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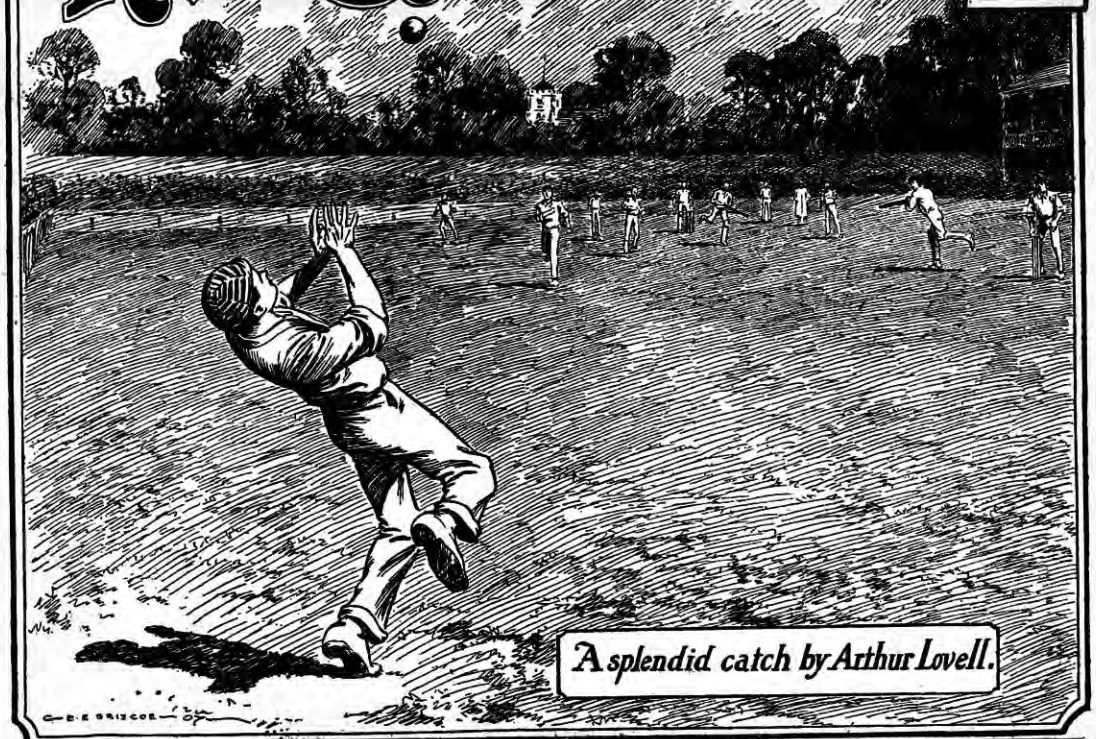

A splendid catch by Arthur Lovell.

No. 260. Vol. V.] EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY. [Saturday, May 25, 1907.

You Must Read This Grand Athletic Tale!

KING CRICKET!

A Fascinating New Story of County Cricket.

Written by CHARLES HAMILTON, and Illustrated by E. E. BRISCOE.

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The Chief Characters in this Fine Story.

ARTHUR LOVELL, Loamshire's champion bat. He becomes a professional. His uncle is ruined by James Lagden.

KIT VALANCE, Loamshire's best bowler. He first comes to notice in the Colts' match, where he takes Arthur Lovell's wicket. Later he becomes Arthur's firm chum.

GEOFFREY LAGDEN, an amateur and a good bat. He is bitterly jealous of Arthur Lovell, whom he hates and endeavours to injure. He is Arthur's rival for the hand of Molly Hilton. A snobbish character.

JAMES LAGDEN, who has ruined Arthur's uncle.

BLAINE, Captain of Loamshire, and the steady friend of Arthur and Kit. He is Molly Hilton's cousin.

PONSONBY, Geoffrey Lagden's friend, and a man of similar character—snobbish to a degree.

The first instalment tells how Arthur Lovell distinguishes himself in the Colts' match, in spite of the efforts which Geoffrey Lagden puts forth to keep him in the shade. In the second innings, just as Arthur is about to take his place at the wicket, Lagden tells him that his uncle is a ruined man, thus putting him off his form. At the earliest possible moment he leaves the field, and speeds towards London to learn exactly what is amiss. His uncle tells him that James Lagden is the cause of his ruin.

Arthur realises that he can no longer retain his position as amateur cricketer for Loamshire, and sends in his resignation; but his friend Kit Valance suggests his turning professional. Arthur decides to do so. He rejoins his club, and in the first innings of the match against Leicestershire he tops the century.

Kit Valance has a twin brother who is not a credit to his family. He is constantly asking Kit for money, and because of the disgrace which publicity would bring, Kit lets him have it. But being in a rather tighter corner than usual Len Valance backs Somerset to beat Loamshire, and asks his brother to let down his side. Kit refuses indignantly, and in the first innings takes no less than three wickets.

Loamshire get the best of the first day's play, Arthur topping his century. Lagden spies on Len Valance, who is in company with a stranger, mistaking him for his brother. He overhears a plot to prevent Kit's playing the following day. Approaching the conspirators, he promises to aid them. Soon after Kit is lured to an empty cottage, and there gagged and bound.

(How follow his fortunes as detailed in the instalment below.)

Somersetshire Goes Ahead.

"ALL down for 290!" said Arthur Lovell cheerfully.

"Not bad, Kit!"

Valance nodded without speaking.

He had been strangely silent that morning, and Arthur wondered rather anxiously what was troubling his mind.

There was a buzz of cheery talk on the County Cricket Ground at Taunton. The interest in the first day's play had been very keen, and a good-sized crowd had turned up for the second day. Loamshire had finished their innings in about an hour, and the score for the visiting county stood at 290.

As Somerset had scored only 93 for their first innings, the result of the match seemed to be a foregone conclusion. At all events, it seemed so to the Loamshire men, who were confidently anticipating a victory with an innings to spare. It did not seem probable that play would last into the third day at all.

But Somerset had not given up hope yet. With such batsmen as Lionel Palairet and Braund to rely upon, the home team were certain to make a desperate fight for it in their second innings, and some of them still nourished a faint hope that Loamshire might return defeated home.

The Loamshire innings over, the cricketers were chatting, while the roller was busy on the pitch; but Arthur Lovell found his chum in an uncommunicative mood. To any remark made to him that morning, Valance had replied only in monosyllables; and Arthur could not help being anxious.

Kit had left him the previous night, on receiving the letter from Len, and, on coming down in the morning, Arthur had discovered that the young bowler had not been home all night.

He was alarmed and uneasy, but his fears were relieved when he met Valance on the match ground. Valance had not explained his absence, and Arthur had not liked to ask his chum questions.

"I say, Kit," the young batsman remarked abruptly, "is anything wrong, old chap? Can I do anything to help you?"

Valance shook his head.

"Nothing is wrong, Lovell," he replied. "I'm feeling a bit—a bit depressed this morning—that's all."

"You saw Len last night?"

Valance started a little.

"Yes; I saw him," he replied briefly.

"I was rather worried when I found you hadn't been home all night."

"I'm sorry; it couldn't be helped."

Still he volunteered no word of information, and Arthur, who was anxious, but did not wish to appear curious, said no more upon the subject.

Some subtle change had taken place in his friend since they parted the previous night; he felt that keenly, but could hardly define what it was. Valance's manner was cold and uncommunicative, but this Lovell attributed to the worry on his mind concerning his scapegrace twin-brother.

There was something else, Arthur did not exactly know what, but it seemed as if a cloud had come between him and his friend.

The crowd were collecting again to watch the resumption of play. Arthur went into the pavilion, and Valance slowly followed. Blaine, the Loamshire skipper, met them with a cheerful grin.

"Feeling fit, Valance?" he exclaimed. "I want you to repeat yesterday's performance to-day. Feel like doing it?"

Valance laughed slightly.

"I hope so, Blane. I shall do my best, at all events."

"That's right," laughed the Loamshire skipper. "We all know what your best is like, Valance."

Geoffrey Lagden, who was standing near, smiled sardonically as he overheard the remark. Then, catching Arthur Lovell's eye, he coloured and turned away.

Arthur grinned at him in surprise for a moment. But it was now time to think of the game, and the incident made no impression upon his mind.

The wickets were in perfect condition, the day clear and sunny, the ground crowded with a good-humoured and interested throng. The conditions were favourable for ideal cricket, and the spectators were destined to see some startling developments of that eventful match.

Blane placed his men to field, and assigned the first over to Valance. The bowler sent down a few trials to the wicket-keeper. Arthur Lovell was looking at him, and again a vague sense of a change in his friend came to him. Valance's style was not the free, assured style of old. What was the matter with him?

The Somersetshire batsmen came out of the pavilion, and the trial balls ceased, and the bowler prepared for business.

Lionel Palairet and Lewis opened the innings for Somersetshire. The Somerset captain had resolved that a stand should be made against the Loamshire bowling early in the innings, if only to encourage his side, but even Palairet felt a slight uneasiness at the sight of Valance ready for business at the pavilion end. But he did not show it.

With the grace of manner never lacking in him, the Somerset captain took up his position at the wicket, and prepared for the first over. Blane, who was keeping wicket, smiled a confident smile to himself. He had every confidence in Kit Valance.

Valance took a little run, shorter than usual, and his arm went up and over, and the round, red ball came down.

Clack!

Away it went with a whiz, and the batsmen ran and ran again. They were safe, with two to their credit, when the ball came in, and was tossed back to the bowler.

A slight smile came over Lionel Palairet's face. That ball was one of the easiest he had ever played, and either Valance was off his form this morning, or else he was playing with him after having thrown him off his guard. The latter was not likely to happen. Palairet watched keenly for the next ball. Down it came, as simple a ball as ever a schoolboy bowled on a college ground, and with a power, ful drive Palairet sent it over the pavilion.

The crowd cheered loudly, not only at the splendid hit, but at the dawning possibility that Somersetshire would yet pull up in their second innings. The over finished in the same style. It gave Palairet sixteen in all, and the crowd were delighted.

Valance's face was off his form, or else his magnificent bowling of the previous day had been a kind of fluke, a mere flash in the pan. Lionel Palairet had never been in better form. The hopes of Somersetshire rose. Blane's expression was puzzled. He did not quite know what to make of it.

Tweedie bowled the second over against Lewis's wicket. Lewis took five runs for the over, and at the end of it faced Valance's bowling.

Now was the time for Valance to break the toe, as it were. He did not seem able to touch Palairet's wicket, but Lewis's was well within his powers, if he was in anything like his usual form.

Blane's face became a perfect study as that over progressed. There were two wides to begin with, and then Lewis cut the bowling all over the ground. What was the matter with Valance?

The crowd were cheering lustily. The Somerset score was already at twenty-nine for two overs, and Loamshire realised that the victory they had counted upon as a certainty was not so very certain after all. If this sort of thing continued, the home team would soon pull up. And it did continue.

Valance bowled his usual big proportion of overs, but all the "devil" was gone out of his bowling. Not a wicket fell, and his bowling was played as easily as possible. The Somerset score mounted up.

The first wicket—Lewis's—fell to Tweedie. Poynts replaced him at the wicket, and, luckily for Loamshire, was soon caught out by Arthur Lovell. But Valance seemed unable to effect anything against the batsmen. His bowling was cut all over the field, and every over he delivered added considerably to the home score.

Blane's face gradually grew longer and longer. He knew that the worst thing a skipper could do in a match game was to get flurried, and change the bowling contrary to his original intentions.

But if Valance's form did not improve, it was useless to allow him to go on adding to the Somerset score in this manner. The Loamshire skipper wore a worried look. The cheers from the interested and excited crowd, greeting every fresh drive by Palairet, did not sound pleasantly in his ears.

The Somerset captain was certainly batting in magnificent style, and would undoubtedly have piled up a good total of runs for his side in any case, but Blane knew that his splendid innings now was due to Valance's inexplicable falling-off in form.

A splendid five brought Palairet's individual score up to eighty, and then, as the field crossed for the next over, Blane spoke to Valance.

The latter was looking somewhat nervous and uneasy, as if he felt that he had not done what was expected of him, and did not like to face his captain. Blane went straight to the point in his direct way.

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Valance?"

"Nothing," said the bowler half-sullenly.

"You're not in form to-day."

"Well, one can't be in first-class form always, can we? I'm doing my best."

Blane looked at him in surprise. He did not speak in the manner the Loamshire skipper was accustomed to from Kit Valance, and Blane was quick to detect the slight. A look of concern came into Blane's face as a new thought struck him.

"Aren't you well, Valance? If you're not, say so. It's a bad look-out for us, but I don't want to play any man who's not up to it."

"I'm all right," said Valance; "I've been feeling a bit off-colour. I fancy I overdid it a bit yesterday."

"Well, I'll give you a rest, anyway," said Blane. "For goodness' sake try to get some of your form back. I've depended upon you, Valance, and it's hard to be left in the lurch like this. Buck up!"

"I'm sorry, Blane. It's as bad for me as for you."

"I'm thinking of the county," growled Blane. "We can't afford to throw a match away. But I don't want to rag you. I'm not grumbling. I know you too well to think that you wouldn't do your best, Valance. But for goodness' sake pull yourself together."

He tossed the ball to Geoffrey Lagden.

Valance took Lagden's place in the field with a flush in his cheek, which showed that he had felt the captain's words. Geoffrey Lagden bowled against Lionel Palairet, and though he could not touch his wicket, he secured a maiden over, the first in the innings.

Palairet's success at the wicket made Blane grateful for trifles now, and he gave Lagden a glance of cordial approval as the over ended.

He had never expected to see the amateur bowl better than Valance, but on this occasion Geoffrey Lagden had certainly done so, and it was his turn to lay out, too, as it seemed, for a little later a Somersetshire wicket fell to his bowling, though it was not that of the dreaded Palairet.

Somersetshire were now three down for a hundred and twenty runs, a score that nobody on the ground had expected for the whole innings when it commenced. Loamshire's luck was evidently out. For, as is not at all uncommon in a match, the unexpected "rot" of a player relied on by all seemed to detract from the form of the rest.

The Loamshire bowling all round was weaker than it had been on the first day of the match, with the solitary exception of Geoffrey Lagden.

The fourth wicket fell to Arthur Lovell, put on as a change bowler, but by this time Lionel Palairet's score was ninety-eight. That he would go over the century was the hope of nearly every spectator on the ground, and it began to look like a certainty. A red-faced man in a white hat, standing well to the front watching the game, rubbed his fat hands with glee. The growing success of the home team seemed to afford him more enjoyment than it did to the native folk who thronged around him, and cheered every clack of the bat on the ball.

Mr. Sharp was in high spirits. But a nervous depression was settling over the Loamshire men. In the pavilion enclosure Colonel Hilton was puzzled and worried. Blane did not allow his face to show what he felt, but he was feeling extremely sore.

After a rest, Valance was put on again to bowl against Palairet. The Somersetshire captain faced his bowling with easy confidence now, but at the same time he was thoroughly alert and ready for a surprise. But his alertness was not needed. He played every ball as easily as he could have desired, and they pitched one after another just where he wanted them, and every ball he swiped away with a vim that made the crowd yell with delight.

Blane's brow contracted. Arthur Lovell was feeling, and looking, miserable. He could not understand this falling-off in Valance's bowling any more than the Loamshire skipper could. There was certainly something wrong with Kit somehow, and yet so far as physical health went he looked perfectly fit.

The cheers were deafening when Lionel Palairet passed the hundred, and the finish of the over brought his score up to 106.

Then the luncheon interval gave the Loamshire fieldsmen a much-needed rest. The scoring had been extremely rapid, and boundaries had been, if not as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, at all events, pretty frequent.

Lionel Palairet was still looking as fresh as paint, and loud cheers followed him as he walked off the field.

"I say, I'm sorry, Blane," said Valance, in the pavilion. "I know I've not done what you expected of me."

Blane looked at him grimly.

"No, you haven't," he said.

"I've been feeling a bit off-colour somehow."

"You look fit enough."

"I'll do better in the afternoon, I promise you that," said Valance; and Blane nodded, and turned away without speaking again.

He knew it was useless, or worse than useless, to "nag" a player who did not come up to expectations, and that such "nagging" was only likely to make him nervous and detract from his form. But he was bitterly disappointed, and he could not help an unpleasant suspicion rising in his mind that Valance could have done better if he had tried.

It seemed impossible that the young bowler, whom he had always known to be thoroughly honourable and reliable, could have deliberately intended to let his side down in the match, especially after opening so brilliantly on the previous day.

Yet it was hard to reconcile his previous day's splendid performance with to-day's miserable display, without a suspicion that all was not as it should be. And if that chilling doubt crept into Blane's mind, it may be imagined what was the more carping and suspicious minds of the rest.

Geoffrey Lagden, indeed, made no secret of his opinion. He talked to the colonel over lunch, and the veteran cricketer naturally alluded to the matter that was weighing in his mind, the inexplicable falling off of Valance's form.

"Do you think he is doing his best, sir?" asked Lagden.

The old cricketer stared.

"I don't quite understand you, Lagden. Of course he's doing his best."

"Oh, if you are sure of that, all right!"

"Do you mean to say that you think he's not doing as well as he might for his side?" Colonel Hilton asked, knitting his brows.

Lagden shrugged his shoulders.

"If he is, sir, it's a very poor best, after what he did yesterday."

"I admit it is inexplicable, but I have known such cases in cricket before," said the colonel. "Such things will happen."

"I don't know, sir, whether I ought to speak about it, but I think that came under my notice which might throw some light upon the matter," said Lagden hesitatingly.

Colonel Hilton looked straight at him.

"If you have the slightest reason to suppose that Valance is not doing his best, Lagden, you certainly ought to acquaint me with it," he said. "At the same time, I cannot help knowing that you dislike that young man, and I say plainly, that I don't want to listen to any insinuations against him."

Lagden bit his lip and coloured. The colonel had a direct and soldierly way of coming straight to, the point, which often made Geoffrey Lagden feel uncomfortable. But a little discomfort of that kind was not likely to prevent him from taking advantage of any opportunity of injuring one he hated.

"If I tell you exactly what occurred, sir, you can use your own judgment as to whether it is of any consequence," he said, concealing his annoyance. "I may mention that Tunstall was with me at the time, and can bear me out."

"That sounds very serious to begin with. What is it?"

"Last evening, when walking near Taunton, we saw Valance in deep and earnest conversation with a man a professional cricketer ought to have no acquaintance even with."

"Who was the man?" asked the colonel tersely.

"A disreputable fellow named Sharp, whom I have seen many times on the racecourse. He is a bookmaker, and to my knowledge bets on county cricket matches."

The colonel gnawed his grey moustache.

"And you say Valance was in earnest conversation with this blackguard?"

"Yes. And they were undoubtedly on very friendly terms. They passed us in a lane, and I happened to catch a word or two as they passed—of course, quite by accident. They were talking cricket."

Colonel Hilton knitted his brows darkly.

He knew that Lagden disliked Kit Valance, and he had a vague feeling that Lagden's word was not absolutely to be relied upon when he was speaking about a person he disliked. But he knew Lagden could have hardly invented a story like this; and, beside, there was Tunstall's word for it, too. Tunstall had his faults, but he was not a man to lie.

"I don't understand this at all," said Colonel Hilton slowly. "Valance certainly never ought to hold any communication with such a man. A professional cricketer ought to be like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. But, taken in conjunction with his extraordinary failure to-day, the circumstance looks suspicious."

"I am glad you think I ought to have mentioned it," said Lagden diffidently. "I should be sorry to be understood as speaking against Valance without cause." And he walked away, leaving the old soldier to digest his information.

Colonel Hilton was looking very worried when Blane came to speak to him a little later.

The Loamshire skipper noted it at once, and spoke on the subject that was exercising the colonel's mind and his own.

"Not quite what we expected to-day, sir," he remarked. "I can't understand Valance."

"I have just heard something about him," said Colonel Hilton abruptly. "I don't want it to go any further at present, but I want your opinion on it, Blane."

"Yes!" said the Loamshire captain wonderingly. "What is it?"

"Lagden and Tunstall saw him last night in close conversation with a betting man named Sharp. They appeared to be on friendly terms, and were talking cricket. What do you think of that?"

Blane started.

"I hardly know what to say, sir," he replied slowly. "I can't help feeling that Valance has not done so well to-day as he might have done."

"Ah, you have thought that, Blane!"

"Yes, I couldn't help thinking it; but I should hate to do him an injustice. It seems impossible that he could have sold the match."

"Yet it is strange, very strange."

"Yes, it is strange," assented the Loamshire captain. "But—but we don't want to judge hastily, at all events, sir. Let us give Valance another chance this afternoon."

"If he is playing us false, that may be throwing away the game."

"True, but unless he picks up form a bit, I will not let him bowl more than an over or two. That won't make much difference either way."

"Very good. This is a horribly unpleasant happening. I hope for his own sake that Valance will do better this afternoon. Otherwise I cannot very well keep the matter from the official notice of the committee."

And there was a shade upon the colonel's face when, the luncheon interval over, the Somersetshire innings was resumed, and the Loamshire men went out to field.

Somerset's Success—An Amazing Discovery.

LIONEL PALAIRET looked as fresh as a daisy as he took his place at the wicket. The crowd cheered his reappearance. The keen Somerset folk wanted to see him knock up his second century, and with the "pot" that seemed to have set in in the Loamshire bowling, that was now quite within the bounds of possibility.

The ball was given to Geoffrey Lagden for the first over. He bowled a maiden against Palairet, a sufficiently creditable feat, considering the form the Somerset captain was in for the second time that day. Then Kit Valance was put on against Phillips at the other end.

Blane, keeping wicket, waited anxiously. Arthur Lovell cast a still more anxious glance at his chum. He fervently hoped that the redhead reserved to him something of his old form. He knew the harm this egregious failure might do to Kit's prospects, to say nothing of the now probable result of a county defeat.

He looked eagerly for something of the old bowling, but he was disappointed. The very first ball showed that Valance had not improved in the least. Phillips, stepping out to to it, sent it on its journey with a powerful drive, and the crowd cheered the first boundary.

Valance sent down ball after ball, and the Somerset batsman, with an easy, confident smile on his face, simply made hay of them.

The fifth ball gave him three, so that Lionel Palairet received the last ball of the over, and with easy grace he cut it away over the heads of the spectators.

Blane's teeth came together with a click.

When the field crossed over, the ball was tossed to Arthur Lovell

"Go on and see what you can do, Lovell, for mercy's sake," said Blane in a low voice. "That rotter won't bowl another over to-day."

Lovell started and coloured.

"Are you speaking of Valance?"

"Yes," said Blane savagely, "confound him!"

"He's done his best," said Arthur warmly, ever ready to speak up for his friend, though even he had no word of explanation to give as to the cause of Valance's failure.

"Perhaps," said Blane, shrugging his shoulders. "Never mind that now. He won't bowl again this afternoon, and maybe never again for Loamshire."

A look of pain came into Lovell's face.

He had feared something of this kind. But there was no time for talk. He went on to bowl, determined to do what he could to make up for Valance's deficiency.

Fortune smiled upon him, too, for at the second ball of the over Phillips was clean bowled, and now Somerset had five down.

The score stood at 220. Lionel Palairet was still batting strongly, and seemed set at the wicket for the day. In the next few overs he passed Lovell's score in the Loamshire innings of 140. "The Loamshires' dream of winning by an innings had long crumbled away. They would have to bat again, and it began to look as if they would have a fight to win at all.

The enthusiasm round the field was growing to fever heat. Men shouted and tossed their hats in the air, caring little whether they ever saw them again, when the Somerset score passed that of the Loamshire's innings.

The recovery of Somerset, after the dismal prospects of the county at the commencement of the match, was astounding. 280! That was the figure when Lionel Palairet, within a dozen of his second century, succumbed to the Loamshire attack at last.

Tweedie, canny Scot that he was, had sent him down a ball that tempted him to hit out, and Arthur Lovell in the field saw his chance.

The fieldsman's hands went up swiftly. He had seen his chance, and apparently meant to take it, and had he done so, the most dangerous Somerset batsman would have been dismissed.

But Valance's fielding seemed to be on a par with his bowling that day. His hands came clumsily together, and the ball escaped them, and rolled at his feet.

The chance was lost.

Braund drew a deep breath of relief as he saw what a narrow escape he had had, and Blane ground his teeth.

Valance had muffed an easy catch, and the Loamshire skipper, with Lagden's insinuation in his mind, believed that he had done it intentionally.

Arthur Lovell looked dismayed. He had made sure in his mind of that catch, and he was amazed and distressed to see Valance so inexplicably throw the chance away. What was the matter with him?

Braund continued to pile up runs. His individual score was getting high now, and the Somersetshire total was piling up. Another wicket down, caught out by Blane, who had an eagle-eye upon for chances.

And now Braund's time had come. He had sent the leather whizzing with a mighty cut, and Arthur Lovell was after it like a shot. The batsmen were running, and running again, and again for a third time they completed fortune.

It was once too often. From the country the leather came whizzing in from Lovell, straight to the Loamshire skipper, and down went the bails. Braund's bat clumped on the crease a second too late.

"How's that?"

"Out!" said the umpire sententiously.

And the Somersetshire hero carried out his bat, stumped.

The last Somersetshire wicket fell a few minutes before the time fixed for drawing the stumps, and the home county were all down for a total of 360 for the second innings.

CLUBS IN "THE BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

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And his eyes flashed. Up went his hands, and he backed away with his eyes fixed on the round object that seemed to be floating down into them.

Click! And the round red ball was safe in his palms.

"Caught!"

It was a loud shout; and disappointed as most of the spectators were, they gave Lovell's fine feat a ringing cheer.

"Well caught!"

"How's that?" cried Loamshire, with a deep breath of relief.

"Out!"

Palairet already had his bat under his arm. He walked away towards the pavilion, while the crowd cheered him lustily, with cheers, too, for the fieldsman who had caught him out.

The score now read 280 for 6, last man, 183. There were still four wickets to fall, and one of these was Braund's, so that Somerset's chance was decidedly a rosy one.

Blane came in to take the place of the Somerset captain. He was in fine form, as he soon showed.

The Loamshire bowling now came from Tweedie, Lagden, and Lovell. Since lunch Valance had bowled only one over, and Blane had clearly no intention of putting him on again.

Braund made hay of an over from Lagden, but presently the Loamshire amateur succeeded in bowling his partner.

Seven down for 300!

The afternoon was wearing away in a blaze of golden sunlight. Another Somersetshire wicket had fallen by the time the figures stood at 320. But Braund was still batting, and hitting the Loamshire bowling all over the field.

Then suddenly a blaze came into Blane's eyes.

From a late cut by Braund the ball sailed as if with deliberate intention towards the exact spot where Valance was standing at field.

Considering the score for the Somerset first innings, the figure was astounding, and the Somerset men were in high spirits over it. The Somerset total for both innings was 453. Had the first innings panned out anything like the second the total would probably have passed Somersetshire's record, the famous 630 in the Yorkshire match in 1901.

But as it was it was bad enough for the visiting county. Instead of winning the match with an innings to spare, as they had confidently hoped, they were left with 164 to get to win on the third day of the match, and it was certain now to be a fight to a finish.

Loamshire's bowling had "petered out" in a lamentable way, and it remained to be seen on the last day of the match whether the visiting county's batting could save the situation. After the happenings of the second day, Loamshire did not feel inclined to make sure about anything.

The red-faced man in the white hat walked off the field with a dubious expression. The Somerset total had passed most expectations, but it had hardly fulfilled his hopes, for it left Loamshire 164 to get; but they had taken as many as 290 in their first innings. Arthur Lovell knocked up another century for his side the situation would probably be saved for the visitors. And was there any reason why he should not?

If the fourth innings pulled Loamshire round, all the trouble and risk of the bookmaker's plot had gone for nothing. And if Arthur Lovell batted, Mr. Sharp had very serious doubts about Somerset's ultimate victory. An idea was working in Mr. Sharp's subtle brain, the result of which we shall soon see.

Arthur Lovell intended to walk home with his chum after the match, but he missed Valance, after changing his clothes. He learned from a groundsman that Valance had left the ground; and rather surprised at the young bowler's having given him the slip as it were, Lovell set out to walk home alone.

At a short distance from the ground, however, he came upon Valance. He was standing in the shadow of a tree by the roadside, talking to a man in a white hat. At sight of Lovell they immediately parted, and Valance came towards the Loamshire bat.

"Hello!" said Arthur cheerily. "I missed you, Kit."

"I wanted to speak to that chap, so I came out quickly," said Valance. "I thought I should meet you here. I made a rotten show to-day."

"I'm afraid you did, Kit," said Lovell frankly. "I can't understand it. Your form seemed to be completely gone."

"We have a good number to get to win to-morrow," said Valance abruptly. "What do you think of our chances, Lovell?"

"Oh, so far as that goes, good!"

"You think we shall win?"

"Decidedly," said Arthur, with a nod. "We knocked up 290 in our first innings. There's no reason on earth why we shouldn't get 164 in our second."

"I suppose not."

"Somerset's recovery to-day has simply given us another day's work to-morrow," said Arthur, with a laugh. "But we shall handle it all right, Kit. I haven't the slightest doubt that our batting will save the game."

"Your batting, you mean, Lovell. Loamshire would cut a poor figure to-morrow if you were not in the ranks."

"Well, I shall bat for all I'm worth, you may be sure," said Arthur. "But don't worry about that, Kit. I've been rather a cold douche to-day; but I don't believe the winning of the match is seriously endangered. We shall pull the game out of the fire to-morrow."

Valance smiled curiously.

"That's what I was anxious about, Lovell. You said some time ago that you'd help me if I were in need of help."

"You can rely upon me, Kit."

"Will you come with me now?"

"Certainly. What can I do?"

"I can explain that better when we get there. You can help me materially—if you don't mind," said Valance hesitatingly.

"With all my heart, Kit. You know I'm quite at your service," said Lovell. "Lead away!"

Valance nodded, and walked on, and the young Loamshire bat strode along by his side. The bowler was strangely silent, as if immersed in disagreeable reflection, and Arthur Lovell did not speak.

Little did Arthur Lovell dream of what was passing in his champion's mind.

They turned from the road into a dusky lane, and after a walk of some distance Valance opened a door and stepped inside. It was all dark; no light showing anywhere within.

"Come in, Lovell," said Kit's voice was shaking, and Lovell noted it and wondered again. "Come in, old fellow. I'll have a light in a jiffy!"

"All right, Kit."

Lovell stepped into the cottage. The next instant he uttered an exclamation of astonishment. His companion had suddenly slammed the door, and at the same moment hidden hands from the darkness grasped Arthur Lovell and dragged him down.

Too utterly amazed to struggle, the young cricketer was secured, and bound hand and foot almost in a twinkling. He was a helpless prisoner before he even recovered his voice. Then, amazed, bewildered, he called out to Valance:

"Kit, what does this mean? Is it a joke, or what, Kit?"

There was no reply.

"Kit—Kit!"

He heard a faint chuckle in the darkness. Then he was lifted up and carried bodily away. He tried to struggle, but he was powerless; he could only writhe helplessly in his bonds.

"Kit!"

Down a rickety, creaking flight of stairs he was carried, and dumped heavily on a hard board floor. The darkness was intense. The grip on him was gone; he was left lying there, and he heard the stairs creak under the footsteps of his captors, who were evidently leaving the room.

Anger and indignation were blended now with the young cricketer's amazement. He had been led into a trap by the man he trusted. But why? And for what?

He struggled with the cord that bound his limbs. In vain. He heard a door at the top of the stone close, and a key turn in a lock.

"Kit—Kit!"

There was a faint groan from the darkness. Lovell started. The black den had another tenant, then! Who was it? What was the meaning of it all?

"Who is there?" called out Arthur, in a firm voice.

"Lovell!"

It was a cry of surprise. Lovell felt as if his head was turning round, for he knew the voice. It was the voice of Kit Valance!

"Kit, is it you? How came you here? For Heaven's sake speak, before I think I have taken leave of my senses!"

"I am Kit Valance. And you are here?"

"I am, who, in the name of wonder, has played in the Somerset match to-day? Who has trapped me here and kidnapped me?"

"My twin-brother Len! He has trapped you as he trapped me," groaned Kit. "It is a plot against Loamshire. We are helpless prisoners here, and the county match is lost!"

(This popular cricket story will be continued in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

Don't Miss Next Week's Instalment of This Fine Story.

FROM YOUR EDITOR'S CHAIR.

Latest Portrait of YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).
Controller of
THE BOYS' REALM —Saturday.
THE BOYS' FRIEND —Tuesday.
THE BOYS' HERALD—Thursday.

Your Editor is always glad to hear from you about yourself or your favourite paper. He will answer you by post if you enclose a stamped addressed postcard or envelope. Write to him if you are in trouble, if you want information, or if you have any ideas for our paper. All letters to be addressed to the Editor of THE BOYS' REALM, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. If your letter is not replied to here, it may be answered in "The Boys' Friend" next Tuesday, or "The Boys' Herald" next Thursday. THE BOYS' REALM will be sent post free to any part of the world on the following terms: 12 months, 7s.; 6 months, 3s. 6d.; 3 months, 1s. 9d.—payable in advance by British stamps. Postal Orders or Money Orders to be sent to the Publisher, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS FOR NEXT WEEK.

I AM glad to be able to tell my friends that I have secured two very good stories for next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM. One of them is entitled "Making a Champion," by Clement Hale. It will be found a grand rowing story, full of stirring incident, and calculated to fascinate every lad, no matter whether he takes an interest in aquatics or not.

The other story is a tale of cricket and adventure by Martin Shaw, and is entitled "Pelham to the Rescue."

THE BOYS' REALM Leagues.

IT is my sincere pleasure to be able to announce that the effort which THE BOYS' REALM Leagues are making to awaken a healthy interest in sports amongst the growing lads of this country are meeting with enormous success. There is one particular point of gratification about the many applications which have been received for admission to our Leagues and this is, that many of the clubs are connected with Sunday-schools and other religious institutions throughout the kingdom.

If proof were needed that THE BOYS' REALM is a sound and healthy journal, we have it here in the fact that sober, serious-minded men, whose ambitions are not wholly worldly, sanction the application of the junior clubs which they control for admission to THE BOYS' REALM League.

I am glad to be able to record this fact, because it serves once more to nail to the counter that gross lie—the statement that THE BOYS' REALM is not a fit paper for any respectable lad.

THE BOYS' REALM is, without question, the foremost athletic and fiction journal for boys and young men in this country, and its success is due very largely to the loyal support which it receives from the clubs attached to the many religious denominations in the United Kingdom.

A Word to My Football Friends.

OF course, now is the close season for football, although only last Saturday I saw several merry teams still playing this grand winter game. But when the sun makes his warmth felt, the strenuousness of football compels even its most enthusiastic supporters to give it up until the coming of the colder winter days.

I want, therefore, to tell my football friends who have supported me so loyally during the past season that next winter THE BOYS' REALM'S football programme will be one of the most stupendous ever offered to the readers of any young men's journal. I want them to keep an eye on our paper during the close season, because they will find that during the coming months I shall have several very important announcements to make to those of my chums who are interested in football.

Great New Serial Starts in a Fortnight's Time.

THE very many thousands of my friends and supporters of THE BOYS' REALM will, I am sure, regard the news I am going to tell them with great satisfaction. I have a great surprise—a huge treat—in store for them, and, without beating any further about the bush, I may say at once that it concerns a new serial story.

I am not going to tell my friends a great deal about this fine, new serial which will commence in our pages very shortly, but I want to impress on them that it will be a really stunning yarn. It will be from the pen of the famous author of "Tom Tartar's School-days." All I want to do this week, however, is to whet the appetites of my readers, so that they may look forward with avidity to the splendid new tale I am preparing for their delectation.

My chums will remember the delight with which they receive a gift that comes quite unexpectedly. This new serial story will call into existence just that feeling of surprise and delight. Therefore, don't miss a single copy of THE BOYS' REALM for the next few weeks, and you'll be certain not to miss this special treat that is coming.

A Very Nervous Lad.

"AT night, when I am asleep," writes J. G., of London, to me, "I talk and kick about a lot, and it must be this that makes me feel tired in the mornings." My chum then asks me what he shall do to stop this. A little later on in his letter he tells me that he is subject to shivering down the back, but he refuses to see a doctor about it because he is so nervous.

My chum, I say to me a compliment by asking me for advice, while he refuses to see and take the advice of a doctor. It shows me that he regards me as a personal friend, and that is what I aim to be to every one of the readers of my papers.

But, all the same, I think that J. G. would be well advised to see a doctor as soon as possible. It is plain to me that he is suffering from some nervous complaint, and a doctor who makes an individual examination into the nature of his nervousness, would be able to help him, whereas I am quite unable to tell him what to do, save get out into the fresh air as often as possible, and take plenty of healthy exercise, and to abstain from all rich foods, tobacco, and intoxicants.

Nervousness is not an infrequent complaint with young men who have to work hard all day in confined spaces, and often under very unhealthy conditions, so you see, J. G., your case is nothing unusual. Take my advice, then, and see a doctor. One bottle of medicine, and his advice, may rid you of your nervousness in a very short time.

OUT FRIDAY, JUNE 7TH.

TWO MORE NEW ADDITIONS TO

"The Boys' Friend" 3d. Complete Library.

No. 19— "NELSON LEE'S PUPIL,"

A Complete Story of the Famous Detective.

HOW HE DISCOVERED AND ADOPTED "NIPPER."

By MAXWELL SCOTT.

No. 20— "THREE BRITISH BOYS,"

A Splendid Complete School Tale.

By MAURICE MERRIMAN.

PLEASE ORDER YOUR COPIES TO-DAY.

About Making Model Yachts.

J. T. are the initials of one of my Plumstead friends, and he has written to ask me for a few particulars about the making of model yachts. I am quite willing to comply with my chum's request, and here with give him a few particulars which I have taken from a back number of "The Boys' Herald," our companion paper, which makes a speciality of answering questions of this kind, and, in fact, upon anything that has to do with hobbies.

Well, then, J. T., this little article will give you all the information you desire:

First obtain a piece of soft wood free from knots, about 16 inches long, 4 inches wide, and 2½ inches deep. With a pencil draw a line down the middle, just for a guide, and sketch out the deck plan. Now, with a saw, cut off the corners so as to roughly shape the body of the boat, then finish shaping it with a plane, and smooth with glass-paper.

We have now a hull shaped something like half a cigar. Next, with a small gouge, hollow it out until you have a shell of about half an inch in thickness. Now for the keel. This should be made of thin, galvanised sheet-iron, obtained from the ironmonger's. Cut to shape and size, leaving four small pieces projecting from the top, horizontally, to fasten it to the hull, and weight with lead at the bottom.

If the keel cannot be cut exactly to the shape of the hull, it may be let into the wood a very little way. Care should be taken to see that the weight and position of the keel balances the boat properly when in the water.

The deck can be made of thin boxwood, and fastened to the hull with very small screws or rivets. Insert the mast, which should be very light, but strong, and about 12 inches in length, through the deck about 6 inches from the bow end; and into the bottom of the boat a little way to hold it steady.

The gaff, boom, bowsprit, sails, etc., can be made and fixed easily by any boy. Ask your mother or sister to machine-stitch the sails for you.

The various screw-eyes, etc., necessary to make everything neat and trim, can be obtained from the same place as the material for the keel at the cost of a very few pence. The boat should be nicely painted, and we have a practical and cheaply-constructed model, which for its size will sail very fast, and should be easily turned into pocket-money.

Sexton Blake.

ONE of my many REALM supporters, whose initials are K. J., has written to me, asking that I will revive the series of long, complete tales of Sexton Blake, which appeared in our pages recently. Now, I always do my best to meet the wishes of my readers, but on this occasion I must confess I do not see my way clear to doing so. I have already carefully mapped out the programme of THE BOYS' REALM for some time to come, and it contains so many really attractive features that there is no room for more. I can only say to my chum, therefore, take "The Union Jack" Library, one penny, every Friday, in which will be found a specially long, complete tale of this great detective every week, and also "The Boys' Friend," in which is now appearing a story relating Sexton Blake's adventures in Congoland. Surely he will then have sufficient stories to read concerning this very popular character and his clever young assistant, Tinker.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

Daily Mail.

RUNNING:

Mr. A. A. ELSON, winner of over 200 prizes, gives readers the benefit of valuable experience gained during his long career on the cinder-path.

SPRINTING—*(continued from last week).*

BEFORE leaving sprinting, I must add a few general items to be observed: In training, the sprinter should run against the wind in practice, because he is likely to have this to do in a race. In practice, as well as in racing, the sprinter should never be looking over to see where his opponents are, as that takes his mind off his running. The sprinter must concentrate his whole attention on his running, and must dash into the tape at the utmost top speed before attempting to ease in any way. Many a race has been lost through failure to observe this rule.

440 Yards.

Varying methods of training for 440 yards are the result of two different schools of runners—the sprinter, and the middle-distance man—joining issue in this contest. The sprinter relies on his fast pace for carrying him well on through the greater part of the distance, the remainder of which he struggles on through. The middle-distance runner makes the most of his ability to maintain a long, telling stride throughout the whole distance. A schedule of training which may, however, be generally adopted is as follows:

Forty or fifty yards' bursts to attain speed in starting, for the quarter-miler should be smart into his running at the pistol-crack, in order to get a good position at the start. On most tracks the 440 yards' race starts below a corner, and a quick starter will reach the corner first, and so avoid possible jostling, and being thrown out of his stride.

After this speed work, the athlete should run 250 to 300 yards at quarter-mile racing speed. Twice a week he should sprint 220 yards at full top speed, and he should jog 500 yards, or a little over, at fair speed every practice day. Not more than one trial a week at the full distance should be indulged in.

The quarter-miler should endeavour to get into a long easy swing, and should not shorten his stride into topmost racing speed until the very last hard spurt for home. If he has kept well up by means of this long, swinging stride, and has been able to save a strong finishing effort, he will have the advantage in the last 50 yards, when nearly everyone is in difficulties. A conscious mental effort during the first portion of the race to "keep out" this stride will be found to have been of the utmost service when it comes to the last three-score yards.

The middle-distance runner who is essaying quarters will derive most benefit from short sharp bursts of 50 to 80 yards, with an occasional 200 yards at sprinting pace. This is a method much favoured by those athletes who are at the top of the tree. The present half-mile champion would appear to commence his training by constant sprinting work, for very early in the season he was winning prizes in 100 and 120 yards' races.

The young athlete should bear in mind that a 440 yards' race is the hardest and most punishing of all, and one should be in good condition before venturing to essay it. No one should attempt to train for this distance until they are in something like racing trim, or an attack of the "slows," with its disheartening consequences, will intervene.

Middle-Distance Races.

Contests at distances over a quarter-mile, and less than one mile, are termed middle-distance events. Those most generally included in an athletic sports' programme are the ½-mile, 1,000 yards, and ¾-mile races.

In middle-distance running, to be successful, the young athlete should possess both speed and stamina. Wind and muscle must be brought to a high state of perfection. A fast stride must be cultivated.

The ½-mile is the most popular race of this series. The art of winning races at this distance was my special study, and having natural aptitude for it, I won the Continental Championship, and many handicap prizes over this journey.

As I believe in taking the actual contest itself in its performance as a guide and standard for training, it will be of assistance if an analysis of a ½-mile race is taken. This race, especially when a handicap, is invariably started at a fast pace. In almost every ½-mile handicap nowadays, there will be found competitors of the sprinting class—i.e., runners who can "get among the prizes" at sprint distances. To these competitors it is second nature to jump off quickly at the pistol, and make the pace fast at the outset. In training, therefore, it should be borne in mind that the first 250 to 330 yards will be run at a fast pace. There will then be a slight ease whilst waiting for the second wind. The young competitor should learn how to nurse himself during this stage, so that he may take full advantage of the added power to will possess once the second wind shall have come along. When 300 yards or so has been completed the pace will have developed into a strong, active stride, and it is at this stage that one takes note of the position of fellow competitors and that improvement of one's own position should be attempted. At 250 yards from home condition tells greatly. The ill-trained and ill-conditioned competitor will find himself in difficulties. Many drop out at this stage.

At this point if it has been possible to keep well up with the field, without taking too much out of oneself in the process, effort should be made to take up a winning position. The final run in has yet to take place, and this extends over the last 50 to 60 yards. A youth who stays well throughout the race, and is also a strong finisher, will win many races at half a mile. There are many who cannot sustain a strong finishing effort, so the advantage lies with the competitor who is well up with the leaders 100 yards from the tape, and who can spurt during the last three-score yards or so.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

Our Popular School Tale!

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

A Grand New Story of School Life.

By MAXWELL SCOTT

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

At the commencement of the new term at St. Ninian's a new boy arrives. He is an Indian Prince, and delights in the name of Chota Lal Nath Chandra Bose. Lal comes into possession of a gold locket which is later on to have a great effect on his life. The owner of the locket is not known, but a German turns up one day and says that it belonged at one time to his sister, and asks that it may be handed over to him. But he is proved to be an impostor, and has to leave the school precipitately.

Lal is robbed of the gold locket by a convict who has escaped from Greystones Prison.

Mr. Boswell, the Cleveden chemist, who is standing for the County Council, hears that the headmaster of the local Grammar School is to oppose him. He rushes off to where his opponent is holding a meeting, whence he is followed by Nipper and his chums, who see the prospect of some fun.

(Now read to-day's instalment.)

The Meeting at the Institution.

THE Mechanics' Institute was the largest public building in Cleveden. It had the further distinction of being fitted throughout with the electric light—this having been installed at Lord Cleveden's expense, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee.

Entering the building from the street, one found oneself in a square, tiled lobby, flanked on each side by numerous doors. At the end of this lobby was a winding staircase, at the top of which was a spacious landing.

There were three doors on the landing, to say nothing of a portrait of Lord Cleveden, some photographs of the institute, and a row of brass-bound buckets filled with water, for use in case of fire.

Two of the doors led into cloak-rooms—one for ladies, and the other for gentlemen. The third door—a massive oak door, with wrought-iron bolts and hinges—led into what was known as the Assembly Room. This was the largest room in the building, and was used for dances, concerts, public meetings, sales of work, and so forth.

The vice-president of the institute was a greengrocer named Watson. The treasurer was a retired sea-captain, whose name was Bruster. Both these men were bitterly jealous of Mr. Boswell's popularity, and it was they who had taken the leading part in persuading Dr. Stuart-Unwin, the headmaster of the Grammar School, to come forward as a candidate for the County Council in opposition to the pugnacious chemist.

When Dr. Stuart-Unwin had expressed his willingness to stand if he were formally invited, Mr. Watson and Captain Bruster had sent out circulars, announcing that a meeting would be held in the Assembly Room at five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, "to hear an address from Dr. Stuart-Unwin, M.A., and, if thought fit, to adopt him as our candidate."

This was the meeting which Sergeant Quiggin had described as "an 'ole and corner meetin'." And it richly deserved the description. Every precaution had been taken to prevent Mr. Boswell and his supporters hearing of the meeting. No notice had been published in the local paper, and the circulars—which were marked "private and confidential"—had been sent to none but those who were known to be unfriendly to the chemist.

As a further precaution, a ticket of admission had been enclosed with each circular, and the caretaker of the institute, who had been appointed doorkeeper, had been given strict orders to let nobody into the room who was not provided with a ticket.

Altogether, about a hundred and fifty circulars had been sent out; but owing to the stormy weather and the inconvenient hour for which the meeting had been summoned, less than a third of those who had been invited accepted the invitation.

As a matter of fact, when Mr. Watson took the chair, with Dr. Stuart-Unwin on his right and Captain Bruster on his left, there were exactly twenty-eight people in the room, including the doorkeeper and the three men on the platform. Others kept dropping in, however, while the chairman was delivering his opening speech, and when Dr. Stuart-Unwin rose to address the meeting the audience had increased to nearly forty.

The doctor had just concluded his address when Sergeant Quiggin and Mr. Boswell reached the institute, with Nipper and his five chums in their wake.

As was usually the case at this early hour of the evening, the lower rooms of the institute were deserted. Deserted also was the landing at the top of the stairs; for by this time the caretaker had decided that nobody else was coming to the meeting, and had gone into the Assembly Room, closing the door behind him, to listen to the speeches. Nobody, therefore, saw the two men enter the building, and nobody saw the six boys slip in after them and follow them upstairs.

Almost at the same moment as they entered the building, Mr. Watson rose to his feet to propose the usual "fit and proper" resolution. He was a tall, thin, cadaverous-looking man, with an impediment in his speech which, when he was nervous or excited, was apt to develop into an uncontrollable stutter.

"F-f-fellow ratepayers," he began, in a high-pitched voice, "after listenin' to the hable haddress which 'as just been delivered by Dr. Stuart-Unwin, I'm sure you'll all agree with me that 'e 'as a fit and pup-pup-proper person to represent us in the Cuck-cuck-cuck"—he paused and took a long breath—"in the Cuck-cuck-cuck——"

"Cuckoo!" said a ribald voice in the audience.

Mr. Watson scowled and glared at the interrupter.

"In the Cuck-cuck-county Council!" he said. "I 'ave great pleasure, therefore, in movin' the following resolution: 'That this meetin' 'ereby expresses its cuck-cuck-cuck——"

"Cuckoo!" said the voice again.

Mr. Watson danced with rage and gesticulated wildly with his arms.

"Cuck-cuck-cuck-confidence in Dr. Stuart-Unwin," he shouted, "and pledges itself to use hevery legitimate means to return 'im at the 'ead of the pup-pup-pup——"

"Poll!" said Captain Bruster.

"Pup-pup-pup-poll!" said Mr. Watson.

He paused, and mopped his perspiring brow, while the audience raised a sympathetic cheer.

"As you all know," he continued, "there is another cuck-cuck——"

"Cuckoo!" piped the jeering voice.

"Cuck-cuck-candidate!" howled Mr. Watson —"another candidate in the field, in the person of a hignorant and conceited wind-bag, who 'as pup-pup-poisoned more people with 'is pup-pup-pills than 'is namesake ever 'ad cuck-cuck-killed with all 'is armies!" (Loud laughter.) "I 'ain't intended to take no part in this election, but when I 'eard that Napoleon Bub-bonaparte Bub-bubbleshub-bubbleshub-bubbleshub-Boswell 'ad 'ad the howdacity to hoffer 'imself for election, I said to myself, I said——"

But what he had said to himself was not destined to be revealed just then, for at that moment the door was violently flung open, and Sergeant Quiggin stumped into the room, with Napoleon Bonaparte Boswell at his heels.

If a bombshell had suddenly exploded in the room it could hardly have created a greater sensation. Like one man, the audience gasped, rose to its feet, and hurriedly sat down again. For a moment the chairman stared at the new arrivals in open-mouthed dismay; then his legs seemed to give way beneath him, and he fell back limply in his chair. Of all the men in the room the caretaker alone preserved his presence of mind.

"'Ere, I say, over can't come in 'ere!" he cried, springing to his feet and planting himself in front of Sergeant Quiggin. "Nobody's allowed in 'ere without a ticket!"

"Well, what's the matter with these 'ere tickets?" roared the sergeant, thrusting a pair of brawny fists into the caretaker's face.

The caretaker hastily recoiled, lost his balance, and sat down heavily on the end of a form, which promptly tipped up and deposited him on the floor with a crash that shook the room.

By that time Nipper and his chums had reached the top of the stairs, and before the bewildered caretaker had time to collect his scattered wits the six boys slipped into the room and seated themselves on an empty form just inside the door.

"Now, friend Boswell, come along," snorted Sergeant Quiggin, as he stumped down the middle of the room, flashing defiant glances right and left. "We've pushed the henemy's boutposts, and now we've got to capture 'is hearthworks! We'll show the rebels if we're afraid of 'em! We'll learn the mutineers a thing or two afore we've done with 'em!"

"They're comin' on to the pup-pup-platform!" screamed Mr. Watson, in a terrified voice. "Stop 'em! Turn 'em out! Walker—Micklem—somebody go for the pup-pup-pup-police!"

But nobody stirred. The whole audience, in fact, seemed mesmerised and paralysed by this unexpected turn of events, and before they had recovered from their stupefaction the two men had reached the end of the room and had mounted the platform.

"Now, then, cabbage-merchant, gerrout o' that chair!" said Sergeant Quiggin, glaring at Mr. Watson. "I'll take command of this 'ere camp for the rest of the manoeuvres!"

"I pup-pup-protest against this boutrage!" stammered Mr. Watson, clutching the arms of the chair. "It is hutterly hillegal! This is a pup-pup-private meetin'! We 'ave pup-pup-paid for the room, and——"

That was all he had time to say, for at that moment the sergeant laid his hand on the back of the chair, tilted it forward, and sent the greengrocer sprawling on his hands and knees on the platform.

White with anger, trembling with indignation, Dr. Stuart-Unwin started to his feet.

"This is intolerable!" he cried. "I say this is intolerable! I have never witnessed such a disgraceful scene in all my life! I say I have never witnessed——"

"Order, order!" thundered Sergeant Quiggin. "You've said that once already! Don't waste time by repeatin' yourself!"

"Insolent ruffian!" retorted the doctor. "How dare you speak to me like that. I say how dare you——"

"Oh, sit down!" said the sergeant wearily. "You make me tired!"

As he uttered these words he raised his wooden leg and gently prodded the end in the pit of the doctor's stomach. With a gasping grunt the doctor staggered back, stumbled over Mr. Watson's prostrate form, and sat down on the top of him.

"Strike me fours-about, I didn't tell you to sit down on the cabbage-merchant!" said the sergeant, with a grin. "However, if you'd rather sit on 'im than on a chair, it's no affair of mine. 'Shun! Silence in the ranks! Mr. Boswell, kindly take the doctor's chair."

Nipper leaned over the balustrade and poured the contents of the bucket of water over the unfortunate master.

Mr. Boswell calmly sat down in the doctor's chair, whilst at the same time the sergeant sat down in the chairman's seat, and smiled benignly on the gaping audience.

"Now, we can get to business!" he said. "Ladies and gentlemen—leastways, I don't see no ladies in the congregation, but we'll let that pass—the object of this meetin', as I understand it, was to 'ear an address from Dr. Stuart-Unwin, and, if thought fit, to adopt 'im as your candidate. Well, you ain't goin' to think fit to adopt 'im as your candidate—see? You're goin' to think fit to adopt my hesteemed friend, Mr. Napoleon Boosparte Boswell, as your candidate—see?

"I'm a Cleveden man myself," he continued, "and a Cleveden man for Cleveden is my motter. An' you can take it from me as it's goin' to be your motter, too—see? We ain't-a-goin' to 'ave no kid-walloper as our representative, not 'arf! N. B. Boswell, that's the man for us, and don't you forget it!"

Whilst he had been speaking, Mr. Watson and Dr. Stuart-Unwin had picked themselves up and had retired to the back of the platform, where they were holding an agitated consultation.

"You must assert yourself," said the doctor, who was almost beside himself with rage. "I say you must assert yourself. If you allow this ruffian to usurp your position as chairman, and dictate to the meeting how it shall vote, you will be the laughing-stock of the village. You must be firm, my dear Mr. Watson. I say, you must be firm."

"But what cuck-cuck-can I do?" pleaded the wretched greengrocer. "You see how it is. Everybody in the room is afraid of 'im, and I'm no match for 'im single-handed."

Before the doctor could reply, Sergeant Quiggin turned round and transfixed them with his eagle eye.

"Silence in the corner there!" he roared. "Don't know enough o' discipline to 'old your jaw when the commandin' officer is addressin' the battalion?"

He faced the audience again.

"I 'ave now great pleasure in proposin' that Mr. N. B. Boswell is a fit and proper person to represent us in the County Council," he said. "Cap'n Bruster will second the resolution, and then Mr. Boswell will address the meetin'."

The captain sat bolt upright in his chair and gasped like a stranded codfish. As already mentioned, he was one of those who had taken a leading part in persuading Dr. Stuart-Unwin to oppose Mr. Boswell. The suggestion that he should second a vote of confidence in Mr. Boswell took his breath away.

"I—I won't do it!" he gasped.

"You won't?" said Sergeant Quiggin.

"No!" said the captain defiantly.

"Ho, ho!" said the sergeant. "Mutiny in the ranks—eh!"

He took off his coat and handed it to Mr. Boswell; then he rolled up his shirt-sleeves and displayed a pair of biceps that would not have disgraced a Sandow.

Captain Bruster hastily rose to his feet.

"I—I beg to second Sergeant Quiggin's resolution," he said, in a low, nervous voice.

"Oh, you coward—you miserable coward!" hooted Dr. Stuart-Unwin. "You're like the rest of them! I say, you're like the rest of them! You haven't the pluck of a mouse!"

He turned to the audience.

"I appeal to you as Britons!" he cried. "You are forty to one—are you going to allow yourselves to be intimidated and browbeaten by a single man? Come! Prove yourselves to be men! Seize this ruffian and turn him out!"

"And me a cripple, too!" sighed Sergeant Quiggin, as he leisurely donned his coat. "Did you hever 'ear of such a thing in your life as a doctor of divinity incitin' forty able-bodied men to attack a poor unfortunate, one-legged cripple?"

The doctor glared at him, and then at the audience.

"Go for the police, then!" he shouted. "If you haven't the courage to turn him out yourselves, go for the police!"

Three men sprang to their feet.

"'Shun!" roared Sergeant Quiggin, in a voice that shook the rafters. "Fall in, there!"

The three men dropped back into their seats as though they had been shot.

"Mr. Boswell will now address the meetin'," said the sergeant blandly. "Sit down, doctor."

"I will not," shouted the doctor. "I say I will not! If nobody else will go for the police, I will go myself!"

Purple with passion, he sprang down from the platform, strode to the end of the room, and vanished through the open door.

Scarcely had he disappeared ere Nipper's eyes began to twinkle—a sure sign of mischief.

"Such an opportunity may not occur again," he murmured, as he rose to his feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Dick.

"There's a row of fire-buckets on the landing outside," said Nipper, with a wink. "I'm going to give Stewed Onions a parting salute. No, don't come with me. I'll be back in a minute."

He slipped out on to the landing and picked up one of the brass-bound buckets. Dr. Stuart-Unwin was then about half-way down the winding staircase. Nipper lifted the bucket over the iron banister, and waited until the doctor was exactly underneath him.

"The cowards—the poltroons!" the doctor was muttering to himself. "To let themselves be terrorised by——"

His mutterings ended in an ear-splitting yell for at that moment a hissing cascade of ice-

The Fighting Fifth.

(Continued from the previous page.)

water descended on him from above and deluged him from head to foot.

Foaming at the mouth, scarcely responsible for his actions, he bounded up the stairs two at a time in a frenzy of uncontrollable rage. Quick as thought Nipper darted back into the room. As previously mentioned, his five companions were seated on a form just inside the door. On the wall behind them was the switch which controlled the electric light.

"He's coming back!" whispered Nipper hurriedly. "I'll trip him up as he comes in; then we'll switch off the light and do a bunk!"

He had scarcely finished speaking ere Dr. Stuart-Unwin rushed through the door, dripping like a half-drowned rat and gesticulating like a maniac.

"Where's the miscreant——" he began; but ere he could say more he stumbled over Nipper's outstretched foot, and dived headforemost into the back of a row of men on one of the forms.

Over went the form and all its occupants, amid a pandemonium of shrieks and yells. With shouts of alarm the rest of the audience leaped to their feet. Sergeant Quiggin bawled for order, and the doctor yelled for the police. And just when the uproar was at its height Dick switched off the electric light.

This had the effect, of course, of plunging the room into total darkness, under cover of which the six boys darted out on to the landing, pulled the door to behind them, and shot the heavy wrought-iron bolts.

"Murder! Police! Get off my face! Leggo my nose! Ow! Ouch! Fire! Help! Murder!"

Such were a few of the sounds, accompanied by the crash of overturning forms and the hammering of feet and fists on the inside of the door, which fell on the ears of Nipper and his chums as they danced a wild war-dance of triumph on the landing.

"Jee-rusalem! Did you ever hear such a rumpus in all your natural?" chortled Nipper. "Talk about a beargarden! This is worse than twenty bear-gardens rolled in one!"

"And the language!" said Dick, turning up his eyes in pious horror. "Awful, isn't it?"

"Shocking!" said Russell. "Come away, dear boys! This is no place for little us."

"Is isn't," said Nipper, as the door began to yield. "Shun! Form fours—left—by the right—quick march!"

A moment later the door burst open and a mob of struggling, panic-stricken men rolled out on to the landing. But by that time Nipper and his chums had left the building and were racing through the snow towards St. Ninian's.

The Charge That Failed.

LAL had just risen from Greystones when Dick and Nipper reached St. Ninian's, and great was their excitement and astonishment when he told them of his adventure with the escaped convict and his subsequent meeting with the mysterious German.

"Then the locket is gone," said Dick, when the young Hindoo had concluded his tale.

"Clean gone," said Lal. "Of course, if the convict is recaptured, and the locket is still in his possession, it will doubtless be returned to me; but my own opinion is that I've seen the last of it."

"Well, I'm sorry it's gone, of course," said Nipper; "but I'm jolly glad the German didn't get it, anyway."

"So am I," said Lal. "But I don't know that I'm altogether sorry it has gone. It was nothing but a worry and a nuisance to me all the time I had it."

"All the same, I hope you'll get it back," said Dick. "If you don't, we shall never know who that German relative so keen on getting hold of it, and I loathe an unsolved mystery."

"So do I, if it comes to that," said Lal. "But it doesn't follow that the mystery would ever have been solved, even if the convict hadn't stolen the locket. Perhaps the German would have collared it in the end, or perhaps he would have given up trying to collar it, and in either case we might never have known any more than we know now. By the way, did I tell you I'd discovered what the German's name is?"

"No," said Nipper. "How did you find out?"

"As I've already told you," Lal said, "he went clean off his head when he heard that the convict had stolen the locket. He raved and ranted like a madman, and swore that he would shoot me, because, as he said, I'd ruined all his plans. 'And nobody ever thwarted Otto Heinrich,' he said, 'and lived to brag of his triumph.'"

"Otto Heinrich," said Nipper; "that's the bounder's name, then, is it?"

"Evidently," said Lal. "He also said I'd cheated him of five thousands pounds; which meant, I suppose, that if he could have got hold of the locket somebody would have given him five thousand pounds for it—though why anybody should be willing to give five thousand pounds for a locket that isn't worth more than thirty bob is more than I can understand."

"Have you told Mr. Rant?" asked Dick.

"Not yet," said Lal. "I mean to, of course; but I only got back about two minutes before you fellows came in. Where have you been?"

In reply to this question, they told him of their escapade at the Mechanics' Institute.

"My hat, why wasn't I there to see the fun!" laughed Lal. "But, I say, it was rather risky, wasn't it? You know what a vindictive cur Steward Onions is, and how bitter he is against St. Ninian's. He'd simply go dotty with delight if he got a chance to haul half a dozen of our fellows before the local beak; so, if anybody saw what you did at that meeting——"

"But they didn't!" interrupted Nipper. "We took jolly good care of that. Not a soul—— Hallo, there's the bell for call-over! Come along!"

They trooped down to the big hall, and answered to their names; then Nipper and Dick returned to the study for evening prep., whilst Lal sought an interview with Mr. Rant and told his story for the second time.

The housemaster was even more excited and astonished than Nipper and Dick had been.

"The Head must be informed of this at once," he said. "Come with me."

He conducted Lal to the headmaster's study, where Dr. Shuttleworth was seated at his desk, correcting a batch of Sixth Form papers. A few brief sentences Mr. Rant explained to the doctor what had happened; then he turned to Lal.

"Now, tell the Head your story in your own words," he said.

For the third time Lal recounted his adventures on Hampton Heath, and the doctor was about to question him when the butler knocked and opened the door.

"Dr. Stuart-Unwin and a person hof the name hof Watson wish to see you, sir," he said.

Lal uttered a gasp of dismay. He guessed in a moment what had brought the two men to St. Ninian's. They had discovered that Nipper and his chums were responsible for the row at the Institute, and had come to demand their punishment.

As for Dr. Shuttleworth, he received the butler's announcement with an exclamation of mingled indignation and annoyance. As the reader will remember, Dr. Stuart-Unwin had earned the undying enmity of the St. Ninian's boys by prosecuting two of their number for trespassing on the public footpath which crossed the Grammar School grounds, and Shuttleworth had naturally taken up the cudgels on behalf of his boys, and a bitter quarrel had ensued between the two headmasters—a quarrel which had led to an acrimonious correspondence in the local press. In the course of this correspondence Dr. Shuttleworth had described the headmaster of the Grammar School as "a meddlesome upstart"; to which Dr. Stuart-Unwin had retorted by dubbing his confrere at St. Ninian's as "a clerical nonentity, inflated with an exaggerated sense of his own importance."

In view of these strained relations, the reader will readily understand the surprise and indignation with which Dr. Shuttleworth received the news that Dr. Stuart-Unwin had presumed to show his face within the precincts of St. Ninian's.

"Dr. Stuart-Unwin!" he exclaimed. "Well, of all the effrontery! How dare he come here! Send him away at once! I will neither see him nor hold any communication whatever with him!"

"Oh, yes, you will!" said a voice outside the door. "I insist on seeing you! I say I insist on seeing you! This way, Mr. Watson!"

The doctor sprang to his feet, quivering to his finger-tips with anger and indignation. At the same moment, Dr. Stuart-Unwin elbowed the butler aside, and stalked into the room, with the greengrocer at his heels.

"Sir," thundered the Head, "this insolence passes all bounds! How dare you force yourself into my study in this unwarrantable fashion? Leave the room at once, or I will send for the police!"

"Send for the police by all means!" said Dr. Stuart-Unwin, as he pushed the butler out of the room and closed the door. "I say, send for the police by all means! Nothing would please me better! But I'll not withdraw

In this story Mr. David Goodwin tells in his inimitable way how two colliery lads climbed the ladder to fame and fortune notwithstanding the many efforts their unscrupulous enemies put forth to prevent their doing so. The scene is laid in South Wales, and by reading the brief introduction the tale may be commenced to-day.

A MAGNIFICENT TALE OF COLLIERY LIFE.

By David Goodwin.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

Roddy Owen and Tom Hughes, two Welsh colliery lads, are the heirs of a certain Matthew Matthews, who was the rightful owner of the Aberford and Coed Coch Pits. But these collieries are in the hands of a man named Kenyon Price, who, by foul means, defrauded the late owner of them, and Roddy and Tom are determined to wrest them from his grasp.

The only other property left them by the late Matthew Matthews is a place known as Starve-Crow Farm. The boys, having been sacked from Kenyon Price's employ, go and take up residence at the little wooden shelter on this farm. Here they meet a wonderful little Welsh mountain boy named Dafydd Rees, with whom they become firm friends.

Whilst exploring their property they come across an old mine-shaft, and this they descend. They are astonished at the richness of the seam of coal beneath, and realise that with the necessary capital they could easily become rich men. They decide that they will set to work and save sufficient to start mining operations.

Roddy applies for a job at the Coed Coch Colliery. He is taken on, and Tom Hughes with him. The boys are at once set to work as hewers, and cause no little surprise at the large amount of coal tallied to them each day. In the evenings they return to Starve-Crow Farm.

One day Tom is caught on the down-grade between a stationary and an approaching train of trams. In the nick of time he manages to scramble on to the top of the foremost approaching tram. There is a splintering crash, and he is hurled forward through the darkness.

(Now read to-day's instalment.)

Mr. Sully Sees His Handiwork.

AMID the tearing, splitting noises of the collision, the young hewer was only conscious of being flung forward through empty space in a world of darkness. Then came a shock that seemed to start out of its place every bone in his body, and after that all was blank.

When consciousness returned, Tom was aware of a hum of voices round about him, the dim glow of miners' lamps flitting like fire-flies, and a buzzing noise in his head.

When he tried to move the attempt racked him with such pain that he closed his eyes again, and almost fainted anew.

"Poor lad!" said a rough, pitying voice. "Was he dead? Be careful with him, Rhys! Raise his head—so! Haf you any brandy?"

"How did it happen?" said another voice.

"Ter trams was away. See, they are all smashed up behind there. I think he was riding on ter back ones, and was thrown right ofer here when they run into those two. Nefor mind that, put go for a stretcher, and get him to ter foster, quick!"

The miner who had spoken guessed half the truth. When the crash came Tom had been hurled forward off the top of the load on to which he had scrambled right over the two stationary trams, and had fallen on the metals beyond.

The collision jammed the whole train into a heap just short of him, and blocked the grade completely.

How long he had been there before the colliers arrived he did not know, though it was doubtless no great while; but he lay in a half-conscious condition, white and limp; nor did he stir when he heard the voices of Terry Lloyd and Roddy.

"One o' the best young hewers we ha' had," said the man who had first spoken.

"I fear his hewin' days is over, poor lad!" said another, on whose knees Tom's head was resting. "There's hardly life in him."

"What is it? Is Tom Hughes hurt?" cried Roddy, in an agony of anxiety, hurrying to the spot from a side road below, by which he had made a long circuit. Terry Lloyd came close behind. "Let me see him."

Roddy threw himself on his knees beside his chum, and with a sinking heart saw how deadly white the boy's face was, and a trace of blood at his lips.

"Speak to me, Tom! Are you much hurt, old boy?"

"I dunno," replied Tom, in a voice so faint it could hardly be heard. "Fraid so."

An awful fear seized Roddy that his little friend was dying. He rose to his feet, and a quick glance round at the smashed trams told him plainly enough how the disaster had happened, and the trap into which Tom had apparently fallen.

"My heavens!" cried Roddy wildly. "If he dies the fault's mine. Why did I bring him here for these brutes to murder him?"

The other two hewers stared at Roddy in amazement. Tom opened his eyes, and spoke as though he had just awakened from sleep, while Terry Lloyd bent over him.

"All right, Roddy!" he gasped. "Not done yet. Shall get over it. Sully's had a good try. You said he would. Failed though. Be better soon."

Roddy felt as if his blood was on fire, and he clenched his fists.

"If he dies, Sully shall swing for it!" he said, in a thick, low voice. "I'll see to that! The brute sha'n't profit by what he's done!"

Terry Lloyd, who alone caught the words, and Tom as well, looked up at Roddy with a startled face.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "Sully! Be th' holy iron, d'ye mean it's no accident at all?" The big hewer grew excited. "Here, tell me, Roddy Owen, haven't I seen ye escape twice yourself this month from an ugly accident, an' by the skin o' your teeth? Now it's Tom, an' he says Sully's the cause o' it. Begob," he cried, rising and clenching an enormous fist, "I begin to see through this! I wasn't born blind."

The big pitman, whose hot Welsh blood lost none of its fire through his mother being an Irishwoman, and was also of quick perception, fairly shook with indignation as he faced Roddy, who fell for the moment that he had said too much. It was no time for commotions of that sort.

"Shut up, Terry!" he said quietly. "If you've heard anything, forget it for the present. I'll settle this. Here comes the stretcher. And we're not goin' to lose Tom; we'll pull him through."

The stretcher arrived, and with it Mr. Glass, looking very anxious and stern. He put a rapid question or two about Tom's condition, and helped Roddy to lift him on to the stretcher.

The youngster, plucky as he was, could not quite keep back a groan of pain when they moved him.

"He's dangerously injured, I fear!" muttered Mr. Glass. "Take the stretcher, two of you!"

Terry Lloyd had stood stock-still since his suspicions had been aroused, and his thoughts moved swiftly. He did not move when the stretcher was manned.

Terry had a strong regard for the boys, especially for Tom, and what he had heard came as a shock to him.

Roddy walked beside the stretcher, anxiously watching Tom's face. The break-down gang arrived and passed to deal with the wrecked trams, and just as the melancholy little procession with the stretcher turned the grade corner they came upon Mr. Sully, of all people. The head-viewer looked startled, and stopped, as though wishing he had taken another road. The sudden sight of him roused Terry Lloyd like a lion, and the big hewer, striding forward and gripping his pick in his left hand, shook his huge right fist full in Mr. Sully's face.

"Is that your work, ye dirty scoundrel?" he said fiercely, pointing with his pick to the prone form on the stretcher. "Ay, ye know it is!" he cried, as the head-viewer turned white and shrank back against the wall.

The whole party, Mr. Glass included, was stupefied.

"Watch it well," said Terry, with a fierce glare, "for if that boy dies I'll drive this pick through your skinny ribs an' rid the earth o' ye! 'Twill be rightly done!"

Roddy, who was no less aroused than the big hewer himself by the sight of his enemy at such a time, was striding forward, too, when Tom's hand suddenly closed on his wrist from the stretcher, and held fast.

"Steady, old chap!" whispered Tom faintly. "No rows, now, please!"

Roddy, at his chum's touch, obeyed and held back; but things looked very awkward for the head-viewer.

Mr. Sully, after the first surprise, pulled himself together and faced the situation cleverly. Two of the hewers had interposed, and were trying to hold Terry back.

"Have you lost your senses, my man," said Mr. Sully quietly, "or have you been drinking? Stand back! I will inquire into your case later. This is no time for brawling in the pit. Take that poor lad up the shaft, men, and let the surgeon attend him as quickly as possible. Who is he?"

The cool effrontery of the question was almost too much for Roddy once more, in spite of Tom's restraining him; but it took Terry Lloyd aback. The big hewer did not know what to make of it, and began to wonder if he had been too hasty. One of the stretcher-bearers answered:

"It's young Tom Hughes, sir, the little hewer from 53."

"Go on, men, get him to the doctor without delay. This is a sad business. I hope he's not much hurt. Clear the road, there!"

Despite his words, a strange look passed over the viewer's sallow face as he passed on, glancing at the stretcher as he went.

Luckily, Roddy did not see the look, nor did Terry Lloyd. They were bent on getting aid for Tom before anything else was done, and in a little while the bearers and Roddy stepped out of the cage at the shaft top, and took their burden to the back house, always kept ready for emergencies, where Roddy waited with painful anxiety for the doctor.

How Jerry Crail Came to Bryn y Garth.

"HOW d'you feel, old chap?" he said. "Are you in much pain?"

"Pretty well," murmured Tom; for in truth he was suffering agonies. "But you needn't be scared. I'm going to pull through; and we'll win yet, Roddy!"

The doctor arrived in another minute, and made his examination of the victim, Roddy waiting and dreading the verdict.

"A bad fall, indeed!" said the physician. "Your friend is a plucky little fellow, for he must be suffering very severely. But it is nothing dangerous, and we will soon relieve him."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Roddy fervently, his cheeks changing colour.

The doctor opened his bag, and busied himself with the patient. Mr. Glass came to the door, and was overjoyed to hear there was no danger. He was called away again at once; and the physician beckoned to Roddy.

"I need the help of a strong man here," he said, in a low voice. "Will you get me an intelligent pitman?"

"I'm not weak myself, sir," said Roddy eagerly. "Can't I help Tom?"

The doctor glanced over him, and decided he would do.

"Very well," he said. "The boy's shoulder is put out; that is the chief injury. He is suffering so much that to avoid giving him a worse shock I am putting him under a light anæsthetic, and to help replace the joint, you must follow my directions exactly. I see you have plenty of nerve."

Roddy was ready enough, and Tom was mercifully deprived of consciousness for a time. The operation of putting the dislocated shoulder back in its place may be done single-handed, but Dr. Scott preferred his own way. Roddy felt acutely thankful that his chum could no longer feel; but he gave what help was needed, and the thing was done swiftly and skilfully by the medical man.

"He will do very well now," said the doctor. "That blood from the mouth? It only comes from a cut on the lip. You need not worry about it. There are some severe bruises. The boy had better go to the infirmary; and the shoulder, now I have bandaged it, will need certain treatment. He is very healthy and fit, and though he will have to remain on his back for a week, the boy will be none the worse after that time. He is already coming to."

Tom presently opened his eyes, and the doctor, having satisfied himself, hurried off in

(Continued on the next page.)

CHAMPIONS OF THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LEAGUE, 1906-7 (Senior Section).

CHORISTER JUNIORS, F.C., Winners of THE BOYS' REALM Cup. *(See Our League Corner.)*

Great New Serial Coming Shortly!

WITH PICK & LAMP.

(Continued from the previous page.)

his motor to see another patient. Tom was rather weak and sick, and Roddy sat by him till, in half an hour, the patient felt better.

"I'm needing all right now, Roddy," he said. "Feel pretty sore, that's all. Did you see anybody after the smash?"

"No; I didn't get there till afterwards."

"I wonder who did it? Somebody started those trams down on me, that's sure. What now?"

"You're to go to the 'firmary, doctor says."

"I'm hanged if I do!" said Tom, with great vigour. "The beastly place'd suffocate me! I shall go to Bryn-y-Garth. There's pure air up there. I'll be fit again to-morrow!"

"No, no, old-chap; you've got to have a long rest, or you'll break up!"

"Well, I'll get it at Bryn-y-Garth! You can drive me up there after the shift. I tell you I won't stop down here. The hill air'll mend me in no time. I don't give a snap to be anywhere else, an' Starve-Crow Farm's where I mean to go!"

So persistent was Tom on this point that Roddy's arguments went for nothing, and finding that Tom was growing hot and excited about it, he at last gave in.

"All right," he said, "I'll get a long waggonette an' drive you up there. Don't get in a stew, old chap, or you'll get worse. You've got to lie on your back, so I'll make up a bed on the floor of the trap."

Mr. Glass reappeared just then, and shook Tom's hand with warmth and great care. He was delighted to hear the boy was going on so well.

"I am instructed by the head office to convey their regrets for this accident," he said. "They will give you thorough compensation, and full pay all the time you are away. They hope your recovery will be a quick one, and are holding a searching inquiry into the accident."

Tom smiled grimly from his couch; and Mr. Glass looked rather queerly at the boys.

"I don't know quite what to make of this affair," he said.

"I don't wonder at that, sir," said Tom. "Will you thank the—er—the head office for me?"

Mr. Glass departed, and Roddy rose.

"Where are you goin', old chap?" said Tom.

"You lie here an' take it easy," replied Roddy quietly. "The time's come for Sully to pay for this, an' I'm just goin' on a visit to him, same as you meant to this mornin'."

"Nothing of the sort!" said Tom vehemently.

"Here, Roddy, come back!"

"It's all right, Tom! You stay here. I'm not goin' to let Sully off what he's fairly earned this time!" said Roddy grimly.

"If you go out," said Tom decisively, "I shall get up! You just attend to me, or I shall get in a fever or somethin', Roddy. I'm goin' to have my way in this. It's my show—you can't say it isn't—an' I forbid you to say a word to Sully! Never mind what I said to him about you; that don't count. I want your promise to hold your tongue. Look at me now. Haven't I the right to ask you, old chap?"

It cost Roddy a severe struggle with himself to agree. But he was more troubled at the moment about Tom getting dangerously excited than anything else.

"I'm givin' in to you all round the clock, Tom," he said; "but I can't argue with a chap who's as badly smashed up as you are. Very well. I'll drive you straight out to Bryn-y-Garth, an' we'll settle the other matters to-morrow."

Roddy departed, and had to answer any number of inquiries after Tom on the way; but he saw no more of Terry Lloyd, who was still down the pit. There was not time to wait for him. Roddy obtained a waggonette, with good springs and a wide door, a steady horse to draw it, and a lad to drive it back. He brought this round to the colliery yard.

"I hope I'm doin' right, takin' Tom away like this," he thought; "but he's set his mind on it. An' it's a fact, we'd feel he's safer there with us than anywhere else. Wonder if they'll try to stop me takin' him?"

But no opposition was offered at all at the colliery. Mr. Sully did not appear, and it seemed that Roddy had a clear field. Mr. Glass helped to lift Tom's stretcher into the waggonette, and the boy declared himself quite comfortable. Almost directly they started he went fast asleep, and remained so all the way, being worn out in mind and body.

Roddy drove the trap at a foot-pace the whole distance. Gripe following behind; and they halted within half a mile of Bryn-y-Garth, having gone so far on the road would let him. He sent the lad on with a message to Dafydd, who soon turned up, in a good deal of consternation. Roddy signed to him to ask no questions; and, sending the waggonette back, the two boys bore Tom's stretcher and its load very carefully to the cottage. Once there, they made up as comfortable a bed as they could, and Tom, who scarcely woke up even then, was put in it with great care.

When that was done, Roddy took Dafydd outside, and told him how matters stood, while the evening meal was prepared.

The mountaineer gave one of his long whistles.

"You was seem to me to pe going looking for your deaths at that pit," he said. "What was you expect?"

"It's true," said Roddy, with a sigh; "an' I think we shall have to own it, and chuck that part o' the game up. We can't go back. When it was me they were after I didn't care, for I can take my chance. But they'd always left Tom alone, an' I didn't think they'd go for him in this ugly fashion. I think I know why they did it, too.

"I would not take on ter jobs you do for anything on earth!" said Dafydd. "Climbing ter crags, or going in a winter snowstorm in ter mountains was nothing to it. A sea-on boil or a rogue horse I will face, put to go down there in ter dark with death all round you—Ugh!"

"It's got to stop," mused Roddy; "I can't face it, either. For myself I don't care, but when I saw Tom lyin' there as white as a sheet below those smashed trams, an' thought he was dead, it gave me the most awful shock I've ever had. It made me feel as bad as if I'd murdered him, for, anyway, he wouldn't ha' been in the Coed Coch at all but for me!"

"I don't see that," said Dafydd. "You was both partners, and take ter same risks."

"An' I'm not at all sure I ought to ha' brought him out to this wild place in the state he is, with no help for miles. What'd the doctor say to it? He ought to have been in the 'firmary."

"Pooh!" said Dafydd. "They was know nothing in those places—they only fill up his insido with messes out of pottles. Let me see him again."

The young mountaineer made a thorough examination of Tom, who did not even wake under it. Then Dafydd, without saying anything more to Roddy, who was left to his own thoughts, departed over the moor and disappeared round the shoulder of the mountain.

Gripping his pick in his left hand Terry Lloyd shook his huge right fist full in Mr. Sully's face. "Is that your work?" he said fiercely.

He was gone a long time, and busied himself by the fire for an hour after he returned. Tom awoke finally, and was hot, feverish, and refused to eat anything.

Roddy was scared at his condition, and with some reason. Dafydd, however, took things calmly, made Tom swallow some hot broth he had prepared, and then concocted a horrible-looking mess of what seemed to be leaves and herbs stewed in very hot water, and made these into a sort of compress, which he bound all round Tom's shoulder and arm-pit with skilfully-tied bandages of cloth. Tom complained of the heat of it, but was obliged to drink a warm kind of tea smelling strongly of herbs, and dozed off again. Dafydd covered him up, and told Roddy he was not to worry himself "whatefler."

The next day was well advanced when Tom awoke, the others having been a-foot for a long time, and they did not disturb him.

"Gosh!" said Tom. "Have I been asleep? What am I here for? Got any grub, Dafydd? I could eat a cart-horse, harness an' all!"

Dafydd administered a savoury rabbit-stew, which Tom polished off to the last atom. The mountaineer then removed the bandage and poultice. Every trace of feverishness had left Tom, his arm was no longer even swollen, and he looked bright and well.

"You're a holy wonder for a medicine-man!" said the astonished Rodwell to Dafydd. "What was that stuff you put on his shoulder?"

"Only a few herbs that I know ter trick of," said Dafydd, grinning. "You feel petter, Tom—eh? You must lie quiet for to-day and rest. To-morrow you shall be as well as me."

"You're the ace of trumps, Dafydd; show me the man who says you're not!" exclaimed Tom. "The doctor said I'd be in bed a week. I fell pretty near fit already—though I felt rotten last night—but I'll lie up if you tell me to. But I say, Roddy! Why aren't you at the pits? It's long past time."

"Pits be hanged!" growled Roddy. "We've done with 'em. I'm not goin' to the Coed Coch any more, an' I'll take care you never do."

"You don't mean to say you're scared off?" cried Tom.

"I don't think I deserve that, old chap," said Rodwell, flushing painfully.

"No, of course not. I didn't mean that, Roddy. But what's this for?"

"I'm not goin' to see you run into danger like that any more. We'll just chuck it—that's all!"

Tom raised himself on one elbow.

"Now, look here," he said earnestly, "this sort of talk has got to stop, once for all. As soon as I'm fit, I'm goin' back to the Aberford. We know what was ahead of us. We didn't begin this game to squeal every time we got hurt. There's half the money earned already, an' all we've had between us is a bruise or two. I say we're to go on an' get the other half! I shall, whether you do or not!"

"But it's too risky for you," protested Roddy; "it's no use you're talkin' like that. It was you who said you were goin' to let Gripe tackle Sully if I came to any harm. An' now it's you——"

"I know I did, but I've thought better of it. If you were killed, I don't say I'd have Sully's life then—he should hang for it. But we're makin' fools of ourselves by kickin' against the pricks. We went into the game with our eyes open, knowin' what to expect, an' it's no good hollering out when we happen to catch it out. Roddy, you go back to the Coed Coch to-morrow, an' I shall follow as soon as I'm over I can swing a pick! That £50 has got to be earned!"

Rodwell was silent. His chum spoke with such vigour that he was convinced in spite of himself. It was never on his own account that he had wanted to back out.

"Very well," he said; "we'll go back to our stalls in Kenyon Price's colliery. Though I'd arranged a very different programme. I was goin' to raise blue fire all round over this business."

"Put it off, old chap, until we've got the money we want. Every time they fail they get more shy of us. I think they'll give us a long rest now."

"But who d'you suppose it was that set those trams chargin' down the grade at you?"

"I dunno. What's the use o' goin' into that now? Let it drop. Sully arranged it somehow."

"I'd like to know who the culprit is though. Was it Jerry Crail?"

"Can't say. He'd disappeared, certainly, when I went out to get my lamp filled. That lamp was part o' the trick, of course, to bring me out. But I shouldn't think Jerry'd be trusted to do it himself. He hasn't got the gumption for it, nor the pluck. Shouldn't wonder if he had some sort o' hand in it though."

"I'll bet he had," said Rodwell savagely, "the squint-eyed little beast!"

"Squint-eyes, has he?" put in Dafydd.

"Yes, a bit of a cast in one eye. Why?" said Tom.

"Because I wass see a poy like that sneaking apout ter lower moor," said Dafydd, "as if he meant comin' here, but he wass see me and ween away. He had towy hair, and wass very lean. Last Thursday, I think, wass ter tay."

"That's Jerry!" exclaimed Tom. "Yes, an' he wasn't puttin' for us in the pit on Thursday—we didn't see him that day."

"My word!" said Rodwell grimly. "He was spyin' out the land, I s'pose. It'll be a sorry day for Mr. Jerry Crail if he comes to Starve-Crow Farm!"

"He wouldn't dare do that," said Tom; "only scoutin' round in the distance. You give him a lesson, Dafydd, my boy, if you see him again."

Roddy grave in as to going back to Coed Coch, and had to admit that Tom's arguments were sound enough. It was no use giving in because they got what they expected. He refused point-blank, however, to leave Bryn y Garth till Tom was able to get about again, and so the next day found him still on the farm. For though Dafydd's promise came true, and Tom, thanks to the wonderful healing power of the poultices of herbs, was able to get up, it was too late then for Roddy to start for the collieries. They took it easy all the morning. Tom sunning himself in front of the cottage.

In the afternoon, after Dafydd had groped a few trouts out of the brook, they were still enjoying the novelty of a whole holiday; though Roddy began on the subject of his return to the pits next day.

"There ain't really any reason why you should go back for a time, Tom," he said, grinning, "'cause the precious Sully sent word to say you'd get full pay all the time you were away."

"That was to try and smooth things over—eh?" chuckled Tom. "I'll claim that pay, you can bet. But I won't overdo it either, or else he might go back on it. Besides, I'm improvin' all the time, an' make a bit more every week."

"One thing's dead sure: Gripe's got to be left here, an' never taken into Aberford any more on workin' days. I've got a crow to pick with you over that, Dafydd. It interferes with business. You know, Tom, if it hadn't been for Gripe an' your threat to Sully this last affair'd never ha' happened."

"Sully's in a holy terror of Gripe, that's a fact," agreed Tom; "an' no wonder. If I——"

"Hush!" whispered Dafydd suddenly. He lay flat and looked round the corner of the cottage. Something the others had not noticed had caught his keen eye—or ear.

The Conspiracy Against Gripe.

"WHAT is it?" murmured Roddy.

"A visitor. I was thinking," replied Dafydd, under his breath.

"Come, Roddy, and move very quietly, if you can. Tom, hold ter tog."

Gripe had pricked up his ears, and Tom's fingers closed on the bulldog's collar, though he wondered what was in the wind. He did not feel up to following the others, who went off by themselves very stealthily.

Dafydd led the way round at the back of the little woods, where he knelt behind a boulder and looked down the hillside. Roddy followed his gaze, and saw that somebody was making his way up towards some rocks further away towards the stream. The form was familiar to him.

"Jerry Crail!" he muttered. "Does he dare come here after all?"

"That iss the poy I saw before," nodded Dafydd, "and I think it was not his first visit here, though he has not peen quite as close. He could easily get to that place without being seen by us at all."

"I wonder he comes in the daytime, by gum!" whispered Roddy. "What can he be after?"

Dafydd shrugged his shoulders, not being able to make a guess.

"I was only know one thing," he said. "That place he go to iss where Gripe goes sometimes and hurries out the rancid cat, for another time at the foot of those rocks. It iss sure ter poy does not know that, or it is ter last place he would go to. Now, you come with me, and we can get there pefore he does, and without his seeing us. Perhaps he wants to watch ter farm from there."

"He'll get a rare old surprise then in a minute," thought Roddy; and he followed Dafydd down a little gully that led to the rocks. Jerry reached them without any difficulty, and came round the edge of a small shrub at the visitor.

Jerry Crail did not look as if his conscience was very good. He moved quickly and stealthily, glancing always in the direction of the cottage, and as he neared the rocks he drew something from his inner pocket, examined it for a moment, and cast it near the foot of the rocks. He put his hand in his pocket as if seeking more of the stuff, wherever it was, when Roddy and Dafydd suddenly burst out upon him.

With a yell of fright Jerry turned to fly, but the two pursuers were on to him so quickly that he was soon captured, though not before he had flung from him the thing he held in his hand, which looked like a scrap of meat. In a moment he was tripped up, and spread-eagled in the heather, while Gripe, who had broken away from Tom, came bounding down the hill with fierce growls.

"Hold him!" cried Roddy, springing up. "Here, Gripe, here!"

"Let me go! I'll kill me! Oh, keep 'im orf!" screamed Jerry. "I ain't done no harm!"

(Another long instalment of this thrilling story will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

THE ROXBY CHAMPIONS

A STIRRING TALE OF WATER POLO

BY

A. S. HARDY.

Green and Hallowes, the centres of their respective sides, went straight for the ball at an amazing pace, outstripping their wing men, and the game had begun.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Rival Secretary — The Meeting — Electing a Captain—Simson Speaks Out —The Challenge.

"WELL?" said William Green.

"Well?" repeated Herbert Druce, glancing at the ex-captain of the Roxby Swimming Club as if he would try to read his thoughts.

It was six o'clock at night, and the High Street of Roxby, that famous seaport town upon the Yorkshire coast, was thronged with people. Green looked round a little uncomfortably. He did not wish any of his friends, or the members of the Roxby Club, to see him talking to the secretary of the Vampires, the Stedworth Club, that had within the last twelve months seriously challenged Roxby's proud position as champion club of the district.

"You got my letter?" Herbert Druce went on.

"Yes; you see, I am here to keep the appointment you made. But I don't want anyone to see me. Simson, or some of his toadies, may be hanging about, and they'd make a mouthful of it, and it would go against me at the election to-night."

"Very well, then," said Druce quickly, "there's a quiet coffee-shop in Milton Street. Let us go there. None of your lot ever visit that place. I usually call there when I come to Roxby, and I've never seen a Roxby member in there."

"That will do," assented the big, burly Green, slouching quickly round the corner. "We can talk there without fear of being overheard."

A couple of minutes later they were seated in a pow in the coffee-shop in Milton Street, where, as Herbert Druce discussed a high-tea, they began to talk over club matters, and the prospects of the Roxby Club for the coming season.

"Your captaincy of the Roxby expired last week," said the secretary of the Vampires; "but, of course, you will be re-elected at the meeting to-night when the vote is taken."

"I'm not so sure," said William Green, scowling darkly. "Jack Simson seems to have won a lot of influence over the members, and there is just a chance that he will beat me. Sayers, Hall, Maidment, and that lot, will back me, and I really think I ought to get through. But Simson is strong, and fancies himself for the post."

"Supposing he wins—eh?"

And the Vampires' secretary shot a quick, questioning glance at his companion.

Green bit his lip.

"I don't think I could stay in the club if he bossed the show," he said bitterly.

"There you are! That's what I wanted to know. That's what made me write to you, Green. You've been the mainstay of the Roxby Water-polo Team for the past three years. It was through you they became runners-up for the Northern Championship last year; and they never would have won the District Championship if you hadn't been there to coach and train them. Besides, look how valuable you are in team racing. We've got a fine lot for the Vampires this year, and I even think we shall run the Roxby very close, if we don't beat them, at the water-polo. We'd be glad of the assistance of a man like you. You haven't played for Roxby yet this season, and are, therefore, eligible to play for us. Will you make me a promise that if Simson is elected captain, and you resign your membership of the Roxby, that you will give us the first chance of your services?"

The secretary knew his man. He had spoken naturally, unaffectedly, and his praise of Green was well managed. Druce knew the Roxby man's conceit right enough, and he knew how to pander to it.

Green smiled.

"It is good of you to think of me like that," he said. "But, of course, as you know, I have played centre-forward for Roxby for the last four years. They couldn't do without me! Besides, I prided myself on my loyalty to my club. It is only Simson I object to, and if I am elected captain again, I shall know how to put him in his proper place."

"But you may not be elected captain," said Druce, busying himself with his food and adopting a careless tone. "Of course, you probably will be, but you may not. Then Simson may put on airs."

Green ground his teeth together.

"I put my trust in the boys!" he said. "Besides, they know they can't do without me!"

"Well, I don't wish to persuade you against your will," said the Vampires' secretary; "but we shall have a mighty strong pole team this year. We have Millington, the half-mile swimming champion, joining us. He will be worth something. He's going to play at half-back. We are weak at centre-forward. We could do with you in that position. Think it over, Green. Maybe you will drop me a line if you think of resigning your membership of the Roxby?"

"Well," said Green, with a half-laugh, "there's no harm in me promising to join the Vampires if I break with my own club; but I don't think there is much chance of that. They can't do without me."

"You've got a coming flyer in young Sidney Hallowes, they tell me," the Vampires' secretary remarked, as he paid the reckoning, and moved, with the Roxby man, towards the door.

"He's only sixteen, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Green, frowning; "and he thinks a deuce of a lot of himself, too! He's one of Simson's favourites. The boy can swim, I admit; but to say he is a coming champion, and all that sort of thing, is tommy rot! He's a natural swimmer. Gets all the strokes ever invented, and is smart. He's wonderful for a junior! He plays with our second team at water-polo, but I don't think you need fear him. He will never get a place in the first team."

"What time's your meeting?"

"Half-past seven."

"Will you have a drink?"

"No, thanks; teetotaller!"

"That's the style! Glad to hear it! Well, Green, you'll think over what I've said, won't you?"

"Yes; all right!"

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

They shook hands and parted, and William Green, inflating his chest and walking along the High Street as if the place belonged to him, with the medals that he had won at swimming and water-polo swinging ostentatiously from his gold watch chain, made his way towards the Athenæum Hall, where the meeting of the Roxby Swimming Club was to be held.

He arrived there to find the place already pretty full. He was greeted warmly, but he noticed that one or two of the fellows were not very cordial in their handshakes, and he loathed them for it. They were some of Simon's gang, he thought.

Green had taken a great deal upon himself, because he reckoned that he was the founder of the club. Simson had been one of the original members, too, but a junior, and it was only during the last two years that he had come right to the front as swimmer and organiser, and had seriously challenged Green's position as leader of the Roxby.

Being a member of committee, Simson was able at times to oppose Green—sy, and strong enough to carry his point, too; and being by nature a bully, Green had resented this interference. They had been at daggers drawn for the better part of the past year, and the climax had been reached when Simson was proposed as captain to the club in opposition to Green, and for the first time in Roxby history the destination of the captaincy had to be decided by ballot.

Green, surrounded by a number of his cronies, leant his back against the wall. He smiled once or twice in Simson's direction—Jack Simson was seated quietly at the end of the hall, as far out of the way as possible—and he sneered when he saw the boy Sidney Hallowes, the coming swimming and water-polo champion, Simson said, whipping up the members on Simson's behalf.

At half-past seven the hall was packed, and a few minutes later the secretary of the club, Alfred Watson, who played in goal for the Roxby champions, read the minutes of the last meeting. Then, after what seemed tedious waiting to some, the big business of the meeting was reached.

"You all know that the candidates for the captaincy are William Green, who has filled the position for the past five years—ever since the club was started, I might say," said Secretary Watson, "and Jack Simson, who is one of the best and keenest workers on behalf of the club. I think there are too many of us present to decide the question on a show of hands, therefore will each member write his preference on the piece of paper which will be handed to him? Hallowes and Hall, you can serve the papers out."

The two members indicated distributed squares of paper amongst the members, and there was a minute of intense bustle while the writing went on. Then the papers were folded, and gathered in again.

At the end of the hall on the raised stage the papers were placed upon a table, and sorted by members of the committee. Five minutes later the secretary, stepping forward amidst dead silence, held up his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there have been forty-seven votes for Simson and nineteen for Green! I, therefore, declare that Jack Simson is appointed captain for the ensuing year!"

In a moment the place was in an uproar. The members of the Roxby Swimming Club leapt to their feet, cheering like mad; and as William Green marked the enthusiasm of the meeting, he turned pale with anger.

Never since the club had been in existence had the members showed such a preference for him. His blood boiled. He was sick of the club—sick of the lot of them. And he darted malignant hatred at Jack Simson, who had withdrawn himself from his modest position at the end of the hall, and had mounted the stage, where he prepared to address his comrades.

As soon as silence reigned the new captain spoke, his voice sounding clear and well modulated.

"Lads," he said, "I thank you for the honour you have done me, and I am sure that if Green looks at things from the right point of view, he will see that it is good for the captaincy to go round. I haven't much to say, but I should like to point out one thing. It is the dangerous rivalry of the Vampires. Our polo team must be strengthened if we want to win the District Championship again this year, or to make any show in the Northern Championship of the A.S.A., or in the Roxby and District League.

"Green—I say it impartially—is not so fast as he used to be. But he has a good head on his shoulders. He would be invaluable at centre-half. I propose that we give young Sidney Hallowes a trial at centre-forward, and put Green at centre-half. It will improve our team, I am sure!"

Somebody shouted "Bravo, young Hallowes!" and then Green stepped forward.

"I've got nothing to say, boys," he said, "about you appointing Simson captain of the club. I only hope he will turn out as good as you expect"—this with a sneer—"but I must protest at the inclusion of Hallowes in the first team. He has had no experience. He is not class enough. He is too young; and I should like to know what advantage can be gained by shifting me from centre-forward, and putting a slighter and much slower swimmer in my place? It will ruin the whole team."

"Bravo! Green is right!" shouted one of his chums.

"I don't think our new captain is starting well by making a serious initial blunder," Green went on, with a sneer.

Simson got upon his feet.

"Boys," he cried, "we haven't come here to bicker and quarrel, I hope. One of the mistakes of Green's captaincy was that he would never look among his juniors for likely men. Now, I have watched the juniors with interest, and I say that we haven't a lad in the club can compare with young Hallowes as a centre-forward. As to his being slower than Green, I'm willing to back him to beat Green from any distance from 100 yards upwards; and if that won't qualify him for inclusion in the first team, I should like to know what would?"

A murmur of astonishment went up.

"Young Hallowes," Simson went on, "has always been afraid of himself. He was too modest to race with the rest of the chaps, though they all marvelled at his pace and

stamina in the junior water-polo games. I induced him to swim a quarter-mile against the watch the other night, and the result astonished me. He can give Green nearly half a minute over the distance."

"It's a lie!" shouted Green fiercely.

"Will you put aside your dignity and put it to the test?" said Simson. "Will you swim the youngster, Green? It is for the good of the club, and no malice intended. If he beats you fairly, you will admit we will be fully entitled to try him at centre-forward, and you won't mind going to centre-half? Hang it, if I could do any good for the club by standing down from the team, or shifting my position, I'd do it right enough."

"Go on, swim the youngster, Green!" cried Maidment.

"All right!" said Green, with an incredulous smile on his lips, for he could not believe Simson. "I'll swim him when and where he likes. Let there be two races—one at 100 yards, and the other at a quarter of a mile."

"On Wednesday evening," asked Simson.

"Hallowes, you can swim Green then, can't you?"

Sidney Hallowes had mounted the platform at his captain's invitation. He was only sixteen years of age, and looked a midget in his clothes. His face was pale as he looked round, shy and nervous, and the idea of his beating Green seemed so ludicrous to most of the members present that a titter went round.

"Yes," said the boy, his voice quivering, whilst a flush mounted from his neck to the roots of his hair; "I'll swim him then, Simson, if you want us to."

"Good boy!" laughed his captain. "And I will present you with a medal in commemoration of your victory myself."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The 100 Yards Race—Sidney Hallowes Causes a Surprise—The Quarter Mile—Green's Disgust—The Vampires' Secretary Secures a New Recruit.

On Wednesday night when the races between Green and Hallowes were to be decided, the swimming-baths at Roxby were absolutely packed, and a good many members of the Vampire Swimming Club had come over from Stedworth to see the fun.

Secretary Druce was there, and he watched the members of the Roxby Swimming Club as they swam about the bath very intently. He had to confess that there was a great deal of talent in the club, and much of it amongst the juniors. The Vampires were not the better team yet.

At eight o'clock Secretary Watson cleared the bath, and the members of the Roxby Club, standing with folded arms, or leaning against their dressing-boxes, looked with eager interest at the shallow end, where some towels were being allowed for competitors to dive from.

Sidney Hallowes was the first to turn out, and he looked a midget indeed as he walked along beside the big and muscular Jack Simson, who had placed an arm fondly around the boy's neck.

Sidney Hallowes was pale and shivering. He looked anything but well.

"How do you feel, Sid?" asked the captain encouragingly.

"Very nervous, Jack," answered the boy. "I shall be all right when I get into the water, though."

"Don't be overawed by the occasion, and afraid of Green," said the captain; "but swim to win, my boy, and you'll pull through right enough."

Sidney Hallowes seemed to shrink from the gaze of his clubmates. He was so nervous that he would have hidden himself in a box if he could.

"He doesn't stand a chance!" said Hall contemptuously. "I'm afraid Simson is going to make a hash of his captaincy."

A moment later Green appeared. He was a magnificently built fellow, with broad shoulders, fine chest, splendid hips and thighs—a swimmer all over. His brown, healthy skin shone in the electric light, and one glance at his smiling, confident face would have established him favourite, even with the rawest athletic lyro.

"Come on!" cried Maidment, a good-humoured member of the Roxby. "Come and be killed, young Hallowes! Our captain's let you in for something."

The youngster stepped on to the towel, and concentrated his thoughts upon the business in hand. It was a strange thing, but none of the Roxby men knew what Hallowes was capable of, the youngster having resolutely all along refused to swim in competition, saying that he was not good enough. The greatest interest was, therefore, centred in this race.

"Bargain! I don't think the youngster will win!" said Sayers, to a whisper to Hall.

"Nonsense!" returned Hall. "He doesn't stand a chance. Just as if he could have laid low all this time."

"What about Simson's judgment?" asked Sayers. "He's not usually wrong, is he?"

"Get ready!" cried Secretary Watson; and the competitors strained forward. "Go!"

Into the water both bodies descended like a flash, and the next moment the two were swimming away like mad. The distance was three lengths of the baths. Green as once adopted his powerful trudgen stroke; while Hallowes, with his body and head completely immersed, excepting when he put his face up to breathe, used a long overarm stroke that carried him swiftly and easily through the water.

As they touched the end of the bath together, there was a burst of excitement. Hallowes was holding his redoubtable opponent! The turn was easily made, Green gaining a couple of yards there, owing to his greater experience; but they touched the second end almost simultaneously, and as they finished to the finish Hallowes, suddenly turning upon his belly, began to use the trudgen stroke. He was as fresh as when he started, and, closing in on Green, he swept a foot or so past him. The ex-captain of the Roxby lashed the water in desperation. Finding himself held, he lost his head, and, going clean away, Sidney Hallowes won by a length, amidst tumultuous applause.

"Where's Simson's judgment now?" shrieked Maidment, in ecstasy. "Hurrah! Our captain for ever!"

The time was 59sec.

Angry, disgusted, and crushed by the bitterness of his defeat, Green, refusing to be comforted, retired to his box until he should be wanted for the next race; whilst Sidney Hallowes, leaving the water, joined his captain, who put a bath rug round him.

"Bravo, Sidney!" he said. "You are certain to win the quarter!"

The boy's cheeks were crimson now, his eyes laughing. His nervousness had gone.

When the bath was again cleared, and the principals turned out for the race over a quarter of a mile, it was seen that William Green had lost his confident look, though there was something threatening about the grim set of his mouth. Sidney Hallowes, however, was smiling, and took his place upon the towel with all the confidence in the world.

"The youngster has got his measure," remarked Maidment. "Green has met his Waterloo!"

Into the water they dived to the word, and they went down the bath side by side. This time Hallowes was using the over-stroke again, and Green, considering the distance they had to go, adopted that method of progression, too. They touched together, and both took the turn nicely.

Along the bath and back again, with nothing in it. So for 150 yards. Then Hallowes tried a sprint. Green answered, and the boy discovered that it was not yet time to get away. Two lengths had been covered, when Green thought it time to apply some of his unused strength.

He swam hard, took his turn like a champion, and opened out a short lead; but not for long. In the next length Hallowes closed in upon his opponent, and then, having once got up, slowly but surely he got away. Green began to lose style, and with it pace. At the completion of the tenth length the ex-captain of the Vampires was well beaten; and eventually Sidney, swimming easily, won by three-quarters of a length, amidst prolonged and excited cheering.

Green swam to the steps and got out. He dressed, without saying a word to his comrades, left the bath. His humiliation was greater than he could bear. He hated Jack Simson. He hated Sidney Hallowes, the boy who had beaten him. He hated his old club. He intended to wash the dust of the Roxby Swimming Club from off his feet.

At a turn in the street he ran into Herbert Druce, the Vampires' secretary, who had been to see the racing.

"By Jove!" said the latter, "that lad can swim, Green! What a pity you weren't really fit to meet him."

"Yes," growled Green.

"He's young, and trained to the hour. You've been lying idle since the autumn. Still, Green, you're a rattling good swimmer. We could like to have you with us in the Vampires."

"Suppose I wanted to join?" asked Green, eyeing his companion doubtfully.

"We'd jump at you, man!" said the secretary. "We've always wished you were one of us. Come now, you're eligible to play for the Vampires this season, as you haven't turned out yet for Roxby. Come now, will you join?"

"Yes!" said Green, his eyes flashing; "I intend to send in my resignation to the Roxby to-night. If you care to have me, I'll join you with pleasure."

"Then we may consider it settled?"

Green nodded assent; then, with a vindictive glance back towards the swimming-baths, he vowed to bring about the downfall of the Roxby polo team, and show them what they had lost in losing him.

"You'll be sorry you crossed me, Jack Simson," he muttered; "and you, too, Hallowes! I'll have my revenge upon you both!"

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Final for the District Championship—The Vampires Score First—A Penalty Goal—Maidment Draws Blood for Roxby—Hallowes Plays Best—The Equaliser—How the Match was Won.

The swimming season was well upon the way, and the water polo competitions in the Roxby district were exciting the keenest enthusiasm.

Both Roxby and the Vampires were still in the Northern Championship Competition, and it was said by many well-known judges that both were likely to extend Hyde Seal and Everton ere the championship was decided, and they had also won their way into the final of the Roxby and District Championship. Roxby had won pretty easily all along the line, so far as the minor championship was concerned, and though the Vampires had been a bit harder pressed in their matches, they were deserving finalists, the great improvement in their team being unquestionably due to the coaching and leadership of William Green, who had been training assiduously, and was swimming better, it was said, than ever he had done before.

The final of the Roxby District Championship was set aside for decision one Saturday afternoon in the sea, the nets and the course to be fixed beneath the protecting shelter of the breakwater on the southern side.

Interest in water-polo is far more lavishly displayed in Roxby than in London or the big cities, and so it is not to be wondered at that, on the hot Saturday afternoon of the match, every boat that was capable of floating was chartered by an eager mob of sightseers, several launches and tugs hired out by parties, and even sailing-boats pressed into the service. It was a gala day. Bunting was displayed everywhere in the form of pennants on the vessels within the harbour, and club colours extensively worn.

Mr. Digby, an official of the A.S.A., had been secured as referee, and two well-known followers of the sport were to act as goal scorers, and the timekeeper was a man well known for his infallibility—a matter of no small consequence when so much time has to be deducted for stoppages, etc., as in the game of water-polo.

The course was marked out with floating buoys, and outside the limits the surging craft gathered. The goals were anchored in deep water, and the sea was perfectly calm, rendering the conditions for the game ideal.

The arena were in attendance, and, undressing in their boats, they prepared to enter the water five minutes before the appointed time for the start.

"Look after Hallowes, Green," said Secretary Druce, as the Vampires' centre-forward was about to dive into the water; "he's dangerous."

"Look after him," said Green, with an ugly look and a short, hard laugh. "They say he is the most wonderful goal-getter of the season. Well, I'll show him one, and I'll spoil his goal-getting! Hallowes and Simson had the laugh of me that night at the Roxby Baths; but if I get the laugh of them to-day, we shall be all square."

"Well, don't indulge in foul play," said the secretary warningly. "You know how strict Referee Digby is; and if you are ordered out, it may cost us the match."

"I'll watch it," said Green.

He hid the Vampires into the water, and the next moment fourteen heads were bobbing about in the prescribed area. The referee, bell in hand, and the timekeeper were seated in a dinghy anchored at the centre of the course. The goal scorers, flags in hand, signalled that all was in readiness, and the teams were at once lined up.

There was a breathless hush, during which the timekeeper was seen to look at his watch, and then, amidst a yell, the ball was thrown into the centre of the field of play.

There was an immediate lashing of the blue water, and the players raced towards their places, Green and Hallowes, the centres of their respective sides, going straight for the ball at an amazing pace, outstripping their wing men, and the game had begun.

It seemed that Green must get to the ball first, as, with a twist, it turned a little toward him. But no; young Sidney Hallowes got his hand to it first, and, with a deft back pass, gave it to Simson, who was left-wing forward for Roxby. Even as he parted with the ball, he received Green's charge, and the boy sank under the water. There was nothing foul about Green's action as far as could be seen; but when the boy came to the surface again, he made no attempt to swim, and his face was drawn with agony.

"I say, that was scarcely fair, Green," he said, as the centre-forward turned and swam in the wake of the players, who were desperately dashing for the Vampires' goal.

Green's reply was a malicious grin.

Then there came a deafening burst of applause, and Maidment, the centre-half, who had cleverly robbed the Vampires' right-wing forward of the ball, threw it a few inches above the bar when the goalkeeper seemed to be hopelessly beaten.

The ball was promptly given to the goalkeeper, and from his throw, Green secured possession, and he, rushing the Roxby goal for the time being, at any rate, incapacitated, set off trudging, keeping the ball well within his possession, and absolutely ignoring, as it seemed, the attempts of the opposition to take it from him.

Twice he was tackled, but, to the amazement of everybody, Maidment utterly failed to stop the man, or secure possession of the ball, and the second time he, with a shrill back throw, Green had beaten Watson, the Roxby secretary and goalkeeper, and the Vampires had drawn first blood. They had an astonishing number of partisans present, and a shout of victory arose.

It was a good goal, and promptly recognised as such, and, with grim faces, the Roxby team swam back to their goal.

"Did Green hurt you, Hallowes?" asked Jack Simson.

"Yes; the brute!" cried the lad, his eyes flashing. "I got his knee in the pit of my stomach, and it turned me sick. If it had been in the bath, Mr. Digby would have seen it."

"I know Digby," said Simson grimly. "He won't let the incident pass unnoticed, and we are not beaten yet, boys."

The referee had the ball in hand now, and, signalling the re-start, he threw it to the centre again. Young Hallowes had had enough of Green, and was not so keen on getting to the ball first this time; but no sooner had the Vampires' centre seized it than he was on him like a flash, and, with a quick flip, knocked the ball cleverly out of his hand, giving Simson possession.

As the left-winger dashed away, the irate Green seized Hallowes by the leg and dragged him under. The foul was at once noticed by the referee, and the game stopped.

From the free throw, a dash was made by the Roxby forwards, and this way the wing men cleared the backs, and gave to Maidment for the centre-half to put on the final touch electrified the crowd; but, alas! the ball struck the crossbar, and as it fell into the water it was taken by Brooks, the Vampires' right back, and thrown to the centre again, where Green and his comrades secured.

Give-and-take play followed, in which fouls were frequent, the Vampires being the chief offenders, their men frequently holding, interfering, and passing under water, and the play began to drag, for Referee Digby was stern and strict in his rulings. Three times in the mad scramble, when the referee could not decide which team had fouled first, the ball was taken from the water and thrown in again; and then, the players being highly incensed, an incident occurred at the Roxby end which cost that side another goal.

Green, whose play against his old comrades was highly open to suspicion, had the ball neatly passed to him when admirably placed. Hall, the Roxby left back, who had been twice taunted by Green, at once tackled him, and, when Green had lost the ball, held on to him with a desperate clutch. Green spluttered and choked.

"Let me go, hang you!" he shouted, when he came up again.

Watson had meanwhile caught the ball from the shot rained in and cleared; but Hall still held on.

"You've done a bit of this to us," he said grimly. "See how you like it."

"Let him go, Hall," shouted Maidment as he swam away, for he realised the danger.

But, with Green kicking and plunging, Hall still foolishly held him, and the whistle went for the foul.

Then, to Hall's chagrin, he found that he was within the four yards limit of his own goal, and the referee was already signalling to him to leave the water, and out Hal had to go. His face was a study as his comrades dragged him into a boat. He had not long to remain out of the water, however, for Green scored from the throw with a richochet shot that cleared the backs and gave Watson no chance, and the Vampires were two up.

There were long faces now among the Roxby men. There were long faces still when at the end of another ten minutes—for there was more than the usual time taken out for stoppages—half-time was signalled, and the Vampires still led by those two goals.

The prospects of defeat stared them in the face. It was an amazing thing, but not once had they found their game.

"It was that first foul of Green's upon young Sidney that put us off," said Jack Simson indignantly. "But never mind, there is a long way to go yet, and I don't think we have shot our bolt. Do you feel all right, Sid?"

"Yes," answered the boy. "I've completely recovered now."

"That's right. And look here, Maidment, you'd better take my place on the left wing. I'll go to centre-half. I can control the game better there. And, besides, I think I can keep a sharper eye on Green than you have done. You're too gentle with him."

This arrangement was adhered to, and after change of ends it was seen that Captain Jack Simson had taken command right from positions, for he completely overshadowed Green, much to that worthy's disgust.

No sooner did the Vampires' centre get the ball than he found Simson upon him. The Roxby centre-half tackled like a demon, and, continually robbing the knights of sea-water as he went under, the Vampires' centre-forward began to blow and show signs of fatigue.

The Vampires' wing men were playing a clever game, keeping well clear of the Roxby backs, and yet prepared to dart through, or to pass whenever they got an opportunity. Green's failure to elude Simson, however, spoiled their play, and Green, realising Simson's superiority, rapidly began to lose his temper.

The ball was now repeatedly out of play, and so keen were the players that excitement was intense.

Five minutes from the restart the Roxby scored their first goal of the match.

It started by Simson cleverly robbing Green and giving to Maidment. Maidment dribbled a little way, and when tackled gave to Hallowes. The boy, without losing a moment, passed to Sayers on the right wing; and Sayers, eluding the left-back opposing him, had a pot-shot at goal, which the Vampires' goalkeeper saved and to fist away. It went to Hallowes, however, and, dribbling cleverly, the young centre-forward rushed the ball into the net.

The goal-scorer raised his flag, the bell rang, and the game was 2 goals to 1 against Roxby, the holders.

The fat was in the fire now. The Vampires' confidence was shaken, and fouls were frequent after the referee had once more thrown the ball in, the Vampires thinking more of holding and interfering with the men opposed to them, rather than tackling them when they had the ball, and stoppages were numerous, whilst the shouts of the partisans rose high.

There was an attempt to intimidate the referee from a Vampire boat near him; but he was not to be intimidated, and held a firm grip

THE ROXBY CHAMPIONS.

(Continued from the previous page).

of the game, though his brow knitted anxiously as he saw Green growing spiteful.

At length Green, under the referee's very nose, turned and kicked out at Simson, who had just robbed him of the ball, and as he blew his whistle Mr. Digby pointed an accusing finger at the Vampires' centre.

"If you do that again, Green," he said, "I'll have you out without further cautioning."

"Why don't you learn to referee?" was Green's retort.

Simson threw the ball in the direction of the Vampires' goal, and the referee ignored the thrust. But a moment later Green, who thought he had at last a chance of dribbling through, Simson being out of the way, swam desperately towards the Roxby goal. He was met by young Hallowes, and this time the slip of a boy upset his plans by coolly knocking the ball out of his hand, diving under, and securing it again cleverly, amidst a roar of applause.

Enraged, Green darted after him, and getting within range as the boy paused to take up the ball for a pass, he deliberately hit him savagely behind the ear.

Half stunned, the boy sank. He was instantly seized by Sayers. The referee's whistle screamed.

"Come out of the water, Green!" cried Mr. Digby. "You shall take no further part in this game."

Green looked at Sayers, and Maidment helped the half-drowning boy towards the boats. Then he swam away.

"At least," he muttered, "I've put him out of the game. If we can only keep 'em out, we'll win now."

Sidney Hallowes was helped into a boat. At the same time a yelling mob in the boats made towards the point where Green would leave the water. They meant going for the bully if they got the chance.

Green, thoroughly frightened now, was glad to get a robe over him and cower in the thwarts of a Vampire boat, the launch that the club had chartered being too far away for him to think of getting to in safety.

The game was stopped for a minute or two to see whether Sidney Hallowes could go on; but, finding he was too bad to play at present, the referee signalled the game to proceed, and the fun throw was taken. From it Jack Simson got possession, and admirable play won a corner from the opposition at close range. The ball was thrown from this right in front of the goal, and here, Sayers getting his fist to it first, knocked it through, and the scores were level.

That equalising goal put new life into young Hallowes. Springing up, he dived into the water.

"I'm all right," he said.

But instead of at once going to his end, amidst cheers he swam to the referee's boat.

"Sir," he said, addressing Mr. Digby, "we have scored. I think you have punished Green enough. I don't bear him any malice. Let him play again."

"No," said the referee decidedly.

"It will only spoil his career, sir, if you don't. He won't do it again. Let him play. As a favour to me."

The referee wavered.

"Very well," he said; and word was sent to Green that he might play.

Amidst cheers from the Vampires, and hisses and groans from the opposition, Green re-entered the water. He was a chastened spirit now.

"I don't think I deserved that kindness,

The feet should never pull on the straps as shown in the above illustration. *(See Rowing Article.)*

Hallowes," he said, struck by the lad's generosity.

"Well, show your gratitude by playing fair," said the boy.

Green did, and the effect of his legal tactics was soon shown, for Sidney Hallowes scored a grand goal from a back throw a minute before time, and just before the final whistle blew Hall made all secure by beating the ball through in a melee, whilst the air simply cracked with the applause.

And so Roxby had won the District Championship again by 4 goals to 3.

Curiously enough, they were drawn against the Vampires later on in the Northern Championship, when the former played without Green, who had resigned. This time there was only one team in it. Roxby winning by 7 goals to 1. As everybody knows, they fought their way into the final that season, only to be beaten by Hyde Seal by 6 goals to 3.

However, there was a sweetness mixed with the bitterness of that defeat, for they had worthily won the right to call themselves the Roxby Champions.

THE END.

(Two fine long, complete tales next week.)

SWIMMING:

Mr. WILLIAM HENRY, Secretary of the Royal Life-Saving Society, couches readers in the important arts of Swimming and Life-Saving.

The Back-Stroke. *(Continued from last week.)*

ONCE the body is in a straight line, bend the knees, and draw the feet towards and under the body; then, with force, sweep them outwards, right and left, and continue the stroke until the legs are closed in line with the body; after which repeat this stroke by drawing the feet towards and under the body. But it must be noted that all these movements must at first be done slowly, and without jerking or hitching the body.

Learning to swim on the back without the use of arms assists greatly to utilise the legs to the best advantage, so that when the arms are brought into use power is greatly increased, and speed naturally follows. It should be noted that the greatest speed is attained when the arms revolve somewhat

like paddle wheels

by the negative portion of the circuit they effect being described in the air, and the positive, which is from above the head, past the shoulders to the hips, in an oblique direction in the water.

The advantages of back-swimming are: (1) Ease in breathing; (2) greater floating power; (3) the recovery of the arm-stroke has the minimum of resistance, because taken through the air; and (4) its great importance in saving life from drowning. Besides these four, it has the further advantage of being a splendid exercise for the development of the chest, and is far in advance of any gymnastic apparatus, for the reason that the actions are natural and free from strain. It is a well-known fact that good back-stroke swimmers always have a well-developed chest as well as an upright body. Such being its advantages, it would seem to be the finest form of physical culture in schools; yet, for some reason or other, it is a method of swimming which seems to be encouraged least of all.

The Overarm Stroke.

By careful compliance with the instructions I have previously given, and provided the learner has had plenty of practice, he should now be able to swim fairly well, and therefore may attempt other methods of progression; but before these are attempted I must strongly advise perfection in the breast and back stroke methods. Not only are these most important when someone has to be rescued, but also their practice provides the very best physical exercise for the development of chest, lungs, and shoulders.

In order to learn the overarm stroke, the body is turned either upon the right or the left side, whilst the feet perform their usual motions as in breast-swimming.

To begin, the under arm is stretched out quickly beyond the head, with the palm of the hand facing downward. This movement takes place at the moment the feet strike wide apart. The upper arm is moved forward slightly beyond the head at the moment the feet are brought together in time with the body. At first it is not advisable to lift the upper arm above the surface of the water, because the learner will first accustom himself to the side position, but once this position becomes familiar no time should be lost in learning the correct stroke by swinging the upper arm forward through the air. As the upper arm is swung forward the lower arm should be pulled downwards towards the hips, perpendicular to the surface of the water.

Keep the Fingers Closed.

It should always be remembered that when these strokes are taken the hands must be kept flat and the fingers closed, because if the stroke is to be effective it is necessary to press to, or press against, the water as large a surface as possible.

When the stroke with the under hand is finished, which should be near the hips, the hand should be turned sideways, the palm facing to the front, so that when the elbow is bent for the recovery of the stroke the hand shall cut the water with its edge, and thus offer the least resistance to progress. As the arm is sent forward beyond the head the hand is gradually turned palm downwards, and in this way the tips of the fingers form the cutwater. The positions of the body and action of the arm will be readily observed by noting the diagram on Column 4 of this page.

The stroke of the upper arm is started when that of the lower arm has finished. Therefore, the upper arm is being carried forward as the lower arm is being pulled through the water towards the hips. The upper arm begins the stroke about six inches beyond the head, and in front of the face, so that when the swimmer looks ahead he can readily see the thumb of the upper hand. The pull is taken with the arm slightly bent, and the hand is brought down with the upper part of the arm above the surface. As the hand passes the chest the arm is gradually straightened until the fingers are in line with the hip, at which point the hand is lifted out of the water, to be carried in the air beyond the head, and the stroke renewed.

(To be continued.)

CRICKET:

Mr. ALBERT TROTT, the famous County Cricketer and Coach, gives some very valuable instruction to Ambitious Cricketers.

Forward Play. *(Continued from last week.)*

THE next time you have an opportunity, go to the Oval and watch the forward drive of Tom Hayward; while another very good model to copy for those who live near Leyton, is Percy Perrin, the Essex batsman.

The better you are at forward play, the more runs you will be able to make; and when you are good, the bat will meet the ball, and not the ball the bat. Not one in ten players gets runs by back-play, and so, when you have mastered forward-play, follow it up with backward-play, but do not trouble too much about the latter until you have learned the former. On a difficult wicket, back-play is useful, and the batsman must depend upon quickness of

eye and wrist

to meet the extraordinary turns or twists of the ball. You may play forward to slow balls, or back to fast ones.

Overhand bowling. *(See Cricket Article.)*

In back-play there is little time whatever to make a stroke, and so you must be able to time the ball correctly. Your eyesight must be very keen, and you will do well to abstain from smoking. Do not impair your sight by this obnoxious habit. Often see young players smoking cigarettes at practice, when they are batting or bowling; and some I have seen smoke right up to the moment of going to the wicket, or on their way to begin their innings. Yet, only last September, Robert Abel, speaking from

thirty years' experience,

said he had found it necessary to abstain entirely from smoking during or before the match. So, young players, **abstain from tobacco till you are twenty-one. I am glad to see that is one of the rules of the League of Health and Strength, in connection with** "The Boys' Herald," and I am sure it will make a big difference in your timing the ball. Young cricketers should leave smoking alone altogether if they hope to do the best they can for their side. Victor Trumper, C. B. Darling, the Hon. A. Lyttleton, Albert Ward, Dr. W. G. Grace, and several of the present Yorkshire Eleven, never smoke, and old cricketers like A. J. Webbe, C. T. Studd, Lord Harris, Lord Hawke, would allow smoking when they captained a side.

Finally, do not be too anxious to make runs until you know something about the bowling opposed to you. "Patience may be a virtue when the fog will not bite," but it is a virtue indeed if you can practise it until you have got your eye in. You will find great batsmen who make runs with unerring regularity are those who test the bowling before they start to hit it. Watch even C. B. Fry or George Hirst. Do not be in a hurry to see how many runs you can score until you know how to deal with the bowling.

Captaincy.

The success of an eleven will depend largely upon the captain, or, in his absence, upon the vice captain. What sort of a man is needed for this position? The answer is, the best man in every way. One who has ability as a player, ideas of leadership, and sound principles. The successful skipper will have no favourites in the eleven, but he will be the friend of all, and the enemy of none. He must seek to imbue others with the same qualities, and must certainly lead—not drive.

The position is not an easy one, and sometimes goes begging even in county cricket. The great captains can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Lord Hawke is perhaps the greatest in England; Noble and Darling in Australia; and P. W. Sherwell in Africa. The wonderful success which has attended Yorkshire is due in no small degree to the firmness and kindness of Lord Hawke, who is just completing a quarter of a century with the famous White Rose eleven. Instinctively his men have followed him, and as each has got to know him loyalty has been an easy matter, and probably to-day the only rivalry among the side is anxiety to try and do all and be all their great leader wishes.

Contrast, on the other hand, the two Australians, the cagle eye of Noble proclaims a silent leader, who has dauntless energy, and is an ideal general when things are going badly for his side, and who knows how to turn what appears to be a disastrous defeat into a creditable struggle.

I do not know if he will lead the Australian team who will next come to these shores, but I am certain of this, that he is the greatest of all Australian captains.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

ROWING:

A FAMOUS OARSMAN, and member of a well-known London Rowing Club tells our readers How to Excel at this Grand Pastime.

(Continued from last week.)

IT is a common fault for an oarsman to bring his blade towards the water in a slanting direction instead of permitting it to be covered up to its full depth when he is at his full reach forward.

It should always be borne in mind that a long swing is of no use unless it can be used effectively, and the blade must be covered the whole of the time that the body is swinging back. If, at any part of the stroke, either the beginning or the finish, the blade is rowed through the air, so much of the swing is wasted.

It is by using his weight in the stroke that the oarsman adds considerably to his power. The beginning must be gripped by throwing the whole weight of the body from the hips upon the oar handle, with the feet pressing strongly upon the stretcher. As soon as this weight is firmly established the slide must move, but not before.

If

the slide is moved

before the weight is properly applied, it will be impossible for the oarsman to make proper use of his weight, and a proportion of his effective power will be lost.

Yet one frequently sees even good oarsmen slide on to their work instead of swinging on to it. This fault they try to rectify by a tremendously hard shove with their legs; but the want of proper use of weight is discovered at the end of a hard race when the oarsman finds he has no reserve of strength to draw upon, and his muscular powers are failing him.

There should, of course, be as little waste of time as possible between the application of the weight of the body from the hips upon the oar handle and the starting of the slide. The movement of the slide comes after, but the two motions should be almost simultaneous if the best results are to be achieved.

A great many men believe that in rowing the longer the blade is kept in the water during the swing back—or shall we say the longer the stroke is?—the better. But this does not follow at all. If the beginning is missed, length of stroke will not make up for it.

The blade is carried through the water as the swing back, the lessening resistance causing it to travel faster the farther it goes towards the finish. Many judges of rowing have laid it down that a constant increase of power should be applied after the "beginning" has been gripped. If the oarsman, however, will pay most of his attention to securing a good, crisp beginning, he will not go far wrong, for it is this crisp beginning that does most to carry the boat past the spot where the oar-blade was first covered.

With the beginning properly gripped, and the slide begun at the right moment, the swing back and the pulling of the blade through the water must necessarily be properly carried out. They follow quite naturally, and the oarsman will then only have to think of the next difficulty that will confront him—viz., the bending of the arm at the finish.

This bending of the arms correctly is a difficulty indeed, and many oarsmen, even of the first class, have one of two faults—they use their arms, in order to carry the blade through, either too much or too little.

Diagram showing the various positions of the arms when executing the overarm stroke. *(See Swimming Article.)*

At the finish of the stroke the arms are bent, the elbows acting as a pivot, in order to allow the oar to come home to the chest. Whilst this bending of the arms is going on the oarsman must still hold on his pressure on the water by the steady and continued swing back of his body and the extension of the slide. He will feel inclined to use pressure of the biceps in order to carry the oar-blade through to the finish. But it is wrong. If he uses these muscles too much, the result will be that his body will be pulled up to meet the oar, his swing will be shortened, and consequently the stroke also.

Besides, the over use of the arms will disturb the lie of the oar, and the finish will be either light or deep—that is to say, the blade will be more or less uncovered, or thrust too deeply in the water, and the balance of the stroke hopelessly disturbed.

Rowing deeply is caused by the extra strain upon the arms affecting the wrists and flattening their arch. The blade is thereby slightly turned in the water, and the least change of position causes it to go down more deeply.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

FINAL RESULTS OF OUR GREAT FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

Your Editor has much pleasure in announcing that the winners of THE BOYS' REALM Cups and Medals offered in connection with Section 2 of our League are as follows:

CUP WINNERS (Junior Section).

NELSON VILLA F.C. Sec., Mr. Walter S. Kent, 133, Fitzwilliam Street, Sheffield.

RUNNERS-UP (Junior Section).

NEWBURY JUNIORS. Sec., Mr. A. N. Waldie, 23, Craven Street, Newbury.

CUP WINNERS (Senior Section).

CHORISTER JUNIORS. Sec., Bandsman E. Mortimer, 1st North Staffordshire Regiment, Tournay Barracks, Aldershot.

RUNNERS-UP (Senior Section).

LINCOLN FIELDS WESLEYANS. Sec., Mr. E. G. Queening, 79, Sutherland Terrace, Harehill Lane, Leeds.

As announced in previous issues of THE BOYS' REALM, each of the members of the winning teams and the runners-up will receive Solid Silver Medals in token of their prowess on the field of play. When it is taken into account that the winning teams have during the season successfully competed against over sixty clubs, their records are all the more creditable.

The following are the final League Tables, and each of the clubs mentioned after the Cup Winners and Runners-up will receive a prize of a Boys' REALM Football. We heartily congratulate all who have taken part in this contest on what they have done, and trust that next season's League Competition will be even more successful than has the past. On another page is published a group photograph of Chorister Juniors F.C., the Champions of the Senior Division.

LEAGUE TABLE UP TO AND INCLUDING SATURDAY, APRIL 27th.

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Chorister Juniors	22	22	0	0	117	8	44
Lincoln Fields Wes.	22	21	0	1	111	12	43
South Leeds United	22	21	0	1	76	6	43
Warrington St. John's	22	21	0	1	86	14	43
Wellfield Juniors	22	20	0	2	89	14	42
Springfield	22	20	0	2	122	24	42
Tonfield Lea Athletic	22	21	1	0	102	12	42
Eldon Park	22	19	0	3	54	10	41
Harringay Albion	21	20	1	0	106	19	40
Salem Athletic	22	19	1	2	82	26	40
Doncaster St. James'	22	20	2	0	77	20	40

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Nelson Villa	22	22	0	0	119	9	44
Newbury Juniors	22	22	0	0	125	22	44
Sydney A.F.C.	22	21	0	1	100	21	43
Malvern United	22	20	0	2	116	17	42
Kettering Argyle	22	20	1	1	85	16	41
St. Mary's United	22	20	1	1	100	24	41
Newhall St. Edward's	22	19	0	3	106	23	41
Tonfield Lea United	22	19	0	3	91	19	41
Deaf Hill Juniors	21	19	0	2	73	9	40

THE BOYS' REALM CRICKET LEAGUE.

FIRST CRICKET-BAT AWARD.

The first of our Prize Cricket-Bats has been awarded to the Ragged School C.C., a club affiliated to the Blackburn and District Sunday School League.

The following is the table for this league up to and including Saturday, April 27th.

A DIVISION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	Pts.
Ragged School	3	2	0	1	5
St. James' Road	3	2	0	1	5
Lower Darwen St. James'	3	1	0	2	4
James Street	3	1	2	0	2
Ribbon Church Institute	1	0	0	1	1
Christ Church	2	0	1	1	1
Lower Darwen Methodist	2	0	1	1	1
St. Matthew's	3	0	2	1	1

B DIVISION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	Pts.
Little Harwood Wesleyan	3	2	0	1	5
St. Paul's	3	2	0	1	5
Anvil Street	3	1	1	1	3
Ribbon	3	1	1	1	3
St. Michael's	3	1	1	1	3
Y.M.C.A.	2	1	1	0	2
Manley Street	2	0	1	1	1
Emanuel's	3	0	2	1	1
St. Ardan's	3	0	2	1	1

RESERVE DIVISION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	Pts.
St. James' Road	3	1	0	2	4
Ribbon Church Institute	2	1	0	1	3
Salesbury St. Peter's	2	1	0	1	3
St. Paul's	3	1	1	1	3
St. Matthew's	2	1	1	0	2
Lower Darwen Methodist	2	1	1	0	2
Christ Church	3	0	1	2	2
Lower Darwen St. James'	3	0	1	2	2
James Street	2	0	1	1	1

SECTION 1.

As announced in previous issues of THE BOYS' REALM, Your Editor hereby offers to present a large number of Solid Silver Challenge Cups as permanent trophies to bona-fide Cricket Leagues in the British Isles. Not only Silver Cups, but Solid Silver Medals will be presented to each of the members of the winning teams, and to each of the members of the running-up teams of the Leagues to which the Silver Cups are awarded. Application should be made now.

SECTION 2.

***Two Solid Silver Cups** for Senior and Junior Clubs.*

SOLID SILVER MEDALS for Each Member of the Winning Club and Runners-up.

A HANDSOME CRICKET-BAT will be presented to Every Club Entering Some Time During the Season.

List of Clubs which Have Already Joined Section 2 of Our Cricket League.

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Rebecca C.C. (Bradford).
Primitive Juniors (Middleton).
Wingate Juniors (Wingate).
Wilton C.C. (Southampton).
Oakley C.C. (Leytonstone).
Kingsgate Athletic (St. John's Wood).
Garfield C.C. (Shepherd's Bush).
Kentish Town Old Boys (West Ealing).
Sydenham United (St. Pancras).
St. Jude's (Sheffield).
Boxworth United C.C. (Barnsbury).
Otley Celtic (Otley).
Malmesbury C.C. (Southampton).

SENIOR DIVISION.

Camden C.C. (Camden Town).
St. Michael's C.C. (Edgware Road).
Victoria C.C. (Camberwell).
St. Jude's C.C. (Southwark).
Holmesdale C.C. (South Norwood).
White Star C.C. (Bradford).

For Full List of Rules and Conditions See Previous Issues of THE BOYS' REALM.

OFF DUTY YARNS

OR, THE DIVERSIONS OF DANNIE AND GINGER.

An Enthralling Series of Complete Humorous Military Stories by W. MURRAY GRAYDON.

HOW GINGER WON THE VICTORIA CROSS.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Assassin — The Third Victim—Ginger Shows up the Trick.

"QUEEREST thing I ever heard of," declared Dannie, the young private, in a whisper. "It makes my flesh creep when I think of it."

"And it makes nay 'air sort of lift," said Ginger, his chum. "If I 'ad any faith in such things, I should believe it was a ghost wot killed them poor chaps."

"But how is it they were killed?" asked Toddy Binks. "One of them might have been sleeping at his post, but it ain't likely that both were. They were in the open, and the night wasn't so dark but what they could have seen anybody sneaking through the grass. And what's more, why should a murderous nigger take the risk of crawling up so close, when he could have let fly from a safe distance with a spear or a musket?"

"It must have been done like that, so it would seem more queer," suggested Dannie. "I bet it's a dodge of these hillmen to frighten us. They're hoping we'll take warning by it, and turn back."

"It beats me," said Ginger, as he stroked the dog Ruff, who was snuggled beside him. "I can't make it out. But I know one thing. The man wot does sentry-duty in this part of the country ought to get the Victoria Cross. I wish I 'ad it," he added, in a wistful tone. "I'd rather have that little bit of iron than a free order on the regimental canteen."

"I think I see you getting it," laughed Dannie. "You're just as likely to be made commander-in-chief."

It was nearly midnight, and the three soldiers were lying on the ground in a wild and woody place, with scores of others around them. They should have been asleep long ago, but a feeling of uneasiness had kept them awake, talking about the strange things that had recently happened. The turbulent tribe of Nagas having broken out and raided several of the tea-plantations of Assama, and then scuttled back to their fortified village, two companies of the Sloggers had been sent up-country to punish them. They had been joined by a company of the Cachar Rifles, a native levy of Imperial Service troops furnished by the Rajah of Cachar, and the punitive column had then penetrated the rugged Assamese hills to search for the Naga stronghold. It was known to be somewhere in a certain large district, but Colonel Podgers had been unable to get any positive information.

The force had now been marching through the hills for five days, and it was clear that the enemy were watching their movements. The trouble had begun at the close of the second day, when a party of Nagas had attacked the rear-guard, killed a couple of men, and carried off the kit-boxes of several officers. On the third night, a native sentry had been found dead at his post, killed by a crushing blow on the skull, by the young subaltern who had gone the round of the pickets at midnight. The cruel deed must have been done only a minute or so before discovery, from the statement of the medical officer.

At the same hour on the fourth and previous night, another native sentry had met his death in a similar way, and had been found still warm and quivering. Both of the unfortunate men had been posted in open positions, and it was impossible to understand how they could have been killed without firing a shot or raising an alarm.

In each case the murderer must have been face to face with his victim, and standing erect, when he dealt the fatal blow. But why had he been permitted to come so near? The subaltern who found the bodies had seen no sign of any. Silently and mysteriously the assassin had come and gone. It was the deepest kind of a mystery, and it had worried everybody, from Colonel Podgers down.

"I'll tell you what I think," said Dannie, after a pause. "The man that did it was one of the native Tommies, and that's how he got up close to the poor chaps. He must have had a grudge against them."

"Find again, and don't talk nonsense," muttered Ginger. "Nothing is goin' to happen to-night, anyway. I 'eard the colonel instructin' the sentries, and they're to fire at anything wot they see, if it's only a bird 'oppin' about in the—"

He was suddenly interrupted by a loud shout, and the next instant, as Ruff barked and the three Sloggers sprang to their feet, the camp was in a state of wild alarm. There was a rush to the outskirts, in the direction of the shouts, and there, lying on the grass with his skull crushed in, and a young officer standing over him, was another native sentry. Again the assassin had come and gone, claiming a third victim, and just as mysteriously as before. The ground was open in front, the nearest thicket being twenty yards off. The sentries to right and left had heard nothing until the alarm was raised, nor, from where they were posted, could they have easily seen anyone approach the dead man, as the night was fairly dark.

"By heavens, another one!" cried Colonel Podgers, as he hurried to the spot. "Is there no end to this devilry? Struck down in the same way, too! He must have let the murderer come straight up to him, Scott!"

"Same way and same time, sir," replied the subaltern, who had been going the midnight round. "He hasn't been dead more than a minute."

"Hardly that," declared Dr. Slammers, who had also arrived on the scene. "By Jove, I don't understand it!"

"Is it witchcraft, or what?" exclaimed the colonel. "But I'll get to the bottom of the mystery! I'll put a stop to it! I'll see if British soldiers can be deceived by this mysterious assassin! If one of them is killed I'll be ready to believe in all the black arts of India!"

"Now you've 'it it on the nail, sir," put in Ginger. "This is the work of some 'Indoo magician wot can make 'imself invisible."

"Indeed!" snapped Colonel Podgers. "Then I'll set you to catch the fellow, Larkins! I hope you'll enjoy yourself!"

The entire guard were changed then and there, men from the Sloggers being substituted, and to his disgust—and fear as well—Ginger found himself posted on the very spot where the native had just been murdered. The camp presently settled down to quiet, and there was no further alarm, though the officer of the night went round the pickets at frequent intervals. The march was resumed early the next morning, after the third victim of the assassin was buried, and when the column halted that evening among the hills, it was a few miles within the district in which the Naga stronghold was believed to be hidden. It was a region of dense jungle, and a space had to be cleared for the camp.

The guards were set at once, and again, since he was still in the colonel's good graces, it fell to Ginger's lot to do picket-duty. He did not like it, for he had a strong feeling that the assassin would make his appearance in the course of the night. He was determined not to be caught napping, however, and the hope of penetrating the mystery cheered him up a little.

"It wouldn't be so lonesome if I 'ad Ruff 'ere," he told himself, "but I dare say 'e's safer with Dannie."

Darkness soon fell, and the sentries melted into the gloom, no longer visible to one another. Gradually the camp became quiet, and the fires were extinguished, but the enemy should let fly with a volley at long range, if any of them were in the neighbourhood. Nothing broke the silence except the cry of a panther far off in the hills.

The evening wore on, and at intervals the officer of the guard went his round. For hour after hour, with his rifle on his shoulder, Ginger paced his narrow beat, peering alertly into the gloom, and straining his ears to catch the slightest sound. The camp was close to one side of him, and on the other he could see across the open space the black wall of the jungle. He had begun to feel confident that nothing could happen to him, for how could any creeping foe draw near without his knowledge? He was certain that the victims of the assassin must have been careless, else they would not have been killed. But as midnight approached—that fatal hour—his spirits sank a little.

"It's time for the subaltern to come round again," he thought. "I shall feel more chipper after 'e's been and gone—"

He was coming now. There he was, the young officer of the guard. A slim, erect figure in khaki, he loomed out of the darkness, parallel with the edge of the camp. On he came, slowly and deliberately, his hands swinging at his sides, his pale features dimly visible in the starlight. Ginger gave a sigh of relief, and then, he knew not why, he grew vaguely troubled. A weird, shivery sensation chilled him to the bone, and with that, as he suddenly remembered the stolen kit, a terrible suspicion flashed upon him. He levelled his rifle at the subaltern, who was now within two or three yards of him.

"Halt!" he bade, in a husky voice. "I beg your pardon, sir, but don't you come any nearer. I ain't quite sure that you're the man wot you ought to be. Do—you—mind givin' me the password, sir?"

He got no reply, and his heart began to thump loudly. The subaltern had stopped, and he appeared to be crouching as if for a spring. Something glittered in his hand, and then, as he leapt forward like a tiger, a jet of flame spat at him, and the crack of a rifle echoed among the hills. Ginger had fired, and he had brought down his man.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Ram Das—The Ambuscade — Ginger Has an Idea.

THE camp had been instantly aroused by the shot. Ruff's excited barking mingled with a clamour of frightened voices.

Lights flashed here and there, and Colonel Podgers was heard ordering the men to stand under arms and prepare for an attack. Meanwhile, a little group had rushed to the spot where Ginger was shouting, and with them was Captain Lansing, the officer of the guard.

"I've got 'im, sir—I've begged the murderer!" exclaimed Ginger. "I was 'alf afraid it was you at first, sir, but I took the risk and let 'im 'ave it!"

"You thought it was me?" gasped the captain. "What do you mean?"

Dr. Slammers and the colonel had now come on the scene, the latter carrying a lantern, and all gathered around the motionless form that lay on the grass.

"How's this?" cried Colonel Podgers. "One of my officers shot! No, by heavens, the man is a native—a Naga in a khaki uniform!"

"So he is!" declared Dr. Slammers. "A whitish powder has been rubbed into his face!"

"And here is his weapon," said Captain Lansing, as he picked up a short club tipped with steel. "This is what killed the three sentries."

"Glory be! I knew he was a wrong 'un!" shouted Ginger, who was shaking Dannie's hand and fondling Ruff. "It struck me just in time, when I remembered the officers' kit wot 'ad been stolen."

He told his story in a few words, and it made everything perfectly clear. The mystery was out at last. Night after night, disguised in one of the stolen uniforms, the cunning assassin had crept through the cordon of sentinels, and approached his victim as if coming from the camp. Thus he had slain the three unsuspecting soldiers, and Ginger had very nearly shared their fate.

"You have done well, Larkins," said the colonel—"very well indeed! I shall not forget this, my brave fellow!"

"Hallo! The man is not dead!" exclaimed the doctor, as he knelt by the supposed corpse. "He is pulling round. The bullet has only grazed his skull."

"I thought I 'ad killed 'im, sir," put in Ginger. "My 'and must 'ave shook when I fired."

Just then a voice hailed the party, and a dusky form was observed coming from the direction of the jungle.

Half a dozen rifles were promptly pointed at the man, who advanced, however, holding up his arms, until he was in the radius of the lantern light. He was a lean, ragged-looking native, with emaciated features and matted hair.

"Another of the rascals!" muttered Dr. Slammers.

"He is not a Naga," said Captain Lansing.

"Who are you?" demanded the colonel. "What do you want here?"

"I am a friend, sahib," replied the man, as he came forward. "I am Ram Das, of the village of Gogera, and many days ago, as I was hunting in the hills, I was captured by the Nagas and taken to their stronghold. When darkness fell to-night I escaped from them, having heard them say that a force of British soldiers were coming, and I will gladly lead you to their fortress, if you do not know where it is."

This was welcome news, and to prove that he was not lying the native showed where his fetters had cut into his wrists and ankles. He was closely questioned, and from his answers it appeared that the stronghold lay within six miles, and that it could be easily taken by assault. Of the prisoner he knew nothing, except that he had seen him among the Nagas.

"We are in luck!" exclaimed Colonel Podgers. "In the morning we will advance against the enemy, leaving Cachar troops in charge of the camp, and when we return we will deal with this assassin."

"Are you sure it is all right, sir?" Captain Lansing asked, in a low voice. "You don't suppose that the native can be a spy, and that he is playing some deep game?"

"I do not," answered the colonel. "I believe the fellow's story. It is evident that he has been a captive of the Nagas, and that he has suffered ill-treatment."

"It looks that way, sir," admitted Captain Lansing; and the others were of the same mind.

The prisoner had now recovered consciousness—the bullet had merely grazed him—but he could not be induced to speak. He glared at the soldiers, and spat viciously at Ram Das, whom he recognised.

He was bound hand and foot, and put under guard, and a few minutes later, the sentries having been changed, all was quiet again.

The night passed without further alarm, and the events of the next few hours, thrilling though they were, will be but briefly described. In the morning Colonel Podgers had a touch of fever, and by the doctor's orders he remained at the camp with the Cachar Rifles, leaving the day's work to the two companies of Sloggers.

Commanded by Captain Lansing, and led by the native guide, the attacking force set off before sunrise, without a suspicion of treachery. For three miles they marched through the wooded hills, and then, as a peculiar whistle was heard, Ram Das suddenly took to his heels and vanished.

The next instant the jungle rang with terrible yells, and from the thickets a shower of spears and bullets was poured into the soldiers, who answered with a volley.

To stand and fight under such circumstances would have been madness, so they at once retreated in good order, leaving four men dead. Back they went for a couple of miles, ignorant of the true motive of the treacherous ambuscade, and then they were alarmed by hearing the faint rattle of firearms ahead of them.

And twenty minutes later, when they had dashed on to the camp, a harrowing scene met their gaze. A dozen of the Cachar troops lay dead, half as many had been wounded, and the rest were in a state of panic.

Lieutenant Scott, who had remained with the colonel, had been shot in the arm. In a few words he told what had happened. A horde of the enemy had suddenly rushed upon the camp, rescued the prisoner, and carried Colonel Podgers off alive; and the prisoner, it had transpired, was no other than Ferukh Pandy, the chief of the Nagas.

"I see it all!" cried Captain Lansing. "We were decoyed away so that the prisoner might be rescued. The Nagas were afraid that their chief might be caught last night, and that is why Ram Das was at hand, ready to play his cunning part. But the colonel must be saved. By heavens, they may kill him!"

"They probably mean to hold him as a hostage, in order to make terms with us," said Dr. Slammers. "I fear we can't do anything," he added gloomily. "The Nagas won't leave any trail to guide us to their fortress."

"Don't you worry about that, sir," Ginger put in eagerly. "Ruff will show us the way. Wot's the matter with givin' 'im a chance?"

Over and down Ginger went, without an instant's hesitation, tumbling headlong into a horde of screeching Nagas, who were at first too astonished to molest him.

This suggestion met with warm approval, for the dog's powers were well-known in the regiment. Ruff quickly found the scent, with the aid of a sock that had been worn by Colonel Podgers, and without delay the two companies of Sloggers set off again, leaving Lieutenant Scott in charge of the camp.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

Following the Scent—The Naga Fortress—The Colonel's Peril.

RAM DAS had led the force westward at dawn, and the direction now taken by the dog was to the north. There was every reason to believe that the two bands of Nagas would join each other, and a strong hope was felt that they might be overtaken and attacked by surprise before they could reach their fortress.

That hope dwindled, however, as the day wore on, for Ruff's trail was by no means easy. He had no trouble with the trail as long as it kept to the damp earth; but at times, on stretches of stony soil, he had great difficulty in finding the scent.

Hour after hour passed, and now rapidly, now slowly, the rescue-party pressed on amid the lonely hills, through dense jungles that shut out the sunlight. By the middle of the afternoon they were still on the march, fatigued and in low spirits.

"The stronghold may be miles ahead of us yet, Slammers," said Captain Lansing. "I'm afraid we sha'n't reach it before night."

"There's no telling," replied the doctor. "Let us get as far as we can."

"Poor old colonel!" murmured Ginger.

"I've heard you call him worse names," said Dannie. "Don't your conscience trouble you now?"

"I never called 'im wot you did!" snorted Ginger, with a scowl. "'E ain't a bad sort, the colonel ain't, and I'll show you wot I'll do for 'im if I get a chance."

Ruff led the way, held in leash by Ginger, and for another half-hour the column went noiselessly on.

Then they began to mount a steep hill, and as they reached the top of it the dog uttered a low growl.

"That means danger, sir!" whispered Ginger, as he stopped.

"Forward!" urged Captain Lansing. "Forward, men!"

The word passed from lip to lip. For half a dozen yards the advance continued, swiftly and stealthily, and as the head of the column emerged from the jungle on the flat and open summit of the hill, they saw the Naga stronghold close in front of them.

There it was, grim and defiant—a palisade of sharpened stakes, in which was set a massive gate, stretching to right and left.

For a few seconds, while the soldiers pushed on from the rear, the silence remained unbroken. Then Ruff barked, and the next instant, as fiendish yells rent the air, spears came whizzing over the wall, and a volley of musketry was fired from loopholes on both sides of the gateway.

It was a startling surprise. Down went Captain Lansing, shot through the thigh, and two men behind him fell dead.

Dr. Slammers reeled back, hit in the arm, and for a moment it seemed that the attack must fail.

The whole column were wavering, seized with the sudden panic that the bravest soldiers are not proof against, and they would certainly have fled but for Ginger, who at once flung himself into the breach. Dropping his rifle, he bent over the fallen officer and grabbed his sword.

"Think of your colonel!" he shouted, in a voice that rang above the clamour. "Follow me, comrades! Come on, doctor! Sail in, Dannie! Follow me, and we'll give the beggars beans!"

Courage was revived by the example of this reckless scapegrace, the black sheep of the regiment, and lusty cheers answered his appeal. Not waiting to see if he was supported or not, Ginger dashed forward, with bullets hissing around him, to the base of the stockade. Like a cat he leapt at the sharpened stakes, got a grip of them, and scrambled to the top.

Over and down he went, without an instant's hesitation, tumbling headlong into a horde of screeching Nagas, who were at first too astonished to molest him.

In a trice he was on his feet, the sword in one hand and his revolver in the other, and as he laid about him, cutting down some of the foe and shooting others, Dannie threw himself over the palisade, followed by Dr. Slammers and a dozen men.

"Give it to them hot!" cried Ginger. "Swipe the beggars! Save the colonel!"

The splutter of firearms mingled with the clash of clubbed rifles on spears. There was a sharp and desperate fight, and things were going badly for the Sloggers, two of whom had been killed, when Dannie succeeded in unbarring the big gate and pulling it open.

With that, a crowd of cheering men came pouring in, and now, seeing that the odds were against them, the foe lost heart, some taking to their heels, while others offered a feeble resistance to the invaders.

"Hurrah, they're running!" shouted Dannie.

"Press on, men!" cried Dr. Slammers. "The victory is ours!"

Meanwhile, Ginger had disappeared, and his comrades feared that he had been slain.

It was not so, however.

Bent on finding and rescuing his colonel, whom he believed to be in great peril, the heroic Slogger had broken through the mass of savages in the thick of the fight. He was not pursued, for the powder-smoke was curling round him and under cover of that friendly cloud he vanished among the huts that were scattered about the fortified enclosure.

He was alone, and running a fearful risk, but he did not wait for help to come up.

"I've got to save the colonel," he told himself.

A short distance in front of him were a group of dusky figures, and he knew what it meant when he saw them dart into a hut that was much larger than the rest.

He sped on with great strides as fast as he could, and as he gained the open doorway and sprang boldly in, he came face to face with six Nagas, among whom were Ram Das and Ferukh Pandy. They had hold of Colonel Podgers, whose arms were bound, and they were on the point of dragging him out, evidently in the hope of carrying him off to the jungle.

"Slay the sahib!" shouted Ferukh Pandy. "Death to him!"

"Kill the officer sahib first!" yelled Ram Das. "Kill him, or he may be rescued!"

Ram Das never spoke again, for a pistol ball entered his brain, and he dropped as he was in the act of driving a knife into the breast of the captive.

Crack! and down went another ruffian.

At that, the others let Colonel Podgers fall to the floor, and then they backed towards the rear end of the hut, so savagely did Ginger fly at them.

"Courage, sir!" he cried, as he planted himself before the colonel. "The beggars sha'n't do you any 'arm! Our boys will soon be 'ere!"

The odds were four to one, but the Slogger's blood was up, and he went into the scrimmage with all his heart. His foes rushed upon him, and the next instant there were only two left, for one had perished by the cold steel, and another had dropped as the revolver barked at him.

Dodging a vicious blow from Ferukh Pandy's tulwar, Ginger sprang at him, and struck with all his might.

Down went the Naga chief with a crash as the sword split his skull in twain, and now, as the pistol cracked again, the surviving savage tumbled across the corpse of Ferukh Pandy.

"That's the last of the beggars, sir," the brave Slogger said breathlessly. "'Ot work, wasn't it?"

What the colonel said was drowned by the clamour.

The ropes that bound him were quickly severed, and by the time he had been helped to his feet, Dr. Slammers hurried into the hut, followed by Dannie and several others.

"Glad to find you safe, sir!" exclaimed the doctor. "The village is in our hands, and the Nagas are in flight. The credit belongs to Larkins, sir. Captain Lansing was wounded at the first volley, and the men would have to fall back, when Larkins snatched the captain's sword, and led the way over the stockade."

"Larkins, give me your hand," said Colonel Podgers in a voice that shook with emotion. "I am proud to grasp it. You are a hero, Larkins, and I shall recommend you for the Victoria Cross."

"Wot, me, sir?" gasped Ginger. "Me get the Cross?"

Several months had passed, and the raid on the Naga stronghold was only a memory.

As Colonel Podgers was standing at the gate of his bungalow after dark one night, smoking a cigar, he saw a little group of men go by at a distance, and heard a maudlin voice trying to sing a barrack-room ballad.

"Who is that, Marker?" he inquired of a young subaltern who happened to come along just then.

"It is Private Larkins, sir," was the reply. "They are taking him off to the guard-house. The Victoria Cross has been too much for him."

"How is that?"

"Well, sir, it seems that he has been celebrating the event this evening. He was found dancing in the Surra Bazaar, with a crowd of natives around him."

The colonel shook his head and laughed.

"A brave fellow, but incorrigible," he muttered. "Hopelessly incorrigible. He will be the same old Larkins to the end."

THE END.

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NORTH MANCHESTER AND DISTRICT AMATEUR CRICKET LEAGUE.—The above league have now only a few vacancies in each of their divisions. Club secretaries please apply at once to Mr. Turner, 33, Pendine Street, St. James's Road, Hightown, Manchester.

THE SHEFFIELD NELSON VILLA F.C. require matches for next football season for first, second, and third teams. Only respectable clubs need apply.—Letter only, to Mr. Walter S. Kent, Hon. Secretary, 153, Pitzwilliam Street, Sheffield.

BROUGHTON JUNIORS F.C. (average age, 17; weak), have all dates open for next season.—Apply, C. Clarke, 1, Bullow Road, Fulham, S.W.

A FOOTBALL CLUB requires matches for next season, home or away. Would also like to know of a junior league in the district of West Ham.—Apply, J. Crosby, 65, Hack Road, Tidal Basin, E.

SUTTON CRUSADERS want matches, home and away, for the coming season (Wednesday team; average age, 16).—Apply, 10, Athol Terrace, Collingwood Road, Sutton.

LEOPOLD UNITED F.C. (average age, 15) want fixtures within five miles radius of Leeds (clubs to have dressing tent and ground). Also a few good players.—Apply, S. Clarkson, 26, Leopold Street, Leeds.

ARLINGTON ARGYLE F.C. (average age, 15; weak) want matches, home and away, for season 1907-8. —Apply to Arthur Foy, Hon. Secretary, 12, St. James's Street, Clerkenwell.

ALBION UNITED F.C. (average age, 15; weak) have all dates open for 1907-8. Would be glad to give players from 15-16 trials. Please communicate with J. Chapman, 65, Albert Street, Islington, N.

GOALKEEPER, age 17, wishes to join a good, respectable football club in West London for season 1907-8. Willing to pay sub. Three seasons with one club.—Write to W. Wright, 12, Exmouth Street, Hampstead Road, N.W.

THREE BOYS, age 12, 13, 14, would like to join a respectable football club in Hull, season 1907-8. Willing to pay sub. Any position.—Apply, 7.30 p.m. to 8 p.m., or by post to B. Richardson, 7, Claremont Avenue, Holmes Street, Hull.

CLAPHAM ROVERS A.F.C. want a few players to complete their football club for 1907-8. Only gentlemanly players need apply. The ground is on Tooting Common.—Apply to R. Larbey, Hon. Secretary, 77, Midmoor Road, Balham, London, S.W.

SELBOURNE UNITED F.C. require a few more players for next season (age about 16). Any respectable boy (age about 14) who would like to join the reserve team next season should enclose stamped addressed envelope to Mr. C. J. Pattinson, 2, Lullington Road, Anerley, London, S.E. Matches required for both teams for next season.

WANTED, a few lads to join a football club for next season (age, 15-17).—Apply, W. Williams, 13, Beale Place, Wright's Road, Roman Road, Bow, E.

PARK VILLA F.C. want a few players (age, 14-15) who reside in the district.—Apply by letter to C. Macdonald, 71, Julian Avenue, South Shields.

BOYS (age 14-16) wishing to join a football club in a league (small sub. required) should immediately apply to A. Bass, 9a, Tamworth Street, Fulham, S.W.

ST. MATTHIAS F.C. (average age, 17) anticipate going into a league in Liverpool or district.—Please send full particulars to William A. Davies, 76, Regent Road, Liverpool.

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A Magnificent Tale of Peril and Adventure. By the Author of "Handsome Harry," "Tom Tartar's Schooldays," &c., &c.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Gallant Hal has set out in his boat the Silver Star to search for his sweetheart and her parents, whom he believes are in the hands of pirates. His theory is correct, and he eventually finds his fiancee and her father in a ruined convent near the town of Valdivia; but the mother is dead. Unfortunately, the girl has been informed by Hal's enemies that he has been making love to Inez de Rialdo, the daughter of the late governor of Valdivia, and when Hal finds her she will have nothing to do with him. Hal is now hot on the track of the pirates.

A Fresh Danger Threatens the Silver Star.

SURELY in the history of man no struggle for life ever took place in a stranger place or under stranger circumstances. Like no other object was the cell in which Caroli de Livana, from whom he was separated by the rush of his own men.

The clash of steel, with the occasional report of a revolver, filled the cave.

On the side of the British there were no cries. With set lips the men of the Silver Star fought on. It was a battle for life on both sides. Retreat was impossible. The vanquished would be at the complete mercy of the victors.

Deadly wounds were given and received. The pirates yelled as they fell, one by one, writhing on the ground, save when the wound they received ended them for good and for all.

Four of Hal's followers were down, and one was dead. Hal himself, with two minor wounds—one on the arm and the other on the thigh—pressed forward to get at the pirate chief.

Caroli de Livana did not seem anxious for the meeting, but fought so as to have a barrier of struggling men between them. At last Hal's opportunity came.

The man of the Silver Star in a body suddenly swept forward, carrying all before them, and the pirate chief was dashed against the side of the cavern. As he recovered himself he found that he was face to face with Hal.

"Now, villain, defend yourself!" cried our hero. "The hour of final defeat for you or me has come!"

"Curse on the day that brought you here!" hissed De Livana.

Like some infuriated wild beast he sprang at Hal, cutting and thrusting with a reckleseness that laid him open to a dozen mortal wounds in as many seconds.

But Hal did not intend to kill him. Coolly he parried the blows and thrusts, stepping closely back as if too closely pressed. The pirate thought he was proving the better man, and pushed on. Cut and thrust—cut and thrust. How steel clashed against steel, twisting, winding, rising and falling with dazzling effect. Hal backed until he was under the opening in the roof. Down streamed the sunlight upon the foes. Away to the left was the struggling mass of seamen and pirates, too busy to heed what their leaders were doing.

Caroli de Livana ejaculated, hissed, and cursed as he fought, but Hal's lips never moved. After the first words he uttered when they met, he did not speak until he had the pirate in the full glare of the shaft of sunlight.

Then he suddenly assumed the offensive. An upward parry raised De Livana's weapon, and then in the same moment, as it were, the point of Hal's keen sword pierced the muscles of his arm.

"The old trick!" yelled the pirate, as he dropped his sword.

His left hand went towards his belt, but ere he could draw a weapon hidden there, Hal dealt him a fair knock-down British blow.

It caught him between the eyes, and he fell heavily to the ground. For a few moments his senses were scattered, and when he recovered himself sufficiently to know what was going on, he found himself secured as a prisoner.

Around him lay his men, dead or dying, save those bound as he was, and prisoners. Then he felt that all was over—that his power as a pirate was come to an end, and his days—perhaps the very hours—numbered.

Hal stood near him with the light of triumph in his eyes, but not demonstrative over his victory. He was giving directions to his men for the disposal of his wounded.

Two of the Silver Star men needed no attention. All their troubles and cares in this world, if they had any, had ended. It was a loss, but taking into account the utter annihilation of the pirate band, as little as could be hoped for.

One of the men was climbing the rope to fetch Manly from the convent to bear a hand with the wounded, and another was going to prepare those on board the Silver Star for their reception.

At least half of the attacking party had received a wound, great or small, and for the present the only surgical attention they could hope for was their own, or such as their messmates could give. This was being done in a rough and ready fashion—the patient exhibiting his wounds and displaying in all cases his jocular bearing. They made a joke of their own sufferings.

For the wounded pirates little could be done. Like wild cats they fought to the last, and only yielded when completely disabled. No surgical aid available there would be of service to them.

Caroli de Livana found that his wound had been looked up, and his arm secured to his side. He strove to tear the bandages off with his teeth, but failed to reach them.

"Why did you not kill me?" he asked Hal.

"You shall die, as you deserve to do, ignominiously."

The eyes of the pirate flashed like flint struck by steel, and a bitter curse escaped him.

"I would have died, and cared little in my last moments," he cried, "had I not fallen by a plebeian hand!"

Hal quietly smiled.

"The pride of race is the only true pride you Spaniards have," Hal said. "But do not fear. If there is anything in blood, which I do not for a moment assert, you have fallen worthily."

"I am descended from the true Castillian line," said the pirate.

"Descended!" said Hal. "Yes, it is a good word—you have descended. But I will not insult a helpless, conquered foe, nor bandy words with you. As far as safe keeping will permit you shall be well cared for, until the time when I can hand you over to the home authorities."

"They have no power to try me," said De Livana.

"You mistake," said Hal. "You plundered British ships, murdered British seamen, and for these crimes you will be tried, and, I think, condemned."

Hal turned away, and beckoned to two men, whom he bade watch over the pirate.

"He shall not be left night or day," Hal thought—"either he or Broody."

The greater part of the day was now gone, and expedition was necessary to get the prisoners and wounded out of the cave.

The nearer way, of course, was out by the roof, but that entailed a lot of heavy work; so the longer route was decided on.

Manly removed the barricade in the convent, and by that way captors and captured left the scene of their recent encounter. By the time this was done the day was at an end, night coming on, so that Hal decided to stop until the morning ere he went on board.

Marsalda was sent for, and came ashore for an hour. He gave some needed attention to the wounded and returned on board. Hal remained on shore to see to the security of his chief prisoner—Caroli de Livana.

He remembered his daring escape when first captured, and would not give him another loophole. All the precautions were taken to keep the convent secure from attack, though it was scarcely within the bounds of possibility that any man or men living would dream of coming to the aid of the pirates.

Notwithstanding the day having been one of great fatigue, Hal was not going to rest. He would be chief sentry over Caroli de Livana throughout the night. Manly and three others took on themselves the care of the wounded.

Darkness came; hours passed until midnight was near at hand. Then a knocking was heard at the convent door. Hal opened it, and saw Mittens, with a pale face and an emphatically agitated air.

"Let me in," he said. "I have very bad news for you. The Spitfire, with the mutineers on board, has come back, and anchored within a hundred yards of the Silver Star. Mr. Warringham has shifted his anchorage a quarter of a mile higher up. He sends me to tell you that it is imperative that all here should be on board before the morning comes."

"It is impossible," said Hal; "the wounded will require great care."

"I give the message," said Mittens, "and know no more. It is very hard for me just now, especially to be constantly getting deeper and deeper into the mire of danger, when all I want is to get back to the old country, and live in peace and plenty. Ta-ta-la! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a world it is!"

"Come, Mittens," said Gallant Hal; "the news you bring is ill indeed. But it may be that the men of the Spitfire are not hostile."

"They are making a row on board, sir," replied Mittens, "and it sounds just as if they were all raving drunk. They sent aboard, ordering the Silver Star to clear out, or they would sink her."

Hal was much disturbed at these tidings. They upset his plans, but he saw the necessity of getting on board without delay. The boat by which Mittens came was awaiting him, and the longboat was to follow.

The decks of the Silver Star had been cleared for action, in case she should be forced to fight before Hal returned.

"If I could only recapture the Spitfire," thought Hal, "and take her home; then indeed would my traducers be silenced!"

It was a bold thought, and he knew the peril that would attend the attempt. As regards the weight of guns and number of men, he was at a great disadvantage. If the Spitfire mutineers handled their craft at all well, the little Silver Star would have but a poor chance of victory.

But would they do so?

Hal had right on his side. The mutineers, in any fight, were in the wrong, and the wrong side is always subject to a feeling of weakness. It was worth the attempt.

Hal called to Manly, and bade him make preparations to carry the wounded down to the sea; and while he was giving these instructions the boom of a big gun was heard.

"That's the bow gun of the Spitfire," said Manly, "and they are firing shells. I haven't helped to work in practice off and on for years without knowing it when it speaks."

"I must leave you in charge here," said Hal hurriedly. "Mittens had better remain also. Do not open the doors to anyone until I return. My place to-night is on board the Silver Star."

The Mutineers—Madness on Board—The Riot—A Fire and the Catastrophe.

GALLANT HAL hastened with all speed down to the shore, and, guided by the light of a lantern, made his way to a boat grounded between sea and beach. Dan Derry was in charge of it, with four men at the oars, and he hailed his captain with a joy he did not attempt to conceal.

"You are wanted aboard, sir," he said, "for Mr. Warringham doesn't like to take all the responsibility on himself."

As he spoke another gun boomed across the sea, and a shot came screeching inland twenty yards of where they were.

"Was that meant for us?" asked Gallant Hal, as he stepped into the boat.

"Goodness knows what it means, sir!" replied Dan Derry. "I think they are guns firing, anyhow and nohow. Mad drunk, as I take it."

"All mad things are dangerous," said Gallant Hal. "Push her off, my men, and give way!"

Two of the men had leapt out, and with a little muscular exertion they ran the boat out and floated it. Then they sprang into it again, and took to their oars. Dan, at the tiller, headed the boat for the sea.

"That's the Silver Star, sir," he said, pointing to a speck of light on the right; "but the devils on board the Spitfire don't seem to have any lanterns going."

Boom! It was a shell that was fired this time, as they could see by the burning fuse, which, like a shooting star, skimmed through the air towards the town.

"They are all mad, or drunk," said Hal—"perhaps both."

"It's just devilry, sir," said Dan—"no more, no less."

He sat with his eyes on the speck of light ahead, which seemed to be gliding away for a time; but presently it stood still, and the rattling of chains was heard.

"Mr. Warringham has taken up new anchor-ground," said Dan. "He wanted to get out of range, if possible, for the sake of the ladies aboard."

"Is the Spitfire anchored?" asked Hal.

"Yes, sir, and they've let all their canvas go, so that it is flapping like a lot of clothes and clinging about the masts."

"The fools!" muttered Gallant Hal.

The speck of light was further off than it seemed. Naturally, it was deceptive in the darkness, but before long it began to increase in size, and about twenty minutes brought them within hail of the Silver Star.

(Continued on the next page.)

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Dan stood up, and, putting his hands to his mouth, shouted out:

"Silver Star ahoy!"

"Boat ahoy!" came the answer back.

The men put on a spurt, and in a minute they were by the side of the gallant little craft. A couple of lanterns flashed over the side, and the ladder was lowered. Hal went up nimbly, and sprang on board. Will Warringham and Little Trim were there, and he gave a hand to each.

"I had my doubts about leaving the convent," he said, "as we have Livana there captive."

"I thought you had better come," replied Will, "for our position here is anything but a rosy one. The very spirit of wanton mischief has broken out on board the Spitfire."

"I am not sorry you sent for me," replied Hal. "We have but one duty before us, and that is to put a stop to this mad firing."

"I agree with you," said Will.

"How are Inez and the rest?"

"All well."

"Then up with the anchor, and we will put out to sea, and get the Spitfire between us and the land."

The word was passed to do everything quietly, and every lantern was ordered to be put out of sight. The light of the stars was sufficient to guide their first movements.

Ashore in the town there were sounds of commotion which floated towards them on the bosom of the breeze blowing off the land. The guns had alarmed the inhabitants, and it was probable that the shell had fallen into the town.

The firing now had, however, ceased, but they could tell where the Spitfire was by the noisy bellowing of men.

When a fair spread of canvas had been put out on the Silver Star, she headed away for the sea, and Hal, standing by the helmsman, directed him, so that they brought her round with the wind on her beam.

Then she slowly drew to a position near the vessel held by the mutineers. At first the pronontory had been between the Silver Star and the town, but now they could see that a fire was burning in the northern quarter.

The shell wantonly fired had not only dropped into the town, but had started another conflagration.

Hal's heart burned within him. He was sorry for the people, who had suffered enough already to imply alone, in a worldly sense, for their sins; and, in addition, he was the last man to encourage needless destruction, no matter who might be the sufferers.

Last of all, his instincts were good, and he could not tolerate mutiny under any circumstances. It is true that the men of the Spitfire had been subjected to rough, tyrannous treatment, but that was no excuse for their present conduct.

If they had simply deserted as one man, he would have said little against them; but even that was not justifiable where the property of his country and its good name were concerned.

No more shots were fired from the Spitfire until he was within hail of her. Steering so as to bring his little craft within a couple of lengths of her, he brought her up dead in the eye of the wind, and, speaking-trumpet in hand, went forward.

The sounds he heard gave him a clue to the sort of fun that was going forward. The crew were holding a mad revelry on board. A fiddle was going, and the shuffling feet on deck—dancing, we suppose, it must be called—was like the pattering of a mob of people crossing a wooden bridge. Raising the speaking-trumpet to his lips, he sent forth a stentorian cry:

"Aboard the Spitfire, there!"

The fiddle stopped, and somebody was heard calling upon the dancers to stop their movements. The response was far from ready, which showed that there was little or no discipline on board; but on Hal's hailing again the noise subsided.

"Who goes there?" roared somebody back.

"The Silver Star!" said Hal. "What the deuce are you doing?"

"Just what we please, and be hanged to you!" was the answer.

"Then have to stop it," cried Hal, "or I will fire into you!"

For a few moments there was no reply. Then the sounds of movement on board were heard, and a gun was fired. The aim, as might be expected, was not very good, but it was sufficiently near to show that the position of the Silver Star was perilous.

With a portentous scream the shot went away to sea, passing the little craft about thirty feet astern. Hal gave orders for a return shot to be fired, aimed low and to the left.

"Don't hit her, Dan," he said, "but let us see if we can scare these fellows into behaving themselves."

The shot was fired, and was first responded to by an angry yelling on board. Then followed a wild firing in reply.

All the guns of the Spitfire were set going, and shots flew about on every side of her. There was no aim, nor attempt to do anything, but simply a mad blazing away, the like of which has seldom, if ever, been seen in any form of naval warfare.

With such charges as he had on board, it would have been madness for Hal to remain where he was. A chance shot might do irreparable mischief. So he brought the Silver Star with her head towards the wind again, and stood away out to sea.

"We must leave them until they get sober," he said. "Perhaps the morning may bring a little reflection with it."

"I wish," said Little Trim, who had drawn up to his side, "that we had no women on board. We would bring those fellows to their senses."

"But then, you see, we have women on board," replied Hal quietly; "but, anyway, I do not mean to let the Spitfire slip off again."

In a quarter of an hour or so the firing on the mutineers' ship ceased. Then, after a short silence, the fiddle was heard again. And, as if in derision of their foe, a lantern was hung out on the bowsprit.

"All right, my lads," said Hal. "We will shoot that away for you."

After going a short way to sea, he put his craft about, and once more bore down upon the Spitfire. Getting within easy distance, he ordered one of the guns amidships to be loaded with shot, and, having taken aim himself, fired.

He did not hit the lantern—that would indeed have been a feat in gunnery—but he shot away the bowsprit, and, with a mass of loose cordage and canvas, it fell in to the sea. Of course, the lantern went also, and so far his object was attained. This piece of work excited a lively commotion on board.

In the middle of a wild hornpipe tune the fiddle stopped and the dancing ceased. A roar of voices was heard, and, above all, somebody who had command, or was in command, yelled out several orders, which apparently nobody heeded.

Hal expected a return shot, but no more guns were fired. In a moment another lantern flashed and then disappeared. After that came silence.

"What's in the wind now?" thought Hal.

He went for a night-glass, and tried to make out what they were doing, but all he could see was a few dim figures moving to and fro. He knew that seventy or eighty men at least were on board, probably more, and the sparsity of men visible rather puzzled him. He observed, too, that they were gradually diminishing in numbers. Passing the word for absolute silence, he made two short tacks, until he once more brought his craft within a couple of cable lengths of the Spitfire.

The induna leapt to bar Billy's path, his great shield of cowhide on his arm, his light throwing spear already poised in his right hand. "Jump up behind me on the pony, Tickey," cried Billy to the Basuto, "and we'll ride round 'em!" *(See John Finnemore's enthralling, complete, lion-hunting story in this week's "Boys' Herald." Now on sale—Id.)*

Then he could see a little more clearly, and, to his amazement, the deck seemed to be quite clear. Will and Little Trim were standing near him, both silent, in accordance with his instructions. The crew, all of whom were on deck, stood like statues at the guns, ready for prompt action when called upon.

"What are they doing?" softly asked Hal.

"Up to the fox?"

"I don't know," replied Will. "Perhaps they think we shall try to board them."

"Or hope that by keeping still we shall not be able to find them."

"It may be that."

"Listen!" said Little Trim. "What's that?"

A dumb kind of click, click reached their ears. As sailors, they all knew what it was.

"Muffled oars," said Hal. "They have taken to their boats."

"Skedaddled," said Little Trim.

It flashed upon Gallant Hal that here was a new peril, and one that he had not in the least foreseen. In the town the mutineers might play havoc with the inhabitants. That would be bad enough. But suppose, instead of going to the town, they made for the woods and discovered the convent?

Of course, they had no interest in the fate of Caroli de Livana, but might they not, in sheer devilry, give him the opportunity of getting away. There were Mittens, Manly, and the few men left in charge also to be thought of. Of course, they had their orders not to admit anyone; but, hearing British voices, they might be induced to do so. Again, it was possible that only a portion of the mutineers had deserted the vessel, while the rest remained on board ready to repel any attack.

It was all surmise, and it passed through his mind in a tenth of the time it has taken to write, without his coming to any conclusion about what ought to be done. He was, however, awakened to immediate action by the appearance of a light on board the cruiser. It suddenly shot up, a thin pencil of light with a crown of smoke, and then all was clear. The mutineers had deserted their vessel in a body, after having set the ship on fire. The first consideration for Hal was to see if he could save it from destruction.

He ordered the long-boat to be lowered, and a full crew to man her.

While it was getting ready, and it did not take long, he gave directions to Will Warringham to take the Silver Star on a mile ahead, anchor, and await his return.

"I shall know in five minutes if I can save her," he said; "but it is dangerous for the Silver Star to be near her."

He sprang into the long-boat, now ready, and gave the word to pull with might and main. The thin fork of flame on board the Spitfire had now become a formidable torch.

It cast a light upon the sea; and Will, as the Silver Star glided away, saw the long-boat shoot like some living thing straight towards the burning vessel, and Hal, alone, climb over the side.

"It seems to me," said Little Trim, "that they have fired it near the magazine."

"What is the matter, senor?" asked a voice behind him.

It was Marvalda, who, with Don Tarva de Rialdo and Mr. Warringham had come up from below. They had been aroused from sleep by the firing, and, dressing themselves, came on deck. Will, who were his left arm in a sling, explained what had taken place. Strange to say, none of them had heard the guns of the Spitfire.

"But the Lady Warringham has," said Marvalda. "She is awake, and with the Lady Inez, who sleeps."

"Is there any danger of that craft blowing up?" asked Don Tarva de Rialdo.

"Not yet," said Will; "but, of course, we cannot tell. I wish Hal would leave her."

Higher rose the flames, and by their light

"Why does he not leave her?" said Alma. "Call to him."

"My dear Alma," said Will, "we could not make him hear."

"Put back, then, until we are near enough. Oh, what mad folly! But I see it; he does not care. He would as soon die as live; and I have been so unjust to him!"

She bent her head, covering her face with her hands. Then, with a quick, impressive motion, she looked up again.

"Will you not push back?" she cried.

"I cannot—I dare not!" said Will. "We can do nothing but anchor. Those were my orders. Alma, you must be reasonable."

"Reasonable, and with him there!" she cried. "Will, you were mad to let him go, knowing what he is. Look at that fire! I see him now, in the midst of it!"

They could all see a shifting speck, and only one on deck, moving to and fro in front of the flames, which every moment gathered strength. Higher and higher they rose in the air. The light wind beat the crown of fire a little to seaward, and an enormous black cloud of smoke, spangled with sparks, spread overhead like a canopy, hiding the stars. It was clear now that the Spitfire was doomed. No efforts on the part of Hal could save her. Why, then, did he not desert the doomed vessel? The speck had disappeared from sight, but there were no signs of the boat returning to the Silver Star. Between the two vessels was a golden sea, reflecting the lurid light of the furious flames. Any floating object the tenth of the size of a boat could easily have been seen. But neither by eyesight, nor with the aid of the glass, could anything be seen. What had happened to Hal?

It was a question which all asked themselves, but none ventured to speak, save Alma, who walked to and fro, bewailing the fate of her lover.

"Lower a boat," she said. "I will go alone. Will, why do you go away and leave him to his fate?"

"We can anchor now," replied Will. "Darling Alma, you must remember that the first duty of a sailor is obedience to orders. Hal bade me come to this spot, and there await him. If he has imperilled his life I cannot help it, although I must bitterly grieve, as many others will. But, remember this, he is his own master."

Little Trim was looking steadily at the burning ship with a glass. To him Alma turned.

"Can you see him?" she asked.

"No," he replied. "I can see nothing but the burning ship, and something like a log lying alongside."

Alma's Grief—The noises in Town—Grief may be with us at Night, but Joy comes in the Morning.

LITTLE Trim did not say that the "log" was an empty boat, as he had good reason to believe it was. Nor could he lay bare his thoughts to the agonised girl.

He feared, as Will feared, that Hal and his men had been suddenly overpowered by smoke or flame. A gust of wind might have turned the fire like water from a hose upon them. One biting breath would be sufficient to throw them down upon the deck writhing in mortal agony.

It was a horrible thought, but he could find no other solution of Hal's continued absence.

"Be patient," he said huskily, "and all may be well."

As he spoke, there was a sudden rending of the burning ship. Great arrows of flame shot out in all directions, masses of burning wood were tossed into the air, and a mighty, deafening noise fell upon their ears. Then, in a moment, came darkness, save for the shower of fiery sparks that rained down into the sea.

The fire had reached the magazine, and the Spitfire, shattered to atoms, was a thing of the past.

A dumb terror and grief, Alma stood watching the falling sparks until the last had fallen and given up its brief life in the bosom of the sea. All that was left as a record of the explosion was a dense volume of smoke slowly spreading across the heaven. In the town, the fire started by the shell of the Spitfire had been got under, and profound darkness reigned.

But not silence.

In the town, the cries of men and women alarmed by the catastrophe, rose in the air, and floated towards the Silver Star in dolorous melody, and the men on board the gallant craft involuntarily pictured the terrified women and children running to and fro.

Will touched Alma on the arm.

"Dearest Alma," he said, "do not linger here. Come below."

"For what reason?" she asked absently. Then, suddenly arousing herself, she cried: "But it cannot be! It is not possible! My brave one dead!"

"We don't know that he was on board that ship, Miss Warringham," said Little Trim. "I, for one, do not think that he was there."

"You say that to give me one gleam of hope," said Alma.

"I do so because I have hope," replied Little Trim. "I don't think our captain, brave as he is, ever runs needless risk. He is not such a fool."

Alma made him no answer. After a long and steady look towards the spot where the Spitfire had recently been, she turned away, and walked slowly down below.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

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