The junction station was in semi-gloom, and no one saw the slim figure drop from the first-class compartment on to the metals, to hurry off across the

He saw that there were lights shining from several windows in the lower part of the house, and, guided by these, he crossed the garden, to reach the wide veranda.

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(Continued overleaf.)

"You wait, my pretty beauty!" he said to himself. "I'll bring you down before I've finished with you!"

He had not seen Cope again, but he had sent a line to the trainer from the Grange, pointing out that he was now owner of the house and the entire property, including Dainty Lass.

"You know my orders," the letter ended. "See that you carry them out!"

A small chapter of accidents seemed to have occurred to Major Stapley on that particular Thursday evening. It was after six o'clock before he left the Grange to make his way to his own home, and half a mile along the road his car stopped.

The road was very dark, and Stapley was no mechanic. He pattered about for a considerable time before he discovered that the trouble was due to his mag shorting, one of the connections having loosened in some mysterious way.

Further on came another discovery. Both back tyres were flat, and he had to spend a solid half hour pumping, unusual exercise that told on his flabby body.

On reaching his house, very much belated, he discovered it in darkness. Something had gone wrong with the electric installation, and his servants were using candles.

Major Stapley was in a very ugly temper as he dined that evening, and after spending half an hour in his study he crossed to the sideboard and poured himself out a glass of his favourite wine.

It seemed to him that he was very tired, and that tired feeling increased until, when he had finished the glass, a drowsy, comfortable sensation overcame him, and at nine o'clock, when his manservant came into the study, Major Stapley was fast asleep in the armchair, with the candles flickering, throwing their shadows on his heavy, sensual face.

After one or two ineffectual efforts to rouse his master, the man called another of the servants, and Stapley was half led, half carried up to bed and tucked away in the sheets.

Next morning a representative of the electrical company appeared, and discovered that someone had been tampering with the switches from the main.

Later in the day the solicitor called, and twice Cope, the trainer, rang up; but all efforts to waken Major Stapley proved unavailing, and it was after five o'clock before the bell whirred from his room, and his servant hurried to answer the summons.

Stapley was sitting up on the edge of his bed, and had just finished drinking a long glass of water. His eyes were mere pinheads, and there was an unhealthy pallor on his face.

"Do you mean to say it's after five o'clock?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Yes, sir."

"What the dickens do you mean by allowing me to sleep all this time?"

The servant backed away to the door.

"Couldn't waken you, sir!"

Major Stapley's head was throbbing, and he had a most amazing thirst. The servant helped him to dress, and Stapley managed to get down to the study.

"Mr. Cope has rung up several times, sir," the servant remarked. "He wouldn't say what his message was, sir, but he wanted to speak to you as soon as he could."

Stapley lifted the receiver, giving the trainer's number, and a few moments later Cope's voice sounded at the other end of the wire.

"What do you want with me, Cope?" the major demanded.

"Oh, nothing very much, major," Cope returned. "I just wanted to tell you that I handed over the filly according to your instructions; but, of course, I'm not responsible for her now."

"You—you handed over—the filly! What do you mean, man?"

"Why, you sent that fellow along last night for Dainty Lass, didn't you? He took her away about ten o'clock."

The telephone-receiver almost crashed from Stapley's fingers.

"You're talking through your hat, man!" he observed. "I never sent anyone, and if you've allowed Dainty Lass to leave your stables, then, by James, I'll hold you personally responsible! Stay where you are; I'm coming over now!"

Three-quarters of an hour later Major Stapley's huge car swung through the high gateway of the training quarters, and its burly owner shot like a bullet from the seat to barge into Cope's house.

He found the trainer waiting for him in the little sitting-room, and without a word Cope slammed a sheet of note-paper in front of the major.

"I don't know what you were getting at over the phone, major," he said; "but there are your orders to me, and I can tell you I was pretty sore about it. I don't like handing over one of my horses to strangers."

Major Stapley grabbed the note and read it. It was a remarkably good imitation of his somewhat illiterate scrawl. It was addressed to Cope, and ran as follows:

"I am not taking any chances over next Saturday. As part owner, I have decided to take charge of the filly until after the race. Wrap her up carefully and hand her over to bearer, who has my instructions. If any inquiries should be made concerning the filly, you can show this letter to Mr. Always."

It was signed "Edgar Stapley," and the major stared at the signature, hardly able to believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"Who brought this message? What was he like?"

"He wouldn't come into the house," said Cope. "He was a dark, gipsy-looking fellow, with all the nerve in the world. I thought he was one of your—your hangers-on, major. I've seen chaps like him around you before."

The trainer leaned forward.

"You mean to say that you don't know anything about this?"

"Of course I don't, you fool!" Stapley snapped back. "It's a blind, I tell you—a trick!"

He read the message again, and his heavy lips twitched.

"But it's clever—darned clever!" he went on. "The rascal who wrote that note was a genius in his way, and I don't blame you, Cope."

"But I thought that you and I were the only two who knew about what was going to happen on Saturday?" Cope commented.

Tuesday at Epsom, and she needs all the work she can get."

"Then you refuse to produce her—eh?"

Alpha Always waved his hand round the sitting-room.

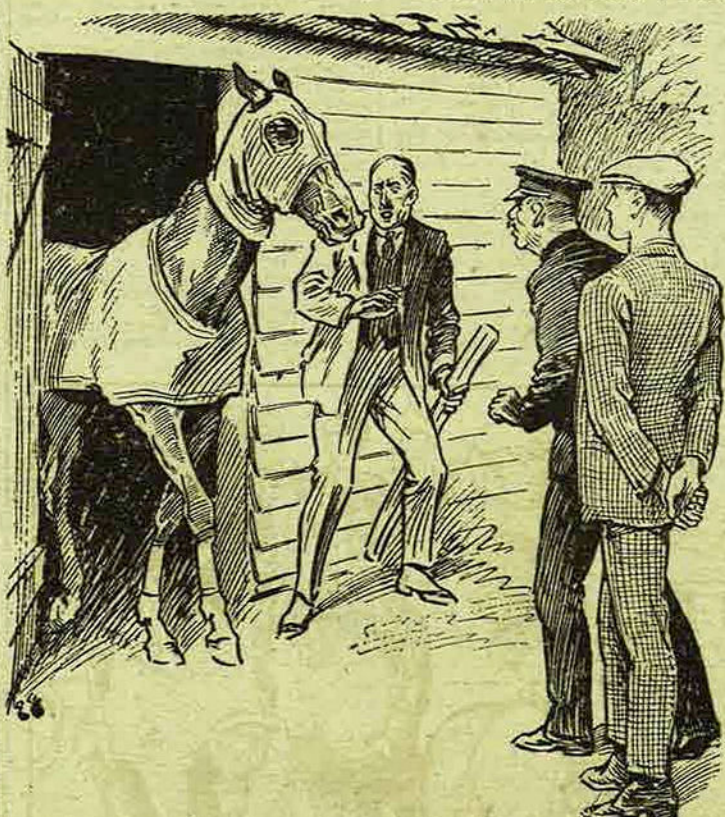
"You don't think I have got her hidden away in one of these chaste ornaments here, do you? To borrow one of the expressive phrases of our American cousins, Major Stapley, 'You can search me!'"

For a moment it seemed as though Major Stapley were about to attack the cool, drawing figure, then he drew back, his fists clenched.

"You will pay for this!" he snarled. "You are a champion bluffer, but you can't bluff me!"

He stormed out of the room, followed by the dejected Cope, and Ralph, who closed the door behind them, swung round and looked at his host.

"You're a blinking iceberg, a frozen



A SURPRISE FOR THE MAJOR! Reaching the barn, Major Stapley slipped the wooden bar aside and drew open the door. Then he fell back with an exclamation of surprise as Dainty Lass came trotting out into the field!

"That's what I thought, too," the major snarled. "But this letter proves that someone else found out, confound it!"

He brought his fist down on the table with a crash.

"Dainty Lass has got to be found!" he blared. "Communicate with the police; search the whole countryside! By hook or by crook I'm going to get her to Leicester on Saturday, and it's up to you, Cope, to find her."

He swung round on his heel, then looked back over his shoulder.

"Where's Always?" he asked.

"Mr. Always phoned up this afternoon," Cope reported. "I have been in a blue funk about it, for I was afraid he would come up here and find out that the Lass had gone. I was going to refer him to you, major, for, as I told you at the first, I wash my hands of the whole affair now."

"He's at the bottom of this, I know it, and, by James, I'm going to tackle him! You come with me to town, and you'd better get some of your hands to start a search. We've got to trace that filly by hook or by crook!"

Cope was bundled into the car, and the swift run to the town followed. They headed straight for the Station Hotel, and a few moments later Major Stapley and Cope were in the private sitting-room, where Alpha Always and Ralph Salters rose at their entry.

Major Stapley stalked across the room, halting in front of Always, and shook his fist in the calm, expressionless face.

"Where is she? What have you done with her?"

Cope caught a sudden twinkle in the eyes of Ralph Salters, but Always' countenance did not change.

"Where is who?" he asked.

"Dainty Lass. Don't try and bluff me, you young hound!" Major Stapley roared. "I own half a share of that filly now, and I demand her instant return to the training-stable!"

He became almost inarticulate, waving his hands and babbling incoherently. Alpha turned a calm eye on Cope.

"What's the idea, Mr. Cope?" he drawled. "The major requires an interpreter."

Cope stammered out a quick report of what had happened, and Always leaned back in his chair.

"This is serious," he said, "and I'm afraid I shall have to hold you personally responsible, Major Stapley. If you have had the filly taken away from Mr. Cope's charge—"

"You know darned well I had nothing to do with that! It's a trick—a trick!"

"A very foolish trick!" said Always. "I didn't want the filly's training disturbed. She doesn't run until next

"You can search my wine-cellars if you like!" roared Major Stapley. "Come on!"

He stalked off through the French windows, across the balcony, and halted at the garage and store-rooms. Beyond the garage was a range of loose boxes, where the major's hunters were stabled.

Walking quietly behind the inspector, Alpha Always visited each loose-box in turn, finally reaching the end of the row.

"A search warrant, indeed!" Major Stapley sneered. "I call it an outrage!"

Beyond the range of boxes was a small paddock, and on the far side of the hedge was a low-roofed shed. On the other side of the hedge ran a roadway that led to the downs.

"You might as well make sure, inspector," said Always. "Let's have a look at the shed."

"There's nothing in there!" the major grated. "I kept a couple of Jerseys last year, but got rid of them."

"I'd hate to doubt your word, major," said Always, "but I'm as interested as you are in Dainty Lass, you know."

They walked down to the gate and entered the paddock, the major striding along in front of the uncomfortable police official.

Twenty yards from the shed the burly figure started suddenly and stared at the weather-beaten structure. All round it were hoof marks, marks that had obviously been recently made, the clear imprints of horse's plates.

Quickening his pace, the major reached the low door of the barn, and, slipping the heavy wooden bar aside, drew the door outwards. He fell back with an exclamation.

With her small head arched and her ears back, Dainty Lass came trotting daintily out into the sunlit field. She was swathed in her stable cloth, and the satini-like sheen of her glossy flanks and limbs indicated her perfect condition.

"A very clever trick, major," Alpha drawled. "Searched everywhere in the district, didn't you? Never dawned on you to look near home, did it?"

Slipping his hand into his pocket, he came forward. A knob of sugar appeared in his palm, and he held it out. Dainty Lass stepped towards the slim youngster, and, thrusting her soft muzzle on to the palm, lifted the succulent morsel.

"No objection of my taking delivery of Dainty Lass now?" Alpha Always asked. "She's got to be boxed and at Epsom to-night."

Major Stapley, leaning against the door, stared hard at the cool-faced speaker.

"No, take her away—take her away, confound you!"

Alpha Always vaulted on to the filly's back, and, without so much as a bribe to guide her, the slender creature set off steadily across the field to the gate that opened out on to the road.

The tap-tap of her hoofs echoed on the hard surface, then died away, and not until she had vanished did the watchers break the silence.

Inspector Sharp rubbed his chin, and looked doubtfully at the major.

"A queer gent, that!" he remarked. "About the coolest customer I've ever met, I reckon!"

But Major Stapley could find no adequate reply. He had been dished! His cunning had been matched by cunning greater than he possessed, and Epsom and the Westminster Stakes loomed in front of him with all that they meant.

A flushed, excited, beautiful girl in the grand-stand at Epsom saw the line of

two-year-olds form for that swift five-furlong dash. By Barbara's side stood Ralph Salters, and she put her hand on his arm.

This race meant everything to her, and the slim fingers tightened as she watched.

There came the hoarse cry, "They're off!" and the long line leaped into movement. On and on came the beautiful creatures racing over the hard track, then out of the ruck slid the sleek chestnut shape, moving with the effortless grace that could never be mistaken.

As a greyhound stretches itself, so did Dainty Lass, driving home for the post. Her jockey, a well-known and famous one, rode to orders. Never once did he use the whip, and the flying chestnut under him, her nostrils distended, her dainty ears pricked, thundered on to a runaway victory.

Dainty Lass passed the post five lengths ahead of her nearest challenger, and the time recorded on the board was fifty-seven seconds.

The crowd broke to swarm over the course, and Barbara shut her eyes for a moment, leaning against Ralph Salters.

An immaculate figure in grey morning clothes and grey topper came slowly through the throng, to halt in front of Ralph and his fair companion. There was a tinted slip of paper in Alpha Always' hand, and he held it out to Barbara with a smile. It was a cheque for two thousand pounds, and the signature—"Edgar Stapley"—seemed to have been written with particular venom, for a great blot appeared at the end of it.

"I suggested that he should give me a receipt for the property instead of this, Miss Barbara," Always commented, "but he rather resented that suggestion. However, you can pay him with his own cheque now, and you can bundle him out. With the wager you've made and what Dainty Lass has won I should think you're clear now, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm clear, thank Heaven, and thanks to you!"

She leaned forward, holding out her hands.

"But what about you, Mr. Always?" she went on. "You have done all this for me, but where do you come in?"

Always smiled.

"Oh, I've had a good day to-day," he said, "for I've given a crook a lesson, and that's the sort of job I like!"

He and Ralph exchanged glances.

"And what about your gipsy pal, Always?" Ralph asked.

The cool face twitched.

"I think he's very satisfied, too," Always returned. "But I didn't mention him to the major, for he spoils a good bottle of wine!"

And just why Ralph Salters went off into a fit of uproarious laughter was a question that Barbara Kachura was never able to answer.

THE END.

(Get along to your newsagent right now and ask him to save you a copy of next Monday's stunning number of the BOYS' FRIEND. You will be bound to enjoy "All Square!" a tip-top story of the Wild West, featuring Arizona Jim and Frank Liversedge and Slim Danvers, the outlaws, contained therein.)

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4. Competitor's name and full postal address must accompany every effort sent in.
5. Entries must reach us not later than May 3rd, 1923, and MUST NOT be enclosed with entrance forms for any other competition. They must be addressed, "Magnet" Limerick No. 3, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

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 On a motor-bike journey
 through Kent,
 But he had a bad spill
 When descending a hill,

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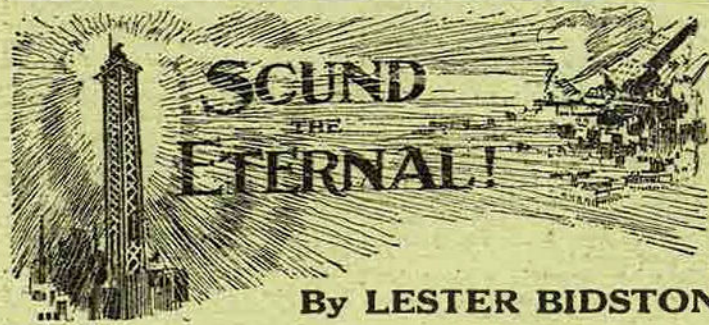
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The 1st Chapter.

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. It is the opinion of Miles Belmain, an American scientist, that the calamities are caused by projectiles from another planet. To test the American's theory, Ken Thornton, Sid Kennedy, and Tim Baynes, three adventurous youths, set out for Venus in Pearl II, a space-ship, which they have constructed from a gravity-defying metal of their own invention. In a similar space-ship they have already visited Mars and Vulcan. They reach the planet Venus, but fall into the hands of some gigantic ants, or Spays, in whose stronghold they discover Thensla, a beautiful young Venusian girl, who is also being held prisoner by the terrible insects. After many narrow escapes from death, the three youths and Thensla succeed in escaping from the Spays, though they are compelled to abandon the Pearl. They reach Nays, capital of Apadocia, over which rules Uensl, Thensla's father, a king without power. The real ruler of Apadocia, the only inhabitable part of Venus, is Scund the Eternal, who, from his citadel, Tarp, controls all that goes on in the country. Though their arrival is kept from the people, Sid explains to Uensl the reason why they have come to Venus, at the same time urging him to throw off Scund's yoke. This the king agrees to do. Thensla is kidnapped by Scund's order, and Sid, Ken, and Tim force an entry into his palace to effect her rescue. They are, however, captured, and, to their amazement, on being brought before Scund, he shows them all his secret weapons. Then he demands that they shall acquaint him with the secret of the construction of Pearl II as the price of Thensla's safety. Sid, as spokesman for the chums, refuses to grant Scund's wish. Scund then says that before Sid makes his answer final he shall know of the fate that broods over Venus.

The 2nd Chapter.

Thensla Wins Freedom!

"Youth of Valda," Scund began, "that you have performed this journey through illimitable space bespeaks exceptional fearlessness. That you have made a vessel to carry you hence bespeaks exceptional knowledge. So if I speak a little of what you already understand, I crave your patience. Through this telescope, beneath whose shadow we sit, I have long studied your sphere of Valda. I have seen it in all its aspects—how closely your eyes can bear witness—and what I have seen has made me bitter that my world is not as yours. You know that yours is as a gigantic fly-wheel—that it not only speeds round our lord, the Sun, but that it everlastingly revolves on itself."

"Rotates on its axis," Tim suggested.

Scund nodded.

"If so you term it—yes. Therein our world differs, to our increasing harm. Know, O strangers, that Atara, speeding round the Great Fire as yours does, though in less time than you take, ever turns the same face to the heat. By this reason we, the humans of Atara, are restricted in all our ways, condemned to own one thin strip of our world, and that only by the aid of unceasing vigilance and unremitting toil. On one side, where the Great Fire lies closest, the giant insects are king; opposite, where the black waters are concentrated, terrible things of ghoul-like intellect are clustered. So from either side, strangers, jealous, vengeful foes wage unending war on us, because they covet the strip on which we live."

"That we know," Sid interrupted. "But surely, with all your science, you can overcome the winged terrors we have seen or the things we have not?"

"Overcome!" Scund smiled ruefully. "We have killed countless myriads, but they breed faster than ever we can kill. And some day—"

He paused. "No, strangers; never would I fear that our land could be overrun, except that Atara is threatening to become—as is your Valda."

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

"That, in the not distant future, Atara will—what you name—rotate on its axis—that it will whirl round and round, even at greater speed than your own!"

"Well, bedad, isn't it yerself has said that you were bitter that your world was not as ours?" Tim exploded.

Scund shook his head.

"Truly, I want Atara to be as Valda, but I want not to be present when this unstable ball of ours goes through the travail of its second birth. Cannot you see that, once that titanic movement begins, Atara may fly into pieces—as once, indeed, yours did? At best, this world, rotating, means a break-up of our defences, the flattening of our walls, the splitting apart of our land, the freeing of all the great waters that are hidden in the Land of Darkness."

"But may not your expectation of this tremendous convulsion be false reasoning?" asked Sid.

Scund's face was set like granite. "No, no! The massive bulk of this world is shifting! Some mighty internal upheaval is forcing the outer crust on which we crawl to become misplaced!"

Cries of horror and fear resounded from Scund's own adherents. Even Thensla's face grew white as the Eternal stated his thoughts of Atara's dreadful fate.

But Scund held up a hand for silence.

"So we return to your adventurous leap through space. Already have I spoken of the tiny flash I saw; that meant the beginning of your long journey. There I was at fault, and terribly do I regret it. That shining speck, which struck fire for a moment and was gone, I mistook for a Valdian earth-burst. Equally, that which I later thought was a fire-ball cleaving our heavens, and driving into the Land of Spays, was you. Had I not made those twin errors, O strangers, you would have been in my hands long since, and—what is more important—your vessel, and all the secrets it contains, would have been mine!"

He again held up his hand as Sid's lips opened to answer him.

"Voyagers, thus was it fated that you came unknown by the only being who would have understood your coming. But now it will be clear to you the wherefore of these twin giants of mine. It is so, is it not?"

"You want to give our world a taste of what yours is going to get?" Tim suggested.

"Not so, impetuous youth!" Scund snapped. "No, I wanted—I still want to do that which you have done—move from world to world, yet live to speak of that moving. So far I have found a vessel that bridges space, but it is no fit vessel by which man might change his world. Yours, now—"

"One moment!" Tim interrupted, a quick suspicion crossing his mind. "You have shown us pictures that you suggest are close-ups of our own country. How do we know but that it's a false vision—as false as the one of chained Thensla by which you trapped us?"

"Did you not recognise what you named as 'Old London'?" Scund countered.

"Yes; but that may have been our own thoughts translated to visibility by your black magic," Tim replied, intensely serious.

"My magic, as you misname it, is

not so great as all that," Scund replied. "That which you saw was no dream-picture of my mind or of yours."

Tim remained doubtfully silent. But, because the subject was a fascinating one, Sid took up the argument.

"My friend doubts because we have reached a pass on Valda where magnification has reached its uttermost limit. We have succeeded in magnifying to one thousand diameters—that is, one million times larger than the object at which we gaze. Yet, Scund, you ask us to believe that you have reached a magnification of nine million times—that you have brought our world within three or four miles of your own!"

"I know not your system of measurement, but your meaning is clear. I also had the same difficulty to face. Eventually I solved the problem, as you can see. There is no magic, but simply the result of long years of applied thought."

"But—" Tim again began.

"Silence, rash youth! My patience is at an end!" Scund snapped. "The issue is clear! You have done that which I have not! That secret I demand of you!"

"So that you can escape the fate conjured up by your fantastic fears," Ken asked, in disgust, "leaving the rest of your kind to fend for themselves, after you've used them as slaves to your heart's content?"

"No; so that I can preserve the brains of Apadocia—my own primarily—until Atara is reborn."

"You tell it well!" Tim smiled. "But with a look Sid silenced him."

"Whatever your reasons, we cannot sell our secret! We dare not risk turning you loose on Valda! Anyway, you ought to stay here and take your chance with your fellows!"

"I want your secret, and I'm determined to have it!" Scund said, looking at Sid through half-closed lids. "Must I take your refusal as your last carefully considered word?"

"You can that!" Sid's chin set stubbornly.

(Continued overleaf.)

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Who is TONY THE RAT?—Details Next Monday—Look out for Something Extra-Special!

Scund turned slowly towards Thensla.

"Therein, lady, are the words of your doom," he said softly.

Thensla stared back at him coldly and proudly.

"It was ever Scund's way to war on women!" she answered.

"I can but use the weapons that lie to my hand."

"Surely you mean it not—" Sid began hotly.

"I never meant anything more seriously or ever spoke words more truthful! Give me your secret, help me build a space-devourer, or this girl is the first Atarian to journey to Valda—inside one of my shells!"

"You—you wouldn't dare—" Sid stammered wildly, though inwardly he had a dread feeling that Scund could and would do it.

There was absolute silence for perhaps a minute, Sid glaring angrily at Scund as he sat, thin-lipped, smilingly watching the dismayed adventurers, while Thensla quietly waited the issue as if the matter held little that interested her.

Then Sid looked questioning from Ken to Tim, and in each face he read the answer that was his own.

He looked at Thensla, his face lined with pain. But the girl refused to meet his glance, and, with a groan that was more than half sob, he turned to Scund.

"Scund, you're a soulless brute!" he said bitterly. "The freeing of Thensla first and foremost—we'll do as you—"

The last word was never uttered. Instead, with a cry of horror, Sid jumped to his feet and leaped swiftly across the table. But his hand only grasped Thensla's when hers was coming away from her mouth.

"By the gods!" shouted one of Scund's creatures. "The Lady of Nayr has chosen death without your help, O Eternal!"

Scund showed a face black with thwarted fury.

"It's not true, girl! Say it's not true, you—"

"But it is!" Thensla answered, holding aloft a tiny crystal bottle. "Always have I had this Water of Acolyne as my last answer to you!"

"Yosa," she continued tenderly in Sid's own language, "I could not accept life at the price you were about to pay. Scund must never reach Valda—always remember that."

"He never will reach Valda now!" Sid answered grimly. "But, oh, Thensla, must you have done this deed—sacrificed a life that is hardly yet begun?"

He bowed his head in grief greater than he wished the girl to see. A spasm of pain shot through Thensla's body; her face became white and grey. And, at the sight, Sid vaulted lightly over the table, pushed Scund roughly aside when he would have interposed, and supported the drooping girl with tender care.

Then she looked up into Sid's face, smiling tenderly.

"Yosa, the gods, of their grace, brought you to me. So I would tell you that you came across the vastness of space to, all unknowingly, teach me love. And, Yosa—" She paused as a fresh spasm of pain shook her. "Yosa, I am happy, for love is greater than space—greater than death itself! Always I will remember thee—here—or beyond the stars!"

Her weight hung heavy on his arm, her eyes grew fixed and glassy, yet her indomitable spirit found time to remember her other friends and to utter a word of encouragement.

"Greeting to you both, dear Ken and Tim! Soon will you be back in pleasant Valda, far from Thensla, yet not forgetting her, perhaps. And now—good-bye!"

"Oh, Thensla, say not that word!" Sid groaned. "Be sure you'll never be forgotten! And should it be fated that we return to Valda, as you say, oft will we look at this place where you have lived!"

For a time she lay in his arms without movement; but soon a tremor ran through her body, and she gave a quiet little sigh that placed her definitely beyond Scund's reach.

Gently and reverentially Sid lifted her to the table, across whose width she had so lately smiled at him, and, utterly oblivious to his surroundings, he stared sadly down at the still face.

Scund Escapes!

Sid was aroused by a scuffle behind him, a sound that brought him back to his troubles and responsibilities,

and the remembrance that his grief was, after all, a private affair. His duty to Earth still remained unfulfilled. He whirled round in time to see Tim push Scund roughly aside, and to see Scund, with a snarl of rage, snatch out the death-dealing wand and half lift it towards the youth who defied him. But his arm dropped as quickly as it had risen, though he continued to hold the wand in readiness.

"Not yet, foolish youth," he muttered. "Though this girl has gone beyond my power you have not." He turned sharply to Sid. "You, sir, were about to agree to my proposal. Does that still hold?"

"A thousand times no!" Sid replied derisively. "Then you bribed us with a girl's life. Now, as Thensla has gone, so has your power over us!"

With that final word Sid gave a panther-like spring and was at Scund before even his own friends had time to realise his daring.

For once Scund had a moment of panic, a fractional second of hesitation that proved his undoing. Sid pretended a swinging blow at his jaw, feinted, and snatched the ray-wand from the instinctively uplifted hand with one swift movement.

Then, his chums on either hand, he looked grimly at the baffled Venusians, and laughed harshly in the face of their leader.

Fate's wheel oft makes a slave a king," Scund spoke quietly and calmly. "So in your case. A slave a span since, a king now by your ownership of my—my—" His eyes dilated, he stared fearfully at the table behind them, his voice rose to a scream, and horror stood revealed on his face. "The gods, who give and take, have pity! Look! Thensla rises!"

Instinctively the three turned to where Scund dramatically pointed, and in that second the Eternal gave one leap that carried him to the round house, and before ever the chums had realised his craftiness the door was secured behind him.

For a moment they stared at Thensla, sadly still and oblivious to the tense drama that surrounded her. Then Scund's metallic chuckle floated back to them, and Sid started as if stung.

"After him, boys!" he cried. "His talk was just bluff, after all. Stay, Tim, we cannot leave poor Thensla. Guard her, and take this death-wand to help you. Come, Ken, we'll not let that scoundrel escape to carry on his evil works!"

Without giving the others opportunity to protest or agree, he sprang to the door and tried to wrench it open. But it proved immovable.

Then he remembered Ixed's satchel. To his unbounded joy his

gangway with open sides, its floor held in position by thin steel rods secured to the underpart of the platform that was now overhead. On either side was a sheer drop of eight hundred feet.

But they were grimly intent on pursuit. And as Scund must have trodden this way, so they followed without hesitation. Fifty swift paces brought them to a steel ladder. Ascending this, they came to another trapdoor, whose under-part was made of wood, over which was grafted glittering quartz.

They now stood in a place that blinded sight, a tube whose upper curve was thirty feet overhead, and it was with something of awe in his expression that Sid turned to his companion.

"Ken, we're actually inside Scund's telescope!" he whispered.

"Then it's a rum way to come!" Ken grumbled, ever practical. "Why that aerial gangway, instead of a staircase straight into it from the platform?"

"Because no fractional line of obstruction must be placed near the eyepiece, if so you can call that camera-obscura thing," Sid answered.

"But why a way in at all?" Ken asked.

"A necessary entrance for the cleaners, of course. Dust is bound to collect. But Scund must be some-

"Ken, I've got a thought that Scund will never enter that last series of tubes unless he has some secret path of escape—a thing unlikely, as it is sure he never foresaw the day he would be hunted along this great instrument of his. No; he'll try to dodge about in the six that lie immediately ahead—try to double back on us. For all we know, he is watching us now—laughing at our perplexity, even." He eyed his chum appealingly. "Ken, old boy, this quarrel is more my affair than yours, isn't it?"

Ken nodded in silence, knowing that his leader was thinking of Thensla and the last words she had spoken to him.

"Then, as one of us must guard this outlet, please let that one be you," Sid continued. "I want you to watch here whilst I chance one tube to try to locate Scund. Once that is done, I feel in my bones that he'll dash back, thinking to escape us altogether. That's where you come in, old son." He exhibited the last of the four explosives he had taken from Ixed's body. "As soon as you see the brute, fling this bomb at him! You won't hit him—I don't want you to, really—but you'll turn him back quick enough, for he won't know how many more of these shattering marbles you've got! That'll give us a chance to locate him—and that is all I want!"

Ken accepted the missile reluctantly, and stowed it carefully away in the satchel that Sid fastened about his waist.

"Well, if it's an order, I suppose it goes," he answered doubtfully. "But he's a tricky beast, and I hate the thought of you, unarmed, tackling him alone!"

"That's as may be!" Sid replied. "It's Scund or I for it—and it's going to be Scund if I can make it so! Now, Ken, help me find the way into the maze ahead!"

The path Sid must follow was easy enough to locate, for a recess at the side of the lens—it was really a portion of the three-foot surround of quartz that held the great circle of crystal in place—opened a way to a second narrow gangway that was twin to the one they had already negotiated.

A silent hand-clasp, then Sid was creeping along the nerve-shattering way. Once he noticed a cluster of workmen leisurely effecting repairs to the floor of the tunnel, nearly a thousand feet below. They looked like busy midges foreshortened, the thuds of their mechanical hammers ascending faintly to his ears.

For a moment he clung dizzily to a thin supporting-rod, likening himself to a fly that explores the dome of St. Paul's. Then, with a wry smile at his straying thoughts, he resumed his precarious journey.

Eventually he reached the end of the metal walk, to be confronted by a steel ladder that rose some twenty feet, then branched off in six separate directions. Gazing upwards, he could now see and understand something of the superhuman skill and monumental labour that had gone to the making of this wonderful, awe-inspiring instrument.

Directly over his head, their size dwarfing imagination so greatly that he had an overwhelming sense of his own insignificance, Sid saw that five of the quartz tubes were arranged in one perfect circle; whilst a sixth, a giant even amongst its huge brethren, pierced its centre.

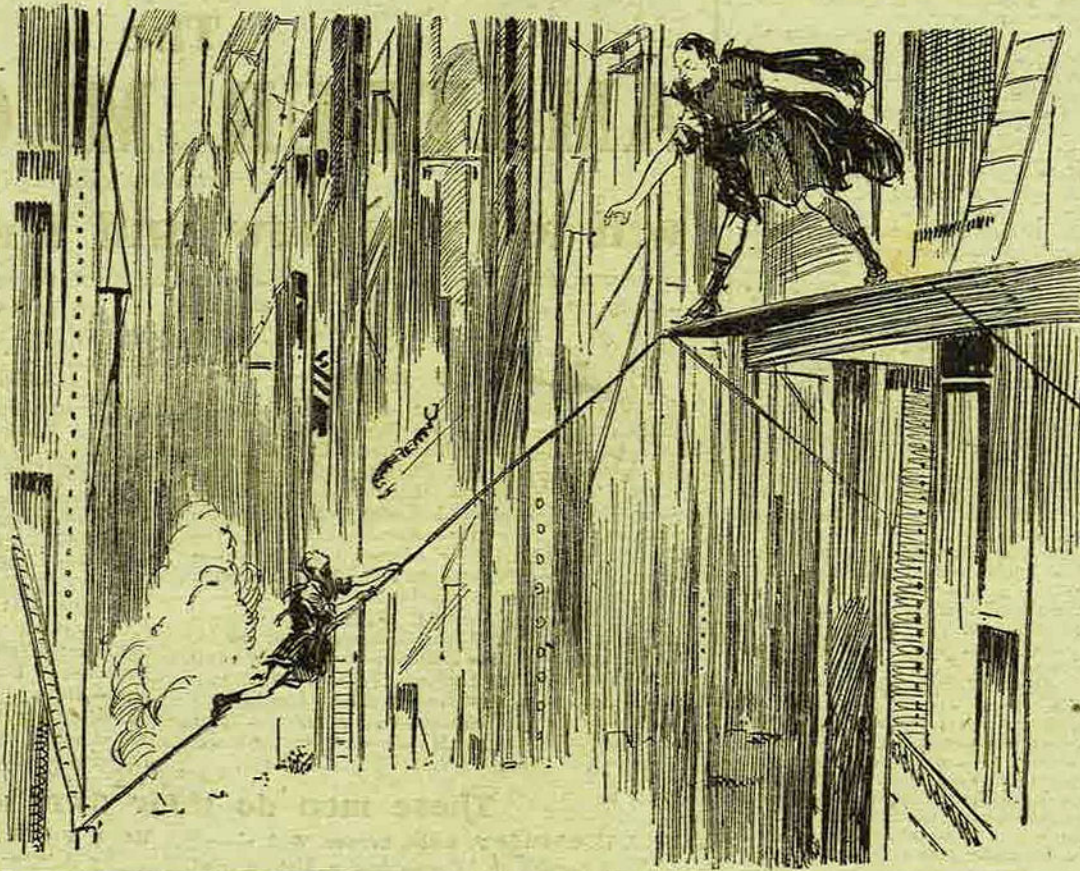
The whole thing, colossal in its conception, had evidently been arranged with mathematical exactitude so as to throw a single clear picture into the last solitary tube that was now behind him. Almost, in that breathless minute of sight-seeing, Sid came to admire Scund—did admire him, in fact, for his majesty of thought.

"But his cleverness is destructive—murderous!" he muttered. "Whatever he does is for the glorification of self—not for the good of his kind!"

And, with that decision, Sid purposefully climbed the metal ladder, resolutely fighting the desire that tempted him to glance downwards. Subconsciously he chose the centre and biggest bore for investigation.

Once safely inside, he peered anxiously through light-stabbed, aching eyes for signs of Scund.

(Where is Scund! Will Sid Kennedy find him? On no account must you miss next Monday's exciting instalment of this magnificent story. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance.)



AT SCUND'S MERCY! Taking a vice-like hold on the rod, Sid looked up in the nick of time to see Scund snatch a heavy metal bolt from his waist and hurl it at him with deadly aim! (A startling incident from next Monday's long instalment of this amazing story.)

"So, Scund, to each dog his day!" he gibed. "In yours you've done deeds that would have shamed a self-respecting mongrel. But"—he laughed hoarsely—"you've done your worst—and last!"

Never in all the long years they had known him had his comrades seen him quite so bitterly roused, so hatefully vindictive. That he meant to kill Scund was never in doubt, and Tim, at any rate, was fascinated by the problem of what would happen when the death-ray touched the Eternal.

But Scund himself was the least perturbed of all that agitated group. Inwardly raging, as he must have been at the total eclipse of his grandiose schemes, he stood proudly apart.

"Foolish youth, think not that I fear you, or aught you try to do. Do what you will, plumb the extent of your failure to its uttermost by knowing that Scund the Eternal is above and beyond your puny reach."

As he spoke the lines seemed to smooth from his face, so that he became young and almost human. Afterwards Sid stated that twice during that pause he tried to lift his wand-bearing arm to give Scund a taste of his own violet abomination, but on each occasion his arm remained stiff and rigid, as if numbed by paralysis.

"Great events hang on slender threads, O Yosa, and a turn of

groping hand found the two bombs he had brought from the pit. Warning Ken away with a gesture, he stepped back twenty paces and flung the crystal marble at that which defied him.

Ten seconds later not one but a dozen ways gave entrance to the round house, and the wrecked walls, crazily awry, were smouldering and breaking into spurts of flame. At the expense of a scorched sleeve, Sid sprang through one yawning aperture, and was immediately followed by his surprised chum.

"I say, Sid," Ken gasped, "that was some little cracker you used on the door. What on earth was it?"

"One of Scund's little correctives for unruly slaves," Sid answered impatiently. "But he's gone, Ken—vanished. There's evidently some hidden way out of this place, one we've got to find quickly." A thought struck him; he peered under the now cracked and broken table. "Here you are, Ken! A door leading to goodness knows where. But come on!"

With feverish haste Sid wrenched at the trapdoor, and uttered a sigh of relief at finding it unfastened. Investigation proved that it gave access to a narrow passage built beneath the platform, and along this alleyway they hurried at their best speed.

It was an eerie place, a three-foot

where ahead, and we're wasting precious time. Protect your eyes by closing them as much as possible, and come on!"

Ken grunted agreement, and followed his impatient leader. Their boots rang harshly loud, but they quickly covered the three hundred yards that brought them to the end of that first single tube.

There their troubles multiplied rapidly. So far they had trodden Scund's path, for the simple reason that, to this point, only the one road had been available to him and to them. But now, through the enormous lens that sealed the end of this tube, they could see a strange, flue-shaped apartment, whose narrowing exactly fitted the clear crystal through which they stared, but which opened out to embrace the six tubes that formed the second series of this amazing instrument.

"What now, Sid?" Ken demanded. "So far we've trodden on Scund's heels. He must be ahead—and not so far ahead, either. But he's had the choice of six roads where before he had only one."

"And we've no means of knowing which of them he's chosen for his get-away," Sid frowned. "Then, again, Ken, these six tubes end by each one running another six, or even more. That'll leave him fifty ways to evade us, whilst we have but the lucky fifty-to-one chance of striking the right tube.

ALL ABOUT THE CUP FINAL IN THIS GREAT FOOTER ARTICLE.



Our Football Corner

All Ready for a Great Cup Final.

The great climax of what has been in many ways a most amazing football season will be staged at Wembley Park next Saturday, when Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United will do battle for the honour of having the name of their club inscribed on the silver bauble which we call the English Cup.



G. KAY (West Ham United).

Another great North v. South duel. There is Bolton Wanderers, the hope of Lancashire and of the Northern provinces as a whole, and West Ham United, really carrying the colours of the South in general, and of London in particular.



W. GILLESPIE (Sheffield United).

ever regarded as a red-letter day in the history of sport. In the first place, it is to be staged on a new ground—a huge stadium which has been erected during the last twelve months at Wembley Park, on the outskirts of London.

ground on which to play the Cup Final; it means that, for the first time in the history of the competition, there is a home for the Final tie which is worthy of the biggest event in the football calendar.

Never, though, was the Palace a really ideal place. There was, as I say, room for any number of people, but the trouble was that the place was not built in such a way that those people could see the football.

Then, after the war, the Final ties were taken to Stamford Bridge, the home of the Chelsea club, but this, too, was something less than the ideal.

Wembley, however, stands for the last word in football grounds—a splendid pitch, wonderful stands, and magnificent mounds from which the people who pay their money to see the game will be able to see it.

From some points of view, it is certainly a good Cup Final for Wembley. There is a London club in it, and that in itself is not a happening which has been any too common in the recent past.

possibly around that new bit of turf at Wembley Park there will be something like 100,000 people in all.

In the first place, if ever there was an affair between football clubs which seemed open to any result, then we can say so much of this Final tie between Bolton and West Ham.



J. SMITH (Bolton Wanderers).

in a way, the public which follows the sport has not made real favourites of either. London reckons that West Ham will win, of course, but Lancashire is just as confident that the Trotters will pull through.



J. MOORE (Derby County).

It is rather a peculiar fact that George Kay, the centre-half and captain of West Ham, should himself be a Lancashire man, and should, in his early footballing days, have played with Bolton Wanderers.

this season, but in a great struggle at Manchester in the semi-final, witnessed by a record crowd, Bolton knocked them out by the aid of one goal scored by David Jack, the inside-right whom West Ham will have to watch.

Gillespie did want to be in this season's Final; for, although he was with Sheffield United when they won the Cup in 1915, he did not play owing to injury.



(Turn to the next page of this issue, right away, and try your hand at solving the History of the Leicester City Football Club! £10 in prizes again offered this week!)

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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, April 28th. The likely winning side is printed in capitals. Where a draw is anticipated, both clubs are printed in smaller letters.

CUP FINAL. WEST HAM UNITED v. Bolton Wanderers.

- First Division. ARSENAL v. Sheffield United. SUNDERLAND v. Aston Villa. Birmingham v. Burnley. Blackburn Rovers v. Chelsea. CARDIFF CITY v. Oldham Athletic. EVERTON v. Preston North End. HUDDERSFIELD T. v. Tottenham H. Stoke v. LIVERPOOL. MANCHESTER CITY v. Newcastle U. WEST BROMWICH A. v. Middlesbrough.

- Second Division. BARNSELY v. Manchester United. BLACKPOOL v. Rotherham County. BRADFORD CITY v. Clapton Orient. CRYSTAL PALACE v. Wolverhampton W. DERBY COUNTY v. Leeds United. FULHAM v. South Shields. HULL CITY v. Coventry City. LEICESTER CITY v. Bury. THE WEDNESDAY v. Port Vale. SOUTHAMPTON v. Stockport County.

- First Division (Scottish League). ABERDEEN v. Motherwell. Albion Rovers v. Partick Thistle. CELTIC v. Airdrieonians. FALKIRK v. Kilmarnock. HAMILTON ACADS. v. Alloa. RAITH ROVERS v. Morton. RANGERS v. Hearts. ST. MIRREN v. Ayr United.

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 SPECIAL ISSUE!

Of course, I very well know it is an old story about the steady progress of the BOYS' FRIEND. But the best of it lies in the fact that it is all true. Week by week comes the important news of continual advance. So we go on. This week, in introducing the copy which is the latest and finest number of the old paper, I want to address a word or two to new readers. Tried supporters know all about it; they understand most of the points. Not all, for there is always a bit more to grasp in these matters. But, naturally, an editor keeps his eye on the new reader. The fellow who picks up this week's copy of the BOYS' FRIEND will get the cheeriest possible surprise. He drops in just at the right moment. The present moment is always the right one, so far as that goes. He has the benefit of all the splendid traditions of the old "Green 'Un"—traditions we are out to maintain and augment. The BOYS' FRIEND for this week, as it comes hot from the press, is wonderful value for the money. It is crammed full of the brightest and most up-to-date fiction, and its sporting yarns are the real, live goods.

"THE TENDERFEET MAKE GOOD!"

There is no better news than this about making good. When a pal performs the feat you are ready to cheer. In next week's yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co. in the West you find these newcomers from Rookwood showing what they are made of. They also prove how easy it is to make a mistake. Every one of us can recall tales about greenhorns who are "taken in" by practical jokers and other swank merchants. It is refreshing in the extreme to see the other side of the picture. Pride ought to come a cropper, but there was never any particular pride about Jimmy Silver and his chums. They did not journey out to the Wild West puffed up with conceit. But Mr. Owen Conquest shows how the fellows of the Rookwood contingent accept what comes, and put their best in to meet any old difficulties they may happen upon. Cow-punchers are a tough lot, and some of them are much given to bounce. As events reveal, the ranching crew meet their match in the youngsters from the Old Country. Next

Monday's yarn of this brilliant series carries on the narrative in spirited style. It was a daring experiment to let Jimmy Silver and his pals make the plunge into an entirely fresh environment, but it has met with amazing success.

"THE LAST THROW!"

You will find Walter Edwards is downright equal to the colossal task

he has set himself in this tremendous story. It is the wind-up of the relentless struggle between the Duke and Rollo Dayton. I am dead certain you will admit that "W. E." has proved his mettle in this big call made upon him. For when the curtain drops on a thrilling narrative you require something even finer and more dramatic than what has gone before. It is a good thing to record that this culminating yarn of a trenchant series goes a bit farther than anything we have had. It is a magnificent piece of work. You see the Duke keener than ever he was to "down" his adversary and queer the pitch of good sport. He has not grown weary of his cause, and I recommend everybody to see what is the upshot of the fight. Neither side will recognise defeat. Somehow you know perfectly well that antagonists of this calibre will never haul down the flag—not for good. There is always a to-morrow for the grim fighter. There is a big surprise in next week's story, and your sympathies will be thoroughly aroused. And

then look out for the wonderful new series by Walter Edwards. These yarns will add lustre to the name of the famous author.

"ALL SQUARE!"

Arizona Jim and his comrades appear on Monday in this story of breathless adventure. Gordon Wallace has plenty of grand yarns to his credit. He can fairly claim this extra-long complete as the top-notch. It contains some blazing novelties, and the action goes with a rush.

"THE ASTRONOMER'S DOUBLE!"

If Peter Foy keeps up to the level of his new tale of Danesbury School, there is no possible fear of his fame as an author being eclipsed. "The Astronomer's Double!" is one of those jolly, irresistible yarns which make you feel pleased—you hardly know why—pleased with the world, pleased with yourself, and, above all, with a writer who can tuck in so much wit and humour and splendid spirit in a short story of a popular school. It is not a bit of use saying

you cannot have doubles. Peter Foy knows better. He has won hands down with his well-woven plot, fine texture, and with capital touches of human nature all through which reveal a keen eye for idiosyncrasies. That is a handful of a word, but it will serve.

JUST A WORD!

Painstaking attention to details is what the drill-sergeant is always mad about. But I am not in the mood to discuss drill-sergeants, laudable, generous-hearted men as they may be. It is concerning attention that I am speaking, and I ask yours for some of the other features of our grand old paper—the weekly which always comes up to the scratch, bright as the morning, and ready to turn Monday into the most enjoyable day of the week. Finis is written on the marvellous adventures of the explorers in the mysterious land of Scand. To follow Scand I have a serial of a very original sort, but I shall have more to say of this great treat next week. Meantime, "The Phantom Pirate!" goes on its triumphant way.

KING CRICKET!

But that is not all. Next week, enter cricket. You will find a Grand Cricket Competition of the most fascinating kind.

THE NEW DAYS!

As summer comes into its own there is a general sense of relief. You will find as the weeks fly that the BOYS' FRIEND is right up to the call of the good new season of sunny days, and jolly times on the river or far away in the country.

RESULT OF THE FULHAM COMPETITION.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to the following competitor, whose solution contained one error:

ALFRED CARR,
70, BARGATE,
Boston, Lincs.

The Second Prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following three competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Wilfred Barnes, 6, Grange Street South, Graungetown, Sunderland.
John Kennedy, 4, Fleshers Venne, Perth.
Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.

Twenty-eight competitors, with three errors each, divide the Ten Prizes of 5/- each. The names and addresses of these prizewinners can be seen on application at this office.

SOLUTION.

Fulham had its beginning, like many other renowned football teams, in a Sunday-school. It was commenced in 1880 by a band of young fellows from St. Andrew's Church, West Kensington. Their ground at Craven Cottage has been a source of much cash to them.

Your Editor

NOW IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY! ANOTHER £10 IN PRIZES OFFERED TO READERS! THE HISTORY OF THE LEICESTER CITY CLUB.

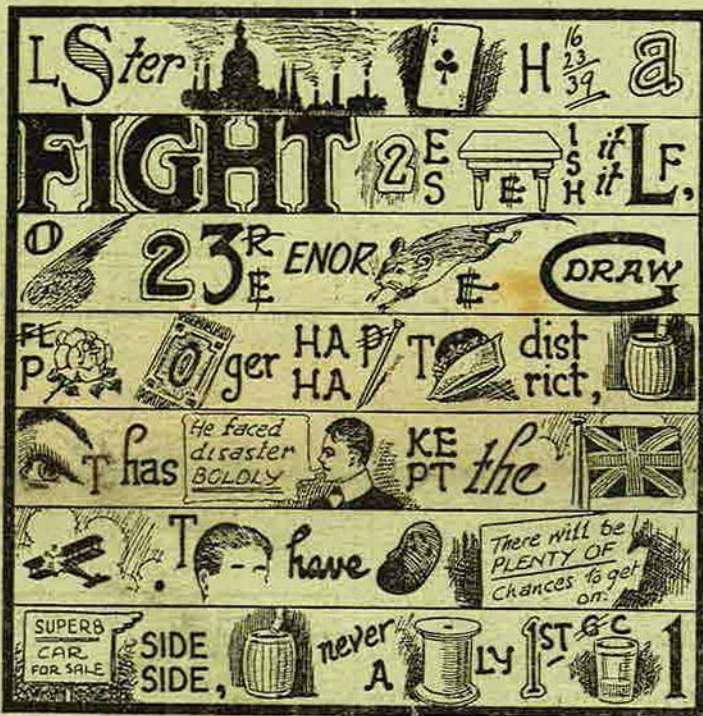
FIRST PRIZE £5.
SECOND PRIZE £2 10s.
and 10 PRIZES of 5s.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid footer competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of the Leicester City 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 "Leicester City" Competition, Boys' Friend Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, May 3rd.

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 "LEICESTER CITY" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.
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