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The Boys' Realm

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Healthy, Interesting & Instructive Stories & Articles.

KING CRICKET! By Charles Hamilton.

WELL CAUGHT! Tunnicliffe upholds his great reputation.

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You Must Read This Grand Athletic Tale!

KING CRICKET!

A Fascinating New Story of County Cricket.

Specially Written for THE BOYS' REALM by One of Our Most Popular Authors.

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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.

BLANE, 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. Soon after a chance in his fortunes necessitates his forfeiting his status as an amateur and turning professional.

Kit Valance, Arthur's bosom chum, has a twin brother named Len who is not a credit to his family. Len Valance backs Somerset to beat Loamshire, and asks his brother to bet on 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.

In desperation Len, with the aid of a confederate, kidnaps Kit, and places him in the pavilion on the next day. The result is demoralising for Loamshire, for Len plays as badly as he can. Seeing that it is still possible for Somerset to be defeated, to make doubly sure Arthur Lovell is also kidnapped and kept prisoner with his friend.

Loamshire seem doomed to defeat, but in the nick of time Arthur and Kit manage to escape, and Arthur pulls the game out of the fire, scoring the winning hit on the stroke of time. Lagden battles for Valance to injure Arthur in such a manner as to make it impossible for him to play in the next match against Yorkshire. Len waits for Arthur in a dark lane the same night. Footsteps are heard, and, stealing out, the scoundrel fells the approaching person with a blow from a loaded stick. At the sound of someone else approaching, Len takes to his heels.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Struck Down.

BUT it was not Arthur Lovell who had fallen under that cowardly blow!

Len Valance had taken it for granted that the shadowy figure, dimly seen under the trees overhanging the lane, was that of the young Loamshire cricketer, and had been wrought up to a pitch of mingled excitement and terror as he waited there in the darkness for Arthur Lovell to pass, and he had acted swiftly, without stopping to think.

As he fled into the night at the sound of approaching footsteps, he did not doubt that it was Arthur Lovell who lay there senseless under the trees. But he was mistaken.

The footsteps came rapidly nearer. A figure, running swiftly, came upon the scene only a few seconds after Len Valance had disappeared.

The new-comer stumbled over the prostrate form on the ground, and almost fell. He recovered himself quickly, and stopped, bending over the fallen man.

"What has happened? Are you hurt?"

Had Len Valance been still within hearing the sound of that voice would have stricken him with amazement and dismay. For it was the voice of Arthur Lovell!

Arthur had been striding along the lane towards the colonel's house, thinking of anything but danger, when he heard the groan of the stricken man, followed by a heavy fall, from the direction ahead of him.

Without a moment's hesitation the young cricketer had dashed forward to see what was the matter.

Len Valance had fled, little dreaming of the true state of affairs. Arthur knelt beside the prostrate form.

"Are you hurt?"

A low, faint moan was the only response.

Arthur gave a quick glance round. It was easy to guess that the man had been struck down by some scoundrel lurking in the shadows of the trees, and it was possible that the latter was still at hand. But the young cricketer soon saw that his arrival on the scene had scared away the ruffian.

He lifted the dim form in his strong arms, and carried it out of the shadow of the trees into the open lane, where the starlight glimmered down. His intention was to render what assistance he could, and he did not suspect yet that the injured man was known to him.

But as he set him down upon the grassy bank beside the lane, in the light of the stars, and glanced at the pale, set face, an exclamation of astonishment left the young cricketer's lips:

"Blane!"

The injured man was Blane, the Loamshire county captain.

He had, doubtless, like Lovell, been walking through the lane to the colonel's house when the unseen ruffian had attacked him. Blane was Molly Hilton's cousin, and the Loamshire captain was often at Lincroft.

"Blane! Poor old chap! What cowardly scoundrel has done this?"

Instinctively Lovell examined the Loamshire captain. He had received a terrible blow upon the head, and was now quite unconscious. There was a streak of red down his pallid face, and his eyes were closed.

Lovell thought rapidly. Blane was evidently in a bad state, and Arthur could do nothing for him. The lights of Lincroft in the distance glistened through the trees. Help was to be had there, but if Lovell left the injured man there was a chance that the ruffian might return to complete his work.

It did not take Arthur many seconds to decide what to do. He raised the insensible man from the grassy bank, and hoisted him upon his shoulder. Blane was a bulky man, of more than average weight; but Lovell shouldered the burden steadily, and set off through the dark lane towards the colonel's house.

He was very much hampered by him as he strode on. But it was needless, for the man who had struck the blow was far away. Lovell breathed hard under the heavy strain, but he bore it pluckily.

He came in sight of the gate of Lincroft, and caught a tiny red glow in the gloom. It came from the end of a cigar which Colonel Hilton was smoking. He was waiting there for his nephew.

"Hallo, what is that, Lovell!" ejaculated the colonel, in astonishment. "What has happened?"

"It is Blane, sir!"

"Blane? My nephew? Is he injured?"

"I found him in the lane, sir. Some scoundrel had struck him down. The wretch intended robbery, I suppose, but my coming frightened him away. I'm afraid he is badly hurt."

The colonel threw away his cigar. The old soldier was a man of action, and, without wasting time in words, he helped Lovell carry poor Blane into the house.

In a very few minutes the Loamshire captain, still insensible, was in bed, and the colonel had telephoned for a doctor.

The colonel remained in the room, gnawing his lip with suppressed anxiety and impatience. Nothing could be done for Blane till the doctor arrived, but could anything be done then? That was the terrible question that weighed on the mind of the old county cricketer, and upon Arthur Lovell's mind.

Arthur descended to the drawing-room, and met Molly, who was pale and anxious. The girl came quickly towards him.

"What has happened, Mr. Lovell? What is the matter with my cousin?"

Arthur Lovell explained quietly. The girl clasped her hands.

"How cowardly, how cruel! Who could have done it? Who could have been so wicked?"

Lovell shook his head.

"That is impossible to tell for the present. It was undoubtedly some scoundrel who intended to rob poor Blane. Colonel Hilton has telephoned to the police-station in Loamchester, and I hope the ruffian will be found." Arthur gritted his teeth. "I wish I had come on the scene before he fled."

They waited anxiously for the arrival of the doctor. It was not long before wheels were heard on the drive, and the physician was shown up to the room where Blane lay white and unconscious. A shock his head seriously as he looked at the injured man. The colonel tugged at his grey moustache.

"Dr. Lathom, is it serious?"

"Very serious," said the doctor briefly. "The poor fellow has received a terrible blow from a loaded stick, I should imagine. He may not recover consciousness for days, and when he does——" The doctor paused.

"And when he does?" repeated the colonel anxiously. "Come, you may speak out to me!"

"I cannot speak with certainty at present, but I fear concussion," said Dr. Lathom simply. "We can only hope for the best."

The colonel breathed hard. This was a heavy blow to him, for he was greatly attached to the sturdy, true-hearted captain of the Loamshire team. He did not as yet think of other things—of Loamshire's prospects now that her captain was disabled by this cruel attack. Yet on Monday the county was to face one of the hardest struggles of the cricket season—the match with Yorkshire.

Arthur Lovell left Lincroft as soon as he had heard the doctor's verdict. He went away with a heavy heart. Like the colonel, he was as yet thinking only of poor Blane, and not of the consequences that would follow his disablement.

He stopped at the police-station in Loamchester to tell what he could of the happening in the lane, but he could say little that would help to track down the ruffian who had attacked Blane. He had neither seen nor heard him. He had thought that he heard a sound of someone brushing through the foliage as he ran up, but that was all. The scoundrel had escaped through the wood without leaving a trace behind.

Kit Valance had heard the news when Arthur Lovell rejoined him late in the evening. The young bowler was as concerned as Arthur. But the former groundsman of the Loamshire County Club had never been on terms of personal friendship with Blane, as Arthur had been in the old palmy days before his fall in fortune, and so his concern was not wholly for Blane. He looked ahead, too.

"This will be bad for Loamshire, sir," the young bowler remarked thoughtfully. "We can't spare Blane just now. It seems to be pretty certain that he will not play again for a long time."

"Perhaps not for the rest of the season, poor chap!" said Arthur sadly. "Anyway, certainly not for some weeks to come."

"Then Loamshire will want a new captain."

Arthur gave a start.

"I hadn't thought of that, Kit."

"We shall have to think of that, sir. You know who is likely to become captain in the place of poor Blane?"

And again Arthur Lovell started.

"Ponsonby!"

"Yes, Ponsonby—the man whom, next to Geoffrey Lagden, you and I pull the worst with, sir, in all the Loamshire Club."

Arthur bit his lip. He had had more than one rub with Ponsonby, a man who was probably more snobbish in character than any other in the Loamshire Club, not excepting even Lagden.

Ponsonby was an "amateur" of a kind well known in county cricket, whose "expenses" were often larger than the pay of a professional player, but who was not inclined to think any the less of himself on that account.

On the other hand, he had an excellent opinion for himself, and a contempt he took little trouble to conceal for the paid players; and since Arthur Lovell had played for the Colts as an amateur, Ponsonby had more than once gone out of his way to make the young batsman feel as keenly as possible that things were not as they had once been.

If Ponsonby became captain of the team the prospect was a bright one for either Arthur Lovell or Kit Valance.

"He may not become skipper, Kit," Arthur said, after a long pause.

Kit shook his head.

"He very nearly got the position before, sir, but the colonel's influence with the committee decided it in favour of Blane. Now Blane is laid up, it's a thousand to one that Ponsonby takes his place. He has powerful backing, and it isn't as if he wasn't fit for the post, in one way. He's a good cricketer, and ought to make a fairly good captain—if he doesn't let private feelings interfere with the game."

"Which is just what he is certain to do, Kit."

"I believe so. There's no disguising the fact that he sticks to Geoffrey Lagden through thick and thin, and Lagden hardly makes a secret of his intention to make things too hot for us in the Loamshire Club."

A hard look came over Arthur Lovell's handsome face.

"I believe you are right, Kit. We have got to look out for squalls."

Kit nodded.

"We can only do our duty, sir, and play a straight game, and trust to fortune. But this bad luck of poor Blane's is the worst thing that could have happened for us, as well as for him."

The Yorkshire Match.

KIT VALANCE was right. When the Loamshire men went northward to meet the White Roses, Blane was lying in a darkened room at Lincroft, helpless to leave his bed; and the colonel, who was too anxious about his nephew to accompany the team to Yorkshire, also remained in Loamchester. A new captain led the cricketers of Loamshire, and the new captain was Ponsonby.

Geoffrey Lagden had felt a pang of remorse when he learned that his treacherous plan had miscarried, and that the Loamshire captain had fallen under the attack intended for Arthur Lovell; but that had soon passed.

He had never liked Blane. He had always had an uneasy feeling that the big, hearty Loamshire skipper saw right through him, and knew the smallness and meanness of his nature. And Blane had always stood by Arthur Lovell, and refused to hear a word said against him.

Many a sneering or cavilling remark had been silenced by a single glance from Blane's honest, scornful eyes, and the skipper had a way of speaking his mind which had often made Lagden and his cronies uncomfortable.

All that was changed now. Blane was gone, and Ponsonby reigned in his place. Lagden's closest friend, and a man after his own heart, was captain of the team; and so Lagden soon ceased to regret the mischance in Lincroft Lane.

He was sorry that Arthur Lovell had escaped injury, but the matter had turned out, as he considered it, very satisfactory.

Of the ruffian who had injured Blane no trace was found. Lagden had kept his word with the rascal, and Len Valance was in London again now, in the office of Lagden's father, feeling quite secure.

Lagden had been compelled to keep his promise, in spite of Len's blunder to secure his silence; but that silence was certain to last only just as long as it suited Len Valance. It was a problem that Geoffrey Lagden would see more of the dingy blackguard in the future.

But Lagden was not thinking of that now, on the sunny Monday morning when the team turned out on the Bradford ground. This fixture with Loamshire was to be played at Bradford, where a good many of the Yorkshire county matches take place.

The morning was fine, but there was a hint of rain in the west. For the present, however, the ground was in excellent condition, and the stumps were pitched at the usual hour.

Although the Loamshires missed Blane, they were in very good condition, capable under good leadership of making a good struggle for victory with Hirst and Hawke and his splendid team; but were they likely to be well led? That was a question which Arthur and Kit, to themselves, had already answered in the negative.

Already Ponsonby had given more than one hint of trouble to come. His manner to Lovell and Valance had never been pleasant. Now it was less pleasant than ever, and there was a tone in his voice when he gave directions that was very grating to their ears.

It was impossible to quarrel with a tone of the voice; and yet Ponsonby made it perfectly plain that he realised that the two players he disliked and mistrusted were under the thumb at last, and that he meant to make them feel it.

He was in a position at last to show his real feelings, without taking the trouble of disguising them, and he intended to make the most of the opportunity.

Lovell took everything quietly, affecting to notice nothing. A dispute with the captain of the County Eleven would, of course, have been serious in its results for a professional player, and he suspected very strongly that Ponsonby was desirous of provoking him to some hot retort that might be construed into insubordination, and so the young batsman was on his guard.

Whether he had justice and fair play in the pavilion or not, he meant to do his best for Loamshire when he was on the field, if Ponsonby gave him a chance.

And if the new captain chose to keep him in the background, and sacrifice the county's interests to personal dislike, he could only grin and bear it.

Ponsonby tossed with Jack Hawke, the Yorkshire skipper, for choice of innings, and the result was in favour of Loamshire. The visitors decided to bat first, and Lord Hawke led his men out to field.

A splendid team they looked, in gleaming white, with their blue county caps bearing the white rose of Yorkshire. Splendid indeed they were, and as Arthur Lovell looked them over he realised what a fight was before his county.

Such players as Lord Hawke, Hirst, Rhodes, Haigh, and Tunnicliffe were not met every day on the cricket-field, and if the strongest county team would have had all its work cut out to keep its end up against them.

Arthur Lovell's heart beat faster at the thought of facing the bowling of Hirst and Haigh; while Kit Valance was thinking with keen anticipation of bowling against bats like Tunnicliffe, Hirst, and Denton.

They were not yet aware of what was in the new captain's mind. The Loamshire innings opened with Tunstall and Geoffrey Lagden. George Hirst went on to bowl. There was an anticipatory craning of necks among the spectators, who had come in big numbers to see the match.

Loamshire's fame had preceded them in the northern county, and their victory over Leicestershire, and the sensational match with Somerset at Taunton, had made the Tykes look for a splendid tussle on the Bradford ground.

Yorkshire had finished second in the county championship last season, and although they had been very near the other end of the list, so at first glance it did not seem that the visiting county would be quite up to the form of Lord Hawke's team.

But the brilliant batting of Arthur Lovell, and the wonderful bowling of Loamshire's new acquisition, Kit Valance, put things more upon a level now.

If Loamshire did their best, the match was certain to be a hard and fast one, and so the canny Yorkshiremen had come in crowds to see the play.

The Bradford ground, which can accommodate between twenty-five and thirty thousand spectators if necessary, was more than half filled, the threatening of rain in the western sky keeping few away from the ground who had leisure to visit it.

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And fourteen or fifteen thousand Tykes, keen sportsmen all, watched with all their eyes as George Hirst went on to bowl against Tunstall's wicket.

Tunstall was on his guard. As a matter of fact, he was feeling a little bit nervous, and he would have been better pleased if Ponsonby had sent in Lovell first to take the keen edge off the Yorkshire bowling.

Hirst sent the ball down with that peculiar swerve on it for which he is famous, and which was an unknown mystery to a batsman like Tunstall.

Tunstall tried to stop that ball. He only wanted to stop it, without thinking of hitting out; but even that little was denied him.

The ball curled round his willow in some mysterious way, and the next thing he knew was that his middle stump was reclining at an intoxicated-looking angle, and that a white-coated umpire was advancing to pick up the bails.

Tunstall stared at his wrecked wicket; while from fifteen thousand hearty Yorkshire throats came a howl:

"How's that?"

The umpire grinned.

"Out!"

Tunstall gave the stumps a mournful glance, and put his bat under his arm. His face was scarlet as he walked back to the pavilion.

The crowd cheered Hirst enthusiastically. The first Loamshire batsman was out first ball of the first over, and was hurrying off to hide his mortification. It was an ominous opening of the match for Loamshire, and, on the other hand, a cheering omen for the home team.

Ponsonby bit his lip as Tunstall came in. It was on his lips to say hot words, but he restrained them. He knew he had only himself to thank for the mishap, for Tunstall was not at all the man to open the batting against the Yorkshire bowling. He was far more suitable to be last man in at the tail-end of a match. Ponsonby knew that, but he had hoped for better things.

"Now, man in," he said, biting his lips. "Are you ready, Fortescue?"

Fortescue grinned.

"Wait a minute while I buckle my pads. I didn't expect to be called upon in such a dickens of a hurry, you know."

Tunstall scowled.

"I dare say you will do no better, Fortescue," he remarked. "George Hirst is in his best form to-day, and you will have to look out."

"Then duck's eggs will be cheap to-day," said Fortescue cheerfully.

Tunstall's scowl grew blacker, but he made no rejoinder.

Fortescue finished fastening his pads. Fortescue was an amateur of the Loamshire team, and a fair player. He had a pretty good opinion of himself—rather a common weakness among the Loamshire cricketers—but he could not be called a snob. He was of a light, somewhat careless nature, and there was a gleam of mischief in his eyes. He had often been extremely polite to Lovell and Valance for no purpose whatever but to irritate Lagden and Ponsonby.

"Oh, don't be all day, Fortescue!" growled Ponsonby, who wanted to find someone he could snap at, as a safety-valve for his inward annoyance and chagrin.

"Right-ho, Pon," said Fortescue carelessly; "I'm ready, but——"

"But what?"

"If you'd take a word of advice from me, old man, you'd send in Lovell next. You needn't keep him to the time limit. Lovell could get ready in a tick."

"Your name is next down on the list."

"My dear chap, a going-in list isn't like the Laws of the Medes and Persians. It can be changed when occasion arises for a change, you know."

"Certainly; but as no occasion has arisen——"

"Pon, old man, I'll tell you the plain truth. Hirst is out for scalps, that's as plain as the nose on your face, or the clock on the pavilion, and Arthur Lovell is the man to stand up against him and tire him out."

"That may be your opinion, Fortescue. It is not mine."

"If Lovell went in next, I wouldn't mind standing down, for the good of the team, and then I believe that Loamshire——"

"Lovell is not going in next. His name is down for last man in."

"My dear Pon——"

"Are you captain of this team, Fortescue, or am I?" cried Ponsonby savagely.

Fortescue shrugged his shoulders.

"You are, Pon; and," he added, under his breath—"and a rotten captain you are, too!"

"Well," said Ponsonby grimly, "if I am captain, and you are kind and obliging enough to admit it, the sooner you obey my orders the better."

"Oh, I'm ready! I always speak my mind, you know."

"Yes; I know you do, without being asked! Next time, when you feel inclined to offer advice, you might wait till I ask for it. Now, you had better go on, or the people will begin to yell. They must be getting tired of waiting for you."

"Oh, don't get your rag out, Pon; I'm going!" said Fortescue carelessly.

And he picked up his bat and walked out of the pavilion. Ponsonby scowled after him. Fortescue's words hit him rather hard, because he knew perfectly well that the young amateur was right, and that he ought to have sent in Arthur Lovell to face George Hirst's dangerous bowling.

But Ponsonby had marked out a course for himself, and he meant to adhere to it come what might. Lovell was down on the list for last man in, and last man he should be, so the new captain of Loamshire said to himself, with a savage, spiteful determination. That he was risking the loss of the game by this determination, he refused to admit even to himself; but in the back of his mind, as it were, he knew it well.

Fortescue's remonstrance had, therefore, only stirred his rage, without altering his intentions, and it was in a very unpleasant mood that he watched the young man take up his position at the wicket.

Fortescue had done his best, perhaps more than he was entitled to do against the wish of his captain, in offering advice; but as it had been declined, he set himself to do the best he could for his side.

The wait for the new batsman had been unusually long, and Hirst had been amusing himself by sending down some trials to the wicket-keeper. The delivery of the famous Yorkshire cricketer was splendid, and showed that he was in his finest form, and fully equal to the best of his efforts during the 1906 season, when he had won such laurels both as batsman and bowler.

He ceased bowling to Hunter, the wicket-keeper, as Fortescue came to the wicket, and prepared for business. Business, indeed, it was; and bad business for Loamshire.

Some encouraging exclamations came from round the railings as he prepared to deliver the second ball of that over, of which the first had been so fatal to Tunstall.

"Go it, Georgie!"

"Give us another!"

"Make it the hat trick, Hirst, owd man!"

George Hirst smiled. He took a little run, and the ball came down from a great height of the powerful left arm. George Hirst, although he bats right-handed, bowls with his left, as many a batsman knows to his sorrow.

The ball broke straight for the middle stump, but Fortescue had better luck than his predecessor at the wicket.

Luck it was, as he afterwards frankly admitted; for he really did not know how he stopped that ball. But he did stop it, and it dropped dead on the crease, greatly to his relief, and to that of Ponsonby, watching from the pavilion.

But would he be able to stop many more like that? He hardly thought so; he knew that Arthur Lovell would have found that bowling hard to face, and he was not a patch on Arthur Lovell. But he was there to do his best, and he waited for the next ball with an assumption of cheery confidence he was in truth far from feeling.

It came down, and Fortescue, somewhat to his own surprise, snicked it away past point for two. Loamshire had broken their duck, anyway. Ponsonby thought, with a sigh of relief. Fortescue was pleased, too, as he scudded across the pitch, and scudded again, as he faced Hirst's bowling after that with more assurance.

The next ball he cut away, but he did not venture to run, for Tunnicliffe at slip had the ball in a twinkling. Tunnicliffe, who usually fields at slip, was "all there" to-day, and quite ready for his leather when it came his way.

The ball came in, and Hirst sent it down again. Fortescue stopped it dead. There was but one more ball to that over, and then he would have the rest he felt he needed, for while he stood up to Hirst's bowling, he felt that he had to keep his eyes and nerves.

The rest was to be a longer one than he anticipated. Hirst sent the ball down with that swerve on it which Tunstall had found unplayable, but Fortescue lifted it into the air. But his satisfaction was saved when the wicket was brief. There came a sound, between a smack and a kiss, from slip, and a roar from thousands of throats:

"Well caught!"

"Good old Tunny!"

Fortescue stared in dismay at the fieldsman at slip. The ball went up into the air from Tunnicliffe's hand, and came down again straight as a die, to be caught in his right palm with a sounding smack.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Ponsonby gave him a dark look as he came in. The next batsman was Tweedie, and he went out to join Lagden at the wickets. The field had crossed over, and Haigh was preparing to bowl the next over against Geoffrey Lagden.

Loamshire 2; last man 2," said Fortescue, reading the score aloud for the benefit of Ponsonby. "Sort of cheerful look out, Pon, ain't it?"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth. Although Fortescue was in his and Lagden's set, and generally acted as if he were one of them, they did not like each other, and now Ponsonby was in a state of suppressed temper, which made him a dangerous man to jest with. He gave Fortescue a savage look as he spoke.

"Two, for two wickets," said Fortescue, with his irritating drawl—irritating to an angry man. "At any rate, we shall make eleven for the whole side, which will be unique as a score in first-class cricket, at all events. If I remember correctly, the lowest score so far in first-class county cricket is the thirteen made by Nottingham against Yorkshire in 1901. We shall beat that record by two, and against the same county. I think——"

"Shut up," said Ponsonby savagely. "I dare say you've done your best to give us that kind of a record."

"What do you mean?"

"You have never lost a wicket for only two runs before."

"I have never faced Hirst's bowling before, or Tunnicliffe's fielding. I suppose you don't doubt that I did my best?"

"Well, you soon realised your own predictions, at any rate," said Ponsonby, with a sneer.

Fortescue's expression changed.

"Do you mean to hint that I threw away a wicket, Ponsonby, just to prove to you that I was in the right?" he said between his teeth.

"I don't mean to hint anything," said Ponsonby, shrugging his shoulders. "Only the less you say about the matter, the better, that's all."

"I don't think so!" cried Fortescue hotly. "I think——"

"Don't make a scene here, Fortescue. Remember that I am your captain."

"Captain or not, you have no right to hint that I failed to play up for my side," exclaimed Fortescue; "and I tell you to your teeth that it's a lie!"

"Fortescue!"

"Yes, it is a lie," said the other coolly, "and you know it, Pon, yourself. Bah, what's the good of talking? I know why you won't send Arthur Lovell on. You're going to keep him back, and lose the match. Do as you like; you're captain, worse luck for Loamshire! But don't try to put the blame on me!"

Ponsonby was livid with rage.

"Do you know whom you're talking to?" he hissed.

Fortescue smiled grimly.

"Yes, I'm talking to my highly-respected captain—a captain that Loamshire has excellent reason to be proud of," he replied.

"By Jove, if you don't immediately apologise, you'll never swing a bat for Loamshire again!" cried Ponsonby, at a white heat.

"Then Loamshire will have to mourn my loss," said Fortescue. And he turned on his heel and walked away.

He left the Loamshire captain quivering with passion.

And when Ponsonby turned his glance upon the pitch, he saw little there to calm or to comfort him. Geoffrey Lagden had taken a single, and lost the bowling, and now the Scotsman Tweedie was keeping his end up against the last bowling of Haigh; but he was only just doing it.

Loamshire played Tweedie for his qualities as a bowler, and at the wicket he was only very passable, and not calculated to stand up long against such bowlers as Yorkshire could put into the field.

Against the lightning balls from Haigh he did not even attempt to make a run, but contented himself with keeping up his wicket, and it was all that was suitable to him that he lived through the over, though it proved a maiden, as far as he was concerned.

The Loamshire score stood at three runs for two wickets, a score that made the canny Tykes amateur field round the ground smile to each other, and predict a sweeping victory for the home county with an innings and a heap of runs to spare.

And, in point of fact, that looked like being the result.

Geoffrey Lagden was now facing Rhodes's bowling, and though he preserved his wicket, he captured only a couple of runs for the over.

Then George Hirst went for Tweedie's wicket in a way that showed that he meant business. The Scotsman stopped ball after ball, glad to be able to do so much; but the last ball of the over proved one too many for him.

He missed it by inches, and then there was a knelling of bails and falling, and Tweedie heard the doom of the umpire: "Out!"

"Well bowled!" shouted Yorkshire, round the railing. "Well bowled, Hirst!"

Tweedie carried out his bat.

The innings was becoming farcical, but Ponsonby was in a bitter and obstinate mood, and his intentions had undergone no change.

The fourth man in was Harding, a quiet and steady amateur cricketer, and a reliable bat when the bowling was not too exacting.

How he would shape against such brilliant bowlers as Hirst and Haigh remained to be seen; but the result was better than might have been expected.

Harding stopped the balls, taking few runs, and giving Geoffrey Lagden an opportunity to show what he was capable of.

Lagden was on his mettle this day.

The plan of keeping Arthur Lovell in the shade was as much his as Ponsonby's, and he was, of course, very anxious for it to be a success, apart from his individual desire to shine as the champion batsman of the day.

Backed up by Harding's steady stonewalling, Lagden began to score, and things looked a little brighter for Loamshire for a time.

The figure went up to twenty-seven, so that Loamshire could feel that they had really started at last. But it proved to be only a lull in the storm.

George Hirst took the leather again against Lagden's wicket, with the determination to nip in the bud this sudden burst of scoring. He meant to do it, and he did it.

Lagden took two, and then, with a brilliant break, he scored four. He faced the next ball confidently—perhaps too confidently. It came, and his bat swept the empty air.

Where was the ball?

The crash of a falling wicket told him where it was. The wicket-keeper grinned up at him, and Lagden clicked his teeth.

His wicket was down. His hopes, which had risen so high, were dashed to the ground, his rosy prospects nipped in the bud.

There was no help for it—he was clean bowled, and Hirst's appeal was promptly answered by the umpire's laconic "out."

Lagden had done comparatively well for his side; but what was wanted was brilliant batting, and brilliant batting was just what Geoffrey Lagden could not give.

He looked glumly at Ponsonby as he went in, and the Loamshire captain returned his look equally glumly. Ponsonby was fastening on his pads as his own name was down next.

There was a stir of interest in the crowd as Ponsonby joined Harding at the wickets.

The Tykes knew little of Ponsonby, but as captain of Loamshire, he should have been able to make a decent show, and they expected as much of him.

They expected too much, as it proved.

The batting went on steadily and slowly, few runs being scored; and the anxious desire to make the Loamshire score look a little more respectable tempted Ponsonby to rashness.

He had nine runs to his credit when, in an almost reckless attempt to take three instead of a safe two, he was stumped by the wicket-keeper.

"How's that!" grinned Hunter.

"Out!"

So Ponsonby went off the field.

Next man in was Chichester. Chichester was a man after Geoffrey Lagden's own heart, and next to Ponsonby, his best chum among the Loamshire men. He came in with a swagger, but he was far from being up to the form of the Yorkshire bowlers.

He scored half a dozen before he was caught out at slip by Tunnicliffe.

Loamshire were now six down, and the four batsmen remaining to come on were Arthur Lovell, Kit Valance, Maynard, and Wentworth. Kit Valance was down to follow Chichester, and he knew the reason. Ponsonby did not intend to let him partner his chum if he could help it.

Kit came in with his usual quiet and calm manner. He faced the bowling steadily, and a couple of twos and then a three showed that he could handle it fairly well. Then Harding was stumped, with only six runs to his credit. Loamshire were seven down, and the score was still under sixty.

Maynard joined Kit Valance. Maynard was somewhat flashy in style, and given to taking risks, for which his partner had sometimes to pay. So it proved in the present case.

Against Haigh's bowling, Maynard scored a two, and then a four, a success that was quite sufficient to get into his head and make him over-confident.

With the very next ball he ran for three, though he would have been content with two.

The ball came into the hands of the wicket-keeper, and Hunter promptly stumped Kit, whose bat was still a yard from the crease.

Wentworth came in to join Maynard. He lived through a couple of overs, and the Loamshire score stood at 62 when he was caught out by Lord Hawke.

And now came Arthur Lovell's turn!

Last man in!

Lovell's feelings as he had watched the discreditable innings may be better imagined than described.

An early innings by Lovell would have put heart into the side, and had he been sent in to join Harding, the stone-waller, he might have knocked up a century for his side.

As last man in, with the reckless and supercilious Maynard as his partner, he was certain to have a very short life at the wickets, and would certainly be "not out" at the finish, if that was any comfort; but equally certainly the finish would not be very far off.

But Arthur Lovell had learned to control his feelings, and his face showed nothing of what he thought as he went on the pitch.

The Yorkshiremen knew Arthur Lovell by reputation, and Lord Hawke sent on Hirst to bowl against his wicket.

But for the first time that day George Hirst met his match.

After the poor show previously made by Loamshire, Lovell's batting was a revelation. He cut away the first ball for two, and the second for four. The third he stopped dead, and the fourth went over the pavilion. The fifth and the sixth had to be tossed back by grinning spectators from over the boundary.

The sportsmanlike Tykes gave him a cheer for that over. Lord Hawke congratulated himself that this batsman had been sent in last, though he wondered what on earth the Loamshire skipper was thinking of. Eighteen for a single over showed that Arthur Lovell could have done if he had been given a chance.

But now Maynard had the bowling again, and Rhodes was putting all he knew into it. At the second ball came the crash of a falling wicket.

It was over!

Arthur Lovell's mental prediction had been exactly realised. He was "not out" for 18, but his innings had been ended by Maynard's poor play, and Loamshire were all down for 79!

All down for 78 before lunch!

Such was Loamshire's score in the first innings of the Yorkshire match, with Ponsonby, though annoyed and dismayed, as obstinate as ever! How was the match to end?

(Another long instalment of this popular Cricket Story will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

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.

"Training Tells."

THE above is the very fitting title of a fine long, complete tale of sport and adventure by Mr. A. S. Hardy which will appear in our columns next week. In it will be told how by training hard to reach the utmost point of fitness, the hero distinguishes himself in the school sports, whilst those who neglected to do this, found that their staying powers were extremely weak, and consequently made a very poor show in the various events for which they entered.

The other long, complete tale which will appear next week is a fine sea story by a popular author, entitled

"Stowaway Steve."

No lover of a rollicking tale of the rolling main should miss it.

"Only a Girl."

SOME weeks ago I printed on this page a charming letter from one of the many young lady readers of THE BOYS' REALM. This young friend of mine took as her signature, "Only a Girl." As a sequel to the publication of this letter I have received a most interesting communication which I print below. There is a great deal of truth in the statements of this writer—"Swindonian"—and while I thank him very heartily for his letter, I think it will be read with interest by very many of my chums.

"Dear Sir,—I was particularly interested in a letter signed 'Only a Girl,' published in a recent issue of THE BOYS' REALM. This signature alone is prompting me to write to you. Why does a girl sign herself 'Only a Girl'? Is it modesty, or is it because she believes herself to be despised by boys? I think this is nearer the mark. We know that boys are always chaffing girls because they are girls, and I am afraid that this produces a semi-discontent in some girls.

"The signature 'Only a Girl,' suggests a half-apology for being a girl. Although when girls speak of boy friends, they very often say that it is their chaff and teasing makes them so charming, I certainly think that in some cases at least, it leaves a slight rankling in their breasts, for when they are deliberating on any point, I always hear the expression, 'but I'm only a girl.' This is a pity, for all girls are at least the equals of boys, and in a very great many cases they are their betters.

"There is nothing manly in scorning a girl. It is arrant cowardice, for when a boy does scorn a girl, he knows that he dare not give her a chance. Perhaps, therefore, a little less chaff and self-conceit from the boys would bring out some of those fine imaginations and conceptions which I am sure mature in a girl's brain; but she is afraid of the reception her ideas will get, and so she swamps them.

"Thus do boys and men crush most noble and fine instincts—things which would never evolve from their own clear brains. Give girls the credit they deserve, and let me press home on all boys the fact that, while boys will be boys, they need not necessarily be brutes.—Yours truly, SWINDONIAN."

How to Increase the Height.

"I AM seventeen years of age," writes H. W., of Kirkstall, "stand 5ft. 3½in. high, and I want to grow tall, as my great ambition is to become a goal-keeper." Letters in this strain reach me almost every day from the readers of my papers. It is a curious fact that very few people seem to be quite satisfied with their height. The tall lad would like to be a bit shorter and stouter; the short lad taller and thinner.

Now, height is one of those limitations which Nature has fixed for us. We cannot all be handsome; we cannot all be tall. But on the other hand, by giving way to evil habits, by disregarding the laws of hygiene and health, we can make ourselves ugly, and we can stunt our growth. The boys who smoke and drink intoxicants do this. That brings us to the indisputable fact that if we are born to be short, nothing on earth can possibly make us tall.

In the case of growing lads, of course, it is somewhat different. A lad of seventeen cannot tell whether he is destined to be a six-footer or a five-footer, although he may surmise, by comparison of his height with that of his father and mother, what it may probably be when his period of maximum growth is attained. The maximum height of a man is reached, it should be stated, when he is about twenty-one or twenty-two years of age.

Therefore, there is always reason for hope in a short lad's mind that he may eventually grow tall. But if this hope should not be realised, there is no need at all for disappointment. Lord Roberts is a little man; Nelson, Wellington, and Napoleon were short men; but all the world reveres them as mighty men of war. Dozens of cases of little men who have achieved fame in the different professions could be mentioned to prove that a boy's height is no drawback to his success in life.

However, I can offer some further consolation to the short lad who would be tall. If Nature has her limitations, nevertheless it is within the power of most boys to put on, say, at least, one inch to their other inches. The leading of a regular, healthy life, the eating of good and nourishing food, the taking of outdoor exercise as often as possible, will do a lot in this direction.

And here is an exercise that my Kirkstall chum and others interested will find of value. Directly H. W. arises in the morning, he should fling up his windows—which, by the way, should be open night and day—so that they will allow the air to enter to its fullest possible extent, and then, standing with his hands on his hips, my chum should slowly draw the air into his lungs, raising his body gradually till he is on tiptoe, and cannot reach any higher. Then he should slowly empty his lungs of air, and sink slowly to his heels. Done a dozen times every morning and evening, this will increase the size of his chest, as well as assist Nature in adding further to his inches.

A Steward's Assistant.

A YOUNG friend of mine who lives in Cork, writes to tell me that he has a great desire to go to sea as a steward's assistant. He also compliments me on the excellence of our stories, for which I warmly thank him.

The steward's assistant corresponds in his position to the waiter on shore. His work, as a rule, covers a day of from fourteen to sixteen hours. He rises soon after 4 a.m., and if he is appointed to cabin duty, he proceeds to prepare the plate and material for the breakfast-table. Afterwards, his duty is to get coffee and so forth for the passengers, and to take it to them at any time from six to seven.

After that he goes into the main saloon to help lay the table for breakfast, and waits at table say from 8.30 to 10 o'clock. When breakfast is over, he turns his attention to cleaning the plates and dishes and so forth, or he takes a turn at bed-making, dusting the cabins, trimming the lamps, cleaning the lights, emptying the slops, cleaning the knives and forks, and so on.

Then comes lunch, when the same process goes on again, and after that—on big liners—preparations are made for late dinner, which is followed by more cleaning up.

The work is not so much of a hard nature, though the hours are long. My young friend will find at first, if he suffers from sea-sickness, or is not used to the movement of the vessel, that his work will cause him a good deal of trouble.

Sometimes an extra lurch of the vessel will send the whole lot of the crockery over on to the floor.

If he is an old hand, he may, after dinner, have an hour or so's leisure; but if his first voyage, he won't be able to take this, because he will be behindhand with his work.

After his work is finished—when everything is cleared away, washed up, and made ship-shape—he is at liberty to take his rest when he likes. To secure a position, my chum should personally apply to the chief steward aboard a liner stationed in any port or dock, or, failing this, should write to the shore purser of any of our big shipping companies.

Can He Go in for Cricket as Well as Swimming?

LEAGUE MEMBER 38,498 has written me an interesting letter, in which he asks me several questions in connection with sport. He says he is a member of a cycling club and of a swimming club, and he is desirous of taking up cricket as well this summer. He is fifteen years of age, and although very strong, enjoys good health. Now, somebody has told him that swimming loosens the muscles all over the body and that cricket hardens them, and my friend has fears that to attempt to excel at cricket, cycling, and swimming would be disastrous to him.

League Member has written to me for advice on the matter. Of course, I do not know who has given my friend his opinions on the value of various sports in the making of muscle, but it seems obvious to me that he knows little about the subject. If League Member wants my advice, he will go in for cycling, swimming, and cricket as often as he pleases. Not one of these pastimes will interfere with his progress in the other.

In each sport almost a different set of muscles are put into operation, and, provided that he does not overtax his strength, no harm could happen to him.

My friend can put aside altogether the consideration that swimming loosens the muscles of the body, and that cricket and cycling harden them.

The whole idea of exercise, whatever form it takes, is to increase the supply of blood to the muscles of the body, so that, on getting greater nourishment, they, of course, become larger and of stronger material. The only danger, as I have said, is through overtaxing one's individual strength.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

DAILY MAIL

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

SECTION 1.

The following clubs in the Leagues mentioned have been awarded BOYS' REALM Cricket Bats for the week ending May 18th:

BLACKBURN AND DISTRICT S.S. LEAGUE.

Anvil Street O.C.—Sec., Mr. J. Fecitt, 28, Wellfield Road, Blackburn.

DUNDEE & DISTRICT LEAGUE.

Belmont C.C.—Sec. (of League), Mr. J. A. Reid, 13, Bellefield Avenue, Magdalene Green, Dundee.

EAST LONDON CHURCH LEAGUE.

Holy Trinity C.C.—Sec., Mr. W. A. M. Ofield, 113, Mayfair Avenue, Ilford.

SUNDERLAND & DISTRICT LEAGUE.

St. Bede's Adult School C.C.—Sec., Mr. A. E. Pink, 50, Hastings Street, Sunderland.

SWINTON & DISTRICT LEAGUE.

Donisbro' C.C.—Sec. (of League), Mr. F. Phillips, Ebenezer Cottages, Swinton, near Rotherham.

ST. CLARE CUP CRICKET LEAGUE.

Stockwell Regina C.C.—Sec., Mr. H. A. Millington, 40, Sidney Road, Stockwell, S.W.

All the clubs who have up to now received bats are heartily pleased with them, and we publish below a letter which has reached this office from the delighted secretary of Taybank XI., a club affiliated to the Dundee and District League:

"Taybank XI. C.C.
"Brotchie Place, Broughty Ferry,
"May 11th, 1907.

"Dear sir,—I received the bat yesterday, and am more than delighted with it. We will use it to-day for the first time, and I hope it brings us luck. Again thanking you,

"I remain, yours sincerely,
"JOHN G. SMITH, Secretary."

SECTION 2.

Prizes of Cricket Bats have this week been awarded to the following Clubs:

JUNIOR DIVISION—WILTON C.C.

Sec., H. B. Gringer, 13, Wilton Road, Shirley, Southampton.

SENIOR DIVISION—STOKE STAR C.C.

Sec., W. Saville, 4, Wheeler's Row, Mount Street, Guildford, Surrey.

OUR SILVER CUPS.

A GRATEFUL LETTER FROM THE RECIPIENTS OF ONE OF THEM.

The following letter is to hand from the Nelson Villa F.C., champions of the Junior Division of Section I. of our Football League. We publish it here to show what good value THE BOYS' REALM is giving in presenting silver cups to cricket, football, and other athletic organisations.

THE SHEFFIELD NELSON VILLA CRICKET AND FOOTBALL CLUB.

Winners of "The Boys' Realm" Cup and Medals, 1906-7.

133, Fitzwilliam Street, Sheffield, May 17th, 1907.

My Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of the Cup won by this Club in the Junior Division of THE BOYS' REALM Football League.

I think the Cup is a "little beauty," and well worth striving for, and, on behalf of the Committee, I ask you to accept our heartiest thanks for the splendid trophy.

With all good wishes for the success of your papers,

I remain, yours truly,

WALTER S. KENT, Hon. Sec.

HISTORY OF CHORISTER JUNIORS F.C. WINNERS OF "THE BOYS' REALM" CUP (SENIOR DIVISION), 1906-7.

By BANDSMAN E. MORTIMER (Hon. Sec.).

The following is a brief account of how Chorister Juniors F.C. was formed, and how the club has progressed:

"In 1904 we had a few boys join our regiment from the different schools round about who had played football and were anxious to form a club. They clubbed together, and managed to get an outfit. Then they wanted a secretary to arrange matches for them, and to conduct the business of the club, and I was asked to undertake this work, and consented to do so.

"The first match I arranged for them they lost by 9 goals to nil; but this big defeat only urged them on to better things, and they made up their minds to beat the same team before the season was over. This they did to the tune of 4 goals to 1.

"They were so delighted with their success that they asked me to let them go into training. I used to take them out for training every morning before breakfast for a good walk, and finish up with a mile run. After breakfast they had their military duties to perform, and in the afternoon I used to take them on the football ground, and let the forwards play against the half-backs and backs in a practice match.

"The first season we played 26 matches—won 8, lost 4, drew 3. In the next season we played 24—won 20, lost 1, drew 3; and this last season we have had nothing but success in our 24 matches. The team are a lot of hard workers and are managed by a good committee. They have had to meet teams bigger than themselves, but they have never given in."

A FIRST CLASS PASSENGER

A Fine Long, Complete Camping-Out Story.

By ANDREW GRAY.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The Strange Appearance of Ebenezer F.

"SAY, boys, that's a real, smart, little dug-out you've got there!"

A skiff—as trim a creation in mahogany and cedar as could be found on the silvery Thames—was swinging restlessly on the swirling waters now filling Chertsey Lock.

The waterproof-covered packages which packed stem and stern, and the pots, jars, and kettles which peeped out here and there, showed that her crew of three were on a camping-out expedition.

Dick Challis and Jack Boucher were junior clerks in the employ of the same firm—the Suskosa Mexican Copper Syndicate, Basinghall Street; while Tony Tarrant was a medical student at St. Barnabas Hospital.

They were all keen river-hands, and for the past two years had spent their summer holidays on the beautiful Upper Thames, pitching and striking their tent, and going on their happy way like wandering Bedouins.

From the start they had prided themselves that their outfit was as spick and span as paint and neat packing could make it, and now this long-legged, shin-whiskered Yankee on the lock-side had hailed their craft as a "dug-out."

The three lads glared at him as if they could eat him, but he only smiled amiably down upon them.

"Beastly sauce! I've a good mind to hop out and ask him what the dickens he means!" grunted Tony, who had a medical student's love for a shindy.

Dick, however, gave him a punch with the butt of a scull, and hissed, "Dry up!"

"Why up he hanged!" said Tony savagely; but a second thud in the ribs showed that Dick was in earnest, and that he had some secret reason for taking the supposed slight "lying down."

Dick had been eyeing the stranger keenly as the boat rose slowly on the inrushing flood. He was trying to make up his mind where he had seen the man before. There was something strangely familiar about him, even about the sunkissed hair carried on his arm; and Dick was also conscious that whatever he knew about the stranger was not to the latter's credit. Beyond that point he was stumped for the moment.

"Good-morning!" he said, for lack of something better to say.

"Good-morning! I was reckoning that that was a real smart outfit of yours," repeated the Yankee, conscious that somehow he must have put his foot in it. "I 'spose you're going way up river—camping in the backwoods sorter thing?"

"Well, I don't know about the backwoods," laughed Dick. "The Thames from source to mouth is inclined to be a bit Piccadilly; but still, there are spots where one can pitch a tent, and we're jogging along from one to another quietly."

"Ah," sighed the Yankee, "it's tarnation fine sport, ain't it? I remember way back when me and Huck Mulberry and Silas Pugh, and three or four others, used to hump it up the old Concord, in Massachusetts. Gee whiz! They was times!"

He looked down with eyes so clear and envious that Dick almost decided that he must be mistaken in his suspicions of the man.

"I'm stuck here in this one-horse place for two mortal hours," he went on wistfully. "The blamed railroads in these parts don't amount to more than a truckway on a mining "dump" out West. I suppose you boys don't feel like giving cousin Jonathan a lift?"

"Where do you want to get to?" growled Tony Tarrant, getting ready to claw their way out of the lock with a bonthook.

"Waal, I'm going to Datchet, but——"

"You must have taken the wrong train, then."

"Reckon I did. That's why I'm landed here. If you could tote me as far as Staines, I hear it's on my road."

"With pleasure!" said Dick so promptly that the others stared at him.

It had just occurred to him where he had seen the stranger before, and he would not have lost sight of him now for worlds. Then he added under his breath:

"The brute! I wonder what his game is in this part of the world? Burglary, for a fiver!"

If ever a criminal walked into a trap open-eyed, the American did. He stepped into the skiff as blithely as a lark, deposited a dressing-bag in the stern, and waved "So-long!" to the lock-keeper.

"Say, this is a kinder purty, little ditch, this Thames of yours!" he volunteered, as he plumped himself down in the stern-sheets and surveyed the sunny meadows from under the tilted brim of his broad, felt hat.

Dick's suspicions received another jog as the American sat down beside him, for something hard in his pistol-pocket prodded him in the leg.

He made no sign, but when his attention was attracted elsewhere he gave the pocket a pinch, and found, as he suspected, that that something was a revolver.

The day promised to be exciting. Leisurely the boat nosed its way up stream to the running accompaniment of small talk from the Yankee. He was a long, raw-boned fellow, about fifty, with hard-bitten face, a grey moustache, and a tuft of imperial on the under-lip.

But he had merry eyes and a merry wit, and before long Tony's surliness had vanished, and Jack Boucher was in a state of perpetual grin. At Staines their passenger would have got out, but neither would hear of it.

"Yes, you'd better stop in the boat and let us take you to your journey's end," agreed Dick. "We'll make Datchet in another couple of hours, and if it's too late then to get to your destination—why, you can stop the night with us."

"Say, that would be bully!" said the Yankee eagerly. "You just have me, and the grass won't grow under my heels while I'm with you. Gee whiz! But it just reminds me of the old days on the Concord, and Huck and Silas Pugh. Ah, he's gone now, poor old hoss!"

"Rank humbug!" growled Dick to himself. "I wonder what you've got inside that bag? As neat a set of burglarious tools as ever fell into the hands of Scotland Yard, I'll wager! I'll watch you, my beauty. The only thing is, how am I going to give the other chaps the tip?"

He thought his chance had come at Bell Weir, but the lock-keeper sent them round by the boatslide, and in the work of running the skiff up the rollers all hands had to join, and the opportunity was gone.

Evening was drawing in now, and by the time Old Windsor Lock hove in sight it was growing dusk. A mile slipped away in the silence.

"We'll camp here in the old spot, I think," said Dick, looking over his shoulder at a meadow fringed with drooping willows. "I wonder if the big house is let yet? It wasn't when I came along here last in May."

"All the better for us if it isn't. Some of these new riverside nobodies don't cotton to campers, you know," explained Jack Boucher. "They keep bailiffs hanging round to turn you off, and the brutes generally wait until you've got your tent pitched and everything unpacked before they show their ugly noses."

"The durned pirates!" said the Yankee sympathetically. "I guess if anyone comes loping round us to-night we'll give 'em snuff! Where's the harm, anyway? Tain't as if we was going to saw down trees, or tear up rail-fences. Let's get right along in here. It's good enough, don't you think, gin'ral?" he inquired of Dick.

It was the very spot Dick had in his eye. The next minute they had run the boat's nose among the willows, and he was out on the bank making it fast stem and stern.

It did not take long before the tent was pitched and a spirit-stove going.

"What do you want to go mussing about with a ten-cent tinpot thing like that for?" demanded the American, staggering up with an armload of sticks. "Ain't you going to light a bang, slap-up fire. Why, there's cords of drift-wood just yelping to be burnt, and here you're fiddlin' around with a stove not fit to bile glue on."

"Well, landlords don't like camp-fires, for one thing," cried Dick.

"Landsakes alive! Who are those tarnation landlords, anyway?" cried the Yankee, commencing to build up a fire with the cunning of a backwoodsman. "Say, boys, you leave this to me. If any landlords come sticking their noses into this outfit, just refer 'em right along to yours truly, an' watch me handle 'em. Hallo, Slabsides! What may you be looking for?"

The last remark was addressed to a water-bailiff in velveteens, who had suddenly loomed into the circle of leaping firelight, and now stood over them.

"I'm looking for the likes of you, if you want to know!" was the surly response. "You're trespassing 'ere, so hoff you gets, an' sharp about it, if yer don't want ter get all yer——"

"Waal, I guess, now, if you was looking for the likes of me, you've come to the correct spot right off," drawled the Yankee. "You say we're trespassin'. Waal, if trespassin' means sitting on ten centaworth of grass and knocking a few holes in the ground, then I say the galoot who rigged up the laws of this played-out country ought to be made to bile 'em and eat 'em."

"Look 'ere, guv'nor——" blustered the man.

"And look'ee hyar yourself, sonny. I ain't a guv'nor, nor a judge, nor a colonel, nor even a major," said the Yankee, chipping in. "I'm jest a plain Amurrican citizen from way back, and I don't care no more for you an' your laws of trespass than I do for blowin' flies off a jam-pot."

"I've got my orders, an' I'm goin' to carry 'em out. You may be a Hottentot, for all I cares, but out you go off this meadder, or I'll 'ave to chuck you in the river. Now, then!"

Over went the Yankee into an open hamper containing the entire commissariat of the expedition. The basket bulged and burst, and the pair wallowed at death-grips amid the contents.

The bailiff pushed out his jaw in an ugly fashion, and spat on his hands.

"Say, Slabsides, tell me—who's your boss when he's at home?" drawled the Yankee calmly.

"That's my business; and don't call me Slabsides again, or I'll knock your nose into the day after to-morrer, as I tell yer!" bellowed the man savagely, squaring up to the American, who he evidently took to be the leader of the party. "Now, then, are you going, or are you ain't?"

"Waal, I guess, come to consider it, it's a case of 'are I ain't,'" said the Yankee quite coolly.

"Look here. One minute," interposed Dick, anxious to avoid a row if he could; but the bailiff had already charged at his enemy like a bull at a toreador.

It was dark except for the flames of the freshly-kindled fire, and the man, not seeing the frying-pan lurking treacherously in the grass, stumbled. The fall brought his nose in violent contact with the Yankee's fist, and Slabsides pitched on his hands and knees, with a howl of anguish. He remained there just long enough to draw his breath again, and get the miniature aurora borealis out of his eyes, and then he sprang up and flung himself at his antagonist with a roar.

Over went the Yankee, capsized by sheer weight into an open hamper containing the entire commissariat of the expedition. The basket bulged and burst, and the pair wallowed at death-grips amid shattering jam-pots, squashed tomatoes, broken eggs, and the remains of a battered veal-and-ham pie.

But the American, though underneath, was not vanquished. He strained like a wrestler and writhed like an eel. A series of wriggles brought him on top of his opponent. His hands sought a grip of the man's collar and pants, and with a herculean effort he bustled him into the river.

"I guess you'd better stay there awhile and cool yourself off, Slabsides," he said, scraping jam and butter from his clothes; while the bailiff floundered like a porpoise in the shallow water.

"All right, my cockalorum; you've done it now, you 'ave!" spluttered the man, as he clambered back on the bank. "I'm goin' off for 'elp, and then we'll see who's going in the river next. Jest you wait there till I come, that's all!"

"Why, sure. Jest bring your friends right along, an' we'll do our best to give 'em a real bully time. An', say, fetch your boss, too. I'd like to meet him. Tell him Ebenezer F——"

But the man had limbered out of hearing distance.

"Gee whiz! That was top-notch, wasn't it? An' better times comin', too!" said the Yankee, turning to the three chums, with a smile. "I wouldn't have missed this rustle-up for ten thousand dollars. It jest fits me down to the ground. But, say, what a mess we've made of your stores!"

"Seems to me if that chap brings half a dozen pals back with him there'll be a bigger mess on than you call it," growled Jack Boucher nervously.

"Waal, I calculate the best thing to do is to stuff as much grub down our necks as we can, and then it won't spile with water," drawled the Yankee. "But they ain't done with Ebenezer F. yet—no, by hooky! I've kept a score of such galoots at bay in my time, more'n once, and, gosh, I just feel like some more!"

Dick, with his mind fixed on Ebenezer's revolver, and from other information received, thought that this was quite likely. He was as savage at the bailiff's attack as was Tony, and Tony was boiling mad.

At the same time, Dick knew that this was one of the occasions when discretion was the better part of valour, and said so.

"What! Cut and run, and leave these brutes to chortle at our funk?" demanded Tony. "I'll see them and you hanged first, Dick! If they want trouble, they can summons us. I'm not going to be chucked off this place neck and crop, as if I was a common pickpocket. Let 'em all come, and I'll give 'em a few pot shots with the air-gun!"

"Gosh! That's the real talk!" said Ebenezer F. "Why, it reminds me of once when Huck Mulberry and me kept ten Greasers——"

"Oh, bother Huck Mulberry, and you, too!" snapped Jack Boucher, jumping up and roaming restlessly round the camp on the flank threatened by the enemy.

"Seems to me we're getting out of sorts jest a leetle. P'raps, if we sat down to a square feed we an' him got things shipshape, in case them galoots come prancing back——"

He paused in the middle of the suggestion with such a meek, apologetic look that Dick could not help laughing.

"I think you've right. Buck up, Tony! Come on, Jack! We'll get our supper first, and then discuss the pros and cons for retreat or defence afterwards."

The meal over, and there being no further signs of the discomfited enemy, the four reclined round the fire. Ebenezer F., for all the twenty yarns he spun that night, never took his keen eye off the line where danger threatened.

A silence fell on the camp at last. The night was warm and dry. The heat of the fire made all pleasantly drowsy, and they dragged their blankets over them and soon began to nod.

Dick lay watching the Yankee through half-closed eyelids, reviewing again and again the circumstances in which he had seen him before, the strange meeting which had brought them together once more, and wondering for

The bailiff pushed out his jaw in an ugly fashion, and spat on his hands.

"Say, Slabsides, tell me—who's your boss when he's at home?" drawled the Yankee calmly.

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A First-Class Passenger.

(Continued from the previous page.)

the life of him what to do and when and how to do it.

The man was armed; that was suspicious in itself. Then there was the bag. It had a metallic clank about it, suggesting tools and things, as Ebenezer F. stowed it away in the stern-sheets.

Dick had allowed himself to wander so far into the borderland between sleep and waking that, before he knew what had happened, drowsiness overcame him and he slept.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
Revelations and Surprises.

He awoke with a gasp, to find what at first took to be a small elephant seated on his chest. A more careful investigation showed that it was only their friend the water-bailiff, who had adopted this position while he issued orders to half a dozen invaders, who had rushed the camp without a blow being struck.

"Now, then, George, get that tent down sharp and chuck it in the river. Heave that stove in arter it, Bill, and that grub and stuff, too."

"You scoundrels!" gasped Dick, making a desperate struggle, which was also the signal for Tony and Jack to strike for liberty.

The bailiff, taken by surprise, tilted backwards on his head, and before he could grab his captive afresh, Dick was up and charging to the assistance of his comrades.

Tony had already got his man down, and was hammering him into a jelly; while Jack Boucher was having a more difficult task of it, for his opponent was none other than the village policeman.

A deft trip, however, quickly sent the bobby on his back; and Bill, who was busy pulling up tent-pegs, got a lift in the rear which made him think he had been hit by a pile-driver.

Before the invaders could rally for the attack the three chums had collected their forces round the tent, and Tony was flourishing an air-gun threateningly. Only then did they realise that there was no sign of Ebenezer F. The Yankee had disappeared.

"Stand back, there!" ordered Tony, as P.-c. Biffin showed a desire to advance to close quarters. "Stand back, or I'll give you such a stinger as'll make you sorry you ever came within ten miles of this place!"

"Here, stow that, Tony!" said Dick, knocking up the air-gun. "This matter is more serious than it appears, I believe. Look here, constable, we surrender; only sit down. I want to 'ave a talk to you first."

"An' I want to 'ave a talk to that long-legged Yankee wot chucked me in the river just now. I'll 'ave the law on 'im, I will. Where is 'e?" demanded the bailiff.

"That's just what I don't know, and what I want to talk to the policeman about, if you'll stop your silly row," said Dick. "To put it bluntly, I believe the chap's a burglar!"

"Eh?" gasped Biffin and foe.

"What the dickens makes you think that?" asked Tony, as soon as he had got over the first shock. "He seemed quite a decent sort, I thought."

Dick made no reply to this; but, routing round the baggage, fished out the stranger's dressing-bag.

"Hand over the sardine-opener, Jack," he said quietly. "Now, look here, bobby. I'm acting only on strong suspicion, but I'm going to ask you to see fair play if I am wrong. Hallo! The chap hasn't even taken the trouble to lock it!"

To Dick's surprise the catch had slid back, and the bag had opened. One glance at the contents, and his audience gasped again.

It contained an assortment of chisel-like tools of highly-tempered steel.

"Jemimies!" exclaimed P.-c. Biffin triumphantly, proceeding to drag a fat pocket-book from the recesses of a tail-pocket. "I arrest all 'ere for complicity and aiding and abetting some person unknown in a burglarious act."

"Wot me, too?" demanded the bailiff.

"No; o' course not, you ass. I mean these young individuals"—indicating the three chums. "Them and the other cove who ain't 'ere."

"Don't you think you'd better get hold of the 'other cove,' as you call him, first, instead of fooling about like this?" demanded Tony hotly.

"Young man, be kecrful," said the policeman. "I've got my eye on you, and anything you say now will be used in evidence agin you."

"Oh, bunkum!" retorted Tony. "Look here, Dick, out with it! You've got something up your sleeve. What makes you suspect this American to be a thief?"

For answer, Dick turned to Jack Boucher, his fellow-clerk in the Suskosa Mexican Copper Syndicate.

"Do you remember the night when the office was broken into, and £350 in cash stolen, to say nothing of other things?"

Jack Boucher's face became more puzzled than ever.

"That Yankee called the day before, and asked for Mr. Braithwaite, the managing director. He was out at the time, and so were you. After waiting ten minutes he said he would call again, and left, giving no name. He seemed to pry about a good deal, too, now I think of it. On the night of the burglary I passed him again at the corner of the street. We were late that evening, and the governor sent us off at last, saying we were to wait for him in the office."

"I remember," said Jack. "And I remember the man, too, now you come to mention it. I thought I had seen him before."

"Do you remember anything else? This machintosh he was wearing?" Dick held up the garment as he spoke.

"Why, that's the one that was hanging up in old Braithwaite's office! You don't mean to say he is the burglar?"

"Well, it looks like it, doesn't it? I never thought of him, curiously enough, until this minute. Moreover, he's armed. He carries a revolver."

"Revolver!" echoed the constable faintly. "Jemmies—revolver! I don't like the look o' this. You'll 'ave to come along with me, that's about it. Stand by, Jarvis, and you chaps! Knock 'em down! Give 'em no mussy if they makes a rush!"

Jarvis, Bill, and George's notion of standing by, however, was to take three quick paces to the rear and stop there, growling something about this being his business not theirs.

Meanwhile, the bobby, catching sight of Tony's air-gun, would like to have followed their example, but impelled by a strong sense of duty stood his ground.

"Don't you think," said Dick quietly, after a pause, "that instead of snarling here at one another like a pack of dogs, we had better skirmish round and see what our American friend is up to? Is there a house worth burgling in the neighbourhood?"

"House! Why, I should just think there is!" said P.-c. Biffin. "There's one over there the new tenant's just moved into; the one this meadder belongs to, too. What's the name of the gentleman agin, Jarvis?"

"Inskip," growled Jarvis nervously. "Ain't seen him yet myself, but they're coming down to-morrow. I heard 'e's got a lump of silver and valoosables in the 'ouse, too. You don't think that cove's down 'ere after them?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said the bobby thickly, gazing with gooseberry eyes in the direction of the dark clump of trees behind which the house lay hidden. "Ow did you gentlemen come across him? Mind, you ain't bound to give evidence, you know, to make a statement, but—well, I'm only warnin' you."

Dick told in a few words the story of their meeting.

"And now you come to think between you," he concluded, "that my friends and I are mixed up with the scoundrel. I'm going straight up there to scout round until I find him. If he's up to any hanky-pasky I want to catch him at it."

"Well, that sounds fair enough," admitted the bobby, very glad to find that he was not expected to tackle such a desperate character alone. "We'll all go, and, mind you, if he shoots, give fair warnin' for'ard."

The advice was obvious, but sound, nevertheless, and they started out. Dick was leading, Tony came second with the air-gun, and the policeman last.

"Sort of keeping a sharp eye out in case anything happened like," as he explained.

Proceeding on tiptoe through the clump of bushes, they halted when the shadowy outline of the house was revealed.

Here P.-c. Biffin suggested a strategical move by which the house might be surrounded, and relegated himself modestly to a post where little glory and less risk were to be obtained.

Tony and Dick made for the rear of the house, facing the river, for the long windows, which glimmered white in the shadows, they knew would afford the easiest point of entry for a burglar.

Between it and the river spread a velvety lawn, across which they would have to steal. They were just moving their minds to make the trip, when they saw a tall, thin figure emerge from the shadow of some bushes and stand looking up at the silent house.

It was Ebenezer F. He halted for a minute, then moved forward to one of the long windows, and seemed to try the catch. His hand went to his pocket. Evidently he was going to manipulate the fastening with a knife.

A few seconds' fumbling, and the window opened inwards, and Ebenezer F. slipped through.

Dick pressed Tony's arm as a signal, and began worming his way across the shadowy lawn on hands and knees.

Tony saw a light struck inside the room, then all was darkness again. Once more a match was struck, and, just as the two lads gained the corner of the wall, the gas was lit.

A faint noise at the far end of the house attracted their attention. A small mob of men was outlined dimly in the darkness, and in the midst of it a helmet bobbed.

The others had apparently come to the conclusion that the best way to surround the house would be for all to stick together in a bunch. Catching sight of the lighted window, they stopped dead.

"Come on; it's no use waiting for them," whispered Dick. "I'm going to make a rush for it!"

The window was open, and the Yankee's back was turned. He seemed to be about to open a desk with a bunch of keys.

Dick's rubber-soled boots made no sound on the soft carpet. With a swift leap he flung himself on the man, and with his knee forced him backwards.

"Say, what's this?" gurgled the Yankee, half shocked by Dick's arm. His hand flew to his hip pocket, but Dick shifted his knee in time to cover it.

"Quick, take his pistol!" he cried to Tony, who was dancing round pointing the air-gun threateningly.

The revolver was secured, and Dick flung the American from him and covered him with the gleaming barrel.

"Hands up!" he said. "We want you, and the police are outside. If you try to bolt, I'll put a bullet in you. Tony, fetch the others in."

"But, say——" exclaimed the American, in bewilderment; and then, as the frightened faces of the others filled the open window, burst into a roar of laughter.

"Oh, you can't fool me with laughing!" said Dick, a trifle nettled. "I suppose you'll pretend you've never seen me before to-day!"

"Wal, come to think of it, I calculate I have. I thought your phiz seemed familiar, but, bust it, I can't fix you nohow!"

A humorous incident from Andrew Gray's great new school tale now appearing in "The Boys' Herald"—1d. every Thursday.

"Oh, you can't—eh? Perhaps you've heard of the Suskosa Mexican Copper Syndicate?"

"I guess. Why, durn my skin, of course! You're the clerk that told me the boss was out."

"I was. The following night there was a burglary there."

"So there was. What next?" drawled the Yankee, still with a provoking smile.

"Nothing, except that you were seen hanging about in the vicinity of the office, and you were carrying to-day a mackintosh, which I know was hanging in Mr. Braithwaite's room. Suspicious circumstances, these by themselves, but when we find you breaking into the house of a gentleman who is not at home, to say nothing of your having this revolver and the bag of burglar's tools you left behind you in camp, I think there is enough evidence to justify your arrest. Constable, you had better take that man in charge."

The policeman licked his hands furtively, and blew out his cheeks; but, to everyone's amazement, the Yankee put his hand on an electric bell-push, and pressed the button. This struck them as a funny thing for a burglar to do.

"Go on, constable, that's only bluff. I've got him covered!" said Dick impatiently.

"Stay right where you are, officer, and save yourself the trouble. I ain't goin' to run jest yet. Fact is, as it's a sorter warm kinder night, I thought I'd order up some drinks to make things more sociable like."

A violent squeal from the upstairs regions, in response to the buzzing of the electric-bell, showed that the alarm was becoming general.

"Seem to have startled the hen-roost now, as well as the menagerie. Say you, you belong to this outfit, don't you?"—turning to Jarvis. "Just go and holler up them stairs, and say I want Mrs. Bilson to skip down when she's ready. An' tell him to fetch in them glasses, an' the key of the wine-cellar."

Jarvis turned purple with suppressed horror, and started to back the policeman through a two-foot wall.

"You ain't—you ain't—you ain't——" he gurgled, in choking tones.

"Ain't what?" demanded Ebenezer F.

"Ain't Mr. Inskip, the gent what's took this 'ouse?" murmured Jarvis faintly.

"Wnal. I thought I was; but if you'll fetch the housekeeper, I'll jest see. I'm getting sorter mixed myself. Won't you sit down, gents? If I ain't Inskip, and this ain't my house, after all—waal, we sha'n't be doing much harm, anyway."

It was Dick's turn to feel faint now. He put the revolver on the mantelpiece out of harm's way, and licked his lips. Jack Boucher had gone pink and green already.

"Are you Mr. F. F. Inskip, the millionaire—one of the directors of the Suskosa Mexican Copper Syndicate?" he gasped, in a voice which seemed to him like a distant steam whistle.

"Waal, I thought I was, but you've got me there again. Jest wait—— Hallo, here is Mrs. Bilson!" as the door opened and a frightened female pushed her head into the room.

"What, Mr. Inskip?" she cried, with a little hysterical flutter. "Why, I didn't expect you till to-morrow, sir! La, to think you should find everythink like this, with——"

Her eyes had been gradually taking in the motley mob filling the sumptuous dining-room, and when she caught sight of the policeman's helmet she broke down with a squeal of bewilderment.

As for Mr. Ebenezer F., he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Say, boys," he said, "I guess I'm mighty relieved to find I was myself, after all. Sit down, constable, and put your feet on the pianner if you will. This is a new shanty of mine, and I guess this is about time for a first-class house-warming. Go think that me, Ebenezer F. Inskip's, been twice taken for a burglar! Why, it would just make my old pard, Huck Mulberry——"

He stopped and shot a comical glance at Jack Boucher's miserable face.

"I forgot. My young friend here don't care for Huck, so we'll leave him outside. But, say, I've had a bully day, thanks to you young fellers, and I couldn't have wished to finish it up better than we're doin' to-night. Sit right down, Mr.——"

"Challis," said Dick. "This is Jack Boucher, also of the Suskosa, and Antony Tarrant of St. Barnabas Hospital. I'm sure we all tender our humblest apologies for this mistake, though the fault was mine. I was an ass——"

"An' was for watching the firm's interests? Gosh, but I think you've acted fine, young man. That's Ebenezer F. Inskip's partikler opinion, an' if he don't act up to it, an' pop in a good word for the pair of you, why, durn his hide, that's all I say. By the way, what became of all those mining-drills in that bag?"

"Drills? We thought they were jemmies!"

"Great rattlesnakes, well that do beat everything! An' to think when we started campin' on that meadow, and me talking about tarnation landlords and things, we was on my own patch of prairie all the time. Columbus, but I ain't laughed so much since—thar, I was goin' to say something about Huck Mulberry, but I won't."

Mr. Inskip, the copper millionaire, went off into another fit of mirth so hearty that even Jarvis, the bailiff, began to calm his fears and grin.

"It was only when I got smellin' round looking for the enemy, and fumbled slick upon the house, that I recognised it as the shanty I'd just took for the season," he continued, wiping his eyes. "I knew I was a day earlier than the hired gals was expecting me; but, getting sorter curious like, and everybody being in bed, I thought I'd jest step in and have a look round. Sakes alive, but this is a rum bizness; but here's the champagne and stuff. Have what you like, and I'll give you the toast of 'Home, sweet home.'"

P.-c. Biffin seemed to think this was a good opportunity to pipe up "For he's a jolly good fellow," and the audience chimed in, and capped it with three times three.

"Long life an' prosperity to Mister Inskip!" roared the bobby, waving his glass. "An' may he find 'is new 'ouse a 'appy 'ome for hever, an' no burglars to disturb 'is night's repose."

"Thanks-e, my friend," said the millionaire. "But do you know where I'd rather be to-night than in this place, big and cosy and pretty as it is?"

"Where's that, sir?" asked Dick.

"Why, sitting there by the camp-fire, with nothing but a blanket and the blue sky over me. I tell yer, the sight of them stars, and the smell of wood-smoke, just takes me back to days I wouldn't have missed for all the copper-mines in Mexico. Say, boys, will you take me along? I'll go on as cook and dish-washer, or anything you like."

"Rather!" echoed the three chums.

"Till the end of the trip?"

"Rather!"

"Say-e whiz, that's fine! Let's get right away now, and finish the house-warming outside."

The three chums have spent many a jolly holiday on the Upper Thames, but none so merry as that fortnight with Ebenezer F. He was as happy as a sandboy, and though his windmill method of rowing created some amusement in the fashionable reaches of the river, he was a host in himself.

To see Ebenezer F. Inskip, the copper millionaire, doing his shopping in an up-river village, with bundles of cauliflowers under his arm, and mutton-chops, jam, butter, and other necessaries stowed in his innumerable pockets, was a sight for the gods.

Nor did he forget to pop in a good word for Dick Challis and Jack Boucher at the office. Both got a rise in salary on their return, and those who know may state that Dick will some day be the London manager of the Suskosa; and that is a pretty big thing.

THE END.

(A Splendid Complete Story by A. S. Hardy will appear next week.)

A TALE OF NIPPER AT ST. NINIAN'S SCHOOL.

BY POPULAR

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 Das. 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.

Nipper and his chums have some fun at the expense of Dr. Stuart-Unwin, the headmaster of the Grammar School, and are only saved from serious trouble by the intervention of Lal.

The escaped convict from Greystones Prison falls over a cliff and is killed. On his body is found the gold locket which he stole from Lal, to whom it is now returned. Lal and Nipper decide on a hiding-place for it, but unwarned by them are overheard by Gardner, a pupil at St. Ninian's, who is in difficulties with a bookmaker in the village.

(You can read this week's instalment.)

"Forewarned is Forearmed."

ABOUT the same time as Bob and Lal set out to return to the school Nipper was seized with a virtuous desire to "tidy up" his desk and weed out all the old letters and papers for which he had no further use.

In the course of this proceeding he came across a pen-and-ink portrait of Stephen Copley, who, as already mentioned, was the leader of the fast set at St. Ninian's.

The portrait, which was really a grotesque and libellous burlesque—was the work of Bob, and had originally been intended for publication in the now defunct "Nipper's Weekly."

"Here's that caricature of Copley which Bob did for the 'Weekly,'" said Nipper, turning round and holding it up for the inspection of Wagstaffe and Dick. "You remember it? It's been kicking about in my desk ever since last term. Jolly good, isn't it?"

"Ripping!" said Wagstaffe. "I always thought it was one of the best things Bob ever did. What are you going to do with it?"

"Burn it, I suppose," said Nipper. "There's no good keeping it any longer, for we shall never publish any more numbers of the 'Weekly' now."

"It's too good to burn," said Wagstaffe. "If you don't want to keep the thing, put it in an envelope and send it round to Copley, with our compliments."

"Good idea!" said Dick. "Better still, give it to me, and I'll slip round to Copley's study and stick it in one of the photo-frames on his mantelpiece."

"Now?" said Nipper.

"Yes," said Dick. "Copley's just gone to the library—I saw him crossing the quad about half a minute ago—so his study will be deserted; and he never locks the door, except when he and his pals are playing cards."

"It's risky," said Nipper. "He'll flay you alive if he nabs you!"

"I'll chance it," said Dick. "Give me the paper, or Cop will be back before I start!"

He snatched the paper from Nipper's hand, and darted away. As he had surmised, the door of Copley's study was not locked, and the room was deserted.

Leaving the door an inch or two ajar, he glided across to the mantelpiece, and was in the act of removing one of the photographs from its frame, when he heard a murmur of voices in the corridor outside.

To his horror, he recognised one of the voices as Copley's, and he had barely time to drop on his hands and knees and crawl behind the couch ere the door was pushed open and Copley and Trott walked in.

"It's about Gardner," said Trott, continuing the conversation which they had begun in the corridor. "You know he's in a hole?"

"Yes," said Copley, closing the door. "He told me this afternoon that he owes Joe Fisher £5 10s., which he can't pay, and Fisher swears he'll go to the Head if the money isn't paid by Wednesday. He asked me if I could lend him a fiver, but I told him straight I couldn't. Has he been trying to borrow the money from you?"

"Yes."

"Did you lend it him?"

"I couldn't. I've only about a sovereign, and I owe Fisher a couple of pounds myself, though, fortunately, he isn't dunning me for it yet. I advised Gardner to go down and see him, and try to persuade him to wait a bit longer, and he went just after tea. He hasn't come back yet, so I don't know what has happened; but supposing Fisher refuses to wait?"

"And he will," said Copley. "I know Joe Fisher. He never threatens unless he means it. If the money isn't paid by Wednesday, he'll split to the Head as sure as we're standing here."

"And then?" said Trott.

Copley shrugged his shoulders.

"Gardy will be expelled, of course!" he said.

"Of course," said Trott. "But that isn't what I meant.

"What did you mean, then?"

"If Fisher goes to the Head," said Trott, "and tells him that Gardner has been betting with him, and won't pay up, what will the Head do? First of all, he'll send for Gardner, and ask him if there are any other fellows in the school who are in the habit of betting with Joe Fisher."

"Well?" said Copley, as Trott paused.

"Gardner is sure to be feeling pretty sick with you and me, because we wouldn't help him out of the mess," said Trott. "Out of spite, or revenge, or whatever you like to call it, he may tell the Head that we have been at the same game as himself, and then we'll be expelled at the same time as Gardner."

"You don't think Gardy would play us a low-down trick like that?" said Copley uneasily.

"Well, between you and me, I'm not so sure that he wouldn't," said Trott. "Anyhow, I'd rather not run the risk if it can be avoided. I've thought a lot about the matter since I spoke to him this afternoon, and I've come to the conclusion that, for our own sakes, we ought to help him out of the hole if we possibly can."

"If you mean I ought to lend him the money, I simply can't," said Copley. "Honour bright, I haven't got five pounds!"

"How much have you?"

"Two pounds and a few shillings."

"And I've a sovereign," said Trott. "If we could raise another two pounds the trick would be done."

"But how on earth are we to raise two pounds between now and Wednesday?" asked Copley.

"I've got a scheme, if you're willing to back me up," said Trott. "You know Das?"

Dick started, for "Das" was the name by which Lal was officially known at St. Ninian's, his full name being, as the reader may remember, Chota Lal Nath Chandra Das.

"Yes," said Copley.

"He has plenty of money!" said Trott, in a meaning voice.

"So has J. D. Rockefeller, if it comes to that;" said Copley flippantly. "But I don't see how——"

"Don't be so funny!" said Trott. "Give me time to explain. My uncle, as you know, is at present travelling in India. I had a letter from him the other day, in which he says he met Das's mother at some function in Simla, and she was awfully interested when she discovered that his nephew and her son were at the same school."

"But what——" began Copley.

"Wait a bit!" interrupted Trott. "My uncle told her I was a monitor, and a big pot at the school, and all that sort of thing, so she begged him when next he wrote to me to ask me to do what I could to help the brat, and make things pleasant for him."

"But what has all this to do with Gardner?" asked Copley.

"Well, what I thought was this," said Trott. "I might look up Das this evening, and tell him about my uncle's letter, and invite him to come round to my study for supper. After supper, you and Gardner might drop in, and by-and-by I'd propose a game of nap. The kid would be too flattered to refuse if we asked him to join in, and by playing into each other's hands we could easily rook him of two or three pounds before bed-time. We could then lend Gardner enough to settle up with Fisher, and everybody would be happy."

"Except Das!" said Copley, with a cynical laugh. "However, he won't be the first junior we've fleeced, and I don't suppose he'll be the last."

"Then you approve of my scheme?" asked Trott.

"Yes," said Copley, "if you can persuade him to come to your study—and it won't be easy, for Hamilton and Starling will do their level best to keep him out of your clutches—I'm willing to play my part in the game. You'll see Gardner, I suppose, and tell him. Hallo, there's the bell for call-over! Come along!"

The two young scoundrels left the room, and hurried down to the big dining-hall. As soon as their footsteps had died away Dick crawled from behind the couch, and followed their example.

He had forgotten all about the caricature now. His only thought was to tell his chums of the dastardly plot he had overheard, and to warn Lal of the trap that was being prepared for him.

By that time Bob and Lal had returned to the school, and were in the hall, with Nipper and Wagstaffe, when Dick arrived. Needless to say, he had no chance to speak to them until call-over was ended; and even when the five chums reached their study, Dick had to wait until Lal had described how he and Bob had met the chief warder in the village, and how the chief warder had given him the locket which had been found in the convict's stocking.

"There was a note from the governor with the locket," said Lal. "Here it is. As you see, he advises me to send the locket to the bank, or else to hide it in some secret place. I thought of hiding it under that loose board behind Nip's desk. What do you chaps think?"

Nipper alone expressed the opinion that the bank would be safer. The others were enthusiastic in their approval of Lal's idea, and after each of them had taken a solemn vow of secrecy, the young Hindoo rolled back the edge of the carpet, prised up the loose board in the flooring-board, and slipped the locket underneath.

"And now for prep.," said Nipper, getting out his books.

"Half a mo'!" said Dick. "I've something to tell you before we start prep."

He described the scene in Copley's study, and repeated the conversation he had overheard. His voice vibrated with indignation and contempt, and his scorn was fully shared by Nipper, Bob, and Wagstaffe. But Lal merely chuckled softly to himself, and smiled a seraphic smile.

"Beautiful!" he murmured. "The spiders and the fly! The wolves and the lamb! The hawks and the pigeon! Lovely, isn't it? Absolutely sker-ump-shus!"

"Disgusting, I call it!" said Nipper. "They're no better than common cardsharpers! It makes one feel ashamed to be a Ninianite to think that such rotters are at the school! Just think what might have happened if Dick hadn't heard their dirty plot!"

"And then think what is going to happen now!" said Lal, with delightful naïvety. "You won't go, of course?" said Bob. "Forewarned is forearmed."

"Exactly!" said Lal. "Forewarned is forearmed, and therefore, my beloved pals, I shall go like a lamb to the slaughter!"

His four chums stared at him in mystified bewilderment.

"You don't mean that you'll accept Trott's invitation?" gasped Nipper.

"I do!" chuckled Lal. "I wouldn't miss that card-party to-night for twenty pounds! They're going to fleece me, are they? They're going to rook me of at least two pounds? Well, well! Excuse my emotion!"

He rocked himself to and fro in a perfect transport of unholy joy.

"What's the idea?" demanded Nipper. "You've got something up your sleeve, I can see!"

"I shall have something up my sleeve to-night!" grinned Lal. "In fact, I shall have several things up my sleeve to-night, including one or two aces, and two or three kings!

"Have you ever seen me juggle with cards?" he continued. "No! Of course you haven't! Neither has Trott! Neither has Copley! Neither has Gardner! But before we've fought—at least, they won't see me do it, but it will be done! And so will they! Oh, yes! They'll see some card-playing to-night that will astonish them!"

The chums burst into a chorus of gleeful shouts. At last they understood what he was driving at. He had already given them some hair-raising examples of his ability as a conjurer, and he now proposed to employ this talent as a means of turning the tables on his would-be "rookers."

"It's great—absolutely great!" chuckled Nipper, hugging himself with delight.

"The loveliest spoof I ever heard of!" said Dick.

"Of course, you won't keep any money you win?" said Bob.

Lal looked at him reproachfully.

"What do you take me for?" he said, in an aggrieved voice. "Of course I shan't keep their money; but the cads deserve to be taught a lesson, and I mean to teach 'em one they won't forget in a hurry."

Whilst he had been speaking, Dick had opened a drawer and had fished out a printed card. It was a list of football fixtures, about the same size as a playing card.

"Show us how you make a card disappear up your sleeve," he said, "and how you bring it down again without being detected."

Lal held out his hand for the card, and the moment his fingers closed on it, it disappeared.

"By Jove! That was smartly done!" said Dick admiringly. "The card is up your sleeve now, is it?"

Lal laughed, and shook his head.

"No," he said, "it's in Wog's pocket!"

"I'll swear it isn't!" exclaimed the fat boy.

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and lo, the card was there!

"And now we'd better be getting on with prep.," said Lal quietly.

The Card-Party.

IN accordance with the plan he had unfolded to Copley, Trott interviewed Lal at the end of prep., showed him his uncle's letter, and invited him to come and have supper with him.

Lal, pretending to be greatly flattered, accepted the invitation, and followed Trott to his study. At the conclusion of the meal, Trott's fag cleared away the supper things, and a moment or two later Copley and Gardner strolled in.

Trott introduced Lal to the seniors; then he locked the door, and turned to the young Hindoo.

"Copley and Gardner and I usually have a hand or two at cards before we go to bed," he said, with an impressive wink. "It's against the rules, of course; but then, as somebody once said, rules are only made to be broken. Will you join us, or would you rather look on?"

"What do you play?" asked Lal.

"Nap, as a rule," said Trott.

"I'm afraid I don't know much about the game," said Lal.

"Oh, you'll soon pick it up!" said Trott. "It's very simple. You deal out five cards each, and when all the players have looked at their cards, the player on the left of the dealer calls out how many tricks he thinks he can win. For instance, if he thinks he can win three tricks, he calls 'Three.' If he thinks he can win all the tricks, he says 'Nap.' If he thinks he can't win any, he says 'Pass.'

"It is then the next player's turn to call. If he doesn't think he can win more tricks than the first chap called, he says 'Pass.' If he thinks he can win more, he calls out the number he thinks he can win. For example, if the first chap called 'Three,' and the second fellow thinks he can win four, he calls 'Four.'

"It is then the next player's turn to call, and then the next, and so on round the table, till every player has either called or passed. The one who calls the highest number starts the game by leading one of his cards, and the others try to beat him. If he wins as many tricks as he called, the others have to pay him whatever stake has been agreed on. If he fails to win as many tricks as he called, he has to pay the others. The cards are then shuffled and dealt out for a fresh hand, and the same process is repeated."

"It seems a bit complicated," said Lal, "but I dare say I shall soon get into it."

"Then you'll play?" said Trott eagerly.

Lal nodded, and, without any further parley, Trott produced a pack of cards, and the four boys seated themselves at the table, Lal having Copley on his left, and Trott on his right, and Gardner in front of him.

"What shall the stakes be?" asked Trott, as he shuffled the cards—"threepence a trick, with half-a-crown for nap if you get it, and eighteenpence if you lose?"

"I'm willing," said Copley and Gardner, in the same breath.

"So am I," said Lal.

"Then cut for deal," said Trott. "Lowest deals."

He spread out the pack on the table, and each boy drew a card. Lal happened to draw the lowest—it was an ace, which he quietly palmed, and afterwards slipped up his sleeve—and then the cards were accordingly handed to him to shuffle and deal.

The three seniors winked at each other as they noted the clumsy and apparently inexperienced way in which Lal shuffled the cards. Little did they guess that whilst he was fumbling with the cards he was occasionally dropping one on the floor, he was skilfully abstracting a useful assortment of aces and court cards, some of which he hid up his sleeve, and others of which he arranged in a certain order at the top of the pack!

"You've shuffled 'em enough now," said Copley presently. "Give 'em to Trott to cut."

Lal pushed the pack in front of Trott, who divided it into two heaps. It was then Lal's duty to place the heaps together, by placing the lower half of the cards on the top of what had previously been the upper half. This, of course, would have disturbed the order in which he had arranged the cards; so when he joined the two heaps together, he kept the end of his thumb between them; and then, by "making the pass"—a trick well known to conjurers—he brought the lower heap to the top, and so restored the cards to their former order.

"Now deal out five apiece, beginning with me," said Copley.

Lal dealt the cards, and the four boys picked up their hands and examined them.

"Pass!" growled Copley, whose hand was composed of four twos and a three!

"Pass!" grunted Gardner, who had three threes and two fours!

"Pass!" echoed Trott, scowling at two fours and three fives.

"Dear me!" cooed Lal, in a voice of childlike wonder. "What awfully rotten hands you fellows must have! I've got rather a good hand. At least, I think it's rather good; but perhaps I don't understand the game. However,

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

(Continued from the previous page.)

I think I'll risk—let me see—yes, nothing venture, nothing win! I'll go nap! Do I play my cards one at a time, or all together?"

"One at a time," said Trott. "Of course, if you have five certain tricks in your hand, you can lay all your cards down at once."

"Like that, do you mean?" said Lal, laying down his cards, and displaying the ace, king, queen, and knave, and ten of diamonds. "Are those what you call five certain tricks?"

The three confederates exchanged disgusted glances.

"Yes, that's good enough for nap!" growled Trott. "That's half-a-crown apiece we owe you."

He pushed his stake across to Lal, and Gardner and Copley followed suit. Lal then pretended to replace his cards on the pack; but instead of doing so, he "palmed" them, and added them to the cards already up his sleeve.

"It's your call now, Gardy," said Trott, when the cards had been shuffled and dealt afresh. "How many are you going?"

"Three," said Gardner.

"Pass!" said Trott.

"Pass!" said Copley.

"Hold on!" said Trott. "It's Das to call before you. Are you passing, too, Das?"

"I don't think I ought to," said Lal. "It seems to me that it would be wicked to pass with a hand like this. Of course, I don't know much about the game, but—well—really, don't you know, I think I'll go nap again."

"Nap again!" snarled Copley.

"Yes," said Lal. And he laid down on the table the ace, king, queen, and knave of clubs, and the ace of diamonds.

Copley muttered something under his breath which evoked a warning "Ssh!" from Trott. Gardner glared at Lal as though he meditated strangling him.

"Yes; that's nap again!" said Trott. "What luck you have! That's another half-crown apiece we owe you!"

"I like this game!" murmured Lal, as he picked up the money and added it to his former winnings, which he had placed on the table at his elbow. "It's a ripping game! That makes fifteen shillings I've won in less than five minutes! Who deals now?"

"I do," said Gardner, gathering up the cards, and not perceiving that Lal had "palmed" his cards again.

He shuffled the cards and dealt them. As soon as Copley picked up his hand, he shot a triumphant glance at Trott, and favoured Gardner with a complacent wink. At last he had a really good hand.

"A certain nap, if Trott and Gardner only back me up!" he muttered to himself.

"Now then, Trott; it's your call now!" he said aloud. "How many are you going?"

"Three, at a venture!" said Trott.

"And you, Das?" said Copley. "Do you pass?"

Lal glanced up from his cards and surveyed his fellow-players with a bland and engaging smile.

"This is most remarkable!" he said. "I'm quite ashamed of my extraordinary luck; but—but I shall really have to go nap again!"

Copley nearly had a fit. Gardner gazed at Lal in blank dismay. Trott groaned aloud.

"Nap again!" he gasped.

"Well, I think it's nap," said Lal sweetly. "Shall I lay my cards down on the table?"

"No!" roared Copley. "I'll go Blucher!"

"Blucher!" said Lal innocently. "Whatever is that?"

"He means," said Trott, "that he'll go nap himself and double the stakes. That is to say, if he wins all five tricks, we'll have to pay him five shillings each, instead of half-a-crown; and if he loses, he'll have to pay us three bob apiece."

"Well, can't I double the stakes again, and go nap myself?" asked Lal.

"Yes," said Trott, somewhat reluctantly. "That's what we call going Wellington."

"But you won't go Wellington, of course?" said Gardner anxiously. "If you lose, you'll have eighteen shillings to fork out between the three of us."

"And if I win?" said Lal.

"We'll have to pay you ten shillings each," said Gardner.

"Then I'll go Wellington," said Lal calmly. "Can anybody go anything higher? No? Then here are my cards—ace, king, queen, knave, and ten of spades! I don't know much about the game," he added, with a winning smile, "but I've a sort of notion that nobody will be able to beat that little lot. How much did you say you had to pay me—ten shillings each?"

Copley staggered to his feet, purple in the face with rage and chagrin.

"I won't pay!" he shouted.

"Neither will I!" said Gardner, also springing to his feet.

As a matter of fact, Gardner couldn't pay. He had only had ten shillings to start with, and as he had already lost five, it was obvious that he could not pay another ten.

"Sit down, you fools!" said Trott angrily. "Do you want to spoil everything? This can't go on for ever. The kid has had phenomenal luck up to now, but it's bound to change before long. Sit down, and let's go on with the game."

Copley and Gardner sullenly resumed their seats, and after Trott had lent Gardner five shillings to pay his debt to Lal, the cards were shuffled and dealt again.

"Now, Das, it's your first call this time," said Trott. "How many are you going? Not nap again, I hope!"

"Yes," said Lal; "nap again. And if anybody goes Blucher, I'll go Wellington!"

Copley flung down his cards in a frenzy of rage, and once more leaped to his feet.

"He's cheating!" he cried. "He must be cheating! Nobody could have such luck as that unless he were cheating!"

"Quite true," said Lal calmly. "I've been cheating all the time!"

If a bombshell had exploded in the room it could hardly have created a greater sensation.

"You—you've been cheating!" gasped Trott.

"All the time!" said Lal. "See!"

He shook his arm over the table, and a shower of cards fluttered out of his sleeve.

Ere his three companions had time to recover from their stupefaction he rose to his feet and confronted them, with flashing eyes and quivering nostrils.

"I'll give you a tip," he said, in accents of biting scorn. "The next time you're hard up for money, try pocket-picking, for a change. It isn't half such a dirty game as the one you meant to play to-night. For my own part, I'd rather pick a pocket any day than try to rook one of my schoolfellows of his money!

"You low, contemptible cads!" he cried, his indignation blazing out. "Do you think I don't know why you invited me to play cards with you to-night? You meant to fleece me, to play into each other's hands, and share the plunder. But it hasn't come off, you see! The pigeon has refused to be plucked. He has beaten you at your own game. And now—"

He picked up the cards with one hand, and his winnings with the other.

"I'll wish you good-night!" he said. "Oh, you needn't be alarmed! I'm not going to keep your money, as you would have kept mine if you had won! Here it is!"

He flung the money in their faces, tossed the cards into the fire, and was through the door and halfway down the corridor before they realised that he had gone.

A Visit to the Black Lion.

As the scheme for "rooking" Lal had ignominiously failed, and as no other method of raising the money presented itself, Gardner had no alternative but to resort to his original plan of interviewing Joe Fisher and trying to persuade him to wait a little longer for his five-pounds-ten.

As the reader may remember, he had told the bookmaker's wife that he would call again about six o'clock on Tuesday evening. About half-past five, therefore, after swallowing a hasty tea, he donned his cap and overcoat and set out for the Black Lion.

Shortly after leaving the school he espied a wooden-legged figure, stumping along the snow-clad road, about twenty yards ahead. Gardner recognised him at a glance.

It was Sergeant Quiggin, the retired Army veteran who had taken such a prominent part at the meeting in the Mechanics' Institute.

"Good-evenin', sir!" said the sergeant, when Gardner overtook him. "Rather better weather, ain't it?"

"Yes," grunted Gardner, who was not in a conversational mood.

He made as if he would pass the sergeant, but the latter was not to be shaken off in that summary fashion.

"I 'ope it'll be as fine as this to-morrow," he said, quickening his pace. "We're 'oldin' an open-air meetin' in the market-place to-morrow, you know."

"Who?" asked Gardner.

"Me and Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Boswell," said the sergeant, swelling with importance. "You know, of course, as Mr. Boswell is standin' for the County Council, and Dr. Stuart-Unwin, that worm at the Grammar School, is opposin' 'im?"

"Now you mention it," said Gardner, "I did hear something about it. But I don't take any interest in politics."

"Aven't you seen Mr. Boswell's election address?" asked the sergeant.

"No," said Gardner. "And I don't want to!" he added, under his breath.

"It's gorgeous!" said the sergeant enthusiastically.

Suddenly he let out a roar of fury which well-nigh startled Gardner out of his senses.

Whilst the sergeant had been speaking, they had turned the corner into the road which ran down to the village. On the left-hand side of this road, just round the corner, were two or three farm-buildings, including a barn.

The end of this barn, which abutted on the road, was plastered with advertisements. Amongst them, about ten or twelve feet from the ground, was a large copy of Mr. Boswell's election address, which Sergeant Quiggin himself had posted up that very afternoon. And the first thing the sergeant saw when he turned the corner, was a bill-sticker in the act of covering up the poster with a large yellow bill, on which was printed, in big black letters, "Vote for Stuart-Unwin!"

The bill-sticker, who was mounted on a ladder, turned his head when he heard the sergeant's roar, and grinned from ear to ear.

The sergeant stumped across the road, quivering with rage and indignation.

"Pull that bill off!" he roared, shaking his fist at the grinning bill-sticker.

The bill-sticker dipped his brush into the bucket of paste, which was suspended by a hook from one of the upper rungs of the ladder.

"Go away!" he murmured, shaking the brush and sprinkling the sergeant with a shower of paste. "Go away, little boy! I'm busy!"

"Come down!" yelled the sergeant, dancing with rage. "Come down, an' let me wipe the floor with you!"

"If yer want me, come up an' fetch me!" retorted the bill-sticker, turning round on the ladder and brandishing his brush.

Sergeant Quiggin, having only one leg, was unable, of course, to accept this invitation. Foaming at the mouth, he seized the ladder with both hands and gave it a violent shake. His intention, no doubt, was to compel the bill-sticker to descend; but the only result of the shaking was to dislodge the bucket, which gracefully canted over and deluged him from head to foot with slimy paste.

This was the last straw. Bellowing like a bull, the infuriated sergeant made a desperate attempt to mount the ladder. His wooden leg, however, slipped through the rungs, and whilst he was struggling to regain his foothold the ladder slid sideways across the road, and the next instant he was lying on his back, with the ladder and the bill-sticker on the top of him.

What happened after that Gardner did not wait to see. Laughing heartily, in spite of his depression, he hurried off to the village, and presently reached the Black Lion.

Joe Fisher was at home, and interviewed Gardner in the little room at the back of the public-house, which was known as the snuggery. These two men we shall have to describe, and the next instant he was lying on his back, with the ladder and the bill-sticker on the top of him.

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Joe Fisher was at home, and interviewed Gardner in the little room at the back of the public-house, which was known as the snuggery. These two men we shall have to describe, and the next interview. It is enough to say that the bookmaker refused to listen to any suggestion of delay.

"I've waited for my money long enough; it was his ultimatum. "I can't live on promises, and unless that money's paid here to-morrow night I goes to Dr. Shuttleworth."

It was in vain that Gardner pleaded for more time, and offered to pay an exorbitant rate of interest.

At half-past six, half crazy with despair, Gardner left the Black Lion and set out to return to St. Ninian's. At the end of the street he was overtaken and accosted by a tall, thin man, in a fur-lined coat, with sandy hair and a flaxen moustache.

It was Otto Heinrich. He had been in the Black Lion when Gardner had arrived, and through the half-open door of the snuggery he had overheard the whole of the conversation between Gardner and Fisher.

"Pardon me, may I have a word or two with you?" he said, when he caught up to Gardner.

Gardner eyed him somewhat coldly.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," he said stiffly. "I do not remember to have met you before."

"We have never met before, so far as I know," said Heinrich. "But I was in the Black Lion just now, and I—er—well, I couldn't help hearing something of what took place between yourself and the landlord."

Gardner flushed to the roots of his hair.

"And I thought perhaps I might be of some assistance to you," added Heinrich, before Gardner could speak.

"If I understand the situation aright," continued the German, "you have been betting with Mr. Fisher, and owe him five-pounds-ten. You have asked him to give you time to pay, as you have not the money at present, but he declares that he will appeal to your headmaster if the money is not paid by to-morrow night. Is that so?"

"Yes," said Gardner, in a low voice.

"It will be a very serious matter for you, I suppose, if your headmaster learns that you have been betting?"

"I shall be ruined," said Gardner bitterly. "It is a strict rule at St. Ninian's—to which there is no exception—that any boy who is found guilty of betting is instantly expelled."

"And is there no hope of your being able to find the money before to-morrow night?" asked Heinrich.

"Not the slightest," said Gardner.

"Then I will find it for you," said Heinrich. "I will lend you five pounds-ten, and you can pay me back whenever it is convenient."

Gardner could hardly believe his ears. For a moment he gazed at the German in speechless amazement.

"You, a perfect stranger, will lend me five pounds ten?" he said, in an incredulous voice.

"I will," said Heinrich.

"Oh, how can I ever thank you?" cried Gardner, seizing the German's hand, and struggling hard to keep back the tears of relief and gratitude that welled up into his eyes.

"Don't thank me yet," said Heinrich, in a meaning voice. "Wait until you have heard my conditions."

At the word "conditions" Gardner's face fell.

"Your conditions?" he repeated. "What do you mean?"

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

"GETTING HIS OWN BACK!"

A COMPLETE ATHLETIC STORY BY A.S.HARDY

As they reached the ninth hurdle Gridley uttered a curious cry, then toppled over and lay still. He had run himself right out.

O.D.

The Sports' Ground at Kendleton—Hurdle and Jumping Practice—Gridley Receives a Shock—The Letter—A Mean Trick—The Snake in the Grass.

"BY George! Can't young Randle shift!"

Philip Askew, captain of the school, opened his eyes wide with surprise as he stood in the playing-fields attached to Kendleton College and watched a youngster practising over the hurdles which had been set up upon the grass plot that was encircled by the quarter-mile cinder-track, upon which to-morrow's races were to be run.

Jack Randle, a finely-built young athlete, who had only done fair work in the field events as a junior in previous years, now promised to make it very warm for the best of the seniors; and the way in which he cleared the hurdles, with his knees and legs drawn up in orthodox style, and his body just topping the timber by a few inches only, to say nothing of his expert three strides in between each obstacle, as he ran the full course of 120 yards without a fault, sprinting in to the finish like lightning, showed he would be hard to beat, and as he watched the youth Philip Askew's face grew radiant with delight.

"Gridley," he said, addressing a tall, well-built, swarthy, and rather surly-looking senior who stood at his side, "I don't think you will have it all your own way to-morrow. Young Randle has been lying low, and doing all his practice on the quiet, exactly as his brother Harry used to do, you remember. Who on earth would have thought he could hurdle like that? You know how much practice it requires before you can top all your timber clean as a whistle, with never a falter in your stride?

"I reckoned you were going to win the prize given to the crack athlete of the school in the sports to-morrow, Gridley; but I'm hanged if I'm so sure about it now. From what I've seen this morning, young Randle will beat you in both the hurdles and the long jump. These were events in which you seemed certain of firsts. Then, if Manning beats you in the mile, and I take the quarter, as I think I may, and Ambrose collars the half, in which either you or I ought to finish second, it will be a mighty close call.

"Manning will win the four miles, the hammer, and perhaps the weight, too; whilst Ambrose will win the high jump. It's a puzzling proposition. If you could have won the hurdles and the long jump, the second to the other events would have done the trick for you. You were runner-up last year, when Randle, senior, went down. It seems you'll fail in your ambition again, after all, Gridley, as this is your last term. I'm deuced sorry, old man."

Gridley smiled. It was a rare, artificial, treacherous smile, and it but ill-disguised the grasping, crafty, selfish, mean nature of the man.

His feelings as he watched young Randle, and realised that, after all, the boy might put him second-best athlete of the school for that year instead of first, were of a complex character. Envy, rage, hatred, jealousy all had their part.

Why the deuce hadn't this boy shown his form before? He—Gridley—then could have taken more care over his preparation. He had looked upon the long jump and the hurdles as his, however.

How was he to guess that since last year Randle, who had then done badly in the junior events, would improve out of all recognition?

"It's his brother, Harry Randle, has put him up to all this!" muttered Gridley angrily. "He's been coaching him during the holidays, and taught him all his own cunning at hurdling and jumping."

"Well, I don't see any reason why he shouldn't," said the captain quickly. "Hang it all, Jack's his own brother, and it's a pity if a man can't show fraternal affection sometimes. I know you haven't much of it to spare, Gridley."

This was a home-thrust at Gridley, whose younger brother had come to the college that term, and had been promptly seized upon by the surly Gridley, and converted into his fag.

The two scarcely ever spoke to each other, and there were strange rumours about that Gridley bullied his younger brother as no other fag in the school had ever been bullied since the foundation-stone was laid.

Gridley sneered.

"To-morrow's sports are not over yet," he said, with a bitter smile. "Much may happen, and that young ass Randle will tire himself out and be as stiff as blazes if he goes on showing off like that much longer."

Jack Randle was at long-jump practice now, and his first attempt was a very fine one, looking, as far as Philip Askew could judge from that distance, to be something in the nature of a school record. Anyway, Askew, who was no mean long-jumper himself, reckoned that he could not have got the distance, no matter how he tried.

He hurried down to see the jump measured, and Gridley, with an added sense of fear in his heart, muttered an oath as he strode off in the direction of the schoolhouse.

Why should these Randles always be crossing his path, he wondered, and upsetting his plans?

If only he could put it out of Jack Randle's power to take part in the sports to-morrow, the hurdles and the long jump would be a certainty for him. But there was nothing likely to happen.

To be beaten by young Randle in the events that he had looked upon as absolute certainties for him was a thought that caused him untold agony. He hated the Randles as he had never hated anyone else in his life. He had tried to force young Randle to fag for him when the youngster first came to Kendleton, and the hiding that Harry Randle had administered to him in the desperate fight in the Fives Court in consequence still lingered in his memory as the bitterest experience of his college days.

The prestige that he had lost over that defeat had never quite been restored, though he had had an easier time since Randle, senior, went down. Gridley always wanted to be "cock of the walk."

Whether he achieved the position by fair means or foul was immaterial to him. His father had brought him up to look upon success, no matter how achieved or how unprincipled the methods were that brought it about, to be the one great object of existence. He must be crack athlete of the school before he left, or he would have nothing to gas or brag about when he left, for he was not clever enough or industrious enough to make any mark in his studies. Philip Askew would come out top of the school there.

"Hang the brat!" muttered the bully, for bully Gridley was like all other unscrupulous men. "I've got to beat Randle somehow."

He entered the schoolhouse, and at once almost ran into the arms of Jenkins, the odd man, who was sorting a whole budget of letters just arrived by the post prior to placing them in the letter rack.

"Any for me, Jenks?" asked Gridley.

"No, sir," answered the odd man sourly, for he did not like the big, blustering, conceited schoolboy.

Jenkins had a blue envelope of unusual shape in his hand now.

"That's for young Randle, isn't it?" asked Gridley, his eyes lighting up with a cunning expression.

"Yes, Mr. Gridley."

"All right; give it me. I'm going out to the playgrounds at once. He told me he was expecting an important letter from home. I'll give it him now."

The odd man looked at the Upper Sixth Form boy for a moment in doubt, then gave him the letter. Gridley walked away whistling; but he had no sooner got outside the schoolhouse, and also out of Jenkins's sight than he walked rapidly round the building, through the smaller door that led to his own set of rooms, and was soon inside them.

"It's from Randle, senior," he muttered, looking at the letter. "I expect he's got something to say to the youngster about to-morrow's sports. I'd like to know what it is."

Gridley was not the kind of youth to resist any sort of temptation, and after easing his conscience by degrees he presently lit the little gas-stove on which his meals were prepared, and placed upon it a kettle full of water.

In a few minutes the steam issued from the spout, and by means of this he soon had the envelope open. Then he carried his prize to the window, and began to devour the contents. They were of a nature to surprise him.

"My dear old Jack," the late captain of Kendleton said. "To-morrow you will be doing your best to win the hurdles and the long jump, and uphold the prestige of our name at the old school. I know, old man, from what you have told me, and what I saw of your improvement in hurdling and jumping when you were home last term, that you won't go far short of winning; but I should like to impress upon you the value of never underrating your opponents, which Gridley is sure to do." (Gridley's face paled with anger as he realised the absolute truth of this.) "You are going to win, dear old Jack, for my sake, and the pater's, for you know how keen he is on you doing well for our name's sake."

Here followed three pages of news about home and domestic matters, and much talk on Harry's part about himself.

"And now, my dear old man," Randle senior went on, as the letter approached its finish, "I should like you to run over in the morning before the sports are held, there being no school that day, and give the little note I enclose to Mary Boyde. She is expecting it. I don't want it to go through the post, because her mother has a dislike for me, thanks to Gridley, and might not give it her. You know how I love her. I have told my dad all about it, and he sees no reason why, if I do well during the next few years, I shouldn't marry her if we are still of the same mind. I know she loves me.

"It's not quite a schoolboy topic I am on now, because you are too young to think about girls yet, but I know you will sympathise with me, old man. Go by the short cut through the wood, where we used to trespass in the days when I was at Kendleton. When you get to the old gamekeeper's shed, go into it, and in the right-hand corner, from the door, you will find a loose piece of board in the flooring. Raise it up, and put the letter beneath. That is how I used to get my notes to Mary in the old days.

"You can cover the board over with litter when you have put the letter there. She'll get it right enough. I know I can trust you to do this, Jack. Take care that young cub of a brother of hers doesn't see you. He's a sneak, and a toady of Gridley's! He'd find the letter and tear it up. God bless you, old man, and mind you do your best to-morrow. We are all in the best of health and spirits at home."

Then came Harry Randle's flowing signature.

Gridley folded the letter up, put the note intended for Mary Boyde inside, and refastened the envelope. Then he remained with his arms folded, lost for a time in gloomy thought.

Gridley had always been very fond of Mary Boyde himself, and he hated Randle the more because he had been and was preferred by her. He was wondering now how he could injure both Harry and Jack. He would like to prevent her getting the letter, but Jack Randle and the sports to-morrow for the moment worried him most. Of a sudden, however, a brilliant idea occurred to him. He went to his desk, took out paper and envelopes, pen and ink, and for some minutes wrote feverishly.

His letter finished, he addressed it to Archie Boyde, the Firs, Kendleton, and fixed a stamp on it. This envelope he carried to the school post-box, and dropped it in.

"Now," he muttered, "if Archie only gets that, and does what I tell him—and I should think he'd have the pluck to, seeing how he hates Jack—the youngster won't have the chance of taking part in the school sports. I think that will punish him more than anything else could do. And Archie will see that Mary doesn't get her letter."

In huge delight as he thought of the trick that would be played on Jack Randle, he then made his way towards the sports' ground, and meeting the youngster, gave him the letter.

"It's just come," he said. "I got it from Jenkins, and brought it to you, thinking you'd like to have it, as it's from your brother, and he doubtless has a lot to say about your running to-morrow."

Jack Randle looked at Gridley in surprise.

He knew well enough how the Sixth Form boy hated him, and he could not account for his sudden fit of generosity. He took the letter, and opened it.

"Now, I wonder," muttered Captain Philip Askew, "what that snake in the grass is plotting in his treacherous heart? I'm afraid it means no good for young Randle."

But Jack, absorbed in his brother Harry's letter, gave no further thought to the matter.

In the morning, after he had been down to the sports' ground to take a short spin in order to clear his lungs and relax his muscles, Jack Randle set out upon his mission to the hut in the wood belonging to the keeper. He was in no intention to place the letter where his brother Harry had instructed him to leave it, and be back at the school for lunch, and then rest until it was time to go down to the ground for the athletics.

It was a brilliant morning, and the sun was hot. Jack's heart was as light as a bird's. He felt that sense of physical fitness steal over him, and that free coursing of the blood in his veins that made him long to shout and to break into a run. But to know it would be well to restrain his feelings, and conserve all his energies for the events in which he was to participate that afternoon. His brother Harry was expected to arrive by the train from London that reached the station of Kendleton, situated a mile and a half from the school, at one o'clock.

And Jack, who knew Harry so well, guessed that, when the sports were over and dinner had been partaken of, the visitor might make his way to some trysting-place which he had arranged upon in his letter to Mary Boyde, and there meet the pretty girl who had captured his heart when he was at the college, and arrange many affairs to their mutual liking.

"Poor old Harry!" thought Jack. "It's a good thing Mary is so sweet, and her father and mother such decent sorts, for that brother of hers, Archie, is a bounder. Still, Mary is pretty, a jolly decent sort, and I shan't mind her so much for a sister-in-law."

Jack, in his boyish enthusiasm, you see, was jumping the intervening years and looking very far ahead indeed.

In the best of spirits, and overjoyed at the thought of seeing Harry again after a lapse of so many months, and at the chance he would have of showing his brother that he had not forgotten his coaching at the hurdles, Jack Randle reached the boundary of Mr. Boyde's estate, and quickly getting over the fence, and ignoring the barbed wire with an ease that I am ashamed to say would far to prove that he and others in the school had been in the habit of trespassing there often before, he plunged into the wood and strode onward, heedless of the fact that the results might not be pleasant should he come into contact with one of Mr. Boyde's many gamekeepers.

He knew the wood inside and out, though anyone might have been excused for losing himself in its tangled undergrowth and closely-growing trees of oak and nut and beech, and it was not long ere he struck into the clearing that led to the already mentioned, nor was he long in arriving at his destination.

The hut was a strongly-built structure of wood, with never a window in it. It had fallen into disuse long ago, and the interior was filled with pruning implements, stakes, and all sorts of rubbish that had been tumbled in there at various times. The walls were stout, as was the door, upon which there was a heavy iron lock, and a staple through which a padlock could be fixed to lend greater security to the place.

The door yawned open, however, as Jack saw to his great delight, and, with a bound, he sprang into it. He went at once to the right-hand corner from the door, which was clear of rubbish, and removing some bundles of twigs that had been placed there, he sought for the piece of movable board to which Harry had referred. Pulling this up, he placed the letter beneath, then put the piece of board back again, and plastered the bundles of twigs over it. His task was done!

With a feeling of great relief he turned to leave the hut, when the door was suddenly banged to, the light of day was shut out, leaving him in complete darkness, and he heard a key grate in the lock. Then, as his ears deceived him, he heard a padlock being slipped through the iron catch of the staple, and, to his horror, he realised that he was a prisoner!

A prisoner, and in such a place, where nobody might think of coming for days to come, perhaps together! It was a horrible thought. What should he do? If he could not get out he would be unable to take part in the sports, and Gridley, whom he knew to be his enemy, would win the hurdles and the long jump, and, therefore, most probably the medal given to the best all-round athlete in the school as well.

"Gridley's at the bottom of this," he muttered, his brows contracting and an angry feeling arising to possession of him.

"Hi!" he shouted; then, realising that he might, after all, have been shut in by accident, and that if the person who had locked the door heard him he might be at once released, he called out at the top of his voice: "Help! You're shut me in! Unlock the door and let me out!"

His appeal was greeted with a shout of laughter that made his blood boil. There were two people outside. And one laugh he could swear was that of Gridley himself.

He ground his teeth in rage, and kicked at the door with all his might. An answering thump came from the outside, and then he recognised Archie Boyde's voice.

"You keep quiet!" cried that mean-spirited whelp. "You've come trespassing on our ground, and you'll jolly well stop there for as long as I care to keep you."

Then silence came, and Jack knew that young Boyde had gone off and left him to his fate.

The realisation that Boyde must have known of his coming, filled him with dismay, and fierce anger against Gridley.

"Gridley gave me the letter," he muttered. "I saw something treacherous in the gleam of his eyes at the time. The envelope came undone too easily. Of course, he had unstuck it, and read the contents, and he laid this trap for me!"

He sat himself down and thought hard. He knew that he could not remain a prisoner there for ever, for Mary Boyde would be sure to come for her letter; but would she release him in time for him to get down and take his part in the hurdle race and the long jump?

He thought not; and, getting up, he roamed the tiny interior of the hut like a madman, trying to burst down the door, or break his way through the walls. It was useless, however—they had been built too strongly; and at last, exhausted, and with the perspiration pouring from his forehead in streams, and his body clammy with it, he sat himself down again and gave himself like the young philosopher he was, to his fate.

He began to count the vanishing minutes. A fierce hunger such as only a schoolboy knows, assailed him, and told him luncheon-time was past.

In imagination he could see his chums at the school searching for him far and wide. But what would be the use? Not one of them would think of looking for him where he was, and he knew the method of avoiding the attention of going to the Boydes' hut to any of them. His brother might guess where he was, and it, that lay his only hope. But his brother would not be likely to think him absent until the time for him to be in the hurdle race. It was a mighty mess up, and Jack, who knew instinctively that Gridley was to blame, ground his teeth together in his rage. The hours passed slowly. It seemed to him that he had been with me but for a whole day and night, when he heard voices outside.

"Hallo, Jack!" cried a voice he knew only too well, and loved to hear. "Are you there?"

"Yes!" he cried, leaping to his feet.

Then a key grated in the lock, the padlock was removed, the door was thrown wide, and Jack Randle staggered out, his face as white as a sheet, his eyes blinking in the bright light of day, to see a gamekeeper, his brother Harry, and pretty Mary Boyde standing before him.

"Jack, my dear old Jack," cried his brother, catching him in his arms and speaking with sincere self-reproach; "it's my fault. I never meant you to be shut up there for all the hurdles, which that brute Gridley went and won. Then, when I thought of what might have happened, and heard what that sneak of a Archie Boyde had to say, I hurried straight into the Firs, asked for Mary, and got her to bring Hugh, the gamekeeper here, to let you out."

"It's not your fault, Harry," faltered Jack. "You couldn't help it. Who would have thought Gridley would be such a cad? Did you opened that letter, of course. And you say he won the hurdles, Harry?"

"Yes, and he will win the long jump, too!" cried Harry, clenching his fists. "I could see you coming on. Oh, Mary, if I'd only had the pluck to write my letter to you direct, instead of giving it to Jack to put in our old secret letter-box, this wouldn't have happened!"

"You couldn't help it, Harry dear," said the girl. "And mother was so sweet to you today. I think we shall have her on our side when we want her."

Jack dived into the hut, and got the letter from its hiding-place.

He gave it to the blushing girl.

"Harry," he said, "I'll leave you now. I want to get back to the school and see who's won the medal. I'll meet you this evening when you come to the college again."

Without waiting for any reply, he set off at a run, and disappeared in a moment in the wood.

Harry, who would have stopped him, turned to the gamekeeper.

"Hugh," he said, "there's half-a-crown for your trouble. You and I are old friends. You got me into many a scrape when I was at the college, didn't you?"

"That I did, sir," the gamekeeper, grinning broadly at the remembrance of many a tussle in bygone days with the Kendleton boys. "But that's all gone by now. They'll never see such another captain as you at the college, sir, or such another lad like your brother Jack. I shall be glad to see you one of the family one day, sir."

And, walking away to avoid the lecture Mary Boyde might read him for his impudence, he, too, plunged into the wood. The sweethearts were left alone.

Meanwhile, Jack tore on towards the school. He arrived breathless and well-nigh exhausted, and faint with hunger, on the sports' ground just as the prizes were being handed out to the successful competitors by the Head. Ignoring the thousands of questions that were fired at him as to his absence, Jack crowded close with the rest, and had the mortification of seeing the triumphant Gridley go up to receive the handsome gold medal which he had so unjustly won.

Jack Randle's absence from the hurdles and the long jump had permitted Gridley to win, with four points to spare.

Gridley, holding his case containing the medal in his hand, and accompanied by some of his toadies, pressed through the surging crowd of boys, and suddenly came face to face with Jack. The youngster's face was purple with rage.

"Gridley," he cried, "you're an infernal cad, but one of these days I'll give you tit for tat, but by fair means instead of foul—that I swear!"

A Championship Meeting—The Man from New Zealand—The Long Jump—The Hurdles—Jack's Big Own Back.

FOUR years after the annual sports meeting held at Kendleton College at which the events narrated in the foregoing chapters took place, there assembled at Stamford Bridge Grounds, Chelsea, in the grand stands, and upon the slopes on which enormous crowds gather in the winter to watch the famous Football League Club, Chelsea, play football, the biggest aggregate number of spectators that had ever assembled to witness a championship athletic meeting.

It seemed that interest in athletics had revived. But it must be said in explanation, that never had such a galaxy of talent promised to compete in the events that constitute the Amateur Athletic Association's championships in the whole history of the sport.

In nearly every event upon the card, from the 100 yards running race, the preliminary heats of which, as usual, opened the meeting, to the steeplechase which concluded it, there were several men fancied to win, and there was always more than one that could go very near to record.

Conspicuous amongst them all was Gridley, of Oxford University A.C., who had been running finely over the hurdles, who had obtained his blue for long jumping, and who was more than a mere outsider at throwing the hammer and putting the weight.

Gridley, too, was a good miler, but had, of course, sacrificed his speed at this distance for his experiness over the hurdles, the preparation for the last event naturally slowing him down in the circuit.

No less than three of the preliminary heats for the hundred yards were run in even time. In putting the weight, for which Gridley started, but gave up on finding he had no chance, Cashenham, an athlete from Pennsylvania University, beat the standard of 25ft. by no less than 3ft. at his very first throw. He won with a put of 48ft 10in., a British amateur record.

Then came the mile race, with a brilliant win for the Cambridge University athlete, C. H. Morgan, and the long jump was reached.

Gridley had put on a dressing-gown of bright hue, and had wandered about the enclosure surrounding the arena, making confidences with many an old Kendleton man whom he happened to see there, in the front of the crowd. But he scowled presently as Philip Askew, who was one of the stewards for the occasion, and who had won the half-mile championship the year before, came up to him.

"Gridley," said the late captain of Kendleton, looking the man he disliked straight in the face, "you remember the little piece of business when you put young Jack Randle out of the school hurdles and the long jump?"

"It's a lie!" cried Gridley hotly, reddening with shame. "I had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, we all know you're lying, that! Well, anyway, Randle is back home from New Zealand. He is the J. H. Randle, of Christchurch Athletic Club, holder of the New Zealand long jumping and 120 yards hurdles record, and he's among the amongst the first entries for the long jump and hurdles here today. I saw him just now in the dressing-room with his brother Harry. He has broadened out into a bronzed Hercules, and looks fit to run for his life. He's got a fine chance of getting his own back from you to-day, Gridley, and I thought it best that you should know it."

Gridley answered never a word. His face paled slightly, and he walked quickly over to the side of the ground opposite the grand stand, where the long jump had been held, with his head bent, and his brows knitted in thought.

He had noticed the name "J. H. Randle, of Christchurch, New Zealand," in the list of entries for the hurdles and long-jump championships, but he had never dreamt for a moment that this could be the Jack Randle he had treated so abominably at Kendleton College.

"Why the deuce didn't I think of it before?" he muttered. "It's all a sickening nuisance; and besides, it brings Harry Randle here, where Mary Boyde can see him. And I've been clever enough to keep them away from each other for the last three years. Just when she had begun to forget him, too, and when I fancied I might stand a chance of winning her consent to marry me. I must win in these events to-day—I must; it means far more some thing to me than proud of in me. Confound it! If she and Harry Randle should meet! I was to have her answer to-day."

His face was intensely gloomy, but as he saw one or two of the long-jumpers strolling across the grass his brow cleared. It was useless giving way to forebodings like this. He was not beaten yet. They had still to jump for it, and he knew well enough he could beat twenty-two feet, and that would want some beating on a hot day like this.

It was hot, too. There was not a breath of air stirring. The gay hunting that had been put up to lend an air of gaiety to the festive scene hung in straight pennons and flags from lines and poles.

Sheffield, the holder of the long-jumping championship, was not competing, having strained the ligaments of his thigh; and Gridley, runner-up last year, and number two, therefore jumped first. He took his run along the narrow cinder-path, timed his spring to a nicety, and landed in the tan with a very fair jump of over twenty feet.

Sauntering back alongside the jump for his dressing-gown, he saw an athlete clad in all white placing a piece of paper at a distance of over a yard in front of where the judges had marked his effort.

It was Jack Randle! Handsome, manly, and bronzed now; but Jack Randle! Gridley noticed that mark the had had placed, and sneered. Why, the youth would have to clear twenty-three feet in order to reach it. The thing was absurd. Randle had won his championship in New Zealand with a jump of twenty-one feet six inches.

Jack Randle, rising, came face to face with Gridley; but he took no notice of him, though a very careful observer might have noticed a twitching of the muscles of the face, which proved that he was not entirely undisturbed by their meeting.

Jack ran back towards the start of the run with a long, raking, graceful stride Gridley saw him shake hands with his brother Harry, who had crossed the enclosure to see the jumping, and who was standing talking to Philip Askew, the old Kendleton captain, and then the youngster came along at a run.

Not for many a year had the spectators at a championship meeting seen a long-jump run for the take off made at such a pace as Jack Randle showed. He moved with the pace of a hundred yards' man.

He sprang upward from the ball of his foot from a long, raking bound, true and clean, rising to a great height, with arms wide spread, and when he landed in the tan it was well clear of the mark he had placed, and Gridley ground his teeth with rage.

With a bound Jack Randle had cleared over twenty-three feet, and the championship was as good as won, for there was no O'Connor to dispute the distance with him.

Jack Randle, having no one to seriously dispute the championship with him, won easily, afterwards putting up twenty-four feet three and a half inches in an exhibition jump, and retiring to the dressing-room amidst a storm of applause.

The half-mile race was next run, and then came the preliminary heats for the two hundred and twenty yards flat race. Then the men were called out for the hurdles, Jack Randle and a man named Owings going in the first heat.

It was the Crystal Palace to a cucumber-frame on Randle, people said, and their opinion was justified when the pistol snapped, for, rising to the report, Jack Randle got to the first hurdle in front, and in front he and then came along topping his timber like a champion indeed, and winning alone, for Owings fell at the fourth hurdle. The time returned was sixteen seconds dead, and the youngster had won the opening round.

Harry was waiting for him, and lovingly put his gown over his shoulders. A pretty girl in the stand clapped her hands until they ached. It was Mary Boyde, and small wonder it was with her, could not help but admit that Jack Randle was indeed a wonderful athlete, and Harry Randle, whom she had always looked upon as an undesirable match for her daughter, a most handsome man.

"And he's so affectionate towards his brother, dear," she said. "A man like that would, of course, make a good husband."

Gridley, who ran in the second heat, won in neat style from scratch in sixteen and two-fifths of a second; and Harraway, a Polytechnic Harrier, won the third heat in a fifth of a second slower time.

There was a brief interval whilst the throwing of the hammer proceeded on its tedious course, and then the finalists toed the mark for the hurdles. Jack Randle and Gridley were drawn side by side.

They did not speak. Gridley's face was as pale as a sheet; Jack Randle's lips were set with grim determination.

At the crack of the pistol the men got away in line, and they all reached the first hurdles together. At the second Jack and Gridley, who was running the race of his life, were side by side. At the third Jack was an inch or so in front. At the fourth they were level again. At the fifth Jack showed a breast ahead. At the sixth he was leading by a clear yard. At the seventh, with a mighty effort, Gridley had closed the gap again. At the eighth they rose together, and a roar of applause came from the crowd at the sight of the magnificent race.

But Gridley had now shot his bolt, and knew it, and as they neared the ninth together he uttered a curious cry as he rose at the hurdle, toppled over as he came down on the other side, and lay still. He had run himself right out, and lay there faltering, dazed like that, and broke the tape as fresh almost as when he had started.

The time returned was fifteen and three-fifths of a second—last time indeed!

And later, when Jack Randle went up to receive his cups and medals from the hands of the Lady Mayoress, Gridley, who had won nothing, stood by biting his nails and looking on. He saw Mary Boyde go up to Jack and congratulate him. He saw the pretty girl link her arm in that of Harry Randle, with her mother's full consent, and with a muttered curse he strode away. Jack Randle had got his own back with a vengeance.

THE END.

(*Next week "TRAINING SKILLS," by A. S. Hardy, will appear.*)

THE SCHOOL ON THE CLIFF.

A Magnificent New Story of Stirring Adventure.

By E. HARCOURT BURRAGE.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS FINE NEW STORY.

JACK JAUNTY, a lad of unknown parentage, who, as a boy, was cast up on the shores of an island off the village of Sternerraig.

THE STRANGER, a curious character who resides alone on an island called the Bowl. He it was that rescued Jack Jaunty from a watery grave. Fourteen years have since passed away.

BOB BAXTER, an old fisherman, in whose charge the Stranger put Jack Jaunty until he was old enough to be sent to the School on the Cliff at Sternerraig. That is where we find him now.

PETER PINNICK, a morose, unsociable fisherman, who nurses an imaginary grievance against the Stranger and against Jack Jaunty.

DAN CALLIS, AARON DOWNEY, GERARD INGLIS, NICKEY and HOPKINS, pupils at the School on the Cliff.

Our story opens on a warm sunny day. Dan Callis, a pupil at the School on the Cliff, and a bully, is daring another lad, Gerard Inglis by name, to descend the Seagull's Cliff. Jack warns him not to do so, but a little later the lad is discovered on a ledge half-way down the face of the cliff insensible. From this perilous position he is rescued by Jack Jaunty.

A stranger arrives at Sternerraig that afternoon, and picking up an acquaintanceship with Peter Pinnick, a surly fisherman, questions him about Jack Jaunty. Peter is obliged against his will to tell the man all he knows. Meanwhile, Jack is sent for by the Stranger, who informs him that he has decided to ask all the boys from the school to spend their next half-holiday on the Bowl Island. On his return to the school Jack has an altercation with Dan Callis concerning Gerard Inglis's narrow escape. Dan walks away muttering threats of vengeance.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 5th CHAPTER.
The Prospect of a Happy Day—Mr. Ferrula Distinguishes Himself as an Oarsman.

"THE request of your friend and benefactor," said Mr. Bonnington to Jack Jaunty, "has quite taken me by surprise. The only fear I have in the matter is that the boys will not behave themselves as they cross the sea."

"Oh, I should allow them to go!" said Mrs. Bonnington.

The schoolmaster was a heavily-built man of "fat, easy countenance," such as Cæsar loved. His acknowledged weight was fourteen stone.

Mrs. Bonnington was both short and spare, and scaled something like half the weight of her husband.

One of the chief characteristics of the schoolmaster was affected sternness. He liked to play the part of a man of adamantine nature, whom nothing would move, and it went down with some people. But those that lived in the house knew that Mrs. Bonnington could, with the aid of a domestic screw, do just what she liked with him.

Jack had sought the headmaster in his study, and was glad to find Mrs. Bonnington there. He was more than glad to find the view she took of the invitation.

"No," said Mr. Bonnington sternly; "I don't think I can let so large a party go. It would be too risky. Suppose, now, both boats should get upset, then I lose my whole school in one fell swoop."

"Oh, what nousense!" said his wife. "If the day is calm, what risks can there be?"

"You think not, my dear?"

"Well, ask yourself, as a man, if there can be any danger?"

"Jaunty," said Mr. Bonnington, turning to Jack, "on mature reflection, I think that the invitation so liberally sent by the amiable gentleman who loves solitude is a discreet one, and may be accepted. Convey to him my thanks, and say that next Thursday, if all things are well, the boys shall visit the Bowl."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jack. "I am sure they will all be delighted!"

"No doubt," said Mrs. Bonnington drily; "just as they would if we gave them leave to let off some fireworks in a powder factory."

Jack, scenting a possible change of front on the part of the lady, hurriedly took his leave, and clinched the matter by at once informing the boys that they had leave to go.

Mr. Redditch had heard of the invitation and opposed it. Mr. Ferrula was of opinion that it ought to be accepted. The ideas of the tutors on most subjects diverged.

"And, what is more," said Mr. Ferrula, "we ought to go with them!"

But here disappointment stepped in. Jack being asked, informed Mr. Ferrula that the tutors were not included, which excited that gentleman's ire, and he announced his intention of going, whether invited or not.

"The school will be in a perfect riot," he said to Redditch, "unless the eye of authority is on them."

"And do you think you have that eye?" drily asked the other.

"I hope and believe so."

A short laugh was the only rejoinder. There was not much in it, save in its tone, which meant a good deal.

"Matters will come to a head one day between that man and me!" muttered Ferrula, as he walked away. "The world is not big enough for two men so bitterly opposed to each other. I hope it will not lead to anything serious."

Ferrula was as harmless as a bluebottle; he buzzed much, but he stung very little. An encounter between the rival tutors was as yet far below the horizon.

* * * * * * *

Mr. Terrapin did not stop long at Sternerraig. The following morning he disappeared, and Jack saw no more of him just then. He left no clue as to the place he went to. Jack made a few inquiries on the subject for the benefit of the Stranger, but could learn nothing.

Bob Baxter was very bitter when speaking of him, and with good reason, too.

"He got hold of that bad boy of mine," he said, "and sent him home drunk. Jim's going fast enough to ruin without any help. When me and that 'ere Tarpaulin"—Bob never got hold of strange names correctly—"meet again one of us will want a little medicated assistance."

It was, no doubt, a shameful thing to do. In any case, it would have been an outrage, in a manly sense. Jim Baxter was an utter young blackguard—backward in the better things, and precocious in vice—and out of his father's hearing it was often said by the simple folk that he was ripening for the gallows.

Mr. Terrapin must have had some object in giving the boy drink, but what it was, Bob Baxter could not see. Possibly we shall hear all about it by-and-by.

Thursday came round quickly, and the weather was very promising. Early in the morning a light mist rested on the sea; by eight o'clock the sun had dispersed it.

In the ordinary way, a fine day is, under these circumstances, assured, and Jack, who went to see Bob directly after breakfast, to help him to get his boat ready, said how jolly it was.

"It won't rain this morning," said Bob, "nor in the afternoon; but I won't wager against summat moist in the evening. The sun came up a bit too red for my fancy."

"We mustn't be too particular, Bob," said Jack.

"You needn't be!" retorted Bob; "but we fishing chaps have to calculate everything to a nicety. That 'ere boy o' mine's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Jack.

"Not for good," said Bob, "but off with Peter Pinnick to the Blue Rocks for whiting. They ain't coming back till the evening; I'm a bit nervous about him."

"Oh, he won't be drowned!" said Jack hopefully.

"If he was," said Bob, lowering his voice, "I'd never forgive myself for all the hard things he's drawed out of me. What would I give to see him a good son?"

"Perhaps he will be some day."

"Heaven only knows!" sighed Bob.

The time finally settled for going to the Bowl, as per message through Bob, was ten o'clock, and quite an hour before that time all the boys were on the beach. Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington were there, also the tutors, and all the inhabitants who had nothing else to do. Mr. Ferrula had modified his original declaration of going with the boys, and now announced that he intended to run over to the Seamew when she came over, and point out to its owner the advisability of his having someone "in authority" to control the boys.

For this purpose, which nobody objected to, knowing how it would end, Bob had kindly lent the tutor a coble, a class of boat which is about as broad as it is long, and in inexperienced hands is peculiarly adapted to produce ridicule and possible disaster.

As soon as the boys began to embark, Mr. Ferrula started in his coble, intending to row straight to the Seamew. He got a few yards from the shore, and then the outgoing tide got him in its clutches and bore him away in a westerly direction. He pulled hard with the left oar, and two turns of it brought the head—which is very like the tail—of his bark towards the shore.

He had now entered upon a series of gyrations which edified all observers on shore, and continued them until the boys were on board and were sailing towards the Bowl.

Mr. Redditch, who had observed the performance of his brother tutor with an edified smile, was now addressed by Mr. Bonnington.

"What is Ferrula doing?" he asked.

"He thinks it is his duty to go with the boys, so that there may be somebody in authority with them on the island," was the answer.

"What nousense!" said the schoolmaster. "I have every confidence in the boys, and their boat also. Ah, Ferrula!"

"Sir!" cried the tutor.

"Come back this instant. You know nothing about managing a boat!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Ferrula tried to pull ashore, and in doing so turned the coble round again. The tide had now fairly caught it, and he began to glide seaward with tolerable rapidity.

"He must have assistance," said Mr. Bonnington. And he appealed to some of the fishermen near to go to the tutor's assistance. Some of the men pleaded that they had to mend their nets, others said "their boats were leaking;" but on being offered a reward half a dozen proceeded to launch a craft. Their faces were all on the grin, which may, in a degree, account for the time it took to get their boat into the sea. By the time they had done so Mr. Ferrula was a quarter of a mile from the shore, pulling frantically, catching crabs, and making a regular tee-totum of his boat.

Then, when the craft was afloat, the men did not start at once. They wrangled among themselves as to where they should sit. They all wanted to be stroke oar, and nobody was inclined to steer. At length, however, they got under way, and, to all appearance pulling with might and main, went in pursuit of the unhappy tutor in the coble. The rescuing boat, however, made very little headway, which the fishermen on shore accounted for as the result of the contrariness of the tide.

To all appearances there was a prospect of Mr. Ferrula's drifting right away to sea, and being lost for evermore.

"Of all the absurdities ever perpetrated by man," said Mr. Bonnington, "this trick of Ferrula's is the most ridiculous."

"It will teach the goose a lesson," said Mrs. Bonnington. "if he drifts right away to the Continent, or gets picked up by some ship bound for India. I hope, for his sake, that it is a safe boat."

"Oh, nothing less than being tossed by a whale will upset the coble!" said Mr. Bonnington.

Shambles, the coastguardsman, now appeared on the scene with his telescope, which he lent to the schoolmaster, who focussed it on the coble and reported the condition of its occupant.

"He has jumped himself clean out," he said, "and has lost both oars in the sea. The tide is carrying him away, and unless our friends row with more speed he is a lost man."

THE 6th CHAPTER.
The Visit to the Bowl—A Morning Bathe—An Enemy in the Cave.

MEANWHILE, the boys, who had paid little or no heed to the movements of their tutor, being occupied in joyous chatter about what they would do on the island, had been carried across the neck of sea, and the anchor dropped.

In two boats they were borne in parties to the shore, and landed without a mishap. The majority of them had previously seen little or nothing of the voluntary exile, and hitherto he had been to them a man of mystery. Now they began to wonder what there was mysterious about him. A more genial, frank, hearty man none of them could desire to meet.

Even Callis, as insensible to kindness as a boy can well be, was drawn towards him by the magnet which has for its secret power love and goodwill; and he was for the time more like the general run of boys that he usually was. On assembling ashore, the Stranger addressed them in a few simple words that went home to the hearts of all.

"Boys," he said, "you are here to-day to enjoy yourselves, and I hope that one and all will have a jolly time of it. I shall leave you now to run about for an hour or so, and if any of you fancy a swim, I recommend the point yonder, where the two rocks stand out so prominently. It is sheltered, and the beach slopes down, so you will not be running any great risks. I shall summon you all back with the blast of a horn."

It was a warm day, and the desire to have a dip in the sea was pretty general.

All could swim a little, as natation was part of their school training, and there was little chance of them getting into trouble. The two rocks were about half a mile off, and just there the rugged cliffs were high and honeycombed with caves, which, the Stranger laughingly explained, might be haunted by gnome kings.

"I don't know," he said, "for I never look into them now. I explored them when first I lived here, and found very little to interest me."

Away went the boys, scampering along the sands and over the rocks. Jack Jaunty was accompanied by Gerard Inglis and Nickey Hopkins—the latter as lively as a bluebottle.

(Continued on the next page.)

With a strength that was but the temporary outcome of his excitement, Gerard lifted Jack out and laid him on the floor of the cave.

The School on the Cliff.

(Continued from the previous page.)

and much given to falling over any impediment, big or little, that came in his way.

Nickey was one of those boys who took things pretty much as he found them. If ever he lived to be a man he would become one of those cheerful philosophers who find in every turn of life something to rejoice at, and in every misfortune something to bear with resignation. After his fifth tumble, Jack took occasion to remonstrate with him.

"Why don't you go along more steadily?" he said. "Or is it your intention to notch the passing minutes on your shins and elbows as Robinson Crusoe recorded the successive days on a post?"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Nickey. "A fellow must get a tumble now and then. I say, isn't it jolly? The Bowl is a regular paradise; and isn't she Stranger a brick?"

"He has a heart of gold," said Jack, with a slight tremor in his voice. "Goodness knows I shall never be able to repay him for half his kindness to me."

"I am sure he don't expect it," said Gerard Inglis.

"No," returned Jack; "but that doesn't exactly remove the obligation."

The place pointed out by the Stranger as suitable for bathing was just such a spot as boys could not fail to revel in. The bench was very level, and the receding tide left all sorts of convenient-sized rocks sticking out of the water to climb up and take headers from. A general "pooling" was begun, and in a few minutes half their number were tumbling about like young porpoises in the briny.

Jack did not immediately undress, for the cliff, with its caves, attracted his attention. Drawing back from his fellows, he peeped into several of the latter. For the most part they were of no great depth, and were strewn with small stones and the seaweed left there when the tides ran in exceptionally high.

In a few minutes he came to one which promised to be of some interest. It penetrated the cliff to a considerable distance, for the interior looked as black as night; and what astonished Jack especially was the fact that there were footmarks, apparently of recent date, at the mouth of it.

Now, the Stranger had said that he had not of late visited the caves, so the footmarks could not be his. Nor could they be Bob Baxter's, for that worthy fisherman did not pay long visits to the island, and never by any chance roamed about it. Who, then, was accountable for these indications of the presence of man?

Jack stood for a few moments at the mouth of the cave, endeavouring to solve the problem, and finding no solution to it. Then, suddenly raising his eyes and piercing into its dark depths, he saw the form of a man dimly outlined in the gloom. Jack's heart fairly skipped within him, just as yours might have done, gentle reader, but he was not alarmed.

"Who is there?" he cried.

No answer was vouchsafed him, so he boldly dashed into the cave, and fairly ran against a man, who grasped him by the collar of his jacket.

"Silence!" was hissed in his ears; and then he knew the voice of the man.

"Peter Pinnick?" he exclaimed.

"Will you keep quiet, or do you want me to throttle you?" was the answer. "Come in here, will you?"

He was jerked forward and before he could do anything to defend himself was thrown down, and a heavy hand placed over his mouth.

"You've got to keep quiet," said Peter, in a low, thrilling tone, "or, as I'm living, I'll put an end to you. Just promise that you will never tell anyone you've seen me here. I'll take the shutting of both eyes for an answer. Keep 'em closed for a moment or two."

Jack was determined that no promise of the nature demanded should be extracted from him.

"Will you do it?" asked Peter.

Jack made no sign.

"Here, you Jim Baxter," said Peter softly, "what are you standing behind there for? Come forward and bear a hand. Bring a bit of rope and twist up some tow to make a gag for him."

In response to this request, disreputable Jim came stumbling out of the gloom, bearing a length of rope in his hand.

Obeying the softly spoken directions of Peter Pinnick, he cut off a short end and unravelled it so as to make a small bundle of tow; then he gave a hand in binding Jack's legs and arms. This operation was not unaccompanied by a struggle on the part of the victim; but Peter Pinnick, who was a very strong man, threw his whole weight upon the boy, and held him tight.

The bundle of tow was finally rammed into his mouth, and tied there with a scarf that Jim was told to remove from Jack's neck. Then he lay as helpless as a log of wood, but defiant still.

"You've brought this on yourself, mind you," said Peter Pinnick. "I offered to take your promise, because I knowed you'd keep it; but if you won't give it you must suffer. Now then, for the last time, will you do as I ax you to?"

THE 7th CHAPTER.
Left to a Terrible Fate.

JACK made no sign.

"Ketch hold of his legs, Jim," said Peter; "but we must bear him into the den. Now then, boy, are you going to wait until they come swarming in to see what's come to him?"

The "den," as Peter Pinnick called it, was a small hollow about twenty yards down the cave. It was big enough to give sleeping-room for two, and looked as if it had been used for that purpose. Close by it were a number of loose stones of various sizes, some no bigger than a cricket-ball, others as much as a man could roll along.

"Shove him in!" growled Peter Pinnick.

Jack was thrust in, and with all speed the old ruffian began to block up the opening with stones, aiming at Jim because he was slow at assisting in the work. Jim did not, to all appearance, half like the job; but he was clearly governed by the master spirit of the man, and did some of the labour. In a few minutes Jack was hidden from view, and was to be called his living tomb. The stones did not fit quite close, and there was plenty of air to breathe. So far Jack was safe.

"We are off now," said Peter Pinnick, speaking through one of the small orifices; "and, mind this, you've only yourself to blame for this. When the tide's in there's three feet of water where you are lying, but it won't be back for some hours. You were always a cocky little beggar, and now I hope you feel took down a bit. Eh, Jim, eh, Jim?"

Jack, with all his senses fully alert, heard them picking their way from the spot, and he noticed particularly that they went up the cave and not towards the shore.

This proved that the place was of some extent, and in all probability there was another mode of exit, possibly some distance from the one by which he had entered.

Whatever Jack may have thought of his refusal to give the promise demanded, it was now too late to change his mind. There he was, a prisoner in the most awful of prisons, unable to do anything to effect his release, and he must endeavour to bear his fate bravely. First of all, necessary to keep calm. On that might depend his life, for if he lost his head or fainted away his doom was sealed.

The sound of his enemies retreating soon died away, but the cave was not by any means wrapped in silence. The laughter and cheery cries of the boys floated in and filled the place with sounds that were very musical, although they added to his misery and growing despair. He could even hear the splashing of the sea as the boys plunged into it and rolled about. Then all happens, the wind was going down as the tide went out, and there was a comparative calm.

Presently he heard somebody calling him by name, and recognised the cheerful voice of Nickey Hopkins.

"Jack, Jack! Where are you?"

Then Gerard Inglis called him, and he heard them talking together not ten yards from his dismal hiding-place.

"He must be in one of the caves," Nickey said, "and this seems the most likely of the lot. Jack, Jack!"

"Oh, what would I not give to be able to answer him!" thought poor Jack.

They called to him again and again. Then others came in, and there was quite a babel of voices in the cave. The general opinion seemed to be that Jack could not be there. At last he heard Dan Callis speaking.

"Of course he isn't here, you fools!" he said. "Why don't you go growling about a dismal den like this? Most likely he's gone on to the house to have a quiet talk with the Stranger."

"That must be it," replied Nickey. "But why didn't he say he was going? It isn't at all like Jack. Listen! Isn't that a horn?"

They were all quiet for a moment, and the blast of a horn, loud and clear, penetrated the cave.

"It's all right," said Nickey; "he's gone on to the house. Jack can blow a horn as well as anybody, and it sounds just like the way he does it."

The scampering of many feet followed, and outside there was a calling of the stragglers together, mingled with the hurried expostulation of a few who were not quite dressed. In three minutes those sounds ceased, and the voices of talking boys slowly faded away.

Jack was alone. Then for the first time the full desolation and misery of his position fell upon him.

"I have only now to wait for the tide to come in," he groaned. "They will never think of looking for me here."

. . . . . .

Leaving Jack for a brief space of time, we must follow the boys, who raced off in the direction of the sound of the horn.

Nickey, who had been so sure of its having been blown by his friend, was disappointed to find the Stranger alone, half-way up the cliffs, awaiting their coming. His quick eye roamed over the boys, and quickly detected that the one he cared for most was missing. From the boys his gaze wandered away along the sands; and Nickey, who had come up breathless, pulled up by his side, panting.

"Where's Jack?" asked the Stranger.

"That's what we can't make out, sir," replied Nickey. "He went down to bathe with us, and he did not go into the water, but went off somewhere."

"What direction did he take?"

Nickey did not know, and all the others were in a like state of ignorance. A shade of anxiety spread itself over the countenance of the Stranger.

"What a singular thing to do," he said. "He is not given to whims, is he?"

"Oh, no!" replied Nickey. "He is the best fellow out."

"It is a most mysterious thing!" muttered the Stranger; and for a moment his brows were knitted with a sternness that showed he could, if occasion demanded, be very resolute.

"Boys," he said, "luncheon is ready. But we must find Jack before we sit down to it, if it takes us all day. I'll summon him again."

He blew a blast on the horn that echoed away for miles, and glanced quickly around, hoping to see the familiar form of Jack rise above one of the many land points around. But, of course, he was doomed to disappointment.

"We must go back to the bathing-place," he said.

A few of the boys felt it very hard that they should be called upon to postpone their luncheon because of one missing boy; but, acting, but the majority entered on the task of seeking the lost one with cheerfulness. Jack was not the pet of the whole school -no boy ever is entire boss there—but his jolly ways, generosity, and courage had won more than two-thirds of their hearts. The Stranger kept pace with the boys, exhibiting an activity in getting over rough ground very surprising in a man of his height and weight. In a few minutes the bathing-place was reached, and there a halt was called.

"You have tried the caves, I suppose?" said the Stranger.

"All near this place," replied Gerard Inglis.

"The cliff is honeycombed with them," said the Stranger, "and in some places they run into each other; but I do not think there can be any chance of his losing himself. Now, here is one of the class I speak of."

It was the very cave in which Jack was lying, and, as he kept his *wits* clear, he could hear nearly all they were saying. Stepping just within it, the Stranger sounded the military alarm on the horn. Echo repeated it again and again, and when the sound died away he held up his head for evidence, answering cry he longed for did not come back.

"Once more," he said, "and then we will go higher up. There is the chance of his having fallen and hurt himself. For all we know, he may be lying near, out of sight but within hearing, unable to let us know where he is."

Little did the Stranger think how apropos his words were to the situation, or how keenly they went home to the heart of Jack, who heard them clearly. As he heard the footsteps of his friends retreating a feeling of despair took possession of him. His struggles to get free of his bonds were almost superhuman, but the knots tied by an experienced hand would not budge the fifteenth of an inch. But he did one thing towards getting free. He bit clean through the tow gag which had been thrust into his mouth. Some of it fell back into his throat and brought on a violent fit of coughing, which threatened to burst a blood-vessel, as he had no free vent for it, owing to the scarf about his mouth.

But the muffled sounds which had escaped him were heard by Gerard Inglis, who had lingered behind the rest, and as yet had not gone far away from the cave. For the moment Gerard did not clearly locate the sound, but as the violence of the cough increased he made out the direction from which it came. It sounded like a series of groans, or like one fighting for breath, rather than a cough. Gerard, with a wild feeling of hope that it was Jack, darted into the cave. Coming out of the light, the place was for a brief space of time of inky darkness to him. He could see nothing, but he could still hear the smothered sound.

"Jack," he cried, "where are you?"

The smothered sounds which had escaped the groan-like sounds which escaped the victim of Pinnick's brutality.

Gerard, as soon as he could see a little, moved in their direction, and came to the heap of stones which blocked up Jack's prison. Gerard did not pause to reason out why he should hope to find his friend behind those stones, nor was he troubled with the fears that some might have felt of its being some uncanny creature in its lair.

He thought of Jack, and Jack alone, and eagerly tore away the stones until he caught a glimpse of him. With a strength that was but the temporary outcome of his excitement, he lifted Jack out and laid him on the floor of the cave. With his breath coming in short gasps he removed the handkerchief and brushed away the tow from his mouth.

"Jack—Jack," he groaned, "who has done this brutal thing?"

But Jack could not answer him yet, for his mouth was stiff from recent sufferings; so Gerard drew out his pocket-knife and cut the cords that bound his limbs.

Then Jack was able to sit up; and, after a little more coughing, was able to speak.

"Thanks, Gerard, old man!" he said. "You have squared your account, and made me your debtor to-day."

"What does it all mean?" asked Gerard.

Jack was about to answer, when both were startled by a form coming out of the gloom of the inner part of the cave.

It was, however, not Peter Pinnick, as Jack had for the moment feared, but Jim Baxter. He came up and threw himself down on his knees near Jack.

"I was just a-coming to let you out," he said. "Don't say anything about it, or father will thrash me."

Gerard gazed from one to the other in astonishment. Had Jack, brave as Jack, been made a victim by a lumbering lout of a lad like that?

"It is not a matter for your father to settle," replied Jack coolly, "but for the police. You and Peter Pinnick must be tried. I should die. It is a case of attempted murder."

"I were bound to do as he told me," groaned Jim, "or he would have killed me; but I came back to let you out as soon as I could sneak away from him."

"Sneak is the right word," said Jack. "Sneaking is in your line. I tell you it is a case for the police."

"It will break father's heart, and kill mother, if I'm took to prison," muttered Jim; "and I've heard you say a hundred times that you would cut off your hand to do anything to give them a moment's pain."

It was true enough, and Jack saw that he must either give lasting pain to two of his dearest friends, or forego part of the just revenge on those who had been so brutal to him.

"I must punish Pinnick, anyway," he said.

"You can't drop on him without dropping on me," groaned Jim. "Do, for the sake of father and mother, look over it. You've got a good heart, Jack, I know."

"I don't want any of your soft soap," replied Jack, as he got up and began to rub his limbs where the ropes had been; "and I know how much your love for your father and mother comes in here. You are afraid of your own precious neck coming in contact with a rope. But for the sake of your mother—who was all a mother could be to me—and your father—who is a man every inch of him—I will let this thing go. But, mind you, no more tricks on me. And just now Peter Pinnick that I can see even with him one day. Get out of my sight!"

Jim slunk away into the cave, and Jack, leaning on Gerard's arm, walked out of it.

"Gerard," he said, "you must leave me to tell my own story, and must say nothing yourself. I have given my word that I will let the thing pass, and you must help me to keep it."

"I give you my word I will do so," replied Gerard. "But it does seem hard that the blackguards should get off scot-free. I suppose he did mean to let you out?"

"My opinion is that he was sent by Pinnick to free me," replied Jack, "and the whole thing was intended to scare me. I am glad I did not show the white feather to the ruffian. Jim, of course, wanted all the credit for it. Who would think that he was the son of dear old Bob if they did not know it?"

Jack had hit upon the truth. Peter Pinnick, as far as disposition went, would have committed the deed readily enough, but he had not the courage to face the consequences.

Jim Baxter was not to be trusted; he might blurt out the affair any day; so he was sent back to release Jack, and, as our hero suggested, took the whole credit to himself.

What the precious pair were doing in the cave Jack had no time to speculate upon. As soon as he emerged from the cave he was espied by some of the boys on the cliff, and cheers announcing the discovery, the Stranger soon came hurrying down to meet him.

"My dear Jack," he said, "where have you been?"

"In a beastly hole in that cave," replied Jack. "I heard you, but I really couldn't call you. I was quite speechless."

"Just as I fancied," said the Stranger. "You have no bones broken, I see."

"No," replied Jack, laughing; "and I shall be all right as soon as I have had something to eat."

A blast on the horn summoned the few who were still straggling, and the boys came running up, anxious to hear Jack's story. But he only said—

"After dinner, boys—and then there is nothing to tell."

Nickey was in a state of wild delight, and in the exuberance of his spirits he tried to turn a wheel on the sands; but his education in that line being imperfect, he fell upon his back with a sounding whack that knocked four-fifths of the breath out of his body. But Nickey did not care.

"I'm born to tumble," he said.

"But you will never make a tumbler," said Will Raddle, a boy who had some of Nickey's gifts, and was looked upon by the school as the rival humorist.

"I'll give you a tumble if you cheek me," said Nickey.

"Oh, dear," cried Will, staggering away, "what a ferocious ruffian! Oh, save me from

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him! Spare my life this time, and I will never do it any more!"

And then Will, in his feigned terror, heedless of obstacles in his path, tripped over a big stone, and came down with a force that for the nonce took all the humorous spirit out of him.

A roar of laughter hailed the downfall of the joker, who got up trying to look as if he had at least half the fun to himself. He exchanged a defiant glance at Nicky, who smiled a comically sarcastic smile, and trotted on to join Jack and the Stranger.

THE 8th CHAPTER.
A Day on the Island.

THE house of the Stranger was built in a valley of cuplike form—the bottom of the Bowl, in fact—and was as charming a residence as any man inclined to solitude could desire. It was not at all adapted to entertain many guests, and a big tent had been erected on the lawn in front, part of a well-kept garden of fair dimensions, and there the luncheon was spread.

From an epicurean point of view it was a banquet fit for royalty. The viands were all cold, but there were ham, beef, chicken, salad, tarts, sweets, jellies, fruit and cream, and sundry palatable temperance drinks.

The Stranger took his seat at the head of the long table, with Jack on his right hand and Gerald Inglis on his left. Bob Baxter and an old woman, who was now the Stranger's housekeeper, acted as waiters.

Bob, in happy ignorance of all that had transpired, had been wondering what kept the boys so long away; but he had got into the habit of asking no questions, and betrayed no curiosity on the subject.

Jack, as he looked at his beaming, honest face, was glad he had given that promise to Jim; but, as he said, he had not forgiven the onslaught upon him, and meant one day to square accounts with the authors of it. Meanwhile, seeing that all was well on a jolly manner that he speedily forgot his recent trouble. The Stranger was a first-class host, and knew exactly how to treat boys, so that they felt quite at home.

After luncheon they had a short rest, and then went in for various games. A short distance from the house there was a bit of turf which sufficed for cricket, and the necessary bats and other things were there ready for use. A few of the younger ones played croquet, and on one side of the lawn a tennis-net was put up. Nothing which could be reasonably hoped for to amuse them had been forgotten.

But at last the housekeeper cleared the table, laid it out for tea later on, and then came out to watch the boys at play. The Stranger sat in an easy camp-chair, smiling and looking on, with the face of a man who had all the joy he desired in this world.

The sky overhead was still bright, but occasionally a fleck of dun-coloured cloud sped across it, carried swiftly along by some upper current. Sheltered by the rising ground all round, there was scarcely a breath of wind in the vale below.

Bob, who generally kept his weather eye open, forgot all about it, so interested was he in the boys at play. A pipe of good tobacco, and a jug of excellent beer also had something to do with his serene contemplation.

The afternoon ran away, and teatime came. After it was partaken of the boys were to go home. A blast of the horn stopped the play. The stumps were drawn. The net, however, and everything was put together and stowed in the house. "For use another day," the Stranger cheerily said. Then they went into the tent to partake of the tea, which was as good as the luncheon.

It was half-way through, when a sudden fading of the light attracted the attention of Bob, and, hurrying to the opening of the tent, he looked westward. Rising over the high cliff was a dark, ominous cloud, across which, in thin bars, the electric fluid flashed its zigzag courses.

"Good heavens," exclaimed Bob, "here's a job! We shall never get the boys home to-night!"

The Stranger had marked the change also, and, leaving his seat, he joined Bob. The pair held a short, portentous consultation together.

"We are going to have a storm, Bob."

"We are, sir!"

"Will it be anything serious?"

"A whacker, sir! On and off all night, I should say!"

"What's to be done? Can we get the boys across before it comes on?"

"No, sir; it will be here in a quarter of an hour, and in the open sea it's already blowing a bit—wind against tide. The boys won't be able to go back until the morning."

"Then here they must stop," said the Stranger, "the tent is waterproof, and we shall not get the brunt of the wind here. If we tighten the stays, it will laugh at the weather. See to it, Bob. Then go into the house and get all the bedding, rugs, and things you can possibly lay your hands on. Perhaps some of the boys had better help you."

"I think they had, sir, for the rain will come down by-and-by."

"It won't come in here, as the tent is on slightly rising ground. Hurry up, Baxter!"

As soon as the boys knew what was the matter a feeling of general joy took possession of them. The idea of passing the night on the island, and sleeping in the tent like travellers in some foreign land, was quite according to their idea of real, undiluted comfort.

The tea-table was temporarily abandoned, and all went to help with the rugs and other essentials for sleeping.

What a store of things the Stranger had in his bungalow-like home, to be sure! There was bedding of one sort or another for a dozen people, and the floors being covered with rugs in the place of carpets, there was enough to spread over the tent when the time came to lie down to sleep.

"Bring everything," said the Stranger; "only be quick! You don't want any chairs."

"Certainly not!" said Nicky, as he bounded across the lawn. "Isn't this jolly?"

The dark cloud was now well up above the cliff, the lightning flashed incessantly, and the boom of the advancing storm was plainly heard. The storm promised to be all that lovers of atmospheric disturbance could desire.

Banging to and fro, like ants collecting provender for the advancing winter, the boys soon cleared the house of everything portable that was needed. The rugs and bedding were piled up at one end of the tent, to remain there until it was time to go to bed, and the whole job was finished just as the first few heavy raindrops, heralds of the storm, came straight and heavily down upon the lawn.

"Now finish your tea, boys," said the Stranger.

"I wonder what Bonnington is thinking of just now?" said Nicky, as he resumed his seat. "I'll bet he's fuming over it!"

"And Mrs. Bonnington is telling him that it is all his fault," added Will Baddle. "She is sure to tell him that he ought to have done something to stop the storm."

The truth of this suggestion excited the risible faculties of his listeners; but who cared what was thought by those on the mainland? There they were on the island for the night, and no earthly power could take them safely home.

Before tea was finished the rain came down straight and strong, soaking the earth so that a mist arose and helped to increase the gloom. The lightning flashed and the thunder roared, so that those who wished to make others hear had to bawl their loudest.

Jack, who was the most timid among the boys thought it very terrible, but to the majority it was uncommonly jolly.

The first stage of the storm lasted for an hour or so; but it was, as Bob said, not over for the night. Around on one side the lightning was seen flashing at one place or the other, and the sound of the thunder was like the unceasing murmurs of restless spirits in the air. The wind was rough, but the full force of it was not felt in the vale. The tent stood, and the rain kept out. Inside it was as dry as if surrounded by strong walls and perfectly roofed in. And there we must leave them to pass the night, with all the joys attending this, from a boy's point of view, jolly camping-out.

On shore Mr. Bonnington had been in a state of great anxiety, which was, to a degree, shared by his wife. Mr. Redditch also professed to be likewise affected with the same emotion.

Hour after hour had passed, and nothing could be seen of the rescuing fishermen and Mr. Ferrula and his cobles all disappeared behind one of the islands ere the morning passed. There was no anxiety about the boys, as they were known to be safe; but as the afternoon wore away, the fears entertained about the fate of Mr. Ferrula increased.

Mr. Bonnington was on the cliffs with his remaining tutor, old Shambles, and Jake. Each in turn had used the coastguardsman's glass without making any discovery of the missing boats. And now the dark clouds were seen in the horizon, portending the coming storm.

"And it will be a big one," said Shambles. "If caught in it with them cockleshells, goodbye to all."

"The fool—the madman," said Mr. Bonnington, "to risk his own life and put the lives of those gallant fellows in peril!"

"I think I see 'em!" cried Jake.

"Where?" cried Shambles, getting his glass ready.

"Off the little island."

"Don't tell me you can see 'em with a naked eye, Jake!"

"I can! There's the specks—two boats. You ain't looking the right way, Mister Shambles."

"When I wants your assistance to look the right way," said Shambles, with overpowering dignity, "I'll ask for it; until then, just you keep dumb. There's nuthin' so offensive to a man as a forrard boy."

"Beg pardon, Mister Shambles," said Jake, as he dropped back.

Jake was right. It was the rescuing fishermen's boat and the coble; but they had a long way to come, and the storm was rising fast. A new peril threatened them. The storm did indeed arrive with them, but happily they were within easy distance of the shore, and then the fishermen were pulling as if they meant business and were not out for a lark.

Mr. Bonnington and the tutor had to retreat indoors before the drenching rain, and thither they were followed by Mr. Ferrula in the condition of a half-drowned rat and in a general state of collapse. Two sturdy, grinning fishermen assisted him into the house, where he dropped into a chair.

"Oh, the perils of the deep!" he gasped. "Never more will I brave them!"

"Mr. Ferrula," said Mr. Bonnington impressively, "my position as headmaster of the school is such that I cannot express so plainly as I desire all I feel; but let me say on some service to you to know that if I could in decency speak out, I should not for a moment hesitate to call you an adventurous ass."

And then the boom of thunder broke in upon them, and easy conversation for the time came to an end.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

CLUB NOTICES.

NOTICES AND CHALLENGES FROM READERS' OWN CLUBS, THESE ARE INSERTED FREE OF CHARGE.

NORTHCOTE C.C. (average, 13; weak) require away matches for this season in the South Shields district. For further particulars apply to the Secretary, Ernest Smith, 33, Northcote Street, South Shields.

BURSLEM BAPTIST C.C. (average, 18) are open for the season for home and away matches; within four-miles radius of Burslem.—Apply to Mr. G. Meston, 167, Waterloo Road, Burslem; or, Mr. H. Brindley, 19, Stanley Street, Burslem.

HEELEY ST. PETER'S C.C. (average, 15½) want home and away matches with good, respectable clubs.—Apply, L. Staley, 40, Derbyshire Lane, Meersbrook, Sheffield.

LIMEHOUSE INVICTA F.C. (average, A team, 16½, and B, 15½; medium) want matches for next season, home and away; ground, Hackney Marshes; dressing given and required.—Apply at once to Sid Smith, 28, Copenhagen Place, Limehouse, London, E.

MOORPARK CRUSADERS F.C. (average, 16) want matches, home and away, for next season.—Apply to W. Campbell, Ballochmyle, Renfrew, N.B.

CLARENCE UNITED F.C. (average, 15; weak) require matches, home and away, for season 1907-8; all dates open. Could also make room for two or three good players; small subscription.—Apply, W. Bowley, 65, Pearson Street, Kingsland Road, N.

BRECON ATHLETIC F.C. (average, 16-17) require matches, home and away, for the coming season 1907-8; all dates open.—Write to A. Lovegrove, 47, Chaldon Road, Fulham, S.W.

TOXTETH AND DISTRICT JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE (founded, 1902), awarded a "Boys' Realm" cup last season, have vacancies for next season: average, 16 years. Applicants should apply early to Mr. T. C. Harding, 186, Windsor Street, Toxteth, Liverpool.

ASTLE UNITED (average age, 17; medium) have all dates open, home and away, for 1907-8. Would like to join some league or cup in the district of Willesden.—Apply to W. Robbins, Hon. Secretary, 1, Elm Tree Villas, Stonebridge Park, Willesden, London, N.W.

CROMER STAR F.C. (average age, 16) want matches, home and away, for next season, with clubs the same average age. Ground, Parliament Hill.—Apply, W. J. Ballard, 101, Lymington Avenue, Noel Park, N.

PLAISTOW IRIS F.C., members of Barking and District Football League, 1907-8, require players for next season; nearly all positions.—W. J. Cook, 58, Stock Street, Plaistow, E.

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FRED TAYLOR, 74, Upton Road, Kingsland Road, Dalston, N. (age, 15) wishes to join a football club for coming season to play outside-right in Hackney and district. Height about 5ft.

YOUTH (age, 17) wishes to join a respectable football team within three miles of Liverpool for the coming season.—Write to A. Edwards, 21, Kremlin Drive, Stonycroft, Liverpool.

RESPECTABLE LADS (average age, 16-18) in the neighbourhood of Stepney, desirous of joining a football and athletic club for next season, should write to J. W. S., 55, Pole Street, Stepney, E., enclosing penny stamp for reply.

CLAREMONT UNITED F.C. (average age, 15; weak) require a few good players, 14-16, for the coming season. Small subscription and entrance fee. Also matches, home and away.—Apply, J. Jacobs, 9, Copley Street, Stepney Green, E.

SANFORD ATHLETIC F.C. want a few good players for the coming season. Average age, 16-18. Also a few dates open.—H. T. Read, 1, George Street, King's Cross, N.

PIMLICO RANGERS F.C. require players for next season. Colours, red shirts and black knickers.—Apply, S. Knight, 19, Lillington Street, Pimlico.

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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.

Tom is badly injured by some runaway trams, and is taken to Starve-Crow Farm. The accident is believed to be the work of Mr. Sully, the overseer of the mine, who is in Kenyon Price's pay.

On his return to work Tom has an interview with Kenyon Price, and gives him some straight talk. On the following Sunday the boys go for a walk with Dafydd, who says he will give them some trinkles in salmon pools. In a little while after he spies a large fish and tosses it to dry land, when with startling suddenness Kenyon Price appears on the scene, and accuses them of poaching his salmon.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Invitation to Plas Rhyll.

ALL three of the boys stood rooted to the spot with surprise. None of them would have credited Mr. Kenyon Price with being able to suddenly appear from nowhere in that mysterious fashion, like a Red Indian. They had all been too absorbed in the capture of the lordly fish to look behind them.

But what astonished them most was his remark about the landed fish, which now lay glistening among the heather. Roddy stared at the speaker as if he thought Kenyon Price had gone mad.

"Your salmon!" he exclaimed.

"Mine!" repeated the colliery magnate sharply.

Rodwell was about to scout the suggestion, but Dafydd broke in:

"Ter land from here and up ter mountain yonder, such as it iss, belongs to Lord Aberford," he said.

"It may have done so," said the colliery owner, "but at present it belongs to me. I have bought it, and it is mine."

This rather staggered the boys, for it was evidently true, or Kenyon Price would have had no object in saying it.

"You've bought the land!" muttered Tom.

"Not only on this side, but the whole way round the Bryn y Garth frontiers," said the magnate, with bland superiority, winding his thick gold watchchain round his finger. "I am your neighbour from every point of view," he added, with a slight sneer. "Your—er—property lies in the midst of mine. And I repeat, you are in the act of poaching one of my salmon."

For some moments even the three chums were taken aback. They began to guess what this would mean to them. The colliery-owner did not seem particularly angry about the salmon, as far as that went. He showed no signs of temper, though there was a threatening air about him.

"If it's your salmon," said Roddy, "you may as well get it for yourself. Pitch the fish back in the stream, Dafydd. And if you want to prosecute us for poaching—which I shouldn't advise you to do—we needn't trouble to—"

"Oh, I am not concerning myself about the salmon," said Kenyon Price coolly; "it is a fish that does not agree with me. I called your attention to it so that you might learn how you stand."

The chums said nothing.

"We are neighbours," said Mr. Price, with a smile that seemed almost friendly, though Roddy did not like the look of it himself. He had seen enough to be suspicious of the master of Coed Coch. "And neighbours, you know, ought to be on good terms with each other."

"Well, sir, is it our fault if we're not?" said Roddy.

"You seem to think it isn't, but are you sure?" said the colliery proprietor. "You don't seem inclined to be very civil. You are in my employment, I think, hewers in my pits, I believe, or you. But up here at week-ends I suppose you are landed proprietors!" he sneered again.

"Oh, we're not puttin' on any side about Bryn y Garth," said Tom. "It ain't much of a place, as you see."

"Though I remember you're bein' very keen to buy it a little while ago," put in Rodwell. "For the shootin' and fishin', wasn't it?"

"Oh, no!" replied Kenyon Price. "It was because there was a seam of coal here."

"Well, that's straight from the shoulder, anyhow," said Roddy, rather surprised at such frankness. "So it's coal you're after. So am I."

"We don't appear to agree very well," said Mr. Price.

"Is that any wonder, considerin' what's passed in the last month?" retorted Tom.

"You are not afraid of—er—passing your nights in this lonely place?" queried the coal magnate meaningly, looking round over the desolation of Bryn y Garth.

"Not a bit," replied Rodwell drily. "We've had one or two visitors, but none of them have come twice."

Mr. Kenyon Price turned slightly pink.

"I have a few things to say to you," he said, "and this is not the time or the place to say them, nor can I stop. You know my house, Plas Rhyll? Suppose you visit me there tomorrow evening—say at six o'clock?"

This was still more of a surprise. The boys did not answer.

"Of course, if you are afraid—" began the colliery magnate.

"If you think that you're much mistaken," returned Roddy hotly.

"Then prove it by coming at six o'clock tomorrow night."

Mr. Kenyon Price turned on his heel as he said the words, and walked away.

"Well," remarked Dafydd, picking up the dead salmon and stringing a willow-shoot through its gills, "this wass a rum go. But we haf got ter fish."

"Roddy," said Tom seriously, "it's pretty hot stuff for us if Price has got all the land round us. Think it's true?"

"Of course," grunted Rodwell. "What'd be the good of his sayin' so if it wasn't?"

"It's a confounded nuisance," said Tom apprehensively, as they turned back towards the cottage. "We know what sort of an enemy he makes, as it is. Still, it couldn't be helped, anyway. We couldn't have bought the land, if we'd wanted to—not until we'd made a lot of money out of our shaft. That's where his wealth tells. Look as if he'd got us by the hip."

"I don't know," growled Roddy. "Why was he so beastly civil about it, I wonder? He isn't generally. That looks as if there was a bit of a weak spot somewhere."

"He asked us to Plas Rhyll!"

"Yes, and I vote we go."

"Do you, by gum! D'you think he means any mischief there?"

"I don't believe it—in his own house. Anyway, I shall chance that and go. You needn't come if you'd rather not, Tom."

"Of course I shall come you chump! Dafydd, what d'you think of it? Is it all right?"

"No; nothing that man will do wass all right," replied Dafydd. "He iss worse than all those we haf had to do with together. I can see it in him."

The young mountaineer glanced at the boys thoughtfully.

"I wass not like house, especially big houses like that," he said. "You will not get any coot there. Petter stay away."

The boys were not to be persuaded, however, and quite made up their minds to go. Next morning found them at the pits as usual, and they put in a steady day's work, raising a good tally. Nothing worth mentioning occurred underground. Terry and Pat Lloyd were still the boys' stall-mates, and at the end of the day they went up in the cage together.

As they stood by the yard gates, the five Belgian pitmen passed out, keeping close together and talking in their own tongue. One of them, a big, loose-limbed fellow, looked at Roddy and said something to his comrades, who all laughed loudly as they strolled past.

Kenyon Price Offers Terms.

"NICE choice-lookin' lot, aren't they?" remarked Tom. "We seem to amuse 'em!"

"I've no objection to that," said Roddy; "they can grin all they please. Still, it beats me what they're doin' here. Terry, you're a stickler for the workin'-men's blessed rights, aren't you? How is it these pitmen stand those foreigners here, when there are lots of Welsh hewers to be had? They can't be union men."

"It's a rum 'un to me, too," replied Terry; "but you're wrong. I don't worry about such things.

"It'd raise a strike right away in any colliery in the North," said Roddy, "if the owners took on non-union men, let alone foreigners. Has anybody said anything about it?"

"Divil a word, that I know of," was Terry's reply, "though I don't think the men like it. But rates are high now an' work is good. The hands don't want a row. It'll be let slide, that's all."

"I don't agree with you a ha'p'orth, Terry," said big Luke Jones, one of the hewers from the Grade. "To my mind it's time them Dutchmen was footed out, an' they oughtn't to ha' bin let in. While there's a British miner in the country lackin' a job, no foreigner oughter take his place—nor oven then. They're a dirty lot, those five, for I've been workin' in the stalls next 'em."

"It's a fact, I don't see why the boss wants to take on Belgians," said Terry. "It's easy to get it altered if the hands chooses. Kenyon Price himself daren't go against it."

"So I will," said Jones. "I'll get the secretary to take a deputation o' hands to see Sully. If this sort o' thing starts, there's no sayin' where it'll stop. We'll have 'em shifted out o' the Aberford."

"Oh, I shouldn't do that—" began Roddy; but Luke cut him short.

"You leave this to men what's hewed afore you was thought of, lad. We'll attend to it."

Roddy shrugged his shoulders and grinned; but as he turned away he caught sight of Sully, who had been talking to an engineer close by, and the viewer's eyes met his.

"Sully heard what you said," remarked Tom. "He gave you an ugly look for it, too. Didn't seem at all pleased."

"It don't look as if we succeeded in pleasin' Sully much at any time," said Roddy. "Let's get back an' finish that salmon. I'll bet Dafydd's cooked the other half in some nobby way of his own."

They were not far wrong in that conjecture, but salmon, though a luxury, is hardly a thing to make big meals off. Both the chums felt rather "off colour" when they started for Aberford next morning, and Tom complained that he had not slept, unless one counted nightmares. However, they met Terry on the way to the yard, and he had some news.

"They've lost no time startin' the agitation," said Terry, laughing. "Luke Jones is great on politics. He got several of the hewers together last night, an' saw the secretary of the union. Off they went right away, an' saw Sully before he left for home. They told him the Belgians must be given the push."

"What did Sully say?"

"He didn't dare refuse right away. But he told 'em he'd got the men on a month's contract, and at the end o' that time he promised they should go. The union wouldn't ha' stood it in most places, but they let it go at that. The Belgians is to go in a month."

"I wish I'd said nothing about it," remarked Roddy, rather uncomfortably. "Not that I suppose that made a grain o' difference. Still, I didn't want to get 'em kicked out."

(Continued on the next page.)

Id. IS ALL IT COSTS

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"How did they turn up here, of all places? That's what I want to know," said Tom.

"I heard about that last night," Terry replied. "They was stokers on a steamer that came into Cardiff, though they'd been colliers afore that in their own country. The five of 'em got into some drunken fight with Cardiff dock-hands, an' they used knives, an' played up the deuce. They got two months apiece for it, bein' short some o' the dockers pretty bad, an' when they come out o' gaol, no ship'd take 'em."

"Should think not," commented Tom.

"So they tramped up country, hearin' there was collieries, an' Sully took 'em on as hewers, bein' short-handed. An' I reckon he'd think he'd some reason of his own for doin' it."

"They're a pretty ugly crowd, then, by that account," said Tom. "You needn't be sorry for putting Luke Jones on to 'em, Roddy—they'll be a jolly good riddance."

Rodwell agreed, and felt no more scruples at having raised the question. When the boys crossed the yard they passed within view of the offices. The first thing they noticed was the Belgian party in Sully's room, their caps in hand. They could see him through the windows talking to them.

"He's explainin' matters to 'em," said Tom. "See that, Roddy? Tellin' 'em about the deputation, an' that they'll have to go in a month. I'll bet he's sick about it, too."

"Birds of a feather," was Roddy's reply. "Hallo!" he added, under his breath.

"What?" inquired Tom.

Roddy had seen Sully catch sight of the boys walking past, and he noticed the viewer called the attention of the Belgians, and gave a quick jerk of his head towards the boys, as if pointing them out.

"See that?" said Roddy. "He's tellin' 'em it's he that owns this business, an' that we started it. I'll bet you that's his game. Didn't you spot it? Remember how Sully overheard us last night talkin' to Luke Jones. He'll make the most of it. Put the blame on us."

"No great odds, is it?" said Tom. "Come on, let's get down the cage."

He cast a look back, however, and observed that only four of the Belgians had left the offices—one had evidently remained behind with Sully. The boys went to the shaft, and had to wait a while, for a cage-load of men had just gone down. Roddy and Tom were standing a little way apart, chatting, when they saw somebody strutting in their direction. It was the big, loose-limbed Belgian who had been the missing one of the five when the others left the office.

His eyes fell on the boys, and he came towards them with a fierce, menacing scowl on his face. He singled out Roddy, and burst into a torrent of threatening words in his own tongue.

"Sorry, but I don't speak your lingo," said the young lever. "What are you makin' such a fuss about?"

The Belgian's rage increased. He shouted epithets in the roughest Flemish, which were all Greek to Roddy's ears, and then, clenching a grimy fist, he strode forward as if to attack the boy.

Suddenly, with three steps, Terry Lloyd interposed his big frame between, and, taking hold of the Belgian's shoulder with one hand, gave him a twist that sent him staggering back.

"None o' that, ye Dutch spalpeen!" said Terry sharply. "You touch Roddy Owen, an' I'll drive your ugly nose through your back hair! Freeze on to that, if ye don't want to get hurt!"

The Belgian stuttered with rage, and made as if to spring at his assailant. For a moment it looked as if there would be a fight; but the formidable appearance of Terry's big figure, and the fist like a shoulder of mutton which promised to deal with the foreigner, was too much for him. The man swallowed his wrath and drew back sullenly, while several of the pitmen came to watch the fun.

The Belgians, seeing that it would be very unwise to interfere any further with the boys just then, withdrew, muttering among themselves, and went to get their lamps, while Tom and Roddy, rather relieved that a general "row" was averted, stepped into the cage with the Lloyds.

"You seem to ha' got a fine old knack of gettin' into ructions, Roddy," Terry remarked.

"Begob, I envy you, me bhoy."

"We could do with a few less," replied Roddy. "One or two are all very well, but I haven't the appetite for 'em that you have. It was jolly good of you to stop in an' stave that Belgian off, though. I'm much obliged, Terry."

"Tush! You cu'd ha' stretched that loose-limbed spalpeen on his back yourself," said Terry. "Sure, I did nothing. What bone had he got to pick wid you, I wonder?"

"He and his mates have found out that I spoke about 'em to Luke Jones. They think it's my fault that they're to be shifted."

"Take no notice o' that trash," said Terry scornfully. "They'll find themselves in the wrong box if they try to raise trouble here."

When the cage stopped, the boys went up the road together leading to their stalls, and Roddy dropped a word of warning.

"You see how the land lies, Tom," he said. "We'd better steer clear o' that lot. They may mean danger. You saw 'em talking to Sully?"

"Yes. Didn't quite like the look of that. He wouldn't dare tell a crew of trampe like that anything secret, though."

"Secret be hanged! He's stirred 'em up against us properly, an' he'll leave the rest to chance. Clever move of Sully's, I call it. You heard what Terry said about the sort o' toughs they are. That's why I say keep wide of 'em. If we don't run across their path too much, we're all right."

"I think we're all right, anyhow. The pitmen won't stand any nonsense from that lot, and they know it. They'd get jumped on. Nothing to worry about."

Roddy said no more, and they soon forgot all troubles and problems in a long spell of steady, hard work. The pits seemed quite a relief nowadays, for they had no trouble underground, and everything went smoothly there. Terry and Pat were still their mates in the stalls, and Mr. Glass was head of the section.

All the same, the chums were glad enough to get out again, and breathe the pure air of the upper world, after the shift was over.

"We've got to step out if we're goin' to reach Bryn y Garth before we visit Mr. Kenyon Price," said Roddy, "an' I suppose we must."

"Of course we must, you ass! Because I'd rather starve than be beholden to him for anything, considering what's passed. Whether we shall get any good by goin' is more than I can tell, an' it don't seem likely. But we'll hear what he's got to say."

"Seems to me like a trap of some sort. However, I'm with you."

They walked at their briskest pace to Bryn y Garth, and found Dafydd as discouraging as ever about the visit. There was no time to do anything but wash and jump hurriedly into clean clothes.

"We don't want K. P.'s flunkies jeerin' at us," said Tom; "not that I care a button about

Suddenly, with three steps, Terry Lloyd interposed his big frame between, and, taking hold of the Belgian's shoulder with one hand, gave him a twist that sent him staggering back.

that, but it's just for our own blessed self-respect. Twenty minutes to seven! We shall have to hook it like anything."

"Punctuality is the politeness o' princes," chuckled Tom, as the building came in sight. "By rights we ought to ha' come in a motor-car. Still——"

"We'll get one out o' the Bryn y Garth profits before long," said Roddy, "an' have a motor right to it then Price has to his whole collection. He's got six, they say. Big place, ain't it?"

The great, sumptuous-looking house showed up beyond an avenue of trees stretching across a newly-laid-out park. The building was modern, very showy, and anything but picturesque, though it looked rich and luxurious enough.

There was nothing shy about the boys. They walked into the park, past the lodge-gates, as if they owned the place, and took no notice of the lodge-keeper, who called out gruffly to ask them their business. It was nearly a quarter of a mile through the park to the house.

"I'm thinking it's as likely as not K. P. ain't expectin' us at all," said Tom. "No doubt he didn't suppose we'd come."

"Then it'll be a little surprise for him," said Roddy, walking up the wide, stone steps and ringing a bell; "but my opinion is he's reckoned on our comin', and is waitin' for us. Seven o'clock's the tick," he added, glancing at the clock-tower near the stables.

The two great doors were flung open, and a couple of footmen appeared.

"What do you want?" said the taller of the two, looking at the boys scornfully.

"To see Mr. Kenyon Price," replied Roddy.

"He expects us."

"Ho, I dessay!" snorted the footman, looking wrathfully at the boys' rough clothes. "Get round to the back door, that's the place for your sort! What d'yer mean by——"

"Go to Mr. Kenyon Price at once," said Roddy sharply, in a tone that carried through the hall, "and tell him Hughes and Owen are here to see him. Quick, now!"

The two footmen were quite taken aback, and before they could reply a voice was heard somewhere in the interior, bidding them admit the boys. Tom and Roddy walked in, and were ushered by the surprised flunkies into a large, luxurious dining-room, the table of which was set with snow-white linen and sparkling silver and crystal. The footmen then withdrew, closing the door.

"Run on, showin' us into the dining-room," unholy inside with the fat of the land!" said Tom, quite overcome by the richness of everything. "Who wouldn't be a colliery owner?"

"Rum go, showin' us into the dining-room," said Roddy. "Wish he'd hurry up."

Nobody appeared for some time, however, and the boys, after glancing round the room and noting its handsome apartments, went to the window, and stood looking out across the park. The whole house seemed strangely silent.

"So you've concluded to come—eh? Quite plucky of you."

The boys turned round, and saw Mr. Kenyon Price standing by the table. Neither of them had seen or heard him enter the room. He was in full evening-dress.

"Had a pleasant walk from Bryn y Garth?" said the mine-owner genially.

"Not bad," replied Roddy; "and now we're here, at your invitation, sir, what do you want with us?"

"Just a little chat," said Kenyon Price, "that's all. By the way, I suppose you haven't had dinner—or supper, as you would call it? We dine here at the unfashionable hour of seven. I will ring, and, if you will join me at the table, I shall be glad."

"No, thanks," put in Tom.

"Quite so. Now, I don't know if you've ever noticed, my young friends, that it never pays people who own the same sort of business to be enemies. They only injure each other, and do no good."

Roddy made no reply.

"They come to all sorts of grief," continued Kenyon Price thoughtfully; "surprisin' things happen to them."

"Are you trying to threaten us, sir?" said Roddy, half rising out of his chair.

"No, no; of course not. How absurd! I'm giving you a little advice, that's all, as you're starting in life. Now, I suppose you know that my property runs all round yours, and hems you in."

"Yes; you bought it so as to make things hot for us," said Tom; "but Gripe's still quite equal to all the midnight visitors that may come to Bryn y Garth. He could eat 'em without salt!"

"I'm afraid you're talking rather over my head," said Mr. Kenyon Price, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I don't know who Gripe is, or what you mean by midnight visitors. But——"

"All right, keep it up," replied Tom, shrugging shoulders in his turn; "we don't mind. By the way, you haven't asked after my shoulder yet, sir."

"Your shoulder! Oh, yes; you are the lad that was hurt in the pit the other day, aren't you?" said the coal magnate carelessly. "I'm glad it was no worse; but, of course, I can't keep abreast of everything that goes on in such large collieries as mine. But, as I was saying, this land of mine at Bryn y Garth hems your little property in. Now, I have much experience in coal-mining; you have very little. Why shouldn't we combine?"

"How?" said Roddy.

"Why, join forces, my lad. I will join you as partner in Bryn y Garth, and we will put all the land together—work the coal, and share the profits. You can't do it by yourself; you haven't the money, and never will have. You can't possibly do it with a few pounds."

"We're going to have a jolly good try, though," said Rodwell.

"You will come to grief. What chance will you have, with me as a rival, and owning all the land round you?"

"It's our land that the coal's on, though," said Roddy. "Yours isn't worth a toss."

"That remains to be seen. There is no telling how the coal-seams may run. You have a little coal on your land; perhaps a great deal. I will take all risk off your hands; we will have a proper deed of partnership drawn up, and we will share the profits alike. I don't try to persuade you your land's worth nothing. I think it is very likely worth a great deal; but with my help you can make a hundred times more of it, and start making it pay at once."

"Why do you want to join this little place of ours, when you've got the huge Coed Coch collieries, sir?" Rodwell said.

"Because we can combine them all together," said the coal magnate, "and keep wages down, and have more power over the men. We can cut prices, and make bigger profits. When we've joined two such fat collieries together, the pitmen will be more under our thumb. Surely you understand that!"

"I don't know that I want to understand it," said Roddy. "I'm a pitman myself, an' I don't think I shall forget that when I'm a mine-owner."

"Well, but you're sharp enough. You can't help seeing that my offer is a splendid thing for you. With it—and providing Bryn y Garth turns out well—you will rapidly make your fortunes and a sure success. You will have money, power, a house like this"—Mr. Price waved his hand round the sumptuous dining-room—"horses, motors, everything you can wish for. Without my help, it is likely that nothing but trouble and ruin lie ahead of you. Now, choose! Which shall it be?"

"You've made your offer," Roddy said. "I shouldn't wonder if it's all just as you say—in fact, I believe it is."

"Then you accept?"

"These are my conditions," said Roddy, "on behalf of myself an' Tom Hughes. You'll not only share your lands at Bryn y Garth, but you'll surrender one half o' the whole o' your collieries o' Coed Coch, which you hold wrongfully. You'll surrender them to us, the rightful owners, along with half the money you've drawn out o' them from the beginning. An', secondly, if you'd any hand in the death of Matt Matthews, you'll confess it, an' make every reparation in your power."

The colliery-owner rose to his feet, his eyes glittering dangerously.

"You dare say this to me?"

"Yes; and twice as much!" replied Roddy contemptuously. "D'you think we don't know you? That's the trust we took in hand when Matt died, an' we'll fulfill it! I'll have no hand in any half measures! Those are our terms!"

Kenyon Price gripped the back of the chair till his knuckles grew white.

"Is that your last word," he said, between his teeth, "you insolent young dog? Think well; is it?"

"Our last word," returned Roddy. "isn't it, Tom?"

Tom nodded grimly. He thoroughly agreed.

Then go!" said the colliery owner fiercely, pointing to the door. "Out of my house! I have said my say! Pit Bryn y Garth against Coed Coch, and see what comes of it!"

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

SWIMMING:

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

MOTIONLESS FLOATING.

NEXT to being able to swim well on the breast and back, a knowledge of floating is very useful, particularly to those who may be taken with cramp, or attempting to save life; besides which, the ability to float vastly increases the confidence of a swimmer when in the water.

There are some people who are so formed that they could never float in a horizontal position motionless on the surface of the water; but these are very few. The great majority, however, with but a little practice, will be able to float. The specific gravity of most persons is less than that of water, and my own experience leads me to believe that most persons who thoroughly expand their chests and inflate their lungs, also assume the proper position, will float, not necessarily horizontally—because that position is purely a question of balance—but to float, only with one's face and chest above the surface, can be done by most persons without muscular effort.

In order to learn to float, select some shallow water—about one to one and a half feet deep is best for the purpose—but before beginning practice in floating, the pupil should first learn

deep breathing.

The method to be adopted is as follows:

From the position of attention, bring the head and shoulders well forward, and slowly exhale through the mouth as much air as possible from the lungs. Follow this up by slowly making a deep inspiration through the nostrils, at the same time gradually throwing back the head and shoulders to the first position. This exercise should be repeated six or more times at each lesson, which should be taken in the open air about twice daily.

By taking this breathing exercise regularly for, say, one month, not only will the pupil benefit in health by the exchange of air so introduced into the lungs, but also will learn how to fill them properly, and thus add to

the buoyancy of the body.

In beginning to take practice in floating, remember that it is most essential to take a long breath and completely fill the lungs with air; then, holding the breath, turn on the back, stretch the arms well outward along and beyond the sides of the head, with the palms turned upwards; the legs should be opened wide apart, bent at the knee, with the feet well under the body.

This is the easiest position in which to float, as the centre of gravity is thus brought nearer to the chest, which contains the lungs filled with air.

At the first few attempts the water will wash over the face, but as one lies still and holds the breath, the body will gradually rise, and the face will come above the surface sufficiently high in order to allow respiration to be carried on. While lying in this position it is necessary to remember that the lungs are not to be completely emptied, but kept inflated by the air being quietly exchanged in them.

Fig. 1.—Topping the Hurdle.

Remember that frequent practice is required, and that so long as the lungs are properly inflated, and there is weight beyond the head in order to balance the feet, one may lie on the surface, face upward, without any muscular effort. Of course, it is much easier to float in salt than in fresh water; this is because of its greater density, and for that reason every swimmer can float in the sea.

After being able to float in the doubled-up position, the pupil should next learn to

lie on the back

with the legs extended in a line with the body, and close together.

For this position, the straighter the body the better the effect, and in this case the toes, face, chest, and fingers should be slightly above the surface.

The supreme difficulty of this position is to overcome the perverse tendency of the legs to sink, and if, after frequent trials, they are found still to sink, take some weight—say, about one pound in each hand—and proceed to lie in the position indicated above. This weight will supply the necessary pressure beyond the head so as to raise the feet to the surface. As soon as the body appears to float, release one weight, and continue the practice until you are able to float horizontally without any aid.

Finally, let me remind you that when taking up the position for floating every movement should be gently performed, and as much of the body as possible kept under

the surface of the water.

No part of the body should be caused to drop on the water, because, by so doing, a downward grade will be imparted which will be hard to counteract.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

HURDLING:

A Famous Athlete tells how REALMITES may excel at this sport.

ONE of the prettiest events to watch in an athletic programme is the hurdle race. The sprint hurdle race is over a straight, level grass course 120 yards in length. The hurdles, which are 3½ feet high and about 5 feet long, are placed in flights 10 yards apart, there being ten flights in all for the full course.

To be a successful hurdler one must have some natural talent for this branch of sport, for hurdling is the most difficult of the athletic arts to acquire. An accomplished hurdler must be a fast sprinter, and his leaping powers must be equally to the fore.

Modern hurdling differs much from the olden style of getting over the "sticks," and perhaps is not so graceful in execution. It is, however, very effective and scientific.

The hurdler should take his hurdles with his body or breast directed straight towards them—that is, facing the winning-tape. He will thus

alight on the other side in correct position to be able at once to get into his running between the flights.

When "topping" the hurdle

the forward leg must be thrown over it, the body at the same time being thrown forward. The object of so throwing the forward leg over is to get the foremost foot to the ground on the further side as quickly as possible. There must be no momentary hanging in the air with a view of gaining a bigger landing distance by gliding—this is the old and slower style. The near leg is brought up smartly, with a view to its being in easy position for sprinting the moment that the forward leg touches the ground on the other side of hurdle.

Fig. 2.—Topping the Hurdle. Note the way the leg is thrown out and the swing of the arm.

The distance between the flights must be covered in three strides. I say "must," but have not forgotten that length of leg may not permit all my readers to accomplish this. Constant practice, however, to attain the correct form for fast hurdling, will bring its reward. If, however, after all, it is not possible to cover in three strides the distance between the flights, five strides should be taken, to avoid frequently changing the leg.

In training for hurdling, one hurdle should be set up, jumped at, and cleared. Plenty of practice at this will promote correct style of approach, and it should be the object of the young hurdler to take off always at the same distance in front of the hurdle. By doing this he will get into the habit of approaching each succeeding hurdle in like manner, and will thus gain that

evenness of style

so essential to fast work.

Having practised sufficiently over the one hurdle, the young athlete should add two or three more hurdles—taking care that they are set up at their correct distance one from the other. These he must learn to take in correct style, as set forth, to do which he will find that he will have to "fly" each hurdle barely an inch from the top. When throwing the first leg over the hurdle the body is doubled up somewhat, the right arm is thrown forward (presuming the right leg is the first one over) and the left arm (or right, as the case may be) materially assists the motion by being brought smartly up while the other leg is being thrown over the top.

In addition, the first exponent over here of the modern fast method of "topping the sticks," would use the hip as a swivel. The first leg was thrown over the hurdle, no apparent effort being made to get distance on the farther side, but the other leg followed afterwards, and was not dragged; but, on the contrary, was brought up smartly, so that when the first leg struck the ground on the farther side of the hurdle, his other leg was in capital position for the next stride. In this leg motion it is necessary to

use the body as a lever,

the arms being made use of as described, and being the means of balancing the body whilst undergoing motion.

Gradually increasing the number of hurdles which he can clear whilst still retaining correct form, the young hurdler proceeds until he can accomplish the full ten flights, and can then go through run in.

In the 220 yards hurdle race, the hurdles are placed 20 yards apart. This is not a frequent event in sports programmes in this country, nor does one often see a 440 yards hurdle race. These races are very punishing, and require expert hurdling in their accomplishment.

The young athlete who shows form over hurdles and can sprint fairly fast is assured of a goodly crop of prizes. There are not many hurdlers competing, as compared with the large fields which turn out for the flat events. Plenty of practice is the key-note to success.

(Next week—Jumping, High Jumping, and Long Jumping.)

CRICKET:

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

FIELDING.

FIELDING is one of the things that can be improved by constant practice, and beginners will be well-advised to pay the greatest attention to this department of the game. Three or four times a week, at least, the young player should practice catching, and backing up, and returning the ball. It is most unsatisfactory to make a good score, or for the bowler to get a lot of wickets, and then for the match to be lost by the dropping of an easy catch. I can speak from bitter experience; for again and again I have seen this happen; and J. T. Hearne, my colleague in the Middlesex attack, has often been the victim of what looked like a certain catch's being bungled. When that happens two or three times it is enough to depress the finest bowler in the world.

The fielding will be very much in the captain's or vice-captain of the side makes it in a club. If at practice the leaders are keen, then the rest of the eleven will be rebuked when inclined to be lazy. When Canon Edward Lyttleton, the present headmaster at Eton, was in command of the Cambridge eleven, he found that he had a chance of making his eleven famous for its fielding, and so determined was he to have none but

first-class fielders,

that two men who were more than worthy of their place in a side for their batting, were left out for the simple reason that their fielding was not satisfactory. The records of this eleven show clearly that nothing was lost by these drastic measures; on the contrary, much was gained, and the side has always been known as the finest in all departments of the game ever turned out by either of the Universities. It was much the same a few years later under J. E. K. Studd, the third of the famous band of brothers who became captains in rotation. Studd was a well-known amateur cricketer who was at Cambridge in the eleven, and he said they thought Mr. Studd very strict indeed; but he owed all his success in life to the thoroughness with which he had to play up to the high standard of economy to the man who, to-day, is having a hand in shaping the destinies of thousands of young men at the Polytechnic.

What then, are the qualifications of a good field? They are very simple. A man must be able to pick up the ball quickly, to throw-in well, and to catch. Certainly one cannot give any particular directions about returning the ball, except not to throw in with a yorker, which, of course, is very difficult for the wicket-keeper or bowler to handle. It is much better to try and send in the ball at full speed, or with a long-hop, as this saves a good deal of uncertainty. If you want to be useful, aspire to excellence in this department of the game. Let me speak plainly. You must use both hands; never be careless, or grumble about the position assigned to you; always back up the wicket-keeper or the bowler, who is at the other end of the wicket to you. Be on the look-out, and ready to rush after the ball. Be prepared for a catch, no matter how long it is before the ball is returned, but

watch the ball carefully.

Notice the flight and the position of the fieldsmen.

I have already tried to point out how our fielding can be improved. I think every school captain might have his eleven out fielding just as if a match were on; every man in the position for which he shows an aptitude. It is only in practice games that the leader of the side can find out the principal position which suits a man best.

It was always an object lesson to watch S. E. Gregory, the Australian player. His place was near the wicket—usually cover-point. He was ever ready to dash in as soon as the batsman had shaped to make his stroke. A good fieldsman is always on his toes, or, in other words, ready to spring in any direction.

As a long-field, Joseph Vine, will always command a page in the history of Sussex cricket. No matter how remote the chance of staying the flight of the leather, Vine will always make the attempt, and it is exhilarating in the extreme to watch

the race to the boundary.

Balls that ninety-nine per cent. of our cricketers would leave alone, are keenly chased by the Willingdon professional, and the runs he has saved Sussex by his energy and lightness of foot must be enormous. Without a doubt he is one of the finest out-fields before the public at the present time.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

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.

(Continued from last week.)

ONCE, at Dulwich, took advantage in a remarkable manner of the slowing-down which takes place during the running of the third quarter-mile. When a thousand yards had been covered, the forty odd competitors were so bunched together that a "sheet would have covered the lot," so to speak.

I felt so strong and full of running at this period, that, with sudden inspiration, I sprinted round the whole bunch and took the lead 600 yards from the tape, thus altering my usual tactics of lying handy for a fast run in. I felt, however, I could stay right home at fast speed, and this caused me to "jump." The field was strung-a-cigled, and no one was able to get on terms again with me. The result justified the tactics.

I do not advocate rushing into premier position if unable to maintain it. At the same time, judgment must be used in improving place and position as opportunity affords, and you possess the power to enable you to do so.

When the ball goes

for the last lap, there is always a quickening of pace. Do not get flurried at this. Strive to keep pace with eager competitors without chopping the stride.

At 300 yards to go, if it is possible to change into a quarter-miler's gait, do so, and make the best of your way to the winning-tape. If unable to sprint at so early a stage of the final struggle, nurse your running until you know you can sprint the rest of the way, and then brace yourself up for the run in. Above all, don't look round.

To successfully run a mile race, be it a handicap or a scratch race, much discretion must be used. Utilise superiority of pace or stamina where you either will have the most telling effect on your fellow-competitors; be mindful of pace; take advantage of the openings that occur, and you will have acquired the judgment essential to prize-winning.

In scratch races, if possessed of natural fast pace and ability to stay also, break up your field by making the pace felt. If possessed of more stamina than pace, you want an evenly-run contest, and must do your best to make the most of your staying power in the third lap, when other competitors are nursing themselves for the final struggle.

If you have pace, and little staying power to go with it, you must make the most of the start to get into a position where you can "rest up" for a final fast run in. An occasional fast quarter-mile, and a little sprinting interleaved into the usual training, will make for speed; the non-stayer, on the contrary, should pay particular attention in his practice work to the longer distance work.

I do not advocate track racing at distances over a mile for youthful competitors, and as this series of articles is intended solely for such, beyond saying that the training necessary for distances over two miles and upwards is based proportionately upon that for the mile, except that one rarely covers the full distance, I do not propose to deal further with the subject.

The boy who wishes to make a distance-runner must not only be strong in leg, he must be strong in body. He must have good lung development, a great heart, and be strong across the back; but he will not acquire such strength of body without regular exercises intended for it alone. It may seem strange to the youth who wishes to become a good runner to

practice running,

and running alone. This is a wrong impression to get. There must be the auxiliary exercises. Nor is it the best thing for the young runner to continually cover exceptional and severe long distances in training. He will strengthen his leg muscles certainly, but the body will be weakened by reason of the constant strain left upon it, and one must be physically fit to be a successful runner.

Let youthful enthusiasm be tempered by discretion, and build up the strength simultaneously with improving and developing the running-muscles. Club-swinging, light dumbbell work and deep-breathing exercises will develop the chest. The all-round work which is engendered by many kinds of sport helps considerably in the building up and development of the athlete's body, and because a youth decides to take up running as his chief pastime, there is no necessity, and it is not wise, to throw up every other form of sport to indulge solely in the one.

This can be left to a later stage in life, when the talent possessed needs specialisation to bring it to perfection. Running is a sport, and should be indulged in purely as a pastime by the growing youth.

THE END.

Playing Forward.

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