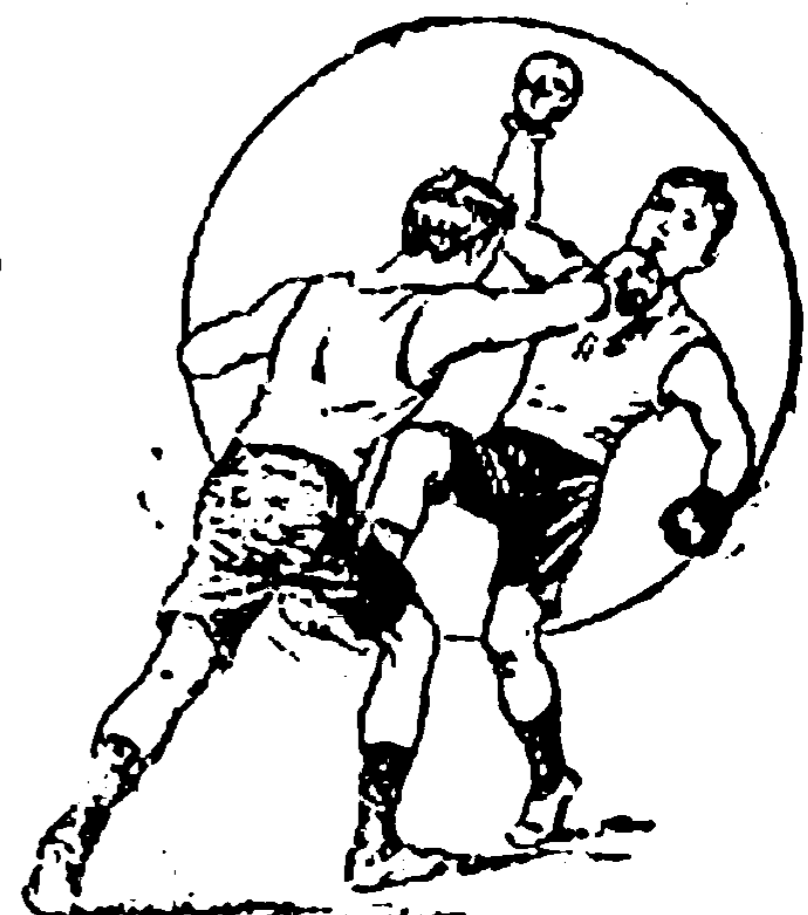




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 By STANLEY HOOPER,
 THE FAMOUS BOXER.



The BOYS' FRIEND 1 1/2

TWELVE PAGES!

No. 965. Vol. XIX. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending December 6th, 1919.

Teddy's Last Chance!



REMORSE!

Tupper set down the tray on the little table and withdrew. Arthur Edward Lovell's anger died away as he looked at his brother. If ever a boy looked plunged into the depths of misery, it was Master Edwin Lovell at that moment. "You've done it now!" muttered Lovell, wretchedly. The fag had not looked up; and he started at the sound of his brother's voice. "How is he?" he asked in a low voice. "He! Who?" "Young Silver—Jimmy's cousin. I—I—I never meant to hurt him like that, Arthur. How is he?"

The 1st Chapter. Breaking It Gently!

"Here he comes!" breathed Tubby Muffin. Tubby Muffin was standing in the gateway of Rookwood, as the dusk thickened over the old school. There was great excitement in Tubby's fat face. Evidently he was waiting for someone to come in, and, equally evidently, he was bursting with news.

Two figures appeared on the road, coming towards the school—Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth. It was upon Lovell that Tubby's eyes were fixed. It was for Arthur Edward Lovell that he had news—startling news. Tubby Muffin was delighted in being the bearer of news—especially of startling news, and he was quite reveling in the prospect of making Arthur Edward Lovell jump.

His round eyes glimmered with excitement, as the two juniors came up to the gates. Lovell was looking very cheery. The chums had been busy talking football, and that interesting topic had driven from Arthur Edward's mind, for the present, the remembrance of his troublesome minor, Teddy. "Lovell!" squeaked Tubby Muffin, as the two juniors came in at the gates.

Jimmy Silver and his chum walked on, unheeding. "Lovell!" howled Tubby. "Lovell major! I say, Lovell—" "Oh, don't bother!" said Lovell. Tubby made a clutch at his sleeve. He was determined that the startling news should be imparted by himself—he had been waiting half an hour to impart it. "I—I—I say, Lovell, you know—" he gasped. "Let go!"

"Your minor, you know—" spluttered Tubby. Lovell stopped at that. "Let go my sleeve, you fat duffer," he growled. "What about my minor?" "Young Teddy, you know—you haven't heard, I suppose?" "Heard what?" snapped Lovell. "About Teddy." Lovell's eyes gleamed. He grasped Tubby and shook him forcibly. "You thumpin' idiot, get it out!"



TEDDY'S LAST CHANCE!

(Continued from previous page.)

he growled. "Has anything happened to my minor?"

"Ow!"

"Answer me, you chump!"

"Wow!" gasped Tubby.

"You fat dummy—"

"Perhaps he would answer better if you left off shaking him, old scout," suggested Jimmy Silver. "Tubby's rather short of breath, you know."

"Grooooh!"

"Will you speak, you ass?" shouted Lovell.

"Ow! Wow! I—I—I'm trying to!" spluttered Tubby. "Leave off shaking me, you beast! Groo! I'm only trying to do you a good turn, ain't I—breaking it gently to you—Grooo!"

"Breaking what?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"What do you mean, Tubby?"

"Grooooh!"

Lovell's face was dark and anxious. He seemed inclined to box Tubby's ears right and left, but he refrained. He was anxious for the news, and he left off shaking the fat Classical.

"Now tell me!" he said in concentrated tones.

"I—I was waiting for you, to tell you," said Tubby breathlessly. "I wanted to break it gently, you know, to save you from a shock. If some of the other fellows told you suddenly, you see—"

"Told me what?" shrieked Lovell.

"About Teddy, you know."

"You—you fat idiot!" breathed Lovell.

"Will you tell me what's happened, or shall I smash you?"

"If you think you can stand the shock, old chap—"

"Tell me, you fool!"

"I—I say, I don't think you ought to call me names, Lovell, when I'm doing you a good turn like this," said Tubby Muffin reproachfully.

Lovell clenched his hands hard.

Muffin backed away a little. It was only too clear that Arthur Edward Lovell was not at all grateful for Tubby's kindness in breaking it gently, whatever "it" was.

"Get it out, you silly ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently.

"Young Teddy, you know," said Tubby Muffin, with a wary eye on Lovell.

"There's been a row, you know—"

"Is that all, you idiot?"

"Teddy was rowing with Jimmy's cousin in the Third Form-room—"

young Algy Silver, you know—"

"Anything else?" growled Lovell savagely.

"And Algy Silver was licking him, you know—"

"Well?"

"And Lovell minor landed him on the napper with a ruler—"

"What?" exclaimed Lovell and Jimmy Silver together, aghast.

Tubby Muffin grinned.

He had made an impression, that was clear. The two Fourth-Formers stared at him blankly.

"Landed him with a ruler?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"On the head," said Tubby, with a nod. "Stunned him!"

"You lying fat rascal!" shouted Lovell.

"How dare you say anything of the kind? I'll—"

Tubby Muffin jumped back in alarm.

"It's true!" he howled. "Really, you know! Silver II is in bed, in the sanatorium now, and the doctor's been—"

"It can't be true!" muttered Lovell, his face pale and dismayed.

"You're lying, you fat worm! I know you're lying—"

"I'm breaking it gently," said Tubby. "I haven't told you the worst yet, you know. If you think you can stand the shock, I— Yaroooh!"

Lovell jumped at the fat Classical and grasped him by the neck. There was a bang as Tubby's head was knocked against the gate.

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Yah!" roared Tubby.

"Now, you fat rascal—"

"It's true!" yelled Tubby Muffin.

"Yah! I won't break it gently now! Ow! He's expelled! Yah!"

"Who's expelled?" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Yow-ow! Lovell minor! Ow! Leggo! And I'm jolly glad!" howled Tubby. "Catch me telling you another time—and breaking it gently, too! Yah! He's sacked from Rookwood, and serve him right!"

Lovell stared blankly at the fat Classical for a moment, as Tubby rubbed his head. Then his arm rose, and he smote, and Tubby Muffin rolled on the ground yelling.

Leaving him there, Lovell started towards the School House at a run. Jimmy Silver dashed after him.

"Lovell, old chap—"

Arthur Edward Lovell ran on, breathless, unheeding.

The 2nd Chapter.

Lovell Minor's Sentence.

There was a buzz of voices in the School House. Lovell blinked round in the light, as he ran in from the dusky quadrangle. All eyes were turned on him at once.

Lovell's face was quite white. He stared round him for a moment, and called to Mornington, who was in the Hall.

"Morny, has—has anything happened while I've been out?"

"Yes, old fellow," said Mornington, very gently. "I'm afraid—that—"

"Tell me—quick!"

"Your minor's been up before the Head," said Mornington, "and—and—and—he's going to leave Rookwood."

"Do you mean he's expelled?"

"Yes, ex. I'm awfully sorry."

Lovell staggered.

He had hoped against hope that Tubby Muffin had been drawing the long-bow; but he could not doubt Mornington's statement.

Raby and Newcome came towards him quickly.

"Buck up, old chap!" muttered George Raby. "It's not your fault. Buck up!"

"What has he done?" breathed Lovell huskily.

"Biffed Silver of the Third with a ruler!" said Newcome. "There seems to have been a row in their Form-room."

"Where's Silver II?"

"In sunny."

"Is—is he really hurt?"

"Only a bad bump, I believe," said Raby. "He was stunned."

"Stunned? Good heavens!"

"It's awfully hard on you, old chap!" muttered Raby. "I'm sorry! But—but—"

"Where's my minor?"

"Locked up in the punishment-room."

"Oh, heavens!" muttered Lovell.

"What will the pater say—and the mater, too? Teddy— Oh!"

He moved blindly away. Jimmy Silver spoke hurriedly to Raby and Newcome, and then ran out into the quadrangle again, heading for the school hospital. He was concerned for his chum; but, naturally, at that moment his first thought was for his young cousin. It was by Jimmy's intervention that Algy Silver had taken up Teddy Lovell, the outcast of the Third Form; but for Jimmy they would never have come in contact. And it had ended in this!

Arthur Edward Lovell moved away with uncertain steps towards the Head's study. He had to see the Head. He felt that he must learn from Dr. Chisholm's own lips that there was no hope.

He tapped at the Head's door, and the doctor's deep voice bade him enter.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, was in the study with the Head, and both the masters looked compassionately at Lovell as he came in unsteadily.

The junior's white, stricken face showed how terribly the blow had fallen upon him.

"Lovell—" said the Head.

"I—I— Excuse my troubling you, sir," muttered Lovell. "I—I've just heard that—that my brother—"

His voice failed him.

"I am very sorry, Lovell!" said Dr. Chisholm, kindly enough. "I can see that you feel your brother's disgrace deeply. But there is nothing to be said."

"I—I was out!" muttered Lovell

confusedly. "I—I had gone out! I—I've just heard! Oh, sir! Is Teddy—"

I mean, my brother—is he really going to be sent away from Rookwood?"

"There is no alternative, Lovell! He leaves in the morning!"

"But, sir—"

"He has been guilty of an unheard-of outrage!" said the Head. "In quarrelling with another boy in his Form, he seized a heavy ruler, and struck him on the head. Silver secundus was stunned. He lies now in the sanatorium, and will be unable to rejoin his Form for some days. A boy with so ungovernable a temper is quite out of place at Rookwood! He will not be expelled publicly, Lovell; he will leave quietly in the morning in charge of a prefect, who will take him home. My poor boy, I am sorry for you; but there is nothing more to be said!"

Lovell looked at the Head's face. It was compassionate, but firm as a rock. There was no hope to be read there.

In silence the Fourth-Former left the study.

Two or three fellows spoke to him in the passage, but he did not seem to hear.

In stunned silence he made his way up to the end study in the Fourth. Raby and Newcome were there.

Both the juniors were looking miserable enough.

Little as they liked Lovell minor, they were dismayed by what had happened; they knew Lovell's affection for his brother, and his look showed plainly how the news had bowed him down.

Lovell threw himself into the arm-chair without looking at his chums.

He sat in frozen silence, and Raby and Newcome did not speak. There was nothing they could say.

Jimmy Silver came into the study at last. His face was a little pale, and his brows were knitted.

Lovell looked up.

"Seen your cousin?" he asked.

Jimmy shook his head.

"No; I couldn't see him. I've seen the matron."

"How is he?"

"It's not so bad as they thought at first," said Jimmy. "The doctor said that he will be all right. He might have been badly hurt, though. He was stunned when that young scoundrel—I—I mean—I mean—"

Jimmy stammered.

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Lovell bitterly. "I know what Teddy's done! He's acted like a beastly little hooligan! I don't expect you to see any excuse for him!"

"I don't see how anybody could!" said Jimmy. "I've been speaking to some of the fags—Grant and Wegg and Stacey, and they've told me what happened. I got Algy to speak to your minor, because the Third had sent him to Coventry, and your minor picked a quarrel with him. He was to blame all along!"

"Of course you'd think that!" muttered Lovell.

"It's the case, old fellow. Goodness knows, I wouldn't be hard on your brother; but the way he's acted—"

Jimmy checked himself. "It seems young Teddy found out that I'd promised Algy a new footer if he'd see the little beast—ahem—I mean if he'd see Lovell minor through his troubles in the Third. And, instead of being decently grateful, he taunted Algy with it in the Form-room, and let all the fags know. Algy punched him—I think anybody would have—and then he let out with a big ruler!"

Jimmy set his lips.

"He couldn't have meant to hurt him!" muttered Lovell.

"He didn't stop to think about that. He didn't care!" said Jimmy savagely. "He might have injured Algy seriously. As it is, the poor kid is laid up. He's to stay to-night in sunny, perhaps to-morrow, with a lump on his head as big as an egg. I feel that it's my fault for ever asking him to champion that little hooligan!"

"Rub it in!" said Lovell.

"I—I don't want to do that, old chap. I know how you feel about Teddy. But—but you must admit that Rookwood isn't the place for your minor!"

"Lot of use what I think about the matter!" groaned Lovell. "He's going to be kicked out to-morrow! Poor old Teddy! He never meant any harm. It was just his temper—"

"Oh, dash it all!" exclaimed Raby. "If a chap loses his temper to the extent of cracking a fellow's nut with a ruler—"

"You're all against him, of course!"

"What the thump do you expect, then?" exclaimed Newcome. "There isn't a fellow at Rookwood would have done such a thing! Even Lat-tray or Leggett would jib at a thing like that!"

Lovell did not answer.

His face was working, and he suddenly let his head fall into his hands. His chums looked at him, startled.

"Lovell, old chap—" muttered Jimmy Silver.

"I—I say—" mumbled Raby.

Lovell did not look up. And Jimmy Silver & Co., after an uncomfortable pause, quitted the study quietly. It was better for poor Lovell to be left to himself for a little while.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Late Repentance!

Tupper, the school page, came along the passage with a tray in his hands. Bread and cheese and a cup of cocoa were on the tray. It was supper for the prisoner in the punishment-room.

This disagreeable apartment was a room at the top of a little staircase some distance from the studies. There was a candle on the tray to light Tupper up the stairs. As he ascended, Lovell of the Fourth followed him up quietly.

Tupper stopped on the landing above, and felt for a key. The door of the punishment-room was locked on the outside. The page gave a start as Lovell's shadow loomed up close to him.

"Lor!" ejaculated Tupper. "you give me a start, Master Lovell!"

"I want to go in, Tupper!" muttered Lovell.

Tupper shook his head.

"Agin orders, sir!" he answered.

"I've got to speak to my brother. He's being turned out of the school to-morrow."

"I—I know, sir, but—"

Lovell slid a half-crown into Tupper's hand, but the page still looked undecided.

"I must see him, Tupper!"

"Well, p'raps you could for a few minutes," said Tupper. "I'll let you stay till I come back for the tray, Master Lovell."

"Thanks, kid!"

"I shall 'ave to lock you in."

"All right!"

Tupper unlocked the door. Lovell passed in quickly, and the page followed with the tray.

A gas-burner was lighted in the room. It was a barely-furnished room, and a bed had been freshly made there.



The Mystery of the Blue Dragon

There are four other brilliant tales, a football article, a prize competition, and many other splendid features in this week's issue of "Young Britain."

You could not possibly desire a more exciting, mysterious or gripping story than this—every chapter has some fresh thrilling surprise. Begin reading it as soon as you can. The opening chapters are in

YOUNG BRITAIN
Out on Thursday. 2d.

Teddy Lovell was sitting on the edge of the bed.

His attitude was one of utter dejection and misery.

There was deep anger, as well as concern, in Lovell's breast; but his anger faded away as he looked at his brother.

If ever a boy looked plunged into the depths of misery, it was Master Edwin Lovell at that moment.

Tupper set down the tray on the little table, and withdrew from the room.

"I'm comin' back for the tray in ten minutes!" he said, and he drew the door shut after him, and turned the key in the lock outside.

"Teddy!" said Lovell.

The fag had not looked up, and he started at the sound of his brother's voice.

"Arthur!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"You've done it now, Teddy!" muttered Lovell wretchedly.

Teddy shivered.

"How is he?" he asked, in a low voice.

"He! Who?"

"Young Silver—Jimmy's cousin." Teddy's voice trembled. "I—I never meant to hurt him like that, Arthur. How is he now?"

Lovell's face softened still more.

He had fully expected to find the wilful, selfish fag thinking only of himself, labouring under a sense of injury, and giving no thought to anyone but his own precious self. His question was a sign of grace. It showed that Lovell minor could spare, at least, a thought for his victim.

"Silver II is getting on all right, Teddy. He's hurt. He's got a bad bump on his head, but he'll be about again to-morrow."

"I—I'm glad of that! I—I was afraid—"

Teddy's voice faltered. "Oh, if I'd really hurt him—"

He broke off. "I was a beast to hit him with the ruler! I wouldn't have done it, only I was wild. I—I didn't think—"

"It's all up now, kid!" said Lovell. "I've been to the Head, and he's as hard as iron. I couldn't expect anything else, of course."

"And I've got to go?"

"Yes."

Teddy drew a long, tremulous breath.

"What will father say?" he muttered.

"Goodness knows!"

There was a pause. Lovell pushed the tray towards Teddy, but the fag turned away his head. He could not eat.

"After all, you wanted to leave Rookwood," said Lovell awkwardly.

"You'll have your way now, at any rate!"

"I—I didn't want to leave—like this! Not in disgrace—turned out of the school!" groaned Teddy. "I—I don't know that I really wanted to leave so much, either. I—I've been thinking a lot while I've been sitting here. I—I never rightly understood before, but—but I've been rather a brute, Arthur. I can see that. Young Silver meant well enough by me. He meant to be kind, and I—I—"

"Oh, if you'd only had a little bit more sense!" muttered Lovell.

"Father and mother, they'll be cut up no end, when you get home, and the Head's letter with you!"

"I—I suppose I've got to go?"

"Yes."

"It's rotten! I—I'm really sorry, too. You needn't pile it on, Arthur. I know I've been a beast. I've been a beast to you, too!" said Teddy remorsefully. "I'm sorry for that! It's not any good now. What did you come here for, Arthur?"

"Only to speak to you, kid."

"I—I suppose you can't think of anything—anything to be done? I don't want to be turned out of Rookwood!" faltered Teddy. "If I had another chance, I wouldn't play the goat again; I wouldn't, really. I—I'd do anything to have another chance, just to—to show I'm not really a beast like all the fellows think. I've never really had a chance, either."

Lovell was silent.

"I never had a chance!" repeated Teddy. "They called me a sneak because I went to the Head. But father never used to shut me up if I went to him complaining, and I—I never thought! I—I was only going on here the same as at home. And I was wild when the fellows wouldn't speak to me—"

"I know; but—"

"But I was a rotter, too," said Teddy miserably. "Beastly temper. I suppose. It didn't seem like that then; but now—now I'm here! I was wild with young Silver, and he only meant to be doing me a good turn, in his way. I suppose I was a fool!"

"If you could only have seen all that a bit sooner!" muttered Lovell. "I ought to have. I wish I had. I— I say, Arthur." The fag's eyes sought Lovell's face hopefully. "Can't anything be done? Suppose you were to speak to the Head?"

"I've spoken to him. It's no use." "I wouldn't mind a licking so much. But to be kicked out of the school, that's awful!" Teddy shivered. "And—and there's the pater, too. I don't mean about his being waxy with me; but he'll be cut up—"

Lovell looked at his brother in wonder. Teddy's reflections in the grim solitude of the punishment-room had evidently done him good. He had been able to see things more in their right light, at last. But it came too late, as repentance so often does.

"Can't you do anything, Arthur?" Lovell groaned.

There was something almost infantile in the fag's appeal to his big brother to "do something" to save him from what he had brought upon himself. The appeal went straight to Lovell's heart, and he writhed with the sense of his own helplessness.

There was a grind of a key in the lock. Tupper was returning for the tray.

"You haven't had your supper, Teddy?"

"I don't want any."

"You'd better eat."

"I can't!"

Tupper came in. He gave Lovell a warning glance, and the Fourth-Former moved to the door.

"Good-night, Teddy!" he said huskily.

Teddy's eyes turned beseechingly on him.

"Arthur, you'll try to think of something—something to help me, now I'm down?"

"I—I— There's nothing—"

"I'll go differently after this if I have another chance," said Teddy eagerly. "You ought to be able to do something to help me, Arthur. Father said you'd always help me through. Try to think of something."

"I—I'll try!" muttered Lovell wretchedly. "Good-night, kid?"

And he left the punishment-room.

The 4th Chapter.
No Help!

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were at prep in the end study when Arthur Edward Lovell returned thither. Lovell gave a glance of distaste at the books on the table. He was not in much of a humour for preparation now.

Jimmy glanced up.

"Feel up to prep, Lovell?"

"No."

"I dare say you can cut it. Bootles won't worry you in the morning after what's happened."

"I shall cut it, anyway!" grunted Lovell.

"Right-ho!"

Lovell sat down, and watched his chains gloomily, as they continued to work.

His mind was busy with harassing thoughts.

Teddy's appeal was still ringing in his ears, and he was trying to think, trying to imagine some way in which the wretched fag could still be saved from the consequences of his folly. Lovell was very far from finding excuses for what Teddy had done. But there were extenuating circumstances in the case, and he felt, too, that given another chance, the hapless Third-Former would do better. But how was that other chance to be gained for him?

Lovell was helpless in the matter. There seemed no possibility. But his old faith in Jimmy Silver's sagacity had not left him. If Jimmy could help him think out that problem, and if he would— It was Jimmy's cousin who lay in "sanny" now, and Jimmy's feeling towards Teddy could not be very kind. But—

"Haven't you finished yet?" Lovell asked, at last.

"Nearly."

"I want to speak to you when you're done, Jimmy."

"Right-ho!"

The three juniors were finished at last, and Raby and Newcome went down to the Common-room. Jimmy Silver remained in the end study with Lovell.

"Go ahead!" he remarked.

Lovell coloured.

"I've seen Teddy," he said.

"Oh!" Jimmy raised his eyebrows. "Isn't he locked in?"

"Tupper let me in to speak to him."

"Yes," said Jimmy, wondering what was coming.

"He's sorry for what he's done, Jimmy."

"Very likely," asserted Jimmy Silver, rather drily.

"I mean, not only because of the consequences, but—because he knows he's done wrong."

"I'm glad of that."

"He doesn't want to leave Rookwood. Be patient, old chap!" muttered Lovell. "You know this is a rotten thing for me."

"I know," said Jimmy; "but it can't be helped, Lovell. The Head couldn't possibly let him stay."

"He's thinking about the pater, too," said Lovell. "I never thought he would, but he is. He's not so selfish as you think."

Jimmy made no reply to that.

"I—I suppose you're feeling bitter because your cousin—"

"Not bitter," said Jimmy; "but—well, Lovell, you know I can't feel very kind towards your minor, after what he's done. It's not really to be expected, is it?"

"I—I suppose not. Then you won't help me?"

Jimmy shifted uncomfortably.

"I can't help you," he said. "There's nothing to be done. The Head's sending him away from the school, and I think he's right. But if I didn't think so, what difference would it make?"

"If Teddy could have another chance—"

"Not likely!"

"I suppose it's a cheek to ask you to help, as it's your cousin he knocked out," said Lovell dejectedly. "But—but, after all, we've always been pals, Jimmy. You might stand by a chap when he's down."

"I—I'll take your word for it, Lovell. You know him better than I do," said Jimmy Silver uncomfortably. "I dare say the lesson he's had has done him good. It must have, if he's not a born idiot. He'll start better somewhere else."

"I want him to start better here."

There was a long silence.

"Then you can't think of anything, Jimmy?" asked Lovell, at last, much discouraged.

"I—I can't! I would if I could," said Jimmy honestly. "If I were in Algy's place—if the young idiot had biffed me instead—but he didn't! I can't ask Algy—"

"He paused.

"What were you thinking of?"

"Well, Algy's the injured party," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "It's possible, I suppose, that if he put it to the Head—but he wouldn't. Dasin it all, he's lying in bed with a lump on his napper! He must be feeling pretty savage, and he's got a right to."

Lovell's brow clouded.

"If that's what you're thinking of, it's no good. Catch him speaking a word for my minor, even if I'd ask him!" Lovell rose restlessly from his chair. "I suppose it's no good. I've got to stand it."

"I'm sorry, old chap."

Lovell nodded, and quitted the study. He went out into the dusky quadrangle to escape the curious eyes of his Form-fellows.

Jimmy Silver remained alone in the end study, thinking.

For Teddy he did not care two

"Wait and see," answered Jimmy. "I'll see him, anyway. The matron's sure to let me speak to him, as he's my cousin."

Lovell nodded silently, and the captain of the Fourth made his way towards the garden of the school hospital.

Mrs. Maloney, the matron, was in charge of Algy Silver there, and Jimmy found her in a good humour.

"How's my cousin, Mrs. Maloney?" Jimmy asked.

"Much better this morning," said the matron, with a smile. "He's having his breakfast in bed."

"Can I see him?"

"You can see him for a few minutes, Master Silver. Come this way!"

"Thank you, ma'am!"

Jimmy Silver followed the matron in.

Silver of the Third was sitting up in bed, with a bandage over his head, his face very pale.

But he was quite himself, and he nodded to his cousin Jimmy with his usual cheeky grin.

"Hallo, old top! You're wandering about early."

"How do you feel this morning, Algy?" asked Jimmy.

"Pretty rotten! My head aches where that little beast landed me," answered Algy Silver. "I've got a lump like a football. Still, I'm getting out of lessons to-day, and perhaps to-morrow. Things might be worse. The matron's going to

"He takes it rather to heart." "Bit of an ass, Lovell, isn't he? Ow! I've got an ache in my napper," said Silver II, with a wry face. "I'm sorry young Lovell's going so soon—"

"Are you, really, kid?" said Jimmy hopefully.

"Yes; I'd like to punch his head before he goes!"

"Oh!"

"Still, I dare say he's got enough," remarked Algy Silver considerably. "He will very likely get a wallop from his father. I know I'd wallop him if I was his father—getting kicked out of school! Little cad! Jolly good thing he's going! Cut the cake for me, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver cut the cake.

"This is jolly good!" said Silver II, with his mouth full. "You ought to have some. What are you looking like a solemn owl about, Jimmy?"

"Eh? Was I?"

"You were—and are!" grinned Algy. "What's the row?"

Jimmy Silver paused. Algy did not mind. He was going ahead excellently with the cake.

"Algy!" said Jimmy at last.

"Fire away, old nut!"

"You don't bear malice, of course?"

"Not a bit! I'd like to punch Lovell minor's head, that's all. But I don't mind so long as he's kicked out."

"Hum!"

"What about that new footer, Jimmy?"

"Eh?"

"I was to have a new footer if I made it all right for Lovell minor in the Third. I tried, really. I got this. I suppose it's all off about the footer?" said Algy regretfully.

"You shall have it, all the same, kid."

"Good man! You ain't a bad sort, Jimmy, though you're a serious old owl. I think you're a duffer not to try this cake."

"Algy, old chap," said Jimmy, in a low voice. "Lovell's seen his minor, and he says Teddy is sorry for what he did—"

"Shouldn't wonder! I'd make him sorer if he was near enough!"

"You don't feel inclined to say a word for him?"

"I'd say something pretty strong if he was here. What the merry thump are you driving at, Jimmy?"

Algy blinked rather curiously at Jimmy over the cake. He could see that the captain of the Fourth had something on his mind.

"Better buck up," he added. "Old Maloney will come in and turn you out in two ticks!"

"Algy, you've been treated badly; and young Lovell was an awful cad to act as he did. Lovell says he's sorry. Look here, kid, it's an awful blow to old Lovell, and he's my best chum. The Head says Teddy is to go, but—but—"

"But what, ass?"

"You're the injured party, you know. If you'd put in a word for Teddy with the Head he might let him off with a flogging."

Silver secundus stared.

"Me put in a word for that thundering little hooligan? Are you off your your rocker, cousin Jimmy?"

Jimmy's face fell.

"I—I suppose you wouldn't?" he said.

"Catch me!"

"Well, it's not to be expected, I suppose," said Jimmy sadly. "Poor old Lovell is awfully knocked over by this—"

"Well, I'm sorry for Lovell," said Silver II. "He's a silly ass, but not a bad sort. But it wouldn't make any difference if I spoke to the Head. Of course, I forgive the little beast, if it comes to that. But he might play the same kind of trick again if he was allowed to stop. He might land out at any fellow's napper."

"Lovell thinks not—"

"Well, a flogging might be a warning to him. But the Head wouldn't take any notice of me."

"There's just a chance—"

"Oh, rot!"

Jimmy Silver sighed. There was just a chance—if Algy could be induced to play up. But Jimmy felt that he had no right to urge the fag to do so. If Algy chose to do the generous thing, so much the better; but it had to be left at that.

"Well, never mind, kid," said Jimmy at last. "After all, it's a lot to ask of you—with that lump on your head. I hope you'll be better soon. Good-bye for the present!"

"Hold on!"

Jimmy turned back.

"I don't bear the little beast any malice, as far as that goes," said Algy. "I'm sorry for Lovell, too. And I was punching the young rotter rather hard when he let out with the

"I—I'll take your word for it, Lovell. You know him better than I do," said Jimmy Silver uncomfortably. "I dare say the lesson he's had has done him good. It must have, if he's not a born idiot. He'll start better somewhere else."

"I want him to start better here."

There was a long silence.

"Then you can't think of anything, Jimmy?" asked Lovell, at last, much discouraged.

"I—I can't! I would if I could," said Jimmy honestly. "If I were in Algy's place—if the young idiot had biffed me instead—but he didn't! I can't ask Algy—"

"He paused.

"What were you thinking of?"

"Well, Algy's the injured party," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "It's possible, I suppose, that if he put it to the Head—but he wouldn't. Dasin it all, he's lying in bed with a lump on his napper! He must be feeling pretty savage, and he's got a right to."

Lovell's brow clouded.

"If that's what you're thinking of, it's no good. Catch him speaking a word for my minor, even if I'd ask him!" Lovell rose restlessly from his chair. "I suppose it's no good. I've got to stand it."

"I'm sorry, old chap."

Lovell nodded, and quitted the study. He went out into the dusky quadrangle to escape the curious eyes of his Form-fellows.

Jimmy Silver remained alone in the end study, thinking.

For Teddy he did not care two

"Wait and see," answered Jimmy. "I'll see him, anyway. The matron's sure to let me speak to him, as he's my cousin."

Lovell nodded silently, and the captain of the Fourth made his way towards the garden of the school hospital.

Mrs. Maloney, the matron, was in charge of Algy Silver there, and Jimmy found her in a good humour.

"How's my cousin, Mrs. Maloney?" Jimmy asked.

"Much better this morning," said the matron, with a smile. "He's having his breakfast in bed."

"Can I see him?"

"You can see him for a few minutes, Master Silver. Come this way!"

"Thank you, ma'am!"

Jimmy Silver followed the matron in.

Silver of the Third was sitting up in bed, with a bandage over his head, his face very pale.

But he was quite himself, and he nodded to his cousin Jimmy with his usual cheeky grin.

"Hallo, old top! You're wandering about early."

"How do you feel this morning, Algy?" asked Jimmy.

"Pretty rotten! My head aches where that little beast landed me," answered Algy Silver. "I've got a lump like a football. Still, I'm getting out of lessons to-day, and perhaps to-morrow. Things might be worse. The matron's going to

"He takes it rather to heart." "Bit of an ass, Lovell, isn't he? Ow! I've got an ache in my napper," said Silver II, with a wry face. "I'm sorry young Lovell's going so soon—"

"Are you, really, kid?" said Jimmy hopefully.

"Yes; I'd like to punch his head before he goes!"

"Oh!"

"Still, I dare say he's got enough," remarked Algy Silver considerably. "He will very likely get a wallop from his father. I know I'd wallop him if I was his father—getting kicked out of school! Little cad! Jolly good thing he's going! Cut the cake for me, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver cut the cake.

"This is jolly good!" said Silver II, with his mouth full. "You ought to have some. What are you looking like a solemn owl about, Jimmy?"

"Eh? Was I?"

"You were—and are!" grinned Algy. "What's the row?"

Jimmy Silver paused. Algy did not mind. He was going ahead excellently with the cake.

"Algy!" said Jimmy at last.

"Fire away, old nut!"

"You don't bear malice, of course?"

"Not a bit! I'd like to punch Lovell minor's head, that's all. But I don't mind so long as he's kicked out."

"Hum!"

"What about that new footer, Jimmy?"

"Eh?"

"I was to have a new footer if I made it all right for Lovell minor in the Third. I tried, really. I got this. I suppose it's all off about the footer?" said Algy regretfully.

"You shall have it, all the same, kid."

"Good man! You ain't a bad sort, Jimmy, though you're a serious old owl. I think you're a duffer not to try this cake."

"Algy, old chap," said Jimmy, in a low voice. "Lovell's seen his minor, and he says Teddy is sorry for what he did—"

"Shouldn't wonder! I'd make him sorer if he was near enough!"

"You don't feel inclined to say a word for him?"

"I'd say something pretty strong if he was here. What the merry thump are you driving at, Jimmy?"

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TEDDY LOVELL'S APOLOGY! Propped up on the pillows, Algy of the Third was reading the "Holiday Annual," and he looked up in surprise as the two juniors entered. "Hallo, you again, Jimmy. My hat, is that young Lovell there?" Teddy came to the bedside with crimson face and downcast eyes. "I—I say, I'm let off—" stammered Teddy. "I'm sorry I biffed you with the ruler and I-I hope you will look over it." "That's all right," said Algy.

"So I would, like a shot," answered Jimmy Silver. "But—but—but there's nothing doing, Lovell. What can be done?"

"I—I don't know," confessed Lovell. "I know it will be awfully rotten for the pater and mater if Teddy goes home in disgrace. They'll very likely think it's all my fault, somehow. Not that that matters. I—I thought you might be able to think of some way out."

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"I couldn't," he said. "I—I would if I could, Lovell, to please you, old chap; but there isn't any way out."

"I suppose young Algy is feeling very bitter about it?"

"Well, he can't be feeling pleased. Not that he's likely to bear malice, if you mean that. I dare say he will forget the whole bizney in a week, after your minor's gone."

Lovell winced.

"I don't want him to go, Jimmy," he muttered. "I—I know he's sorry. I know he means to do better if he gets another chance. It's a shame for him to have to go, when he's made up his mind to that. There's a lot of good in Teddy, if you could only see it. I mean, if he got a chance to try again to get on at Rookwood, he wouldn't act again as he's done—there's no danger of that."

"But—"

"You believe that, Jimmy?"

straws. He could not be expected to feel kindly towards the young rascal of the Third. But for Lovell he cared a good deal, and Teddy's expulsion from Rookwood was a harder blow to Lovell than to the fag himself. If the wretched fag could be saved—if it were yet possible! Jimmy Silver put in some hard thinking in the interval before dormitory.

The 5th Chapter.
Uncle James Does His Best.

Jimmy Silver was still very thoughtful at breakfast the following morning.

He had made up his mind to do his best, for Lovell's sake; but it still remained to be seen whether anything could be done.

Lovell was pale and harassed looking that morning.

He was the object of a good deal of sympathy on the part of the Classical Fourth, though he did not notice it.

After breakfast he followed Jimmy Silver into the quadrangle. He had scarcely touched his food at the table.

"He's going this morning, Jimmy," he muttered, "after we're at lessons. I think. Bulkeley of the Sixth is going to take him home, I hear. Jimmy, old chap, I—I—"

"I'm going to see Algy, if I can," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Algy! But you can't ask him—"

get me the 'Holiday Annual' to read in bed, so I'm not grumbling."

Jimmy smiled.

The crack on the head had apparently not robbed Silver secundus of his cheery spirits.

"Hand me the marmalade, old kid," went on Algy. "I say, like some of this cake? I've got cake with brekker, you know, because I'm a giddy invalid. Mrs. Maloney asked me if my appetite was good. Ha, ha! I said, 'try' it."

And Algy helped himself liberally to marmalade.

"What's happened to that young ruffian?" he added.

"Lovell minor?"

"Yes, I suppose they're hoofing him out."

"He's leaving this morning, Algy."

"Good!" said Silver II, with rather disconcerting satisfaction. "Time he was kicked out of Rookwood—what?"

"It's hard on his people," said Jimmy.

"Yes. They should have brought him up a bit more carefully, shouldn't they? Rather serves them right—what?"

"Oh," said Jimmy. "I—I say, Algy, Lovell's feeling it a lot!"

"He always was a silly ass about his minor," agreed Silver II. "Still, he ought to be glad to be shot of him. Can't be very pleasant, having a young rotter like that hanging about him."

"So I would, like a shot," answered Jimmy Silver. "But—but—but there's nothing doing, Lovell. What can be done?"

"I—I don't know," confessed Lovell. "I know it will be awfully rotten for the pater and mater if Teddy goes home in disgrace. They'll very likely think it's all my fault, somehow. Not that that matters. I—I thought you might be able to think of some way out."

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Lovell winced.

"I don't want him to go, Jimmy," he muttered. "I—I know he's sorry. I know he means to do better if he gets another chance. It's a shame for him to have to go, when he's made up his mind to that. There's a lot of good in Teddy, if you could only see it. I mean, if he got a chance to try again to get on at Rookwood, he wouldn't act again as he's done—there's no danger of that."

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ruler. I say, I'll speak to his nibs if you like."

Jimmy Silver's face brightened. "That's a good kid, Algy. I'd be ever so much obliged, for Lovell's sake."

"Well, I'd rather earn that match footer if I'm going to have it!" grinned Algy. "When is the young cad going to be kicked out?"

"This morning early, I think."

"Then I'll ask Mrs. Maloney to make the Head come. Ta-ta!"

"Thanks, kid!"

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver left, feeling more hopeful, and Algy finished his cake. Mrs. Maloney came to the bedside.

"I want to see the Head, ma'am," said Algy Silver cheerily.

The matron smiled.

"I'm afraid you cannot see Dr. Chisholm at present," she answered. "I will send him a message later."

"I want to see him now!" said Algy coolly. "You send him a message at once, there's a duck! It's important. What's a stunt, you know?"

"A—a what?"

"I'm going to be a dear, good little boy!" explained Algy, with a wink that made the matron jump. "I want to ask the Head to let off that sneaking cad who biffed me on the napper. See? It will be too late presently. If the Head don't come, I shall go to him. And you don't want me to walk into the Sixth Form-room wrapped up in a blanket, do you, Mrs. Maloney?"

"My dear child—"

"Well, I'll get up, then," said Algy. "I've got to see the Head before young Lovell is buzzed off, or I can't work off the forgiveness stunt. See?"

"I—I will send a message," exclaimed Mrs. Maloney. "Lie down at once. The doctor says you are not to move."

"If the Head isn't here before lessons I shall move fast enough," said Algy. "Buck up, won't you, ma'am, there's a good soul?"

Mrs. Maloney smiled, and "bucked up." And ten minutes later the Head of Rookwood was standing beside Silver's bedside, listening in amazement to what that cheery youth had to say.

The 6th Chapter.

Another Chance for Teddy.

"The Head!" murmured Raby. Arthur Edward Lovell drew a gasping breath.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth were hanging about the doorway of the School House, when Dr. Chisholm came out and walked away, and their eyes followed him as he disappeared in the direction of the sanatorium.

"He's gone to see Algy, then?" said Newcome.

"I—I suppose so!" muttered Lovell. "I—I wonder what will come of it, Jimmy, old chap?"

"Hope for the best," said Jimmy Silver. "Keep smiling."

Lovell smiled faintly.

It had seemed a forlorn hope to think that Algy Silver would speak up for the reckless young rascal who had injured him. But that much at least had been gained. But it was still a very doubtful problem what effect it would have upon the Head. Dr. Chisholm had made his decision, and his decision, once taken, was not to be altered lightly.

Poor Lovell waited about in a mood of alternating hope and fear till the tall figure of the Head was seen returning.

Lovell dared not approach him, but he scanned his face as he passed. In the calm, impassive face of the headmaster there was little to be read. But Lovell thought that the expression was softer than usual.

In the House, Dr. Chisholm stopped to speak to Bulkeley of the Sixth, and then went on to his study.

Bulkeley ascended the stairs.

"He's going for Teddy!" muttered Arthur Edward huskily. "Is it—is it to start for home with him?"

"Let's hope not!" said Jimmy.

"I—I must know!"

Lovell ran up the stairs after Bulkeley. He overtook the captain of Rookwood at the door of the punishment-room.

"Bulkeley!" he muttered.

"Cut off!" said Bulkeley, glancing round.

"Are you taking my brother away from Rookwood?" panted Lovell.

Bulkeley's expression softened.

"I'm taking him to the Head's study, at present," he answered. "Dr. Chisholm asked me to. That's all I know."

"Oh!" said Lovell, in relief. He could still hope.

Bulkeley unlocked the door of the punishment-room, and entered. In a couple of minutes, Teddy Lovell came out with him.

The fag's face was almost haggard. He looked as if he had slept little in the night. He glanced at his brother.

"Arthur, old chap, is there any chance?" he breathed.

"I don't know," groaned Lovell. "I've done what I could—Jimmy's done what he could. I think there may be a chance, kid. For goodness' sake, be careful when you're with the Head! Mind you don't cheek him!"

Teddy Lovell grinned faintly. The wise counsel was not required. Teddy was not likely to cheek the Head. Teddy had learned more since he had been shut up in the punishment-room than ever before in his life.

"All right!" he muttered.

"Come on," said Bulkeley; and

he led the fag away down the stairs. Arthur Edward Lovell followed as far as the lower hall, where he rejoined his chums. It was not yet time for morning lessons, and it had been understood that Teddy was to be sent away after the fellows were in the Form-rooms. Why had the Head sent for him so early? Was it a sign of hope?

Lovell waited in the passage, a prey to hope and fear.

His minor followed Bulkeley of the Sixth to the Head's study. He left him there in the presence of the Head.

Teddy stood before the headmaster, feeling the keen eyes fixed upon him, but not daring to raise his own eyes from the carpet.

"Lovell minor!"

The deep, stern voice made Teddy shiver.

"Yes, sir," he almost whispered.

"Lovell minor, yesterday I decided to send you away from the school, for an act of outrageous ruffianism," said the Head sternly. "I still think that you are deserving of the most severe punishment. But this morning I have seen the victim of your brutality. To my surprise, I found that he was anxious on your account!"

Teddy started.

"Oh, sir! I—I'm sorry I hurt him!" he exclaimed, with a break in his voice. "I—I never meant—"

"Whatever you mean, Lovell minor, I know what you did, and that is enough. But the generous lad who now lies in the school hospital has interceded for you."

"Oh, sir!"

"Silver II assures me that he forgives you for the injury you have done him, and he has told me that he provoked you to a certain extent," said the Head. "That, of course, is no excuse for you or for what you did. But he has begged me not to expel you from the school on his account, and he has stated that he thinks you acted under the influence of excitement, scarcely knowing what you were doing. Understand me, Lovell minor, there is no possible sort of excuse for your conduct. But I feel bound to take some notice of what Algernon Silver has said."

"Oh, sir!" mumbled Teddy.

"I was surprised, and certainly pleased, to find Silver II capable of so much generosity towards one who had injured him," said the Head. "For his sake, rather than for yours, Lovell minor, I have promised to take the matter into consideration afresh."

"Yes, sir," whispered Teddy.

"If I could feel sure that you would never again be guilty of such a savage outbreak of temper—"

"I—I promise, sir!" gasped Teddy. "I'm sorry, sir—awfully

sorry—and ashamed. I—I've been thinking about it all night!"

The Head's keen eyes searched Lovell minor's pale, worn face, and his look softened a little.

"There was repentance to be read there—real repentance."

"Well, Lovell minor," said the Head, after a pause, "for Algernon Silver's sake, and because I shall be glad to spare your parents a painful shock, I shall reconsider my decision, and give you another chance in this school."

Teddy gasped.

"Thank you, sir! I—I—"

"For what you have done I shall administer a severe flogging," said Dr. Chisholm. "You will be flogged in Hall before lessons, Lovell minor. I hope that by your future conduct you will prove yourself deserving of my leniency."

"I—I will, sir!" muttered Teddy.

"You may go now."

Lovell minor left the study.

In the passage, a minute later, Arthur Edward Lovell caught him by the arm.

"Teddy!" he breathed. "What—what—"

Teddy tried to smile.

"I'm not going," he said.

"Not sacked, after all?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I'm going to be flogged instead."

"Oh, good!"

"You're jolly lucky," said Raby drily. "Better mind your p's and q's in the future. You won't get off so well another time."

"Thank goodness!" muttered Lovell. "You can stand a flogging, Teddy. Besides, you deserve it."

"I—I know I do," said Teddy humbly. "I—I don't care very much. I—I'm jolly glad I'm going to stay at Rookwood!"

He moved away, and turned back, his face flushed.

"Jimmy Silver—"

He hesitated.

"Well, kid?" said Jimmy, kindly enough.

He was beginning to have a better opinion of Lovell minor.

"Your cousin spoke up for me to the Head," muttered Teddy.

"I know he did."

"It was awfully brickish of him. I don't know why he should do it. I—I say, could I see him? I—I'd like to tell him I'm sorry—"

Teddy's voice faltered.

Jimmy Silver gave the fag a rather queer look.

"Come along with me," he said abruptly.

Teddy Lovell followed him across the quad to the sanatorium. The matron allowed them to enter, and they approached Algy Silver's bed. Propped up on pillows, Algy of the Third was reading the "Holiday

Annual" with a grin on his face. He glanced up.

"Hallo! You again, Jimmy! I say, this is good! My hat! Is that young Lovell there?"

Teddy came to the bedside with a crinson face. Algy stared at him.

"I—I say, I'm let off," stammered Teddy.

"More than you deserve!" said Silver II caustically.

"It was awfully decent of you to speak up for me," mumbled Lovell minor. "I—I—I'm sorry I biffed you with the ruler."

"So you ought to be."

"Well, I am, you know," stammered Teddy. "I—I'd give anything not to have done it. I—I hope you'll look over it."

Algy stared at him, and then grinned.

"Oh, it's all right!" he said. "You'll have a bad time in the Third to-day, I expect; but that serves you right. I'll make the fellows treat you decently when I'm about again. You try to be decent, young shaver, and I'll see you through."

"You're a brick!" said Teddy Lovell gratefully.

"Oh, all right! You bunk now. I want to read about Bunter."

And Algy Silver dropped his eyes to his book again. Jimmy Silver left the ward with Teddy. Lovell was waiting for them outside, and he took his minor away. Jimmy Silver rejoined Raby and Newcome.

"I believe there's a streak of good somewhere in Lovell's minor, after all," he said.

"Then perhaps it'll be on view some day!" grunted Raby.

"Let's hope so," said Newcome charitably.

Ten minutes later there was an assembly in Hall for a flogging. Teddy Lovell was the hapless victim, and the Head of Rookwood did not spare the rod. The fag was not happy that morning in the Third-Form room.

The next day Algy Silver was up again; and, to the surprise of the Third Form, he proceeded to take Lovell minor under his wing. The Third didn't even pretend to understand it; but Algy had his way, and Lovell minor was given another chance, by his Form as well as by the Head. And Jimmy Silver & Co. could only hope that he would make the most of it.

THE END.

(Another long, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next Monday, entitled, "The Mystery of Mossoul" By Owen Conquest.)



It is safe to say that practically every footballer who in his youth shows some signs of ability at the game dreams of the future. Possibly he sees himself playing on the ground of a First League club before a crowd of fifty thousand spectators or so, and also he may see, in imagination, the day when he will be considered good enough to be chosen to play for his country.

That there is a glamour about big football which makes a wide appeal no one will deny. Especially just now, too, there is a chance for the young footballer who shows ability over the ordinary. Practically every football-club manager is on the lookout for promising material.

The war played havoc with the tried footballers. Many of the first-class men fell in the great, grim game, while others, of course, are considerably older, and, in consequence, much nearer the time when they will be too old to hold their own with the best. Hence the frantic search for young players of promise, for, of all games, football is for the young, the healthy, and the strong.

In the past we have seen boys of eighteen and nineteen playing in the very top class of football. Tom Brown, for instance, who still appears at centre-forward for Man-

chester City, was scoring goals in first-class football when he was only eighteen, and there have been cases in the past when a player has been "capped" before he has been out of his teens. These, however, are the exceptions, and, generally speaking, a player is at his best at or around the age of twenty-five.

You may take it from me, however, that the footballer's calling is not one big bed of roses. There are pitfalls in the way, and temptations to be avoided, if the young player is to realise all his dreams.

In the first place, knowing as much as I do now, I should advise every young player who is given the opportunity of signing-on for a first-class club to ponder well before he does so. Especially should I advise him not to give up a job if that job promises at all well.

Thank goodness, the days seem to have passed when the footballer did nothing but play football for a living. Most of the men now have some other occupation for their hands and minds during the week, and it is as well that they should have. The football does not suffer; and when the rough time comes to the man who has been in the limelight, then he is not left without some means of earning his living.

Only the other day, however, I heard of a case where a young footballer showed himself very foolish. He was asked to sign on for a big club in London, and, at the same time, one of the directors offered to find him quite a decent job, with good prospects, in his office.

This young player replied, however, that he was perfectly willing to become a professional, but that he did not want any other work as well—he wanted to make enough out of the game so that it would not be necessary for him to have any other job. So this young footballer was signed on, at a fair wage per week.

Suppose for a moment, however, that he fails to make good, or that he meets with an accident which puts a sudden end to his career as a footballer. He will be left with nothing to fall back upon, and the popular pet of the football-loving public will eventually find himself where many other once-popular men are to-day—on the very verge of starvation.

Hence, although I don't argue against any young player becoming a professional footballer, I do strongly advise him not to give up a job with prospects. Let him play football, and work as well. Then he has two strings to his bow.

Now we come to the next step, in which we suppose that the young player has signed on, and, having been given a chance to show his skill, has become quite a favourite with the people who attend at the ground whereon he plays. Then the pitfalls really begin to yawn in front of him.

In the first place, the temptation to have a bad attack of what is called "swelled head" is often too strong to be resisted. Because the player has done well in two or three matches, the people make a hero of him, and I could tell you of many a youth who has allowed praise to turn his head to such an extent that he has been absolutely spoilt right at the threshold

of what promised to be a wonderful career on the field.

To imagine that you know everything about the game just because you have played in a few first-class matches and done well in them is a fatal failing. A much safer principle

THE DARLING OF THE CROWD.



The accompanying article throws interesting light on the tricks and temptations which beset the path of the popular professional footballer.

is: "Keep on learning new tricks, and, above all, keep on taking a lot of care of yourself."

That brings us automatically to another temptation which the popular player has to fight—the lure of the public-house, in which will be found many people ready to stand treat to the hero of the day.

Here, again, however, there is something to be thankful for. The professional footballer of to-day has travelled a long distance during the

last twenty years. He used to spend the greater portion of the week, when he was not actually training, leaning over the bar of the public-house which happens to be nearest to the ground on which he played. The professional footballer of to-day, however, has much more respect for himself, speaking generally; but even now I could tell you of young and promising players who have come to the end of their career much sooner than they would otherwise have done had they been able to resist the lure of the public-house bar.

A feature of present-day football which worries everybody who has the real welfare of the game at heart is the increase in gambling on the game. This indirectly affects the player, and is the source of another grave temptation.

Already we have had proved cases where footballers have been "bought" to arrange the result of a particular match. A financial inducement has been held out to this or that player to let his side down, and in one or two cases he has been unable to resist the temptation to "get rich quick."

In this gambling element, which has crept into football until it already has a strong hold, there is a real danger to the game as well as to the men who play it. Football which is not genuine will soon lose its hold on the public; and when it loses that hold it will naturally cease to be a profession worth having or following, because there will be no money in it for the expert.

Summed up, then, my advice to the young player who receives his chance to shine in the best class of football is: "Keep your head."

(Next Monday's footer article is entitled, "Holding Up the Fortwards!" By E. Langworth, of Liverpool, and All England fame.)

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF A GREAT NEW SERIAL!

The DOUBLE HORSESHOE RANCH



A Thrilling New Story of a Young Cowboy's Adventures in the Wild West.
By GORDON WALLACE.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF THIS
GRAND STORY!

Steve Emberton, a youth of about nineteen summers is prospecting with his father in the West of Canada, where he comes into contact with a party of cowboys from the Double-Horseshoe Ranch. The foreman, Jake Collinson, is so impressed with the lad's horsemanship that he offers Steve a job at the ranch. After having talked the matter over with his father, Steve accepts the offer. His acceptance is largely influenced by the fact that the ranch, which is run by Basnett, a blind man, really belongs to his father.

John Emberton's uncle had made a will making over the ranch to him, but when Steve's father became acquainted with this his uncle was too far gone to remember where he had hidden the will. Precious to this he had made a will in favour of Basnett, who was then his foreman, and that will was held valid in the absence of the other. Steve's plan is to work at the ranch with the intention of keeping an eye open for the missing will. He chums up with a fellow cowboy named Billy Steele, at the same time incurring the enmity of Jose Pascuales, a Mexican half-breed. Steve makes a good start in his new job by rescuing Aguilu, the step-daughter of Basnett, from being precipitated over a canyon by a pair of runaway buggy-horses; but Basnett does not prove himself very grateful.

Miss Aguilu invites Steve over to the house, and on his arrival the lad is surprised to find the place in darkness. He hears voices and is about to knock at the door from whence they proceed, when an angry voice raised in protest assails his ears. "You're lying, Jose! I can see it in your face!" It was the voice of Simon Basnett!

(Now read on.)

More Mystery!

"None other but Simon Basnett, owner of the Double-Horseshoe Ranch, would dare to call a Jose Pascuales out!" came another voice, softly, sibilantly; and Steve, as he listened, could imagine the Mexican fingering his knife as he spoke. "But you and Jose, boss, know a too much about each other to quarrel. Is it not so? But I am not lying, señor."

The conversation, whatever it was about, was none of Steve's affair. He had no wish to play the eavesdropper. To be sure, the remark of the rancher's struck him as odd. For a blind man to say he could see the lie in Jose's face was strange.

Accordingly, Steve raised his hand again, and rapped sharply on the door. It came open at once, and Steve saw that his first guess had been correct. There was no light in the room, another reason for causing Steve to think his employer's remark strange.

It was Jose who opened the door. The Mexican struck a match and held it aloft. He snarled as he recognised Steve standing in the hallway. Then he sneered.

"So, my fine Britisher, he is spying, is it not?" he asked.

Steve flushed. The insult was almost too much for him. His fingers itched to strike the dark face so near to him. But he realised that it would be a foolish thing to do, to start a fight in the house of his employer on the first night of his stay at the Double-Horseshoe.

He stared straight into Jose's face, then shifted his gaze, and looked over the Mexican's shoulder and into the room. He saw the blind rancher had stood up now, was holding the flame of a match he had struck to an oil-lamp. The rancher was shading his dreadful eyes with one hand.

But what surprised Steve most was that Simon Basnett had writing materials before him, and a quill pen was held between his lips.

"A blind man writing, and in the dark!" mused the Britisher. "Well, I'm dashed! What can it all mean?"

"Who is that, Pascuales?" asked the blind rancher, turning his strange eyes in Steve's direction.

"The new hand, señor," answered the Mexican, grinning evilly. "I caught him with his ear to the key-hole—spying!"

"That's a lie!" cried the Britisher hotly. "Why should I spy on you? I came here because Miss Aguilu sent an invitation to me to see her, and—and the housekeeper."

He remembered then that he did not know Batty Ann's proper name.

The rancher reached out a long arm and seized Steve's in a grip like a steel vice. So powerful was it that Steve had to bite his lips to keep back a cry of pain. Big and tough though the British lad's biceps were, they seemed like putty in the blind man's grasp. Nor did Basnett release him, but drew him towards himself.

Again, for the second time that day, the youngster felt the long, tapering fingers pass up and down his face. He tried to draw himself away, for there was something about this touch that was very repugnant to him. But he might have saved himself the effort. He was held quite fast.

"What did you hear?" demanded Basnett.

"I heard you call Jose a liar!" replied Steve. "And I must say I agree with you, sir, too!"

"What else?"

The rancher shook the lad roughly. Steve clenched his free hand. But before he struck out with it, he remembered that for the present his policy was to act with caution. He did not care to risk dismissal from the ranch just yet. He had a great deal to do. It was his duty to keep on the Double-Horseshoe, in order that he might search the place thoroughly for the missing will. To have done as he felt inclined, would have meant the spoiling of his and his father's plans entirely.

Accordingly, he unclenched his fist and let his arm hang to his side. But his face was scarlet with rage.

"I heard nothing else," he said. "Now, please, if you'll let my arm go, I'll get out of the room."

Basnett released his cruel grip, giving the lad a thrust at the same time, which sent him reeling towards Jose Pascuales. The Mexican slyly thrust out a spurred foot, with the result that Steve staggered against the table and almost fell to the floor.

The lamp tottered, then fell over with a crash. Fortunately for the Double-Horseshoe ranch-house, it was one of those patent self-extinguishing lamps, therefore, beyond the fact that a little coal-oil was spilt on the table, there was no damage done.

The room was plunged into instant darkness.

"Confound you for a blithering idiot!" cried Steve, shaking his fist in the direction of Pascuales. "Wait till I get a light! I'm fed up with you! I'll—"

He fumbled in his pocket for his matchbox, but before he could strike a match, a light appeared in Jose's hand. But before the Mexican could apply the flame to the lamp again, the rancher stretched out a long arm and knocked it out of Jose's hand.

"Wait!" said Simon Basnett. "No light yet! Ah! Come here again!"

Once more he seized Steve in his terrible grip, and the lad felt his head being turned towards the rancher. Then, as Steve wondered what it was all about a deep silence prevailed for several seconds. It was weird. Steve could feel the breath

of the rancher falling on his face somewhat unevenly. At length, though, his arm was free again.

"A light, Pascuales," he said. "This man can get out. I have had a start. For a moment I thought I had met a ghost!"

"Senor!" cried Jose Pascuales hastily. "Take a care! You speak a more than is wise, maybe!"

He struck another match as he spoke, and, as the lamp-glass was only cracked, set the lamp upright

things he had experienced since his entry into the house.

The Double-Horseshoe Ranch, he decided, was a very mysterious place. This was the second time since his arrival that he had come to this decision. And there were strange people in it. There was a blind man, who said and did odd things for a sightless person to do, and there seemed to be an intimacy between the "boss" of the ranch and a scurrilous, oily-haired, evil-eyed, half-bred Spaniard.

"Well, maybe it's none of my business—and maybe it's got a lot to do with my job here," he muttered. "However, for the present, I'd best have another shot at finding Miss Aguilu and the old girl."

The Truth Will Out!

Just then a door across the hallway came open, and the weird-looking figure of Batty Ann was silhouetted against the light that poured out of another room. The light fell on Steve, and she saw him. She beckoned to him with a talon-like finger. Steve removed his hat, and stepped across the hall. A moment later he was in a plainly, but cosily-furnished room, in the presence of Miss Aguilu and the strange old woman.

"You sent for me?" he said quietly, looking at the girl. "Sorry I was so long coming, but your father stopped me."

Aguilu Gray smiled, and held out her hand. Steve took it, and returned the pressure.

"Ann here would insist on knowing

know," said Ann clearly, "as if you were his own son."

Steve started slightly, and met the woman's gaze for a moment; but he soon took his eyes away from her face. He felt distinctly uncomfortable. Perhaps Aguilu noticed him, and wished to spare him the confusion he was feeling and showing.

"Can you play the piano?" she asked.

"Not much," Steve admitted. "But I'm sure you can. Will you?"

He was glad to find any excuse to turn the old woman's attention from him.

The girl sat down to the piano that stood in a corner of the room. She played very well, and, as Steve did not often have the opportunity of listening to good music, he soon was enjoying the novelty to the full; he forgot for the time the strange, mysterious things that seemed to be going on around him here at the Double-Horseshoe Ranch. At any rate, he told himself, here was somebody—Aguilu—who was open and above board. There was nothing in the way of a mystery attached to her, he decided. She was just a frank, honest girl, one of the sort it was well worth knowing.

Later, when she pressed him to do so, he sang. He had a pleasant baritone voice, and she accompanied him well. It got far later before he knew it than he imagined, but at length he realised that he would have to get back to the bunk-house. So he arose. Then it was that he became aware that Ann's strange eyes were again



CATCHING A CATTLE THIEF! Steve drew hard at the rein, and Diabolo, excited by the firing, was not quick to answer. With a prodigious bound he cleared the fallen horse, and as he did so, Steve's hat went flying. For the stranger with incredible swiftness had rolled over on to his side, and fired at the lad.

and soon the room was again filled with light. Steve noticed, as he looked towards his employer, that Basnett again was holding his hand in front of his eyes.

"Go!" said Basnett to Steve. "I believe you heard nothing; but if ever you are caught trying to overhear what's not meant for your ears, remember you will be very sorry for it!"

A bitter retort sprang to Steve's lips. But he kept it down; instead, he turned to the door. As he passed Pascuales, he was prompted to do a very hasty thing; and he did it. He doubled his fist and dealt the Mexican a heavy blow in the lower ribs, making Jose gasp. Out came Jose's knife, but Steve took no notice of it. Instead, he went out into the hallway, and closed the door after him. Then he stood for a moment, pondering his next move, and the

you as soon as I told her how you saved my life," she said. "Ann and I are great friends, you know."

"I wish you'd forget I did anything for you!" said Steve clumsily. "And I'm not so sure I saved your life. You got an awful shaking up as it was."

"You saved my life," the girl said firmly. "So please don't try to make light of it! It's not very flattering, anyhow, to me to say it was nothing!"

Steve blushed hard. Batty Ann stopped in front of him, and surveyed him closely. She had strange, piercing eyes. And, oddly enough, Steve felt, as she gazed at him, as he had felt those few moments in the darkened room where the rancher and the Mexican were, when all had been silent. Then, as now, it had felt as though his very inmost soul was being read.

"You are as like a man I used to

fixed on him. Her lips were moving slightly.

"Good-night, and thank you!" he said to Aguilu. "You're very kind to let me come in and hear music again!"

"Good-night!" she said, with a smile. "You'll have to come in here often. You sing very nicely!"

He turned to the old woman. She did not appear to see his outstretched hand. Instead of taking it, she laid both her hands on his broad shoulders and turned his face towards the light of the lamp.

"I know a man like you once—the image of you," she said. "His name was John Emberton. You might be his son, so like him are you. Tell me, are you John Emberton's son?"

Steve bit his lip. But she was again searching him through and through. Also, Steve had never told

a lie in his life. He had come to the Double Horseshoe Ranch under an assumed name to ennet a lie. But this direct question was too much for his honesty. To be asked point-blank if he were John Emberton's son was a thing he had never calculated on.

"Yes," he said simply. Then he became aware that the door of the room was open. Standing in the doorway was Simon Bassett, while, out in the hall, Jose Pascales stood behind him.

Billy Steele is Puzzled.

There was only a cynical smile on the blind rancher's lips as he stepped further into the room. His hands were outstretched until they touched the back of a chair. Having found what he sought, he sat down upon it. Pascales stood on the threshold, looking very sulky; it was patent that the presence of Steve in Miss Aguila's private sitting-room did not please him at all.

"I hope you have had a pleasant evening, Emberton!" said the rancher, with a soft laugh. Steve bit his lip in vexation. He felt that the cat was properly out of the bag. He made no reply. He saw there was a query written in Aguila's face. He felt mean.

"I hope your father's quite well?" Bassett continued. "This is very interesting, meeting your father's son. I used to know John Emberton quite well."

Steve pulled himself together. After all, why should Bassett associate the assumed name Steve had adopted with any such mission as the Britisher had in hand?

"I had a good reason for calling myself Harris, sir," he said quietly. "My dear boy," said the rancher, with another sneering smile on his thin lips. "I have not asked you for your private history. Indeed, I did not come here to see you at all. I came to see you, Aguila."

He held out something that looked like a cheque-book to the girl. It was open. The girl took it, and, without a word, wrote her name at the foot of the topmost form.

This did not strike Steve at first as anything strange. Her stepfather, being blind, no doubt entrusted her with the signing of all the rancher's cheques. And then it struck Steve again as odd that, if he had recently surprised Bassett with writing materials in front of him and a pen, still wet with ink, in his mouth, the rancher, who obviously to Steve could write, should not be able to do such a simple thing as sign a cheque for himself.

When the girl handed the cheque-book back to her stepfather Simon Bassett came to his feet, and, still groping with his hands, left the room. He appeared to take no further notice of Steve, but, before he shut the door, he handed the cheque to Jose Pascales.

Steve turned again to the girl. She was sitting at the table, with a worried look on her face. Steve did not think the worry was on his behalf. She was looking at nothing in particular. At length she shook her head, sighed, and smiled at the Britisher. "Good-night!" she said.

Steve went out, without another word, and felt very much ashamed of himself. He blamed Batty Ann for showing him up as a man living under false pretences to the girl. He considered her a dangerous one to know, and he decided she had better go down on the list of people on the ranch he had made who would require watching. If she had let him down at the very beginning of his stay on the ranch, then she might let him down worse later. In which conclusion, as it happened, he was entirely wrong.

He turned into his bunk and tried to sleep. It had been a hard day, and he was very tired; but sleep would not come to him till well past midnight, and when it did he dreamed unpleasant dreams, in which the blind rancher, the half-mad woman, Jose Pascales, and the iron-fingered Chinaman were all jumbled together as a body, determined to frustrate him in his endeavour to trace the missing will which would, if found, make the Double Horseshoe Ranch his father's.

All hands turned out bright and early the following morning. Jake Collinson, the foreman, detailed Steve and Billy to ride together on the southernmost boundary-line of the ranch. The time of the fall round-up was approaching, when all hands' every effort would be needed to gather together all the stray cattle that had wandered all over the plains since the previous round-up in May.

Just now work was comparatively easy, but the grass of the prairie was growing somewhat scant, and it was

one of the cowboys' duties to see that the cattle got the best grazing it was possible for them to get.

It was as they rode along at a brisk, loping canter that Steve suddenly half-turned in his saddle, after ten minutes' silence, and put a question to his friend.

"Billy," he said, "about Simon Bassett—is he really blind?"

"Is he blind?" repeated Billy Steele. "Waal, I should say so. Queer question to ask, ain't it?"

"I suppose so," said the Britisher thoughtfully, "but he strikes me as being a man not so blind as people make out!" And he recounted his adventures of the previous night whilst in the ranch house. Billy listened seriously.

"Seems to me there's no reason why a man shouldn't be able to write, even if blind," said the Canadian. "I guess I could train myself to do it."

"Then, if Bassett can, why should he get his step-daughter to sign cheques for him? He got Miss Aguila to sign a cheque last night, and it was some cheque, too. I saw the amount—ten thousand dollars!"

"Who?" sibilated Billy. "Ten thousand of the best! Didn't know the ranch could have stood a cheque like that. Did ye see who it was made out to?"

"No," replied Steve; "but he handed it to Jose afterwards!"

"Waal," said Billy, "I guess I wouldn't trust Jose with ten thousand grains o' wheat, let alone dollars. Ye're right, pard, there's somethin' funny round these parts."

"And who's Batty Ann exactly?" asked Steve. He recounted the incident in which he had given his identity away. "Is she as mad as she looks?"

"Son," said Billy, smiling, "you're getting queer notions about the people on the Double-Horseshoe. Take it from me, Batty Ann's all as batty as she looks. But she's a good sort, is Ann. She's almost a mother to Miss Aguila, and she's a lifelong institution on the ranch. It's a way she has, though, to ask straight questions so pat that you have to answer 'em before you want to. She caused ye to make a bad break last night, but it appears as Simon Bassett don't take much stock of what your name is, or may be. However, I'd keep my wits about me if I were you when Batty's hangin' round."

"If she knew my father years ago, she probably knew something about the will that my great-uncle made in my father's favour," said Steve thoughtfully. "I'll have to try pumpin' her some day."

"Where d'ye figure to start lookin' for that will?" asked Billy. Steve shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he said, "but I think I shall explore the whole of that ranch house thoroughly first. And that'll be a job, with all the people there are in it. However, I suppose I've still got to earn my wages, providing I don't get the sack. Are those our cattle?"

He pointed to a fair-sized herd that was grazing half a mile away. Billy Steele nodded, and the two cantered briskly up to about three hundred head of red steers and heifers that were peacefully eating their fill of the sun-dried grass.

"That's the red herd," said Billy. "It's the smallest herd we have on the place, but it looks to me, somehow, as though it should be a bit bigger. Should be seven hundred of 'em. An' cattle this time o' the year don't scatter so badly. I saw this herd four days ago, and they were twice as many then."

"Meaning?" asked Steve. "Hope there ain't been no stampede," said Billy. "Seen no weather or such-like trouble as I know of to start that up, though. But—"

He counted over the cattle. On the western plains an experienced cow-puncher can tell at a glance whether his herd is as it should be. This red herd was Billy Steele's own care. The Canadian's brow grew puckered at length.

"There's four hundred odd short somehow," he said. "This'll be joyful news for Bassett when I report it to him. But we'll just do a bit of a scout round first, before we gets the wind up. Maybe they have just strayed!"

They set their horses off at a brisk gallop across the plains, making wide sweeps for about an hour. Save for an odd straggling beast here and there, they found nothing. Then, at Billy's suggestion, they turned due south, and soon crossed the boundary of the Double-Horseshoe Ranch, which also was the edge of the good grazing land. They soon struck a stretch of land where there was very little or no grass. In a short while the ground turned to loose sand, hot and

dry, for there had been no rain in that part of the country for over a month.

It was here that Billy drew rein on his horse, and Steve did the same with Diabolo. For a while they proceeded at a walk-pace, while Billy leaned forward in the saddle. All at once he gave a shout. Steve, riding about fifty yards from him, cantered over to him.

Billy pointed to the ground. The sandy soil was very much disturbed. It seemed as though countless hoofs had recently passed over it. Billy's face was hard-looking as Steve glanced inquiringly at it.

"There has been a stampede!" the Canadian announced. "And I'll bet my summer's pay it's the red herd, too. But it wasn't no ordinary stampede!"

"What then?" asked Steve, excited by the expression in Billy's face.

Billy rode forward a few more paces, and pointed again. "There's horses' footmarks on the flanks of the steers," he said. "The red cattle have been run off!"

"Run off?" repeated Steve. "You mean—"

"I'll lay odds they have been rustled," said Billy. "There've been cattle-thieves at work here!"

The Capture of Black McKnight!

"They must have happened quite recently, too," said Billy, pointing to the tracks on the ground. "Probably last night. Waal, there's been quite a bit of this work goin' on round here lately, but this is the first time they've visited our ranch!"

"I thought the country was too civilised these days for cattle-rustlers to have much chance," said Steve.

Billy laughed. "We all thought it had died down for good, but about two years ago it seemed to start all up again," he said.

"Some o' the ranchers have lost hundreds. But this seems to be the biggest scoop they've made yet. I'll lay a hen all them four hundred red steers were in that bunch."

"Are the rustlers known?" asked Steve.

"Not exactly known, but there's some as is suspected very strong," said Billy. "There's one man, though, is definitely known to be one. His name's Black McKnight. But this rustlin's goin' off over half of Montana, and there's gangs all over the place. There's a leader of 'em somewhere; but nobody's yet been able to guess who the leader is. Waal, what about ridin' a bit further on? There's a chance we might be able to get some idea where this lot's been driven off to."

They rode on southwards for several miles, following the tracks quite clearly for so far. But soon the country began to change again, and the tracks were lost in the short-cropped, sunburnt grass. At length Billy drew rein.

"Not much use, I reckon," he said. "This'll mean night-guards for us punchers from now on. Jake Collinson never set us on night-work between round-ups before, but it'll have to be done. Blame the rustlers, say I! I like my bed's well as anyone else!"

"What's the next move?" asked Steve, who was only to-day attached to Billy for instruction in the cow-puncher's work. "Get back to the ranch to report?"

"I'm yes! But we ain't far from Big Horn just now, so I think we'll pay that place a visit and inform Sheriff Dawson. Maybe he'll be interested in the news. He always opined as the Double-Horseshoe wouldn't stay unmolested for ever!"

They set their horses at a canter again, angling slightly east. Big Horn township was about six miles off now. But before they reached the town, they came across a trail, and, standing at the point where they met it, was a shanty.

"Belongs to the U-bar-U crowd," said Billy, "though it's only used on round-ups. Somebody there now, though, if the smoke from the stove-pipe's anything to go by. Yep, there's a man just comin' out."

Steve saw a man appear from the shanty. While they were still a matter of a hundred yards away, this man mounted a horse that was standing outside. He did not shut the door, but turned his horse's head for the trail, which led due east and west.

"Something I seem to know about that horse," said Billy, looking after the man. "Bay and white piebalds ain't very common in these parts. The last man I knowed who rode one was—"

He suddenly clapped spurs to his horse, and set off at a gallop after the man going east. Steve, not knowing what was in Billy's mind, allowed Diabolo also to stretch out, and side by side the two chums drummed across the plain. They gained on the

figure in front, but for a while the latter did not appear to notice he was being followed.

Then he turned his head, and apparently saw Steve and Billy. As he did so, Billy let out a loud yell, an order for him to halt. There was no response, but the pace of the animal in front seemed to quicken. Billy rammied spurs harder into his broncho, Diabolo, who needed no spurs, lengthened his stride to keep up, and Steve, wondering what had got into his friend, allowed the gallant black to go to its own pace.

They slowly gained on the man in front, who time and again kept looking backwards over his shoulder. The distance between them lessened from the original hundred yards, a yard at a time, until there were barely as many feet between them, and the man's features, when he turned his head, could plainly be seen.

"Thought I was right!" yelled Billy, as the wind whistled past Steve's ears. "Hi! Halt thar! Pull up, you!"

"What's it all about?" shouted Steve. "Who is he?"

Just then there was a puff of smoke immediately in front. Steve ducked involuntarily, as he felt something zip startlingly past his head. Another puff of smoke, and another, and each time bullets passed between Billy Steele and the Britisher.

"Something queer here," muttered the Britisher, and dragged his own revolver from its holster. He did not take aim at the man, though, for the pace Diabolo was going at would have made his aim uncertain; besides, he did not yet know why he was being fired at, and hesitated about returning the man's shots. Steve had not always "packed" a gun, as his friend had.

But Billy had no such hesitation about him. He flashed out his heavy colt, and it spoke once—twice. All at once, the horse in front seemed to stumble; then it went forward on its nose. There was a great uprising of alkali dust as the beast went flat on its side, kicking wildly, sending its rider flying afar.

Steve drew hard at the reins, but Diabolo, probably excited by the sound of the revolver firing, was not quick to answer. He shot forward, and—for he was almost on top of the fallen horse—gave a prodigious bound, and cleared it. As he did so, Steve's hat went flying, for the stranger, with incredible swiftness, and being entirely unhurt by his fall, had rolled over on to his side, and had fired at the lad.

At length, Diabolo, snorting, his nostrils showing blood-red, came to a standstill; but not for long, for still another shot was fired—at Billy Steele this time. Then Diabolo's hot temper burst out. He gave a spring, and jumped right on top of the fellow. There was a yell, and when Steve managed to curb his steed, the stranger was lying on his back, his mouth wide open, a bristly, black beard pointing skywards. His hands were clutching his gun, and Steve could see that he was spasmodically jerking the trigger, though the gun was empty.

"Say," roared Billy Steele, pointing straight down on the fellow with his colt, "just put your hands up, mister! That is, if you're not too badly smashed up. Put 'em up!"

The fellow showed he was not seriously hurt, for he sat upright suddenly, both hands, one holding the gun, held straight up.

"Thought as much!" granted Billy, dismounting quickly, and approaching the fellow. "Just throw your gun away, and keep set thar, like that, with your hands up. Guess you're just the feller Sheriff Dawson'll be glad to see!"

"Well, who is he?" asked Steve, as the fellow obeyed, and sent his revolver far enough with a jerk of the hand.

"Mr. Black McKnight, the rustler I was talkin' about," said Billy. "It's Black McKnight, the only one of the rustlers as is known to anybody, and then not to many. I guess I know him well enough, anyhow. Sheriff Dawson will be pleased; and so should the boss, I guess. Let's see if ye're hurt much, pardner."

He stooped over the rustler, who, when he knew he was recognised, seemed to go as white in the face as a bushy, black beard and moustache and eyebrows, that overhung, would let him. A quick examination showed that, though Diabolo had landed right on top of him, he was only badly bruised. There were no bones broken.

"That's better for you," remarked Billy. "Now, try an' stand up."

He jerked the rustler to his feet. The black-bearded one broke out into a torrent of oaths. He only stood on one leg. A shake from

Billy cut short his swearing, and he began, instead, to grin and hiss with pain as he tried to bear some weight on his other foot.

"Waal," said Billy, "I'm afraid ye can't walk, and your own horse ain't fit to carry you far."

As a matter of fact, the rustler's own horse was in a very bad way. Steve examined it, and found it had a leg broken. He therefore put an end to its misery by sending a bullet from his revolver through its brain.

"So up ye gets on to my plug, an' no monkey-shines, either!" said Billy. And he hoisted McKnight into the saddle. Then he swung himself up behind, and, at a slow jog-trot, the party continued their way to Big Horn.

They reached there half an hour later. It was high noon then, and the little cattle-town was busy. When Steve and Billy, with their prisoner, trotted in, there were many who saw them, and curious faces were turned towards them. A crowd on foot followed them as they saw the party were heading for the brick building which was dignified by the title of court-house. For Big Horn was the capital town of Alfalfa County, and here the sheriff had his headquarters; also, the county gaol was there.

Many questions were asked the two chums as they escorted their prisoner. But Billy refused to inform them who their captive was. He rode straight on, and finally came to the court-house, where he slid from his horse's back and dragged McKnight after him. Then, thrusting a hand under his arm, he dragged him inside. Steve tied the two horses to a hitching-post, and followed.

The sheriff was sitting at a table in his private office. He was a very large, fat man, with a jolly, double-chinned face, that was all wrinkles and smiles as Steve first saw him. He sported a great silver star on the breast of his blue shirt, while about his waist was strapped a cartridge-belt that supported a huge revolver, one that did not at all appear to fit his smiling face.

"Waal!" he said, "an' what's the trouble this time, sonny?"

"Got Black McKnight here," said Billy Steele quietly. "You oughter be glad, sheriff."

Sheriff Dawson's jaw dropped, and his eyes looked like popping out of his head. He lugged the huge gun out of his belt; but when he observed that the prisoner was unarmed, that Billy had a good grip on his neck, he repouched it, stood up, and eyed McKnight over.

"Waal," he said, "I allus surmised Black McKnight looked like a blame tough, and, by heck, I believe I was right, though this is the first time I set eyes on him! Waal, this is a surprise! Guess I got a nice hang cell for you, my lad. Guess we'll be able to make you talk some, too, about the rest of your rustlin' gang before we've finished with you. We have a way of makin' people say things here."

The man McKnight ousled vobably. He struggled in Billy's grip, almost got loose from him; but the sheriff, with an agility that was truly amazing in a man of his bulk, jumped forward, and snapped a pair of handcuffs over his wrists. Then, at a whistle from Dawson, a deputy-sheriff strolled into the room. McKnight was hustled to the back of the building, and a moment later was safely locked behind iron bars.

"I guess that's a heap of honest ranchers round these parts as'll be mighty pleased at what ye've done, son," remarked Sheriff Dawson, as he took down particulars of McKnight's capture from Billy and Steve.

"Boss Bassett oughter be so, too," opined Billy Steele. "Guess I have somethin' else to report, sheriff—namely, four hundred of the Double-Horseshoe red herd hev' bin run off, either last night or the night before."

"So?" asked Dawson, lifting his eyebrows. "Waal, I allus calculated as Bassett's luck with the rustlers wouldn't hold out for ever. Four hundred, ye said? Some bunch for one rustle—eh?"

"It sure is," said Billy. "Guess I'll get back to the ranch an' inform Bassett about it. So-long, sheriff! Ye'll know where to find me if ye want me."

He and Steve left the court-house, and, without staying to accept the many invitations to refresh themselves fired at them by the citizens of Big Horn, set off at a round gallop for the Double-Horseshoe Ranch.

(Another exciting instalment of this splendid Wild-West story in next Monday's issue of THE BOYS' FRIEND. Order next week's copy to-day from your newsagent.)



ON THE WARPATH!

A Grand, Complete Story of FRANK RICHARDS & Co., introducing their rivals of Hillcrest.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapter.

Not According to Programme.

"Snow again!" said Frank Richards.

It was coming down in thick, incessant flakes, as the Cedar Creek fellows came out of the lumber school after morning lessons.

"All the better!" said Bob Lawless cheerily.

Chunky Todgers grunted. "I guess I'm sticking to the stove," he remarked.

"I guess you're a fat clam!" retorted Bob. "Who's coming over to Hillcrest?"

"Not me!" said Chunky, promptly and ungrammatically, and he disappeared in the direction of the stove.

Frank Richards & Co. stepped out into the falling snow.

"What are we going to Hillcrest for?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"What for?" repeated Bob.

"Didn't Franky catch a first-class cold through the Hillcrest fellows snowballing him into a drift? Of course, he was a silly jay to tumble into the drift—"

"Fathead!" said Frank Richards politely.

"But we're bound to make the Hillcrest galoots sit up for it!" continued Bob.

"If we hustle along on the snowshoes we shall catch Dicky Bird going home to dinner. Who's coming?"

"Oh, I'll come!" said Beauclerc, laughing. "It will keep us warm, anyhow."

"You're coming, Franky?"

"Just as you like," said Frank Richards. "But you know Mr. Peckover came over here complaining to Miss Meadows last time—"

"Oh, blow Mr. Peckover!"

"Blow him as much as you like; but Miss Meadows—"

"My dear chap, come on, and don't chew the rag!" said Bob Lawless.

"We shall miss Dicky Bird if we stand here talking!"

"Oh, all right!"

The three chums buckled on their snowshoes, and started.

Through the falling flakes they glided out of the gates of Cedar Creek, and out upon the Thompson trails.

Bob Lawless led the way at a terrific burst of speed, and Frank and Vere Beauclerc did their best to keep up with him.

The snowshoes covered the trail at a great rate, the chums of Cedar Creek whizzing merrily along through the frosty atmosphere.

The smoke of Thompson was rising over the trees ahead, when they stopped at a fork in the trail. Ahead of them lay the town of Thompson, and on the left, towards the creek, the trail that ran through the frozen timber to Hillcrest School.

Bob Lawless looked keenly along the path to Hillcrest.

"No tracks there," he said. "They haven't passed yet."

"The snow's falling; it might have covered them up," suggested Frank Richards.

"Not in the time, fathead! I tell you—they haven't passed. Cover!" said Bob. "They might be along any minute now."

"Right-ho!"

The three chums whipped off their snowshoes, and took up their position behind a clump of frost-blackened larches close by the fork of the trail. And while they waited they prepared a pile of snowballs, all ready for the Hillcrest fellows when they passed.

There was soon a pile of ammunition ready to their hands, but there was no sign of Dicky Bird & Co. on the trail.

Bob Lawless began to look puzzled. "They're jolly late going to dinner!" he remarked.

"And we shall be late back for dinner at this rate!" remarked Frank Richards.

"Bother dinner!"

"My dear chap, I'm hungry."

"Same here!" grinned Beauclerc.

"Bob, old fellow, I think the Hillcrest fellows must be staying at the school."

"I guess not. They don't have their dinner at the school as we do, as they're so close to the town," said Bob, shaking his head. "Blessed if I savvy why they're so late! They can't have spotted us and gone another way."

"If they spotted us they wouldn't go another way; they'd go for us!"

"Correct! They'll come along, right enough!"

Bob Lawless peered through the larches along the trail. But there was no sign of the Hillcresters.

"Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" chuckled Frank Richards.

"Oh, bother!" said Bob crossly.

fellows appeared among the trees, and amid loud shouts of laughter, snowballs rained upon the heroes of Cedar Creek. It was only too evident that the astute Dicky Bird had spotted them on the trail, and led his followers round through the timber to attack them from behind.

Frank Richards & Co. attempted to return the fire, but the fusillade was too heavy.

Under a whizzing shower of snowballs they were driven through the crackling larches, and out on the trail, leaving their snowshoes behind them.

"Oh, the rotters!" gasped Bob.

"Stand up to it! Ooooooh!"

"Give 'em socks!" yelled Dicky Bird.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Hillcrest crowd followed up the retreating trio, pelting them with in-

lives, leaving the field of battle in possession of the Hillcrest crowd.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Trophy of Victory!

"Oh, dear!"

"Ow!"

"Ooooooh!"

Thus Frank Richards & Co., as they arrived, breathless, at the gates of Cedar Creek School.

There was no one in the playground. Cedar Creek was at dinner in the lumber schoolhouse.

"What a rotten sell!" gasped Bob Lawless. "Come on; we sha'n't get any dinner at this rate!"

"Oh, you ass!" mumbled Frank Richards.

"It wasn't my fault, fathead!"

"Oh, you're a clump!" gasped Frank. "Is that what you call going on the warpath? It was just pie to those Hillcrest bounders."

"Let's get in to dinner," said Beauclerc.

"Not if Frank hasn't finished wagging his chin," said Bob Lawless sarcastically.

"Oh, come on!" grunted Frank.

The chums of Cedar Creek arrived flushed and breathless in the dining-room. Dinner was well on its way, and Miss Meadows, at the head of the table, gave the late-comers a severe glance as they entered.

"You are late!" she said sharply.

"We—we—we were delayed on the trail, Miss Meadows!" stammered Bob.

"You should not have been delayed on the trail, Lawless."

"Ahem! We—we've lost our snowshoes, and it was rather difficult getting back, ma'am," said Frank.



NOT NICE FOR BOB! In the light of the house Mr. Peckover could be seen striding out with a gun in his hands. Frank and Beauclerc jumped desperately for the gate. Bob Lawless was not so fortunate however. As they clambered up the dog rushed in and his teeth closed—fortunately upon thick homespun! Bob gave a yell as he was bumped backwards in the snow. "Who is there?" shouted the schoolmaster. "Stop! Stand! Hands up!"

"They're not in sight. What the thunder makes them so late to-day?"

"Whizz, whizz, whizz! Smash, smash!"

"Hallo! Look out!" yelled Frank Richards.

There was a sudden fusillade of snowballs, but not from the direction of the trail in front. It came from the timber behind.

The Cedar Creek fellows spun round in amazement and alarm, with snowballs smashing on them in volleys.

Through the frosty trunks behind them, six or seven grinning faces could be seen, the faces of Dicky Bird, Fisher, Blumpy, and a crowd of the Hillcrest fellows. They had arrived, but they had arrived from the wrong direction, and taken the ambush in the rear.

"Oh Jerusalem!" gasped Bob Lawless. "The rotters! They spotted us after all—"

Smash, smash, smash!

"Groogh!" gasped Frank, as he caught a snowball with his mouth, another with his nose, and a third in his eye. "Oooooooh!"

"Go for them!" roared Dicky Bird.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whizz, whizz! Smash!

More and more of the Hillcrest

cessant snowballs. Frank Richards & Co. attempted to make a stand in the trail, but it was in vain. The odds were too great, and the volleys too heavy.

They were driven back towards Cedar Creek, gasping for breath, and half-blinded by the snow that smashed in their faces.

They fairly ran for it at last.

"Oh, by gum!" gasped Bob Lawless, as they stopped at last, out of range. "Oh, dear, what a sell!"

"Oh, you ass!" spluttered Frank Richards, as he gonged snow from his eyes. "If you ever—"

"Let's get back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the Hillcrest crowd. Dicky Bird held up a bundle of snowshoes.

"Are you coming back for them?" he yelled.

"Oh, my hat! They've got our snowshoes!" stuttered Frank. "We've got to get them back—"

"Come on!" said Bob desperately.

The three Cedar Creek fellows charged. They were met by a terrific volley of snowballs that fairly rolled them over in the trail. Then the Hillcrest crowd rushed to close quarters, pelting them till they struggled up and fled, minus their snowshoes.

Frank Richards & Co. ran for their

"Very well, you may sit down."

Fortunately Miss Meadows asked no further questions. Frank Richards & Co. sat down to dinner. Chunky Todgers leaned over towards Frank.

"Did you get a licking?" he asked, in a stage whisper.

"Shurrup!"

"Then you did!" grinned Chunky. "Have the Hillcrest galoots bagged your snowshoes?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Todgers. There were grinning faces along the crowded table, as the hapless raiders ate their dinner. The Cedar Creek fellows did not need telling that the raiders, who had gone for wood, had returned shorn. As the school came out after dinner, Frank Richards & Co. were surrounded by questioners. And instead of sympathising, the Cedar Creek fellows only roared with laughter when they heard the result of the expedition.

"Begad! I ought to have come with you, dear boys!" remarked Algernon Beauclerc.

"Ass!" was Frank Richards' reply.

"I'll come next time, and see you through," said Chunky Todgers, comfortingly.

"Chump!"

"And they've got your snowshoes!" chuckled Eben Hacke. "They'll never let us hear the end of this. You galoots had better take a back seat, and leave Hillcrest to me."

"Oh, cheese it!"

Frank Richards & Co. escaped from the crowd, leaving them chuckling. In the gateway of Cedar Creek they stopped to discuss the matter.

"I—I suppose we got the worst of it," said Bob Lawless. "And the worst is, that they've got our snowshoes, and they'll keep them as trophies. We've got to get them back somehow."

"Let's go over again," suggested Frank sarcastically. "The three of us can mop up all Hillcrest—I don't think!"

Just before afternoon lessons, a dusky Redskin came up the trail from Thompson, and looked in at the school gates. In was Injun Dick, the Apache, and evidently he had a message for somebody. There was an envelope in his dusky hand.

A snow-fight was going on in the playground, and the Indian stopped to look on. Mr. Slimmey, who was coming from his cabin, stopped to speak to the old Apache.

"What do you want here?"

Injun Dick held up the letter.

"Injun, bring letter for Mas Richards," he said.

"Oh, Richards!" called out Mr. Slimmey. "There is a letter for you!"

Frank Richards ran up.

"Thank you, sir! Hand it over, Injun Dick!"

Mr. Slimmey walked on towards the schoolhouse, and Frank held out his hand for the letter. But Injun Dick held out his empty hand, in his turn.

"You give Injun quarter," he said. Frank felt in his pockets, and found a quarter. He could not guess whom the letter was from; but Injun Dick was entitled to his fee as letter-carrier, if the missive was delivered.

Several of the Cedar Creek fellows gathered round, as Frank, having paid over twenty-five cents, received the letter. Injun Dick draped his tattered blanket round him and stalked away.

"What is it, Franky?" asked Bob Lawless. "Old Penrose wanting you to do some more stunts for the 'Thompson Press'?"

"Blessed if I know."

Frank Richards opened the letter. He stared as he looked at it.

"My hat! The cheeky rotter!"

"What is it?"

"The cheeky, bounder!" roared Frank. "I've paid twenty-five cents for this blessed Hillcrest cheek!"

"Hillcrest! Let's look!"

Bob Lawless jerked away the letter, and a dozen Cedar Creek fellows read it at once. It was written in Dicky Bird's somewhat sprawling hand, and it ran:

"Dear Richards.—We're hanging the snowshoes up in the playground at Hillcrest. Come and fetch them—if you can.—DICKY BIRD."

"The cheeky jay!"

"It's up to you galoots!" grinned Eben Hacke. "Go and fetch them—if you can!"

"I guess we will!" growled Bob Lawless.

Clang! Clang!

It was the school-bell, calling Cedar Creek to afternoon lessons. Frank Richards & Co. started for the lumber schoolhouse. But in Miss Meadows' class that afternoon there were three fellows, at least, who were thinking more of the trophy of victory at Hillcrest than of the valuable instruction they were receiving from the Canadian schoolmistress.

The 3rd Chapter.

On the Warpath.

Frank Richards & Co. were glad when school was dismissed that afternoon. The dusk was falling over Cedar Creek when they came out of the lumber school.

Most of the fellows started for home at once; but the three chums lingered.

Without their snowshoes it was a long and weary tramp home through the snow; and besides that they were not at all inclined to leave the trophies in the hands of the Hillcrest fellows.

Chunky Todgers grinned as he passed them on his way to the gates.

"Leave it till to-morrow, and I guess I'll manage it for you somehow," suggested the cheerful Chunky.

Bob Lawless's reply was a whizzing snowball, which caught Master Todgers on his fat little nose, and Chunky yelled and departed.

Black Sam came out to close the gates, and the three chums stopped

in the trail outside. Algernon Beauclerc stopped with them.

"You cut off, old chap," said Vere Beauclerc. "You can tell my father that I shall be a little late."

"Hain't I better see you through, dear boy?" inquired the cousin from the old country.

Bob Lawless picked up a handful of snow.

"Where will you have it, you cheeky young tenderfoot?" he inquired.

Algernon Beauclerc decided not to have it at all. He grinned, and started on his homeward way. The three chums were left together.

"We've got to get back our snowshoes somehow," said Bob Lawless. "It will be no end of a tramp getting home without them. Better start for Hillcrest now."

"The gates will be locked there," remarked Frank Richards, as they tramped up the dusky trail.

"I guess we can climb them."

"That's so; but—"

"My dear chap, we've got no choice. We're not going to have Hillcrest sniggering at us."

"No; but—"

"You're as full of butts as a billy-goat, Frank," said the rancher's son crossly. "Save your breath for walking."

"But—"

"There you go again!" howled Bob.

"Give a chap a chance to speak!" exclaimed Frank. "Dickie Bird says in his letter that he's hung the things up in the playground—"

"That's all right. We shall find them there."

"But—"

"My hat! Are there any billy-goats in your branch of the family, Frank?"

"But listen to me, aas! The Hillcrest fellows will know well enough that we shall come over, and most likely a crowd of them will be waiting for us."

"Let 'em wait."

"If we drop into a dozen of them, we sha'n't get the snowshoes—we shall get snowballs, instead."

"Oh!" said Bob.

And he was very thoughtful. On consideration, it seemed highly probable that Dicky Bird & Co. would linger at the school, in case the chums of Cedar Creek made an attempt to recover the trophies. In fact, it was pretty certain that they would.

"Can't be helped," said Beauclerc at last. "We've got to get them back. But I don't think we'd better let Bob lead us into a trap again."

"Why, you jay—" began Bob Lawless wrathfully.

"Just what I was thinking," said Frank. "We'll get to Hillcrest. But we'll hang around until the bounders are gone, if they're there, which is sure enough. Then we can go in after our things."

"That's a good idea," assented Bob.

The three chums tramped on in the thickening dusk, and arrived in sight of Hillcrest at last, a black mass against the dark sky. Stars were coming out now, and there was a glimmer of light in the frosty timber.

The Cedar Creek fellows kept their eyes well about them as they advanced. The school gate was closed, and evidently locked for the night, and it was unlikely that Dicky Bird & Co. were inside the fence. Mr. Peckover was not likely to allow them to remain within the precincts after the gates were locked.

"There they are!" murmured Bob at last.

On the white snow outside the closed gates five or six shadowy figures were discerned in the distance. Frank Richards & Co. took cover at once.

They had not come over for another fight against heavy odds. Dicky Bird and his comrades were waiting for them, and the chums of Cedar Creek intended to let them wait till they were tired.

Keeping in cover among the frosty tree-trunks, the trio advanced as near as they could, without giving the alarm. As they stood in cover, the voices of the Hillcresters reached them.

"They can't be coming." It was Blumpy's voice. "I say, I'm getting jolly cold!"

"They won't be long," said Dicky Bird. "They can't get home without their snowshoes."

"May have borrowed some," said Fisher.

"Oh, they'll come right enough!"

"I guess it's cold."

"Oh, never mind that!"

The Hillcrest fellows were stamping to keep their feet warm. Frank Richards & Co. remained very quiet in the shadow of the trees.

It was cold enough for them, as well as for the heroes of Hillcrest; but they waited patiently.

Half an hour passed, on leaden wings, and muttering grumbles reached them from the Hillcrest fellows.

"I'm jolly well going!" exclaimed Blumpy at last.

And he went.

Dicky Bird gave a grunt, but he followed with the rest of the crowd, evidently making up his mind that it was useless to wait any longer.

The Hillcresters tramped away through the snow, and disappeared in the shadows towards Thompson, Frank Richards & Co. were glad enough to see them go.

The tramp in the snow died away at last.

"Thank goodness!" said Bob Lawless, with a shiver. "I guess I should have been froze if we'd had to wait much longer."

"Groogh!" murmured Frank.

"Come on!"

The trio issued from their cover, and approached the deserted gates. Bob Lawless was "bunked" up by his comrades, and sat astride the gate, and helped the others up from above. In a few minutes they dropped down inside the walls of Hillcrest School.

Snow was falling lightly, and the playground and buildings were covered with spotless white.

From the house a gleam of light came from Mr. Peckover's window, and another from the window of the kitchen.

"Careful now!" murmured Bob Lawless. "We don't want to wake up Peckover. He hasn't a nice temper."

"Where are the blessed snowshoes?" said Beauclerc.

"Let's look!"

There was a glimmer of starlight on the snow, sufficient to show the invaders their way about. Close by the house was a barn, and on the barn door, sure enough, three pairs of snowshoes were hanging. The chums of Cedar Creek were glad enough to find them so easily.

"All O. K. now," remarked Bob Lawless, as he took down the trophies. "These jays will be rather surprised not to find them here in the morning."

"Hark!"

"Oh Jerusalem!"

There was a sudden bark of a dog. A shadowy figure came whisking through the gloom, barking furiously.

"Bunk!" said Frank hastily.

The three chums made a rush for the gate. The dog, barking vociferously, followed them. There was the sound of an opening door. Light streamed from the house, and the angular form of Mr. Ephraim Peckover was framed in the doorway, looking out.

"Caesar! Caesar!" called out Mr. Peckover sharply.

The dog barked furiously, and made a rush at the schoolboys as they reached the gate. They had to face round to keep him off, and Bob smote him forcibly on the nose with the snowshoes. The dog howled and retreated, and poured out a terrific volume of barking. From the distance came the voice of Mr. Peckover raised in alarm.

"Jane, give me my gun—quick! There is someone in the grounds. My gun—quick!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Frank Richards.

"Up you get!" panted Bob.

Frank made a desperate jump, and caught the top of the gate. The dog rushed on again, and a kick drove it howling back. Bob handed up the snowshoes to Frank, who dropped them in the snow outside the walls.

"Bark, bark, bark, bark!"

"Buck up!"

Frank reached down to help his chums up. As they clambered desperately, the dog rushed in, and leaped at Bob. His teeth closed—fortunately, only on thick homespun clothing. There was a yell from Bob.

He bumped down in the snow, and the dog howled frantically as he received the weight of the rancher's son. The animal squirmed away, barking without cessation.

In the light of the house, Mr. Peckover could be seen striding out with a gun in his hands.

"Who is there?" shouted the schoolmaster. "Stop! Stand! Hands up!"

Bang!

The 4th Chapter.

Cornered.

Frank Richards & Co. dropped instinctively into the snow as the schoolmaster's shotgun came up to a level. Frank could have dropped outside, but he would not abandon his chums. Mr. Peckover was not a brave man, and a gun was not very safe in his hands. The uproar in the

yard convinced him that thieves were breaking in. Visions of the Flour-bag Gang, who had once haunted the Thompson Valley, danced in Mr. Peckover's excited brain. He pulled the trigger, and a charge of small-shot whistled over the schoolboys as they threw themselves down, and pinged upon the gate.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Frank Richards.

"Great pip! The silly old idiot is shooting!" spluttered Bob Lawless. "Get out of this before he loads again. He can see us on the snow."

Mr. Peckover was at a distance, and he could see very dimly the shadowy forms sprawling on the white snow. Perhaps dreading return fire from the supposed thieves, Mr. Peckover dodged back into the cover of the porch to reload his gun. The schoolboys jumped up and ran.

There was no chance of getting over the gate now; they would have been hopelessly exposed to a charge of shot if attempting to climb over. And Mr. Peckover was in that mood of excitement and funk when he was liable to shoot first, and make inquiries afterwards.

On the inner side of the high timber fence the chums of Cedar Creek ran for their lives.

In a few seconds they were out of Mr. Peckover's sight, and in cover of the barn.

There they paused to take breath. The dog was following close at their heels, still barking at a great rate.

An occasional lunge with a boot kept him jumping back, but he did not go far. The voice of Mr. Peckover was heard in the distance:

"Mike! Where are you, Mike? Come at once! There are thieves about the house!"

Mike was the man-of-all-work at Hillcrest. A deep voice with a delightful accent was heard in answer.

"I'm comin', sorr!"

"Oh crikey! Two of the silly idiots now!" groaned Frank Richards.

"How the thump are we going to get out of this!"

"Goodness knows!"

"They went by the barn." It was Mr. Peckover's voice again. "Have you got your gun, Mike?"

"Sure, I've got me shillelagh, sorr!"

"You had better get a gun—"

"Faith, if I get a lick at thim wid me shillelagh, sorr, they won't want another!"

"Behind the barn, I think—"

"I'm arter 'em, sorr!"

"Get inside, quick!" murmured Bob.

The three hapless schoolboys dodged into the barn, and there was a fresh burst of barking from the dog to betray the way they went.

"After them, Mike! I have the gun ready—"

"Don't shoot, sorr!" howled Mike. "Sure, I don't want a charge of shot in the back of me head intirely!"

Mike's huge shadow fell across the open doorway of the barn. Behind him came Mr. Peckover, with the gun at his shoulder, his finger trembling on the trigger.

Evidently Mr. Peckover was ready to shoot at the slightest movement.

There was a ladder to the loft over the barn, and the three hunted youths "shinned" up it at great speed.

They crawled into the loft above, hoping to escape observation there.

But the dog stopped at the foot of the ladder, barking away as if for a wager.

"Sure, they're in the loft, sorr!"

"Cornered!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover, with great satisfaction. "We shall be able to seize the rascals now, and hand them over to the sheriff!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank Richards.

Mike stopped at the foot of the ladder, with a boot on the lowest step, and flourished his cudgel.

"Come down wid ye, ye spalpeens!" he roared.

The chums of Cedar Creek were not likely to obey that summons.

"I will get a lantern!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover. "See that they do not escape while I am gone, Michael."

"Yis, sorr!"

Mr. Peckover hurried away.

Mike remained on guard, grinning at the bottom of the ladder. He seemed quite anxious to get at somebody with his shillelagh.

In the loft, the chums of Cedar Creek lay low, in a state of utter dismay. This nocturnal alarm had not entered into their calculations at all—and certainly not into those of Dicky Bird & Co.

"What the thump are we going to do now?" murmured Vere Beauclerc.

"We can't get past that Irishman!"

"Is there a window—" muttered Frank.

"Only that slit—barred!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And there isn't a trapdoor to shut over the ladder!" grunted Bob Lawless. "Bless them! Blow them! Oh Jerusalem!"

There was a dancing light in the playground now. Mr. Peckover was coming back with a lantern.

He entered the barn, flashing the light round him.

"Have they come down?"

"No, sorr; they're hidin' in the loft!" said Mike.

"Go up, and—"

"Maybe you'd rather go up first, sorr, seeing as you have the gun," suggested the man-of-all-work.

"You may take the gun, Mike!"

"I misdoubt I couldn't 'andle it sorr," said Mike. "How many did you see of the spalpeens, sorr?"

"Three—three hulking ruffians!" said Mr. Peckover, drawing on his excited imagination a little.

Mike gave a grunt.

Apparently he was not eager to penetrate into the shadowy loft, and there encounter three hulking ruffians.

"Go up!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover. "I will stand here with the gun, and shoot if they show themselves."

"Faith, and I'd rather be behind ye, sorr, when ye blaze away wid that gun!"

"Nonsense! Go up at once!" Mike hesitated.

"P'raps they'll come down!" he suggested.

And he shouted up to the loft:

"Come down wid ye, ye omadhauns! Do yez hear? If ye don't come down, sure I'll come up for yez!"

Frank Richards & Co. made no reply, and they did not move. The unwillingness of the enemy to attack made them hope that they might still remain unrecognized until a chance of escape presented itself.

"Go up—go up!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover. "I'll cover you with the gun; if they show themselves I will fire at once. It is quite safe!"

He hung the lantern on a nail in the wall, and presented the shot-gun at the trapdoor above.

Mike eyed him very doubtfully, seemingly more afraid of the shot-gun in Mr. Peckover's hands than of the three hulking ruffians in the loft.

However, he made up his mind at last, and holding his cudgel above his head, to ward off a possible blow, he tramped up the ladder.

The 5th Chapter.

Caught!

"Now, ye spalpeens!"

Mike's head and shoulders came through the trapdoor.

Bob Lawless, behind him, reached out with his boot, and clumped heavily on the unfortunate man-of-all-work's neck.

There was a startled howl from Mike, and he went slithering down the ladder.

With a terrific roar, the bulky Irishman landed on the floor of the barn.

Bang!

A charge of small shot whistled up through the opening of the trapdoor; but Frank Richards & Co. were very careful to keep away from the opening.

The shot scattered over the roof above them.

"Ow, ow! Tare an' punds!" groaned Mike, as he picked himself up. "Sure, I'm covered wid bruises intirely. Wow!"

"Go up again—"

Mike gave an emphatic snort.

"Faith, I'll hold the gun while you go up, but I ain't going up any more at all, at all!" he said.

Mr. Peckover uttered an impatient exclamation, as if exasperated by Michael's pusillimity; but he did not offer to take the lead in a fresh attack. Mr. Peckover was evidently of opinion that a commander-in-chief's place was at the base.

Mike rubbed his head and shoulders and elbows, and growled.

"Well, they are safely cornered," said Mr. Peckover at last. "They cannot escape!"

"Sure, they can't, sorr," said Mike.

Frank Richards & Co. were beginning to feel the same. But they had not given up hope yet.

"I will remain on watch with the gun," continued Mr. Peckover. "You can hurry down to the town for the sheriff, Mike. Tell him that I have three desperate ruffians cornered in the loft, and ask him to send six of his men—six at least—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank Richards. "Six of the sheriff's men to collar poor little us!"

"Yis, sorr!" said Mike.

"I will shoot, if they show so much as an eyebrow!" said Mr. Peckover.

"Hurry, Michael!"

"Yis, sorr!"

"This won't do!" murmured Bob Lawless. "There'll be a thunderin' row about this, anyhow; and, if we get the sheriff and his men here—"

"Phew!"

"We'd better own up!" said Beauclerc. "That old idiot Peckover is excited enough to riddle us with shot!"

"I—I guess we'd better!" muttered Bob.

There was evidently nothing else to be done. The chums of Cedar Creek were cornered; and if Mr. Peckover remained on watch with the shot-gun till the sheriff's men arrived, escape was impossible. And the consequences of fetching the sheriff's posse out to Hillcrest for nothing, were likely to be rather too serious.

The hapless schoolboys made up their minds to it. Bob Lawless approached the opening.

"Ha! I can hear them moving!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover, finger on trigger. "Ruffians! Show yourselves, and I will riddle you. I—"

"Mr. Peckover!" called out Bob, taking care to keep out of range till the schoolmaster learned his identity.

"Eh?"

"You can put that gun away!" growled Bob. "We're only Cedar Creek chaps."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Peckover. "It's only us, sir!" called out Frank Richards.

"I know that voice! Is that you, Richards?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Good heavens! I have always known that you were young ruffians—but an attempted robbery—"

"You old fool!" roared Bob Lawless, forgetting everything else in his wrath. "Do you think we came here to rob your shebang, you dummy?"

There was a chuckle from Mike.

"Sure, it's only the schoolboys, sorr!" he said.

"They are young ruffians!" started Mr. Peckover. "I have had to complain to Miss Meadows for their hurling snowballs at me. What are you doing on my premises, Richards?"

"We—wo just came over, sir."

"For what reason?" demanded Mr. Peckover grimly. "The acid-tempered gentleman was reluctant to give up his suspicion of attempted robbery."

"To—to get some snowshoes that were left here, sir," stammered Frank. "We—we happened to have them with Dicky Bird."

"I will ask Bird to-morrow whether that statement is correct, Richards. You may come down!"

The disconsolate trio descended the ladder into the barn. Mike grinned at them, apparently bearing no malice for his tumble down the ladder. But there was plenty of malice in Mr. Peckover's thin, ill-favoured countenance.

"You have entered my premises, after dark, without permission, and caused an alarm," he exclaimed.

"Even if you came for the reason you state, your proceedings were utterly lawless!"

"There wouldn't have been any alarm, if you hadn't been in a blue funk!" retorted Bob recklessly.

Mike guffawed, and Mr. Peckover glared at him.

"How dare you laugh! Leave the barn at once! Now, Lawless, you will not lessen your offence by insolence."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob. "We know you're coming over to-morrow to worry Miss Meadows about it, and that's enough. Let's get out!"

"Leave my premises at once!" snapped Mr. Peckover. "Michael, see them safely out of gates."

"Yis, sorr!"

"I shall call at Cedar Creek to-morrow morning," said Mr. Peckover bitterly. "You will not escape unpunished for this outrage. Go!"

"Br-r-r!" growled Bob.

The three schoolboys left the barn. Mike, grinning, opened the gate for them, and they passed out, the gate clanging shut behind them.

"What a go!" murmured Beauclerc.

"Well, here's the snowshoes," said Frank Richards. "We've got them, at all events!"

"And a thundering row to follow in the morning!" growled Bob Lawless. "Bless old Peckover! And I guess I'll jolly well give Dicky Bird a prize nose for this!"



The Sports of St. Clive's

A Splendid New Sporting School Story.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

he emerged from his hiding-place, and, leaping between the villain and his victim, ordered Cullen back.

"Leave the boy alone, and try that game on me!" he cried, standing with clenched fists, and eyes fixed on Cullen's face.

"Roberts!" exclaimed Cullen, falling back a step.

Raynham uttered a low cry, and stared at the late instructor of St. Clive's with wide eyes.

He had never expected to see him there, had believed that he was miles away from Banford Town.

"Don't trouble about me, sir, I'm not afraid!" said the boy.

up under the other's guard, and sent a smashing left-hand blow home on the face. Cullen recoiled, and as he stood unbalanced, the instructor got home with left and right.

Cullen shivered to the heel, and swung the stick again.

As it swung back, Raynham leapt at him, seized the cudgel in his strong hands, and wrenched it away from him, swinging it sideways into the wood.

"Thanks!" panted Roberts.

Cullen uttered a roar of anger.

Curse the luck! Was it never to go his way?

"Run, boy, run!" called the instructor, but Raynham, who had passed Cullen, hesitated.

timing a right-hand upper-cut beautifully, he nearly lifted the villain's head off his shoulders.

Cullen rocked on his heels, and the next moment went down, hit clean-off his feet by an electrifying punch that came with lightning-like swiftness.

He fell heavily, turning to glare up at the man who had beaten him, out of savage eyes.

"It's a fair fight this time, Cullen," said the school-instructor, with infinite relish. "When you're ready, you can have some more."

Cullen slowly raised himself on his hands, then groped. Raynham saw his fingers close over a big stone.

"Be careful, sir!" he panted.

Even as he spoke, Cullen sprang erect, dashing the stone full at Roberts' face. Raynham expected to see his champion fall.

But no. He just lowered his head, and the stone crashed harmlessly among the trees. The next moment the two men were locked in a tight embrace, and wrestling desperately for the mastery.

This way and that they tugged and fought for the mastery, every now and then losing an arm to send home a telling half arm blow.

Raynham could hear the dull thud of the blows, and came forward to interfere as he saw Roberts bent backwards. His friend would be beaten. Cullen, with his advantage in height, weight, and reach, would win.

No. He saw Roberts recover his balance, and slide out of the deadly hold; saw him make play with his feet as he slipped his hands up the other's body in a real Cumberland and Westmoreland grip. A twist, a turn, a deft use of the hip and the arms, and he saw Cullen's huge body loosed into the air, and thrown six feet away.

Again the villain fell heavily, his

"You've beaten him, sir. I'm glad. It was wonderful. But you mustn't stay here. It isn't safe."

"I'm all right, my boy. I can take care of myself, I think. Go after the others. You've lost a lot of time. I want you to win the race, you know."

"No chance of that now, sir. I suppose you know the police are after you? It's true. They've been up at the school. You must leave Banford. If you don't they'll have you!"

"Not yet!" And Roberts looked at the boy with a kindling smile.

"It's lucky I got to know that this brute was going to be in wait for you to-day."

"Then you knew? You were here to save me?"

"Yes. I thought it the better way. He's coming round. Run along, my lad."

"Will you go, too, sir?"

"Yes; after I've seen you safe."

"You promise?"

"Yes."

Raynham extended his hand. "I'd like you to shake hands with me, sir," he cried. "I don't believe the ugly things they say of you. I saw your first meeting with Dr. Brooks, when you came to the school that night, you know, in convict's clothes. I knew all the time. But I can't believe that you ever did anything to be ashamed of."

The convict gripped the boy's outstretched hand.

"I don't know about that," he said, frowning gloomily. "I've been a rough diamond, and made a mess of my life. Still, I'm not all bad. Some day, perhaps, you'll know the truth. Don't let anyone know you've seen me, my boy, not even Dr. Brooks. Will you promise?"

"Yes."

"Thank you! Now go!"

Cullen was stirring, rolling on the ground.

Raynham gave him one look, then, turning, swung into his stride, and sped off along the lane. At the bend he turned, and looked back.

Cullen was still lying upon his side. He saw Roberts, the convict, the hunted man, leap for cover, dive into the hedge, and disappear. Then, with a feeling of intense relief, he ran on, quickening his pace, and emerging from the lane, entered upon open ground, where the trail lay to mark the course.

First Man Home!

Raynham had lost a good deal of time, so much indeed that it seemed hopeless for him to attempt to catch up with his field.

Yet, although so much had happened, it had happened rapidly.

From the moment Cullen stepped from cover till Raynham resumed his running a bare minute had passed. It had seemed like ten—more.

It was only afterwards, when he looked backward and recalled the vivid nature of the struggle, that Raynham realised that Roberts must have hit Cullen harder than ever he'd believed a man could hit.

His blows had been like the blows of a sledgehammer, else he would never have beaten Cullen into a state of insensibility.

Many and many a time Raynham thrilled when he remembered.

Now he was intent upon his running, and although the case seemed hopeless he sped on, running with easy, raking stride, until, as he came within sight of the point where the juniors had turned for home, he saw Leake and Hume in front of him, and just beyond them a batch of runners.

Tally-ho, tally-ho! His heart bounded within him, and, encouraged by the sight he raced up to his chime, caught them, hung on for a brief half-minute, and then finding that they were not moving fast enough, swung past them, swept by the others, and crowding on the pace left them far behind.

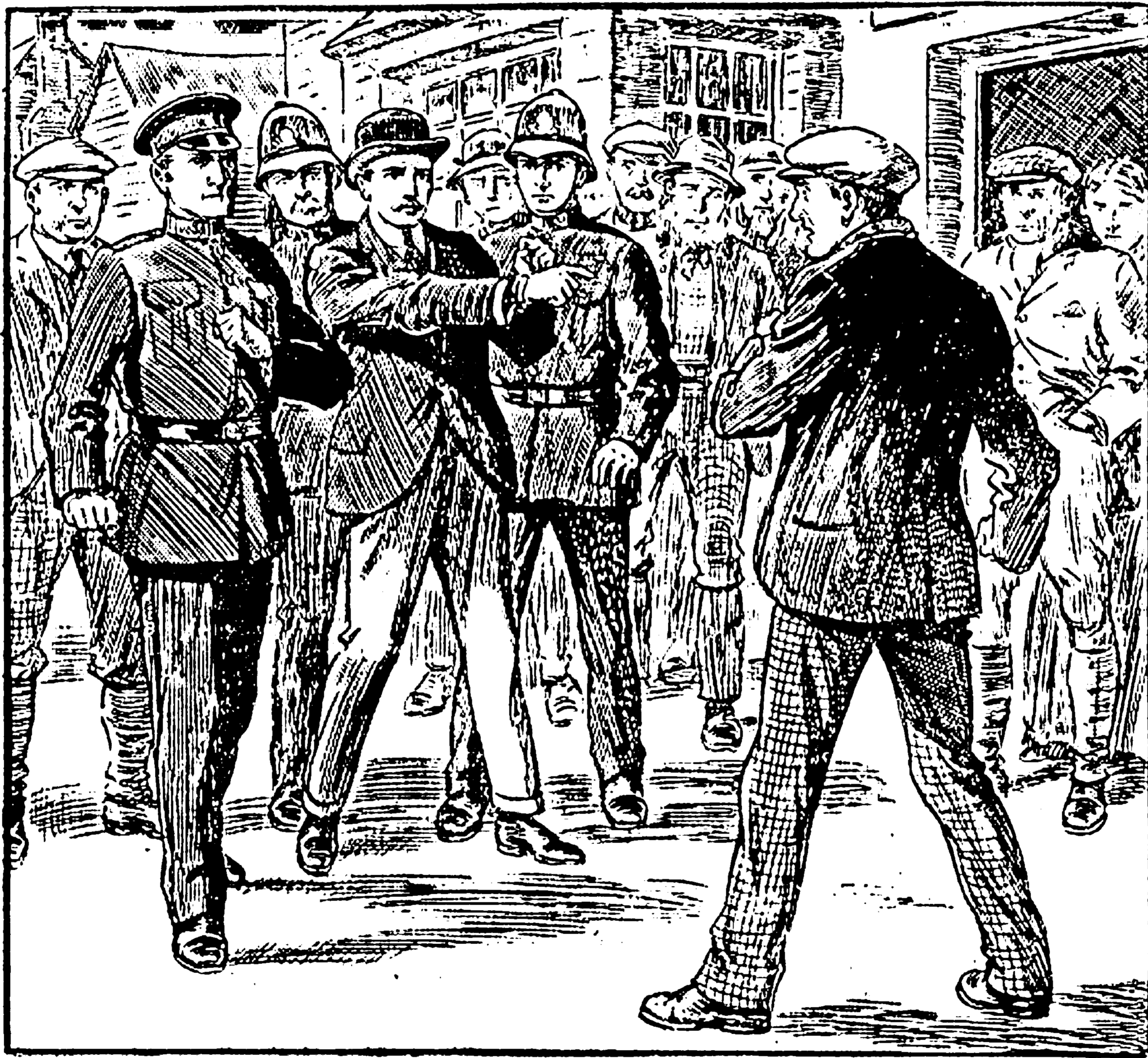
On and on he raced, catching the field by twos and threes, until he began to realise that, after all, he might be able to win.

On and on until he left lane and field behind, and emerged once more on to the hard road.

Through the little village he sped, past the tuckshop and the pond, and so to where the crowd loomed in front of him, and the school gates came into view.

He saw four or five of the runners, their legs splattered with mud, their limbs moving sluggishly, tired, between him and those gates, and heard a whoop from the onlookers.

He made a swift calculation, and knew that, fast as he was going, he would need to run faster if he wanted to overtake them before they got home.



DENOUNCING A VILLAIN!

"One moment!" Roberts raised his manacled wrists, and indicated Cullen, who recoiled with a snarl. "That man was with me in Banford gaol! He escaped a day or so before I did. Now that you've taken me, suppose you take him too!"

Roberts smiled grimly, and nodded. Grey he looked, and wan and old.

Years seemed to have been added to his age since Raynham had seen him last, and there was a hunted expression in his eyes which told of mental suffering.

"It's all right, my lad," was the quiet answer. "I'll hold this villain off; you run the moment you get the chance. Slip into the wood there. You can pass him that way."

Cullen leapt, with stick upraised, hoping to catch Roberts off his guard.

"Look out!" came a warning cry from Raynham.

The blow descended, but not on Roberts' head.

The lithe, active man ducked, came

Knowing the desperate character of the villain, he had no desire to go and leave Roberts alone with him. The two of them could deal with the scoundrel, whereas it was improbable whether Roberts could manage him single-handed.

"I think I'll wait, sir!" he cried.

"No. Go on—"

Ah! Cullen rushed, striking out savagely.

Raynham stood and watched, breathless in his admiration, for the instructor did not budge. With body beautifully poised, he guarded the savage blows aimed at him, and hit back.

Once, twice, thrice, Roberts' left landed on Cullen's face, and then,

ugly face driven into the yielding soil of the lane.

He was badly shaken, and not a little cowed. It was some seconds before he recovered sufficiently to rise.

On to his hands he got, then on to one knee, breathing deeply, muttering fierce and ugly threats.

Then, with a spring, he rushed at Roberts. But the school-instructor was ready for him, and met the rush with a hit full in the face, another, and another.

At the third blow he dropped, and lay still.

Roberts, stooping over him, looked down, a dry smile curving his lips.

"I don't think he'll want any more," he said.

Summary of the Previous Instalments.

St. Clive's is a famous sporting school, whose headmaster, Dr. Brooks, was a great athlete in his day.

Raynham, the captain of the school, is idolised by the junior boys, but has some enemies among the seniors, notably Parker and Bates.

A new games instructor comes to St. Clive's by the name of Roberts, but his stay is short at the school. He turns out to be an escaped convict, and the police attempt to arrest him. Roberts escapes, however, leaving the school in a state of wild conjecture.

Dr. Brooks has cause to expel Parker and Bates, and the two bullies reside in Banford with the fixed intention of being avenged on St. Clive's in general.

A day of cross-country running is fixed for the school, and Raynham, the best to leave the tape in the big race, is running smoothly and easily along a lane, when Dan Cullen, grasping a short, thick stick, steps out from the shadow of a hedge and confronts him. "Now, Mr. Raynham," he growls, "I've got yer, I think!"

(Read on from here.)

Roberts to the Rescue!

"Stand away, and let me pass!" said Raynham firmly. "Your threats don't frighten me!"

He moved forward, but even as he moved, the coward aimed a downward blow at his head with the stick he held. It was a blow which would have laid the boy senseless at Cullen's feet had it landed, perhaps even have killed him.

Raynham leapt nimbly away, however, and tried to dodge the brute.

But Cullen was quick, and the lane was narrow. Striking blow after blow, the villain tried his utmost to beat the schoolboy down. He failed. Raynham, cool, calm, collected, but marvellously agile, dodged, ducked, side-stepped, causing the blows to miss, sometimes avoiding them by sheer instinct alone, until, at last, the villain paused for breath, crouching and glaring at the boy.

Could Raynham have passed him, he would have done so, and have run on, knowing that the big, beefy man would never be able to keep pace with him.

Cullen, however, barred the way; he took care of that, and there was no passing him.

They faced each other three or four paces apart.

"Wait! I'll kill you!" snarled the man.

"I think not; but if you do you'll hang for it!" answered Raynham.

The words angered his enemy.

With a roar, he advanced again.

But before another blow could be aimed at Raynham's unprotected head, one who had been watching the thrilling but unequal struggle, intervened. Long before Raynham had entered the lane, a man had concealed himself behind the hedge.

This man had followed Cullen up from Banford, had waited and watched while the brute selected his stick from the hedge, and cut and trimmed it. He had waited and watched because he had guessed what was going to happen. He had not interfered before because he saw that the boy was equal to the emergency, and, besides, the coolness and cleverness of the school captain had fascinated him.

But when he realised that there could be but one end to the struggle,

Shutting his mouth and clenching his teeth, he quickened his stride.

He'd gained his second wind a long while back. His stride was still easy and natural. He was still up on his toes, while they were running flat-footed, and rolling from sheer fatigue.

He passed one, two, three, four, five. Amid a storm of cheering he passed the gates, and saw Mollison pacing down the drive in front.

Mollison, hearing the cheers, turned his head, and, looking behind him, caught sight of Raynham.

With a last effort he plunged on. "Hurrah! Raynham wins! No! Mollison—Mollison!"

The words rang from the lips of the excited juniors who lined the route from the gates to the finish.

They watched the runners desperately.

Raynham was gaining, gaining, gaining! Yes; but Mollison knew the danger, and was running fast.

For a moment he held his own, then began to come back.

The stand was in sight, and behind it a crowd of masters and monitors.

Raynham, with a supreme effort, sped on, finishing as if he were rounding off a two-twenty. Mollison was twenty yards ahead, ten, five. They were level, running shoulder to shoulder.

For a few strides Mollison managed to keep up with his captain.

Then, with a sobbing cry, he stooped, plunged, steadied himself, recovered his balance, and reeled on, whilst Raynham, arms up, and legs at full stretch, bounding like a deer, flashed to the finish, and broke the worsted to one of the biggest cheers that had ever echoed through the school grounds.

As he reeled sideways, a boy ran up to him. It was Bobby Tate.

"Bully for you, Raynham!" panted the boy. "I knew you'd do it. I said you'd win. You've knocked 'em silly."

But Raynham, whose effort had been wonderful, far more wonderful than any of them ever knew, pushed the junior aside with a smile, and plunged down on the turf, where he sat leaning upon his hands, his mouth agape to suck the air.

"Have I won?" he gasped.

Won? Great Christopher!

Revenge!

The thrashing which Charles Roberts had given Cullen was not half a thrashing. Every blow the grim and determined instructor had landed had shaken the bigger and heavier man to the heels.

The punch which had sent him flying headlong on to his back at the end was the heaviest, the mightiest Raynham had ever seen any man hit, or believed any man could hit.

And Cullen lay where he had fallen, shoulders raised, his ugly face buried in the mud, lay there for some moments, while his vanquisher went one way, and the schoolboy ran the other.

It was just as Raynham was turning the bend in the narrow lane that Cullen raised his head, blinked round, and saw him.

The boy had got away. Stiffing the imprecations which leapt to his lips, Cullen staggered up, and stood swaying unsteadily a moment.

Then, as his head cleared, and he remembered Roberts, felt the hurt of his blows upon face and body, anger surged within him.

He must get even with the instructor. It didn't much matter about Raynham now. After all, he could always find the boy at the school if he wanted to, whereas the other—well, that was different.

The police were looking for him. He must be in hiding somewhere near. What then?

Cullen knew. He must find out where the escaped convict was hiding, and inform the police. Then the police would arrest him, drag him back to gaol. It would break the man's heart.

Cullen knew. Oh, yes, Cullen knew, for he'd watched the well-bred and lonely toff in exercise-yard or chapel, had spoken to him sometimes, and been rebuffed for it. He'd always hated the man—hated him in prison, hated him more out of it. It was class prejudice, he supposed, for, whatever crime Hawes, alias Roberts, ex-convict 83, might have committed, he was an educated man, while Cullen was Cullen—low, vulgar, a bully and a brute.

"Supposing I send him back to gaol—what then? Will he blab about me? And if he does, what then? Banford ain't the only place where a man can earn a living. I'll mike to Liverpool. There are docks there, and ships. I might even be able to escape abroad. What's it matter? I ain't so sweet on staying in this hole of a country. But first I've got to find my man."

His head was clearing rapidly. He was feeling better, stronger.

His natural low cunning returned in full force, and, plunging into the wood, led by the footprints he saw, he dodged from tree to tree, keeping the trail in view, until at last, with a chuckle of delight, he saw from the shelter of a hedge Roberts walking briskly across an open field, but heading away from the town.

"Got him!" muttered the spy.

He followed him cleverly, keeping out of sight until Banford was left behind; and as the shadows came creeping across the fields, the two men entered the small and picturesque little village of Spedmoor.

Cullen saw Roberts make straight for a small inn or alehouse—a delightful little building which belonged to another time, and which bore the date-mark 1715.

Cullen approached as Roberts entered the open door, saw the man he meant to betray exchange a few words with the landlord, a red-faced man in shirtsleeves and apron, and then pass beyond the sanded bar.

He waited, peeping through the rounded windows of the inn at the healthy-looking, round-faced yokels who were drinking there; then walked along the street and back again.

At last, convinced that Roberts would be safely out of the way for a while, he summoned up courage to enter the bar, and called for a pint of ale in a tankard.

Having made a few casual remarks, which were rebuffed by the landlord, who did not like the look of this stranger, Cullen ventured an open question.

"Is that gent who just come in staying here?" he inquired.

"What's that to do with you? Why do you want to know?"

"'Cos he reminded me of a chum I once knew," answered Cullen, quailing before the landlord's steady stare.

"'Him a chum of yours!" exclaimed the landlord derisively.

"You don't expect me to believe that, do yer? Now, get out. I don't want you nosing round here, for I don't like you, and you'll have no more refreshment in my house!"

Cullen smiled sullenly, drank his beer, and left the bar.

"The landlord smells a rat. Looks as if 'e knows something," thought the spy. "So much the better. I'll make sure, and then notify the police. But I mustn't bring 'em over 'ere on a wild-goose chase. Wouldn't do."

He hung about for an hour without achieving any success, and then, as the potman came out to set up the shutters, Cullen tackled him.

The man was taciturn, almost abusive, but half-a-crown soothed him.

"Yes," he said, "the gent's staying 'ere right enough. Came the other day, and ain't going to move yet awhile. Him and the guv'nor seem to be a bit thick like."

"What name did you say he went by?" asked Cullen. "Wasn't Roberts, was it. Roberts being the name of the chum I took him to be?"

"No. Name o' Anson," answered the potman. "But I can't talk no more. 'Ere comes the guv'nor."

"Right-ho!" murmured Cullen, edging away. "Right-ho! S'long!" He moved into the night, trudged out of the village, and sped towards Banford Town at a five miles an hour walk, and on his arrival there headed straight towards the police-station.

"The Best Laid Plans—!"

"Are you quite sure of what you tell us?" asked the inspector, eyeing Cullen doubtfully after the eager villain had told his story.

The convict looked pained, and indicated the bruises on his face and the mud on his clothes.

"What a question to ask an honest man!" he growled. "Didn't I meet 'im in the lane when I went out to see those chubby boys from the big school run their paper-chase? And didn't I rekerise 'im in a flash from the descriptions that have been pasted up outside your police-station? And besides, you've got to remember that 'im and me have 'ad words before, even when I never suspected that he was Convict Hawes."

"And do you mean to say that he marked you like that?"

"Yes. And you can't blame 'im, I suppose. You see, I tried to arrest him and bring 'im into Banford single-handed, and he was desperate. Picked up a great stake he did, and bunged me over the 'ead with it; kicked me and butted me besides. But I'm going to git me own back. Foller 'im I did all the way to the Little Inn at Spedmoor, where 'e's staying under the name o' Anson. If you send some men over there, Mr. Inspector, you'll cop 'im for a cert, and I wouldn't lose no time about it either."

"It's too late to send to-night. I don't want to upset the household. We'll investigate to-morrow, and you, Mr. Cullen, shall come along with us."

The convict's jaw dropped. He hadn't bargained for this. He wanted to have Roberts laid by the heels, but he had no desire to witness the arrest, because it might come of it, so far as he was concerned. Forcing a smile, he said: "Me, come with you and the What for? You're joking!"

"It's no joke, I assure you. We'll start at seven o'clock, and be over there soon after daybreak. We'll drive over by car. You'll report at the station at a quarter to seven."

"You don't want me. He's staying there I tell yer—"

"Quite so. I shall want you to identify him!"

Cullen's heart dropped, and his jaw with it. He argued, pleaded, tried to persuade.

"Why don't you want to come? Is there any reason? Are you concealing something, or afraid—"

The villain realised that it would be better not to argue any further, and gave way.

"Right!" he said. "I'll report 'ere at a quarter to seven."

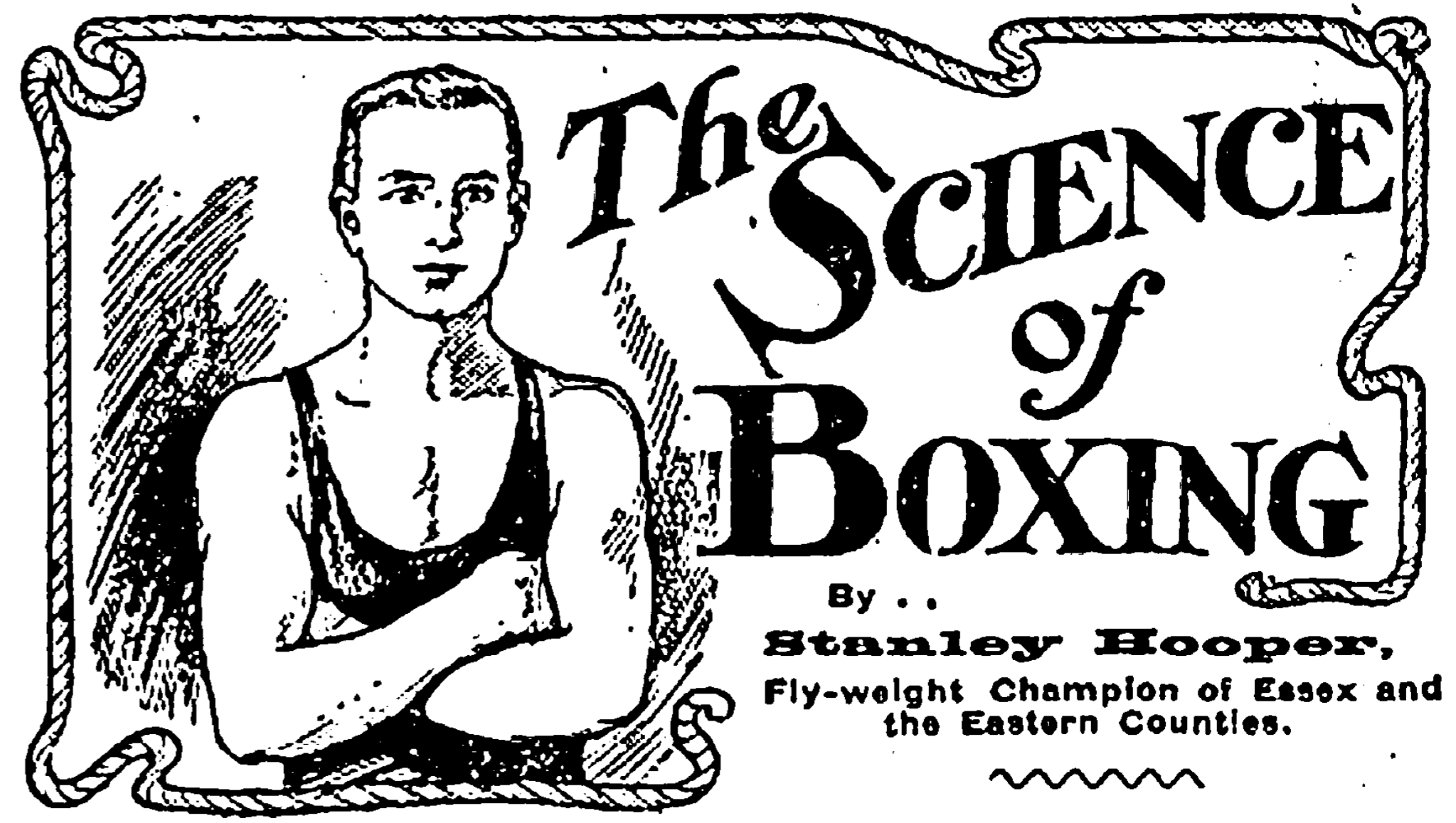
So the next morning Cullen, with cap pulled down over his beetling brows, and shivering in spite of the heavy clothing he wore, reported himself at the Banford police-station at a quarter to seven. Outside stood a big grey car, with lamps alight.

A moment later the inspector and four constables appeared.

The officer, with a curt word of greeting, led the way into the street. They got into the car, and started upon their journey, whilst the grey sky that lowered above them grew lighter every moment.

The journey was swiftly accomplished. It was broad daylight when they entered the village of Spedmoor.

(Continued on page 492.)



STAN HOOPER.

I gave you last week a few hints and simple exercises to fit yourself for the serious boxing practice in store, and in this article I will endeavour to explain the correct pose and first principles of hitting.

Many champions of the past and present day have their favourite boxing attitudes. Generally speaking, the Americans favour the crouching position, whilst British boxers usually adopt the old English upright style. It is common knowledge that the French used to use their feet as a method of self-defence until recent years, when the more—shall we say?—civilised sport of boxing was introduced by Englishmen.

In an incredible short space of time the noble art became enormously popular all over France, and, in quicker time than it takes to tell, the Frenchmen adapted themselves to the English style of boxing with a certain amount of success.

Professional boxers from this country hastened with all speed over the Channel, to receive large sums of money to instruct in the French schools that were very quickly formed. And so things went on for a while, until the time came when International matches were ratified between British and French boxers.

Our men made a serious mistake in holding the Frenchmen too cheaply. They thought it was not necessary to train assiduously "to beat those crude Frenchmen," and the consequence was that Great Britain's boxing prestige received a severe setback.

Defeat after defeat was registered against the British boxer, until we began to shake ourselves and probe for a reason.

Two obvious facts presented themselves, and these were that the Frenchmen, full of pluck, trained heart and soul, with the one word, victory, as their objective; whilst our representatives, over-confident, did not view the prospective matches with the same amount of keenness, and ultimately paid the penalty.

Until the war France had enjoyed one of the greatest boxing booms of modern times; and now we have emerged victoriously and unitedly from the greatest "scrap" of all, we must prepare ourselves for further conflicts, happily of a different kind, with these wonderful Frenchmen.

When the boom in France was at its height, swarms of American "milsingers" invaded French soil, there to do battle with the best that France could produce. It must be admitted that the Yanks, profiting by our mistakes, were, to a certain extent, more successful against these new-comers to the fistie world. But the Frenchmen ultimately gained in experience what they had lost in prestige by being initiated into a new style of boxing, hitherto unknown to them, and eventually they were wise enough to combine the two styles—British and American—the mixture of which attained gratifying results.

From a spectacular point of view, the English method is much the better, and I will go as far as to say that, if carried out to perfection, will triumph over any other. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that, with the exception of a few men, such as Jim Driscoll and Johnny Basham, in the making of a champion it is essential to combine crouching and in-fighting with the English method of out-fighting and upright pose. Very few men indeed have attained championship honours without these necessary qualifications.

The first thing the beginner must learn, however, is the upright position and the straight left; the other will follow in due course from either practice or experience.

The Correct Boxing Position.

The best way to get the correct boxing position is to stand upright in an attitude of attention, with heels

together. Now make a half right turn, and advance the left foot from twelve to twenty inches, just according to the length of leg. Stand nice and easy, equally dividing the weight of the body on both feet, and bend the knees a trifle, so that you are ready to attack or get out of reach quickly, just as occasion may call for.

Now for the hands. The left hand should be extended about twelve inches from the body, with the forearm parallel with the floor. The thumb of your glove should be held uppermost, and your elbow should be kept fairly well into the body, pointing downwards, not out.

The right arm is best placed across the body, so that the glove is nearly on a level with the left shoulder. Keep the right arm about two inches from the body, and hold both arms loosely and easily. You will find from this position of your guard that your right glove forms a certain amount of protection from a right swing on the part of your opponent to the jaw, whilst the right elbow acts in a similar way as a protection from a left swing to the body.

You have now attained the ideal position, and, by inclining the body slightly forward, you are ready for attack or defence.

The First Principles of Hitting.

It is necessary, when taking your first boxing lesson, to learn to deliver a blow successfully to some part of your opponent's anatomy, at the same time being able to avoid his counter. Remember always that quickness, combined with punching ability, invariably spell success. It is essential at all times that you should take your opponent by surprise when delivering a blow, and to attain this end you must endeavour to step in, sending your blow simultaneously, without any apparent effort or preliminary fiddling of drawing the arm back first. The more clean-cut and quicker the blow, the more your opponent will be baffled and "flummoxed." You will then be able to regain your position and prepare for another attack.

Avoid that nervous fiddling before striking. It is really unnecessary, and puts your opponent on his guard: in other words, you "telephone" to him your intention of hitting, and you will find him fully prepared for you.

Now for a few words with regard to hitting power. It is entirely a mistaken impression that large muscles are productive of heavy punching ability. Bulging muscles may look showy, and are a decided asset to a weight-lifter, but they are of no earthly use to the boxer. Your punch should come from the body, not from the biceps. In other words, you must learn to utilise the whole of your weight scientifically when hitting. For instance, if you are leading out with a straight left, be sure that it is straight, so that, when your glove lands, your thumb should still be uppermost, with the elbow pointing downwards, as indicated. The left shoulder should be brought well round, so that you are able to utilise the whole of your reach, and you will "feel" the extra power that you will be enabled to put behind your blow.

Exactly the same thing applies when sending out a right, only in this case you bring your right shoulder round for the purpose of transferring your weight to this particular side.

Constant practice with the pear-shape swing punchball will appreciably help in getting that quick turn of the shoulders which is undeniably the secret of hitting power.

Don't pay too much attention to fancy blows when learning; they will come later, after you have mastered correctly your position, guard, and the use of your left hand.

Stanley Hooper

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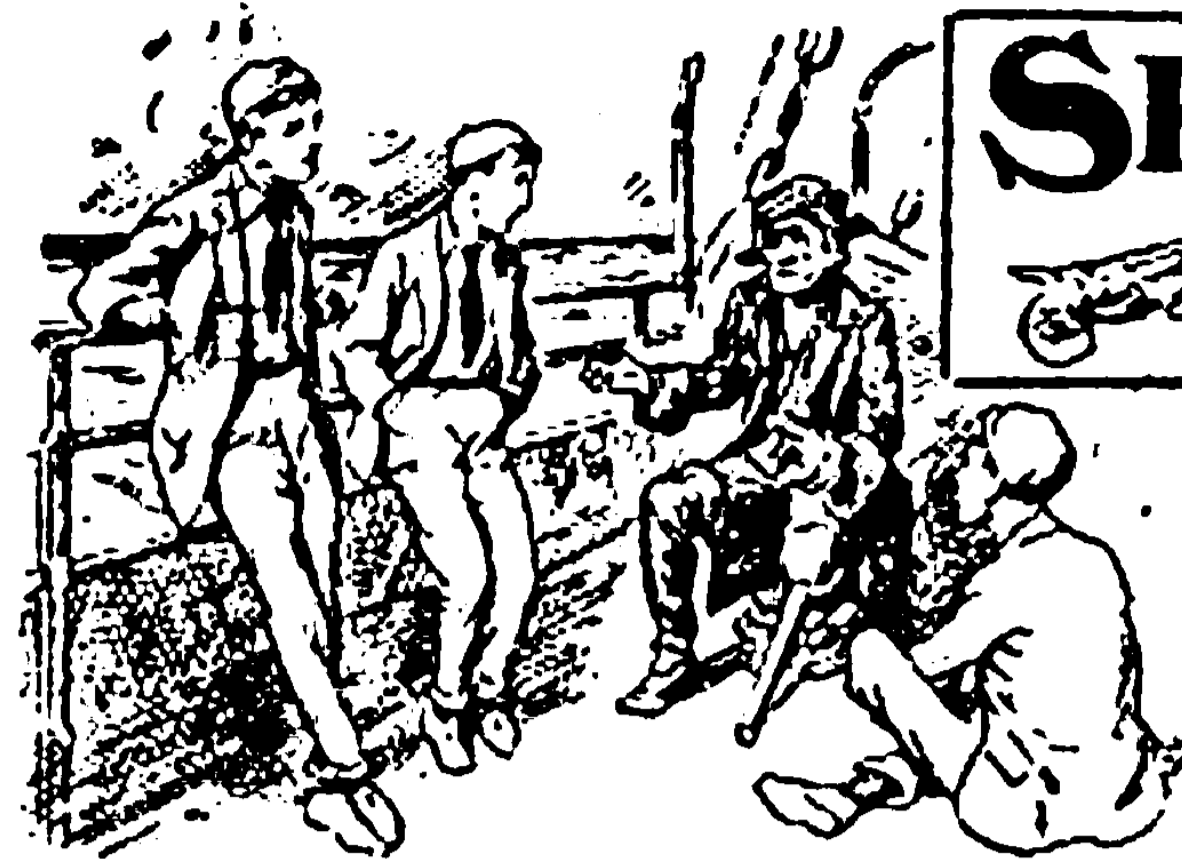
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SKULL ISLAND!

An Amazing New Adventure Story, introducing the Chums of the School-ship Bombay Castle. By DUNCAN STORM.

NEW READERS COMMENCE HERE.

The famous school-ship, the Bombay Castle, is on her way to the South Seas, having on board our old friends, Dick Dorrington, Chip, Skeleton, Porkie, Chu, Pongo Walker, Captain Bones, and their pet animals. Dr. Crabhunter is the head of the floating school, with Lal Tata and "Scorchy" Wilkinson as his subordinates.

News of vast treasure secreted on Skull Island is brought to the boys by Captain Bones, and it is the intention of the little party to explore Skull Island before sailing for home.

The ship anchors off Ghost Island, and the boys journey ashore, only to fall into the hands of a gang of Chinese pirates who take them aboard their junk with the notion of holding them to ransom. Chu manages to drug the entire crew by dopping their "grog," and afterwards releases the boys from their stuffy prison in the hold. Arty takes command of the junk, and has his hands full navigating her. A jagged point of rock shows up in the distance, and it looks certain that the junk will run aground. Arty throws over the tiller, and calls to the boys to haul in the sheets. "Lace her down! Make her travel, or we are done," he cries.

(Now read on.)

Life Aboard the Junk.

The wind suddenly freshened to a squall, and the shadow of a great rolling, black cloud came racing across the lagoon.

Arty looked up to windward. "Hurrah, boys!" he cried. "This little lot is either going to save us, or it's going to capsize us. Hang on!"

The advice was well timed, for as the squall hit the labouring vessel she heeled over at an alarming angle.

Sharp, steep seas, born of the shallow water through which she was running, hit spitefully against her bluff bows, sending clouds of spray flying the length of her decks.

Captain Bones, losing his footing, rolled down the decks, which stood at the angle of a roof top, and fetched away on his back in the lee scuppers, waving his wooden leg helplessly in the air.

"Don't make me laugh, Captain Bones," shouted Arty. "I've got a split lip!"

The old junk, light as she was, with only a light ballasting of pearl-shell, and a small load of dried tripping, was now sailing, as Arty expressed it, "on her ear."

There was a crash and a yell from the stern cabin where the Chinese crew were imprisoned, as tables and sleepers carried away on the roll, and were stacked up in a struggling mass to leeward.

"That's wakened those lads up at last," said Arty comfortably. "They must be sitting on the cabin ceiling now, and they all think they are going to be drowned. Now, will she clear it, or won't she?"

This question was addressed to the last swirl of white water, and the last mass of jagged rock that stuck up from the lagoon.

Beyond this the water was dark and deep, with a few white horses running phosphorescent in the darkness of the cloud shadow.

The question was answered quickly. The old junk leaped and scraped along that last tail of the reef. They felt her stout sides grinding over the coral trash. But she did not actually strike, and a few seconds later she was leaping over the waves that were now running in the deep channel of the lagoon.

"By my halidome, fair sirs," exclaimed Arty, wiping his forehead. "you was a scurvy close shave, and methinks we had a near escape of frapping this tall ship. Ease those sheets, you lubbers! This timber baulk of a tiller is breaking my back!"

He altered the course of the junk, heading her up the lagoon, and the boys easing off the sheets, the junk righted herself, and went roaring away up the lagoon, leaving a moonlit track of white water in her wake.

The brief squall had passed over now, and there was every prospect of a thoroughly enjoyable sail home to the Bombay Castle.

The Chinese they had lashed to the mast had now awakened under the influence of the fresh wind and the spray, which had dashed over them.

These looked up in dull wonderment at the group of laughing boys who were gathered about the tiller of the junk.

Then their eyes followed the swelling of the battened sails, which were straining under the fresh breeze.

"Where you go?" asked one of them.

"Don't know, John," replied Arty from the tiller. "If there's many more reefs like that last one cropping up out of this lagoon, it strikes me that we shall all go to Davy Jones' locker!"

The Chinese they had locked up in the cabin were waking up now, after having been rolled in a heap on the side of the cabin when the junk had lurched over under the squall.

Some of these were hammering on the great teak doors of the cabin, and yelling all sorts of threats and abuse.

Luckily, the junk was built with tremendous solidity everywhere. The

down a bucket of tar which hung from a belaying-pin.

Then he cautiously approached the broken skylight.

The Chinese who had fired the large pistol had handed it down to be reloaded, and another ugly weapon of a similar pattern and calibre was passed up to him.

Arty waited, breathless, with the bucket of tar in his hand for that shaven head to pop up again. It was a very small head, and would just slip through the bars of the skylight, and he knew that the owner would have to put it up further this time if he was going to fire at Pongo Walker, who was crouching down at the great tiller, steering the junk on his hands and knees.

The Chinese, as Arty had expected, popped up his head, levelling the weapon in the direction of the tiller.

But before he could fire, Arty, with a loud cry of delight, slapped down the bucket on the head of the would-be assassin, blotting him out in a couple of gallons of tar, which descended in greatropy strings on the group of blue-coated Celestials who were gaping up below the skylight.

Arty jumped back to the tiller, for Pongo's steering was not very great, and the junk was yawing wildly as she sped on before the wind, which seemed to be increasing.

"It'll take that lad some time to get that juice out of his pigtail!" he cried. "Now, you chaps, haul that tarpaulin over the skylight quick, and don't get too near it as you do so."

The boys were swift to obey his

up across the sea towards Ghost Island.

The squall which had saved them from the reef had been a forerunner of this patch of weather, and now the main cloud was rising rapidly in the sky astern of them, blotting out the stars swiftly.

Far away up the great expanse of the lagoon flashes of lightning were glimmering.

The wind, of a sudden, fell light, and the sails of the junk emptied, as the great cloud drew over the sky, blotting out the moonlight.

Chu, who had been rummaging round the junk for some supper for the hungry Skeleton, returned with some ship's biscuit, a tin of bully-beef, and a bottle of English pickles. And Skeleton, seating himself by Captain Bones, who was sitting smoking on an upturned bucket, commenced his simple repast.

"It's jolly good of you, Chu!" said he gratefully. "All you chaps are jolly good to me. I can't help getting hungry when we are having adventures like this. It's the excitement that puts such a twist on my appetite."

"Well, it strikes me that you will want feeding again to-night," replied Arty with a laugh. "You had better fill up a nose-bag for another supper. We are going to get some more excitement soon. See, the wind is pulling right round, and is beginning to blow into the thunder-cloud. That shows we shall catch it in a few minutes."

Arty peeped into the binnacle. It was an old-fashioned wooden box,

So he beat up the lagoon in short tacks, turning the junk every four minutes, and trusting that he was keeping well in the channel.

But the night was now as black as pitch, save when a flash of lightning lit the whole lagoon with an intense flare, which left them all blinded temporarily.

Tremendous rolls of thunder, like the roar of heavy artillery echoed across the lagoon.

Then came the rain. They could hear it thrashing through the heads of the palms ashore and smoking across the lagoon. Then down it came in such a plump of water that it nearly knocked the breath out of them.

Those who have never seen a tropical storm have no idea of rain. In a few seconds the decks of the junk were filled six inches deep, notwithstanding the spouts, which were pouring out through the scuppers. The rain blotted out the wind as it thundered down, roaring on the deck of the junk and making the great hull reverberate like a drum.

It blotted out the lightning-flashes in its falling veils. It soaked Skeleton's biscuits before he could get them to his mouth.

The boys could feel it pouring down their backs in a trickle, and pouring out again at their heels. But, luckily, it was warm, tepid rain, and they minded it no more than a shower-bath.

The rain knocked down the wind. The sails emptied, and the junk drifted slowly through the alternating flashes of lightning and intervals of pitch darkness.

Then Skeleton, looking aloft, gasped in astonishment, not unmixed with fear.

At the foremasthead of the junk shone a vivid, greenish incandescent ball of fire as large as an electric arc-lamp.

"Crikey!" exclaimed Skeleton, forgetting to bite the soaked biscuit which was half-way to his mouth. "The lightning has set the foremast alight!"

And the words were hardly out of his mouth before similar balls of fire appeared at the truck of the mainmast and on the peak of the mainsail.

"My hat!" exclaimed Dick. "Have you ever seen anything like this before, you chaps?"

"They'll be St. Elmo lights!" said Captain Bones, listening to the boys' descriptions of these weird lights. "They're what sailors call corpse-candles. But there's no 'arm in 'em. If you leave a corpse-candle alone, 'e'll leave you alone!"

"I don't like the beastly things, anyway!" said Skeleton rather dolefully. "I wish they'd go away, and I wish this rain would dry up. My vest is working up all round my chest like a dishcloth!"

Cecil was the only member of the party who was dry. He had been disguised in an oilskin and a sou'wester when Chu had brought him on board. But the rain was too much for Cecil. He saw an empty hog-head by the lightning flashes, which was secured close by the stern of the junk, and he made for it quietly to take shelter from the storm.

The hog-head had probably served as a dog-kennel for the junk's watch-dog. But there was no dog aboard now. Perhaps the pirates had eaten it, or perhaps it had died of the bilgy smell of the Junk of a Thousand Celestial Perfumes.

At any rate, the empty hog-head offered Cecil shelter, and he made for it, dropping on his paws and crawling into it.

Then the boys started, for, above the roar of the rain there sounded a dismal howling from the interior of the great barrel, and Cecil was seen struggling in the entrance, whilst a large sea-boot planted on his ugly face pushed him politely but firmly back.

Chu, who had run aft to discover the cause of the howls, burst out laughing, for, safely stowed away in the depths of the hog-head, was Chow, the pirate boy, who strongly resented Cecil coming into his narrow quarters, and was howling a Chinese version of "I wouldn't leave my little wooden hut for you!"

But Cecil, who was thoroughly cowed by the lightnings and the mysterious corpse-lights which were burning at the mastheads and on the rigging of the junk, struggled to get into the hog-head; whilst Chow, stowed up in the head, firmly resisted his entry, shoving him back with the sole of his great sea-boot.

But the fate of Cecil's lodgings was settled in a sudden and abrupt manner.

(Don't miss next week's instalment of this grand adventure serial. Order your copy now!)



QUITE EFFECTIVE! The Chinese, as Arty had expected, popped up his head, levelling the weapon in the direction of the tiller. But before he could fire, Arty slapped down the bucket on the head of the would-be assassin, blotting him out in a couple of gallons of tar, which descended in greatropy strings on the group of blue-coated Celestials who were gaping up below the skylight.

doors were as solid as the doors of a bank, and the boys had screwed them well home with long six-inch brass screws. And the locks had been made somewhere about the year dot, as large and heavy as the doors of a strong-room.

There were a few dull reports in the interior of the cabin, which showed that some of the mob in there were still armed, and were trying to blow the lock off the door. But it would have taken a machine-gun some time to blow out that great box of cut steel and brass. There were smashes, too, at the skylights, and a chattering of glass.

Then the head of a Chinese showed in the skylight, trying to force up the heavy bronze grids that covered it.

This rascal was evidently standing on the shoulders of another man, and he could just get a glimpse of Arty as he stood at the tiller.

Suddenly he put up his hand out of the skylight, holding a pistol as large as a toy cannon.

This exploded with a tremendous report, and a large ball went whizzing through the air close by Arty's head.

"Hold the tiller a moment, Pongo," said Arty, "and keep your head down if you don't want it knocked off. I'll soon settle that party with the popgun."

Crawling almost on his hands and knees, Arty made for the rail and took

bidling. A large tarpaulin, heavy and strong, which was without doubt a hatch-cover from some looted steamer, was hauled over the skylight, blinding it under its heavy folds. And to make certain that the Chinese below should not slash through it, it was folded eight times, and lashed down to the skylight with ropes.

"Now we can have some supper," said Skeleton comfortably. "I'm feeling awfully peckish again. I wonder where these Chinese keep their pantry?" he added.

"Don't you go about looking for pantries," said Arty. "It's only a couple of hours ago that you had enough supper to last you for a week."

"But I'm so awfully hungry, Arty," pleaded Skeleton.

"Well, let Chu find you some grub!" replied Arty. "He knows his way about this sort of ship better than any of the rest of us. We had better keep together here close by the tiller, for I may want you chaps to shorten sail soon. The weather is beginning to look a bit funny again, and that last squall was a run 'un!"

It was as Arty said. The Pacific is by no means the peaceful ocean that its name denotes, and, more especially among the islands which stud its vast expanse, is liable to sudden squalls and local storms. And such a storm was rapidly coming

lit by a smoky lamp, and in it was placed a needle floating in a saucer of water, on two straws—the oldest compass in the world.

But it was not much good consulting this ancient compass, for the distant lagoon shores were blotted out in the darkness which had fallen, and the occasional flashes of lightning astern only dazzled the eyes of the young navigators.

"Haul in the sheets, boys!" called Arty, as the wind suddenly freshened and set the two great-battened sails slatting like thunder. "The wind's coming straight ahead now."

The boys bent their backs to the heavy tackle and hauled in the sheets. The sails filled, and the junk started tacking across the wide lagoon, heeling down to a freshening breeze.

So far as Arty knew, the lagoon was about five miles wide, but he dared not sail the junk far in towards either shore lest he should run her on the "mat," or the inner reefs of the lagoon.

So far as he knew, he was well in the deep-water channel which ran right through the fifty odd miles of this great enclosed sea lake. But this channel was neither buoyed nor lighted.

He figured out that the Bombay Castle was yet fifteen miles to windward of them, and he longed above all things to bring his prize safely home.

THE SPORTS OF ST. CLIVE'S!

(Continued from page 490.)

Market waggons were lumbering through the streets, the market-places were packed with stalls and carts loaded with the produce of the land. Cattle filled the pens.

So they drove to the inn, the car being stopped within sight of it, and got out.

And as they approached to the ring of merry laughter and the loud echo of deep-toned voices, Cullen saw Roberts talking to the landlord as they stood together at the door.

The school instructor was evidently just about to start out for a walk—might even be leaving the inn for good.

"Look," cried Cullen, pointing, his

voice trembling with excitement, "that's our man! Don't waste time! Arrest him!"

The inspector gave Roberts one piercing glance, and smiled.

He was a man of experience, and knew that Cullen had spoken the truth, for the attempt which Roberts had made to disguise himself was feeble indeed.

"Come with me," said he, touching Cullen on the arm. "Stand by, men! Don't let him get away. Hand-cuff him, for he may prove dangerous."

They were almost up to Roberts when a startled exclamation from the landlord caused the instructor to look round.

As he saw the police closing in on him a hot flush rushed up to his forehead, then died away, leaving him deathly pale.

"Charles Roberts, alias Hawes," said the inspector, "I arrest you as an escaped convict, and advise you to give us no trouble!"

He made a motion. Four strong hands gripped the unlucky convict by the arms, his wrists were wrenched forward.

Click, click! A pair of handcuffs were snapped home and Roberts was helpless.

"We've a car waiting, and will drive you back in that," said the inspector gruffly, making a motion of the hand.

Roberts looking round him, saw the landlord's startled face.

"Don't worry about me," he cried. "And thanks for all your kindness!" He flashed a look at the inspector.

"Mr. Green"—and his voice was clear, emphatic—"knew nothing about me beyond that I asked for shelter, and paid for it!"

His eyes rested on the sinister figure of his enemy, Dan Cullen, who, with cap drawn down to screen his face, and coat collar turned up, for he had wished to avoid being recognised—stood a pace or two away. In a moment the instructor knew the

villain. His lips tightened, and his eyes snapped.

Cullen moved forward. It seemed to him that Roberts, alias Hawes, was going to take things lying down. Why, he hadn't the pluck of a mouse. There was no kick in him. An overwhelming desire to score off the man who had defied him, refused to be blackmailed, came to him.

"Well, Mr. Roberts," he cried, laughing triumphantly, "what have you got to say now? How do you like it? You're going to prison! You thought you were clever defying me, but I've got yer beat."

He thrust his ugly face close to Roberts, exulting in his triumph.

"Stand away there!" cried the inspector roughly. "We want to get our man away!"

"One moment!" Roberts' voice rang out as Cullen recoiled with a snarl. "Before we go I've got something to say about this man!"

He raised his manacled wrists, and indicated the coward.

"He was with me in Banford gaol. He's the man who escaped a day or so before I did. Now that you've taken me, supposing you take him, if I'm to go to gaol, take him, too!"

He laughed. Cullen, with an oath, leapt backwards.

The inspector, quick to act, motioned his men, who got between the villain and retreat.

"Now, Cullen"—and Roberts smiled serenely, cool, calm, and collected as ever during this time of crisis. "I think we are quits."

"He's telling lies! I've never seen the inside of a gaol; I wasn't with him at Banford. He's said this because I gave him away. Don't believe a word he says!" Cullen was panting with excitement, his face red with anger.

"We'll take care of you just to make sure. You've been under suspicion! Arrest that man!"

(Another long instalment of this fine serial will appear in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND.)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

A really splendid story of Jimmy Silver & Co. is on the programme for next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. Monsieur Moneau, the French master, is the central figure, and I am sure all my chums will read this story with great amusement, as well as deep interest. You will enjoy

"THE MYSTERY OF MOSSOO!" By Owen Conquest.

The next magnificent long instalment of our new serial will again grip all my readers. Steve Emberton has become a universal favourite, judging by the shoals of letters I have already received from all over the country in praise of

"THE DOUBLE-HORSESHOE RANCH!" By Gordon Wallace.

Another ripping story of Frank Richards & Co., the chums of the School in the Backwoods, makes delightful reading. Dicky Bird and his followers of Hillcrest, the rival school, play a prominent part in this fine yarn, entitled

"THE REDSKIN RAIDERS!" By Martin Clifford.

Also a long instalment of our sporting school serial,

"THE SPORTS OF ST. CLIVE'S!" By Arthur S. Hardy.

And a splendid instalment of our grand adventure serial,

"SKULL ISLAND!" By Duncan Storm.

Next on the list of good things is another splendid article by Stanley Hooper, the Fly-weight Champion of Essex and the Eastern Counties, which will prove very useful and interesting to all lovers of the noble art. Stanley Hooper has had a wide experience, therefore his knowledge is first-hand and first-class.

And another fine footer article, specially written for the BOYS' FRIEND by E. Longworth, the famous full-back of Liverpool, and All-England renown, entitled

"HOLDING UP THE FORWARD!"

This is an article you must not miss!

STARS OF FILMLAND.

All those of my loyal readers who are also supporters of our companion paper, "Chuckles," or those of you who have younger brothers and sisters following the exploits of Pongo and the other animals, will be delighted to learn that on and after December 6th will be included in its pages portraits of Cinema Stars in coloured design. This new feature has been introduced by special request from many thousands of readers of the Best Coloured Comic on the

market. Tell all your friends about it and make sure of your own copy. Don't forget the date—December 6th!

A YORKSHIRE HOLIDAY CAMP.

Osmotherley, in North Yorks, is where our troop of scouts camp. We have a splendid time. The place is thirty miles from our town. There are very few hedges; only brick walls, the bricks just piled on top of one another. We visited the ruins of Mount Grace Priory and some of the neighbouring villages. From the Hanging Stone, near Thimbley, you can see York Minster with the glasses, also a group of trees close to Pateley Bridge. There is a quaint inscription over the Chequers Inn, at Slapstones. It runs:

"Be not in haste. Step in and taste. Afo for nothing to-morrow."

That is the sort of to-morrow which never comes. At the inn there is a peat fire which has not been out for two hundred years.

This little paragraph comes from Harold Nodding, 30, Milton Road, West Hartlepool, to whom I am sending a cash prize of half-a-crown.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED.

The following readers of the Companion Papers desire correspondence with fellow-readers:

R. S. Ellis, 4, Oxford Street, Edinburgh, wants members for "Amateur Railway Club" magazine. Stamped addressed envelopes.

The Irish Correspondence Club, head office, 7, Regent Street, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, Ireland, wants members from all parts of the world. Magazine issued.

R. Griffin, 424, Stretford Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, with readers interested in picture postcards.

Miss Irene Newton, 63, Otway Street, Chatham, Kent, with readers anywhere.

Alfred Hall, 42, Devreaux Drive, Poulton, Wallasey, Cheshire, with African and American readers.

A. Rice, junr., 12, Queen's Row, Walworth, London, S.E. 17, wants readers for "Queen's Gazette," post free, 3jd.

Edward Cantor, De Rust, Dist. Oudtshoorn, Cape Province, South Africa, with readers interested in stamp collecting. Age 15-15.

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

Readers of the BOYS' FRIEND are invited to contribute short original paragraphs of general interest for publication on this page. Cash prizes of five shillings and a half-a-crown, according to merit, will be awarded to the authors of all paragraphs published.

Sidney Oliver, Bay House, Bryn Street, Newtown, Montgomery, wants contributions for amateur magazine, also members for Correspondence Club.

B. Coupland, 21, Wilford Grove, Nottingham, has some foreign stamps for sale.

L. Tomlinson, 120, Cromorne Street, Meadows, Nottingham, has for sale spare Meccano parts.

Harry Dickman, Ceylon Cottage, 54, Constitutional Street, Cape Town, South Africa, with readers anywhere.

M. Stubbs, 33, Elwy Street, Liverpool, with readers living in the district.

W. H. Neale, The Nidus, High Burnham, Bucks, will exchange Companion Papers for lantern and slides.

E. Tingle, 40, Firhill Road, Sheffield, has for sale a cinematograph with films in good condition.

E. Andrews, Crawford Post Office, Upholland, Wigan, wants readers to join the United Boys' Association. Send stamp for particulars.

Miss Hilda Henderson, 27, Prince Leopold Street, Cardiff, with readers anywhere. 16-20.

ADVENTURE STORIES.

These are always popular. Fellows always want to read tales of

"The bold, bad buccaner, With moustaches and a leer."

There is at present a big demand for home yarns—yarns about school, about familiar scenes, and things that might happen. The fine stories in the "Green 'Un" keep the flag flying.

One of these days I should like to see a romance with the scene laid in China, a country of which we still know so little—the land of tea. It must have been China that the new type of King Cole came from, for the version I heard the other day ran as follows:

"Old King Cole was a cheery old soul,

And they say he was born a Chinese,

For on festive occasions when he called for his bowl,

It was filled to the brim with hot tea."

Personally, I discredit the report, but no matter.

Your Editor

OUR NEW WEEKLY COMPETITION! :: CASH PRIZES FOR READERS!

(No Entrance Fee required)

Have you tried our novel competition yet? Just glance down the next column and make up your mind to enter for this simple and yet interesting feature. The Rookwood Rhymester, who gained such popularity with his "Personalities" series, has induced some of the leading lights at Rookwood to write verses about themselves. All you have to do is to supply the last line in each verse—it must rhyme with the sixth line and also carry on the theme of the verse. It is not difficult, and you will find it provides no end of amusement. Don't think that you have to use words of great length—plain, simple English will do.

When you have succeeded in supplying the missing "last lines," send in your effort to "Rhymester Competition No. 5," The BOYS' FRIEND, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. Competitors' efforts must reach the above address not later than first post December 8th. A postcard will be sufficient.

Your Editor, assisted by "The Rookwood Rhymester," will be the judge, and he will award the prizes—twelve of them each week—to the readers who send in the best "last lines," in his opinion. By the act of entering this competition, every competitor binds himself, or herself, to accept your Editor's decision as final.

"MYSELF!" By Arthur Edward Lovell.

I'm Jimmy Silver's pal, you know, We have been chums together Through storm and shine, through rain and snow.

And every sort of weather, I see no reason to suppose

Our friendship will diminish; We'll stick together till the close,

I'm quite a modest sort of chap, There's nothing great about me; But when it comes to jape or scrap

They cannot do without me, The Fistic Four are going strong,

They're always hale and hearty; I'm very proud that I belong

The Moderns, led by Tommy Dodd, Are always keen to fight us; And when they're licked they think it odd

And dance like old St. Vitus! We never fail to give them beans

Like loyal vegetarians; And they confess, behind the scenes,

The Classics hold the upper hand And rule the roost in all things;

We take the cake, we beat the band, We shine in great or small things,

Upon the field of play we use Our utmost vim and vigour;

Although the cads and slackers choose

I meant to tell you all about Myself in this brief poem; But then, there is no need to shout My virtues, for you know 'em! I'm just a law-abiding cove Whom Silver may rely on; But if I am put out, by Jove,

The last line of each verse is left for you to supply. You need not write out the poem in full, in sending in your attempt; just send in a card with the five "last lines" written on it and your name and address. Now for the prizes. For the most meritorious effort—the one which I consider "rounds off" Lovell's poem the best—I shall award a

CASH PRIZE OF FIFTY SHILLINGS.

For the 5 next best efforts,

FIVE PRIZES OF TEN SHILLINGS EACH,

and for the next six, Consolation Prizes of 6 Splendid Pocket Knives.

ENTER FOR THIS INTERESTING COMPETITION TO-DAY!

GINEMA NOTES.

At last we are to see some of the heroes of boys' fiction on the screen. The Pollock-Daring Film Co. have commenced on a series of "Jack, Sam, and Pete" stories, from the famous stories by S. Clarke Hook appearing in the "Marvel." "Jack" is played by Lieutenant Jack Daring, the producer, who is a crack shot and a famous trick-riider. "Sam" is played by Eddie Willey, who has been through many perilous adventures in the Great War. "Pete" is played by Ernest Tringham, a jolly, black giant from Bermuda, whose feats of strength are to be marvelled at. The villain of the series is played by Captain Jack Kelly, the six-foot stock-whip king. Jack Harding, the Light-Weight Boxing Champion of the World, has an important part in the series.

With such a wonderful cast as the above for the "Jack, Sam, and Pete" stories, no reader of the BOYS' FRIEND can afford to miss these ripping pictures. The thrilling stunts these three heroes go through will make any sport-loving British boy thrill when he sees them on the screen. I will announce the release date as soon as possible.

We are promised something new in pictures in "Around the Town," which the Gaumont Film Company will release in December of this year. These are a weekly series, and each part will include interesting interviews with distinguished people in the worlds of Art, Literature, Science, Theatre Land, and Sport. Quite a novel venture.

Jack Pickford's first national will be "Bill Apperson's Boy," the story of a young man who could not tolerate another woman in his dead mother's place. This is a typical Jack Pickford picture.

This little item of news will interest the fair readers of the "B.F." "Little Women" has now been screened, and is, I expect, now on view. It is a famous Lasky production, featuring an all star cast.

Other films released this month include: "The House Opposite," featuring Leah Baird; "The Narrow Path," with Fanny Ward; "A Marked Man," featuring Harry Carey; "The Mystery Girl," featuring Ethel Clayton; "The White Man," with an all star cast; "Hoop-la of the Circus," featuring Billie Rhodes; "Two-Bit Seats," with Taylor Holmes; "The Green God," with Harry Mory; "Breed of Men," featuring Wm. S. Hart; "The Peril Within," with Dorothy Gish; "Her Great Chance," featuring Alice Brady; and "The Two Brides," starring an all star cast.

There are two serials released this month. Firstly, "The Lightning Raider," featuring ever-popular Pearl White; and secondly, "Elmo the Mighty," with Elmo Lincoln and Lucille Love. These are both first-rate serials, and provide as many thrills as you will want for some weeks to come.

Following immediately after "Elmo the Mighty" there will come another serial, "The Midnight Man," featuring James Corbett, the famous boxer. Then this will be followed by yet another. This time Eddie Polo is the star, and many of the episodes for this serial were taken during his recent visit to this country. The title is not decided yet.