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THE BOYS' REALM

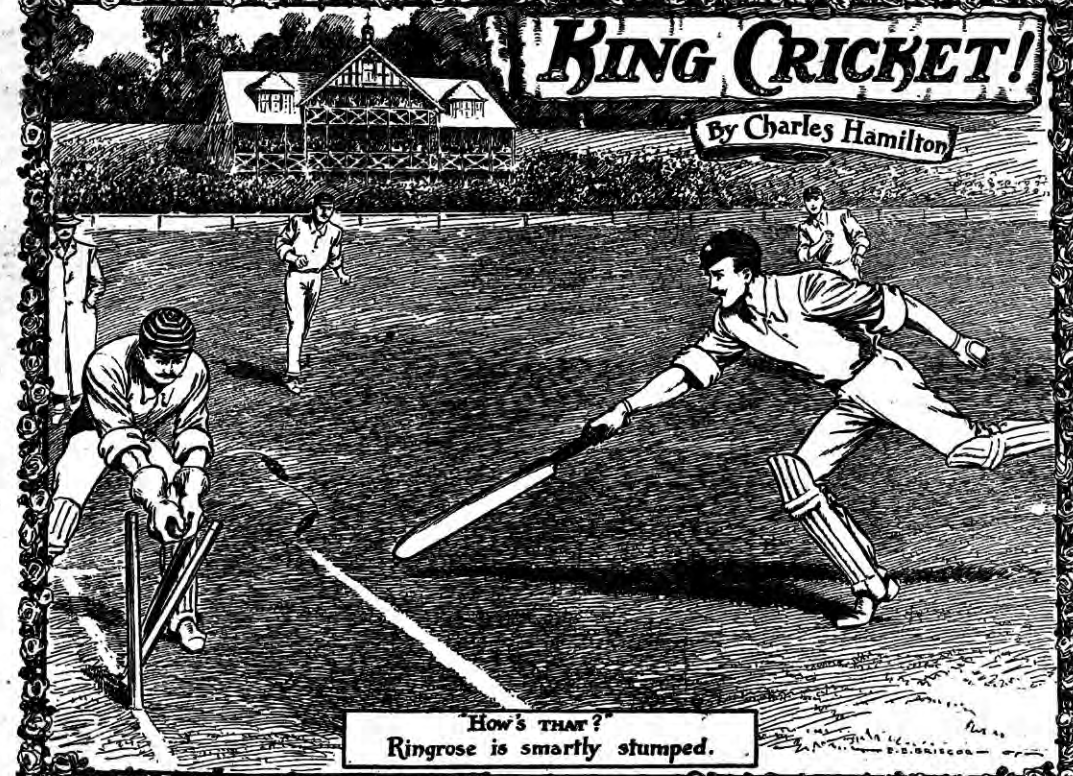
of Sport & Adventure.

SUMMER DOUBLE NUMBER

2D

KING CRICKET!

By Charles Hamilton



"How's that?" Ringrose is smartly stumped.

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New Readers May Start To-day!



KING CRICKET!

A Fascinating New Story of County Cricket.

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

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.

LEN VALANCE, Kit's twin brother.

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 change 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. Lagden bribes Len Valance to injure Arthur in such a manner as to make it impossible for him to play in the next match against Yorkshire.

Len makes a bad blunder, and strikes down Blane, the captain of Loamshire, with a foul blow in the dark, mistaking him for Arthur. Blane is unable to play in the coming match with Yorkshire, and Ponsonby is appointed in his place as captain. Being prejudiced against Arthur and Kit, Ponsonby gives them no chance in the important match with Yorkshire. Arthur is put in last, and by lunch-time Loamshire are all down for 78.

Yorkshire knock up a big score in their first innings, being four wickets down for 250 at the end of the day, through Ponsonby's refusing to allow Kit Valance to bowl. Fortescue, an amateur, discusses the situation with Arthur and Kit, and declares his intention of doing something in the matter, and bringing Ponsonby to his senses.

The next day Yorkshire declare at 400, and Loamshire start their second innings. The game goes very badly for the visitors, and four wickets have fallen for 9 runs, when Ponsonby receives a telegram from Colonel Hilton, the head of the committee of the Loamshire C.C., bidding him play Lovell. Fortescue has kept his word. The captain dares not disobey, and Arthur is sent in with Lagden as a partner. He does wonders, scoring a double century, and at the close of play Loamshire are all out. Is it possible for Loamshire to win? Will Ponsonby remain stubborn to the end and refuse to allow Valance to bowl?

(Now read this week's long instalment.)

Twice the Hat-trick.

LORD HAWKE looked out of the pavilion on the Bradford ground with a smile upon his face. The morning was bright and clear. The threatening clouds had completely passed away, and the sun was gleaming on the wide stretch of greensward.

It was the last day of the great match, Yorkshire v. Loamshire. And, after the vicissitudes of two days' eventful play, victory for the home county seemed to be assured.

Yorkshire wanted 70 to win, with a clear day before them to do it in. Considering that in their first innings the Tykes had made 400 for five wickets, there did not seem much doubt that the desired result would be achieved.

Yorkshire had not expected to have to bat again at all. It was Arthur Lovell's splendid play for Loamshire in the visitors' second innings that had compelled Lord Hawke and his men to fight the match out to a finish.

But the Yorkshiremen were cool and confident. The first innings had shown them that Loamshire had no bowler who could touch their best batsmen at least, Loamshire had not played one. The much-talked-of Colt, Kit Valance, had been put on only for a single over, and had achieved nothing. It was natural that the White Rose team should conclude that they had nothing to fear from the Loamshire bowling.

The Yorkshiremen chatted to each other in a cheerful, careless way. They looked forward to a light and easy morning's work, and a victory gained with hardly an effort long before the lunch interval.

The Yorkshire innings opened with Lord Hawke and George Hirst. The spectators, who were there in thousands, crowded round the match-ground, greeted the appearance of the two splendid batsmen with a ringing cheer.

Lord Hawke, the famous captain of the White Roses, and George Hirst, magnificent either as bowler or batsman, were two men of whom their county might well be proud.

It was confidently predicted by the gleeful Tykes that Lord Hawke and Hirst, between them, would knock up all the runs Yorkshire wanted to win, and that the match would probably be won without a single wicket down.

The players themselves thought it very probable. While this was the spirit of the home team, in the Loamshire ranks there was dismay and doubt. For Ponsonby, the new captain of Loamshire, was as obstinate as ever in following the course he had marked out for himself.

He had, in obedience to a telegram from Colonel Hilton, played Lovell early in the Loamshire second innings, against his own inclination, which was to keep him back to the last. But he was still resolved to keep Kit Valance in the shade.

Lovell had covered himself with glory as a batsman; that his chum should do the same as a bowler was not in accordance with Ponsonby's ideas. The snobbish Loamshire captain had said to himself that this should be a "gentleman's" game; that the county should win without the assistance of the two professionals.

The result had been disaster to Loamshire. Only by playing Arthur Lovell early enough in the second innings to enable him to knock up a big score, had the life of the game been prolonged so far. But for Lovell, Yorkshire would have won with an innings to spare.

Now the same dilemma beset the Loamshire captain once more—to carry out his plan at any risk, or to make a bid for victory by giving Kit Valance every chance to distinguish himself.

And Ponsonby was obstinate. He knew that he was already booked for a "difficulty" with the county committee, for his explanation of his tactics was hardly likely to satisfy those gentlemen, especially Colonel Hilton. And he reflected that, since he was "in" for it, he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and so he was determined to play the scheme out to the bitter end.

Geoffrey Lagden was put on to bowl from the pavilion end against George Hirst. Kit Valance had wondered whether he would have a call to the bowler's crease. He soon discovered that Ponsonby had not changed his mind.

The young bowler's feelings were very bitter. Snobbish dislike was Ponsonby's only motive for leaving him out in the cold; and the result of being ignored in an important first-class match might be serious to the young bowler, whose daily bread depended upon his exertions and the reputation they brought him.

But it was not only the thought of his own exclusion that troubled Kit. He was thinking of Loamshire, too, and of the almost certain defeat of his side; and in the young professional's heart there was a very keen patriotism, quite as keen as that of any of the amateurs of the Loamshire team.

But Kit Valance was not one to complain. He had nothing to do but to field, but he was a splendid fieldsman, and, at least, he could do his best in that direction. And so, crushing down his resentment and wrath, the young cricketer kept a cool and calm face, and took his place in the field, watchful for chances.

Geoffrey Lagden bowled to Hirst, and the big batsman of the Yorkshire side soon showed that he was in excellent trim. His exertions the previous day as a bowler had not impaired his form as a batsman in the slightest.

After stopping the first ball, he began to hit out, and a 2 and a 4 showed what was to be expected of him. A boundary followed, amid loud cheers, and then a 3, which brought Lord Hawke to the batting end.

His lordship slashed at the last ball of the over, and deposited it somewhere among the crowd, who yelled with delight.

Geoffrey Lagden bit his lip. He knew that as a bowler he wasn't up to the weight of the best Yorkshire batsmen, though at the tail-end of the Yorkshire innings he might have been useful. In spite of his dislike of Kit Valance, and his desire to keep the professional in the background, he had sense enough to know that it was necessary to play him if Loamshire was to have anything like a chance.

Not so Ponsonby. The heavens might fall, but it would not change the plans of the dull, obstinate captain of Loamshire. Ponsonby was more likely to grumble at Lagden for not doing better, than to confess himself in the wrong and play the only bowler who could have touched Hirst's wicket. Ponsonby was far from pleased now.

Yorkshire wanted 70 to win when the morning's play started, and in the first over Lord Hawke and Hirst had knocked up 17 of them. At this rate, half an hour's play would be sufficient to bring the home county out ahead, and bring the match to an abrupt conclusion.

Fortescue took the next over. The young amateur made a grimace as he took the ball. It was useless to speak to Ponsonby; he was already in the new captain's black books for his interference the previous day, which had brought the telegram from Colonel Hilton. He could only obey orders, and he went on to do his best.

George Hirst still had the bowling, and he was waiting for the ball with a smile on his sunburnt face. When it came down, he hit out at it, and the batsmen ran 3 before the ball was brought in from the country.

Then Fortescue delivered a ball to Lord Hawke. The Yorkshire captain sent it whizzing, and started to run. Then he stopped, with rather a comical look on his face. The ball was in cover-slip's hand!

Kit Valance tossed up the ball and caught it again.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

Lord Hawke walked away to the pavilion.

The Loamshires drew a breath of relief. The first Yorkshire wicket was down, at all events; Yorkshire were not to win with the timber intact in the second innings.

Ringrose came in to join Hirst at the wickets. The rest of Fortescue's over was bowled against his wicket, and it gave the Yorkshire batsman 12.

The Yorkshire score read—29 for one.

Lagden cast an appealing glance at Ponsonby. The Loamshire captain affected not to see it. He knew what Lagden wanted, and he was determined not to grant it. Whatever happened, Kit Valance should not bowl.

Tunstall was put on to bowl now, and Hirst knocked him all over the field. Run after run was put on, while the Loamshire fieldsmen fagged and sweated after the ball, and the Tykes round the railings grinned with delight.

A 3 brought Ringrose to the batting end, and he sent a ball whizzing, and ran, and ran again, and yet again!

But the third run was one too many! A figure in white was after the ball—after it and upon it; and the figure straightened up and returned the ball like a flash of lightning; and it came to the wicket-keeper, while Ringrose's bat was still a yard from the crease.

It was Arthur Lovell who had sent that ball in, a smart take and return which was well worth a cheer!

For the ball in the wicket-keeper's hand was crashing on the wicket, and Ringrose's bat came to the crease seconds too late.

"How's that?" was the grinning question.

"Out!"

And the batsman walked away.

It was some minutes before the next man in came down to the wicket, and in the interval of leisure some of the crowd became aware of a little by-play proceeding on the field.

The Loamshire captain had walked up to the pavilion from his place at point, apparently in obedience to some beckoning sign from the enclosure.

Now he was in talk with a tall, soldierly-looking gentleman, and from the expression of his face it did not seem that the talk was agreeable to him.

Arthur Lovell had come back from the further side of the field breathing rather hard after his run, and as he came up he caught Kit Valance's eye.

Kit made a slight gesture towards the pavilion.

Arthur looked, and saw Ponsonby standing there, and his heart gave a great bound as he saw whom the Loamshire captain was talking with.

It was Colonel Hilton!

What had brought the old county cricketer so suddenly to the Bradford ground at the finish of the county match?

Was this some more of Fortescue's doing?

Lovell guessed as much. Colonel Hilton seldom missed an out-match of the Loamshire county team, but this time the illness of his nephew, the late Loamshire captain, had detained him at home in Loamchester.

His sudden appearance on the scene now showed that he had learned enough to induce him to take a hasty journey; and Lovell would have given a good deal to hear what he was now saying to the new Loamshire captain.

Ponsonby's expression revealed that he was having a most uncomfortable few minutes.

The colonel was speaking in his sharp, decided way. He was an old soldier, and he never beat about the bush, but came straight to the point, firm and clear as a bayonet.

Ponsonby's tone was very different as he spoke, halting and hesitating.

"I played him in the first Yorkshire innings, sir, to give him a trial, and he shaped rottenly, which confirmed me in my opinion."

"A single over proves nothing."

Ponsonby bit his lip.

"I cannot help thinking," resumed the colonel, "that you have allowed your prejudice against Valance to overcome your judgment, Ponsonby."

"My judgment would be not to play Valance."

"Your judgment was not to play Lovell while he had a chance of doing anything," rejoined Colonel Hilton tartly. "Yet when, in obedience to my wire, you put him on, he did better than the rest of the side put together."

Ponsonby looked sullen.

"Perhaps you have been misled in the same way with regard to Valance," continued the colonel drily. "At all events, I think he should be given a trial."

"I do not think a cricket captain should be interfered with on the field."

"Neither do I, except under very exceptional circumstances."

"I cannot see that the circumstances are exceptional," said Ponsonby obstinately. "I have acted according to my judgment, and nobody can do more than that."

The colonel drew a sharp breath.

"Then your judgment is at fault, and I warn you that the committee will require an explanation," he said. "But that we need not speak of now. I am the last man in the world to interfere with a captain on the field. I think I know the value of discipline, sir. Yet I certainly think you ought to give Valance a trial."

Ponsonby's eyes were burning.

He did not dare to openly break with the colonel, the most influential and powerful man in Loamshire county cricket.

Yet it was very bitter to have to give in.

"I came down here on purpose to see you about it," resumed the colonel. "I am sorry I could not arrive before the Yorkshire innings started."

"I suppose this is some more of Fortescue's meddling!" said Ponsonby viciously.

"Never mind Fortescue now. See, the batsman is going in. You had better make up your mind."

Ponsonby gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"You seem to have made up yours, sir. I will play Valance if you like."

"I do not think you will regret it, Ponsonby."

The Loamshire captain nodded, and went back to his place in the field. He made a sign for the ball to be given to Kit Valance.

Kit's eyes sparkled.

He knew now what the colonel's coming meant. He had hoped, and now he was sure! His fingers closed joyously on the leather.

The new man in was Hunter. Ringrose had gone out with the last ball of the over, and the bowling was now to Hirst's wicket.

Kit Valance was given his hardest task to start with; but he did not falter.

He prepared to bowl against Hirst, and the latter, who had heard of the young Loamshire Colt's reputation, was well on his guard.

He played the first ball to leg easily enough, but did not run.

The second ball he hit out at, and took 2 before the leather came whizzing in from the hand of Arthur Lovell.

And now came the surprise of the innings.

George Hirst, splendid batsman as he was, never knew precisely what the third ball from Kit Valance was like.

He only knew that it broke in an entirely unexpected way, that his bat swept the empty air, and that the next second the elusive ball had knocked his middle stump out of the ground, leaving the wicket with a toothless look.

Hirst stared at the wicket, and then at the bowler, and then at the wicket again. He hadn't expected it.

After the previous Loamshire bowling, this was a revelation, and Hirst wondered whether it was a fluke, or whether Loamshire had been keeping the champion bowler of the season up their sleeve all this time.

"How's that?" cried Kit.

"Out!" was the umpire's laconic reply.

There wasn't any doubt upon the point.

George Hirst put his bat under his arm, and walked away towards the pavilion.

Kit's feat did not elicit a cheer.

The thousands of cricketing folk round the railings had not the slightest doubt that it was a mere fluke, and that Hirst had been dismissed simply by a stroke of bad luck.

But the eyes of the Tykes were yet to be opened on that subject.

Rothery came in next, and put his bat on the crease.

Kit took a little run, and his arm went up and over, and Rothery hit out for where he firmly believed the ball to be; but it couldn't have been there, for his bat hit nothing but atmosphere, and the ball crashed on the wicket.

Down went the bails, and Rothery started and stared!

It was not a common experience for him to be dismissed for a duck's egg, and he couldn't quite believe his eyes at first.

But there was no getting away from it.

The appeal and the reply of the umpire quickly followed.

Rothery had to be convinced.

He went back to the pavilion, and Tunnicliffe came out to take his place. There was a little delay, for the next man in had been far from expecting so prompt a call.

The Loamshire men exchanged glances of satisfaction. Keenest of all was the satisfaction of Arthur Lovell. He had been delighted when Kit Valance had been put on to bowl.

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He was more than delighted to see the Yorkshire wickets fall.

For Arthur knew his chum's quality. He knew that there was no fluke about it. He knew that the Yorkshire batsmen had been dismissed by wonderful bowling, without the slightest admixture of "fluke."

Two wickets had gone down to consecutive balls. Was it to be the hat-trick—the hat-trick in the first over bowled by Kit Valance? Arthur fervently hoped so.

But his hopes were damped when he saw that the next man in was Tunnicliffe.

Tunnicliffe was not the kind of man to be dismissed for a duck's egg.

The batsman took up his position, and waited for the ball.

Rothery had told him to look out for Kit Valance's bowling, and had mentioned that there wasn't any fluke about it. And Tunnicliffe was on the watch.

The crowd were on the watch, too.

They had unhesitatingly sot down as a fluke the ball which had bowled George Hirst; but when the next ball cleaned bowled Rothery they looked doubtful.

If these were flukes they were coming pretty thick.

And so the Tykes waited in silence to see how Kit Valance shaped further, before they made up their minds upon the subject.

They had not long to wait.

The ball came down, a fast one, with a cunning twist on it that had often cost a batsman his wicket—and which had that result now.

The leather, in some mysterious way, curled under Tunnicliffe's bat, and the clack of the falling wicket was followed by a deep-drawn breath from the crowd.

Tunnicliffe was out!

Clean bowled first ball!

What kind of a bowler was this?

For a moment the thousands there were silent from sheer amazement.

Then a ringing cheer burst forth.

"Well bowled!"

"Oh, well bowled!"

"The hat-trick!"

"Oh, well bowled! Well bowled!"

Loud rang the cheering from every quarter of the field.

Tunnicliffe did not wait for the umpire's verdict. He carried out his bat.

The figures on the score-board were altered. They now read 40 for five, last man 0.

Last man 0—and the last man was Tunnicliffe! What kind of a bowler was this whom Loamshire had put on at the eleventh hour, as it were?

Colonel Hilton rubbed his hands in the pavilion. His journey down to Yorkshire had not been taken in vain.

Kit Valance had done the hat-trick!

Yorkshire were five down for 40, out of the 70 they required to win.

With five more wickets to fall, and only 30 runs wanted, Lord Hawke and his men certainly seemed to have little to fear.

But Kit Valance's bowling had made all the difference. It was not only that he was a splendid bowler, but he was now in his very finest form, bowling as he had seldom bowled before. He seemed quite capable of another hat trick.

And another hat-trick might make all the difference between victory and defeat for the Loamshire side.

The same thought occurred to the crowd when they had finished cheering the hat-trick. Most of them were Yorkshire folk, and they wanted their county to win.

But to their credit be it said they were keen sportsmen, and quite ready to give a hearty ovation to any really good play, even if it spelled defeat for the home side.

Denton was next man in. He stopped the last ball of that eventful over dead on the crease, and then the field crossed, and Tweedie was put on to bowl against Hunter.

Hunter soon showed that he was fully equal to dealing with the Scottish professional. He cut the balls all over the ground, and took 10 for the over.

The Yorkshire score was now at 50.

Then there was a buzz of keen interest as Kit Valance took the ball in his hand to deliver the next over against Denton.

Denton was a splendid batsman, quite capable of keeping his wicket up against first-class bowling, but the fate of his predecessors had made him very careful. He played Kit Valance's first ball very carefully, and the second, and the third. Luck was on his side, and it seemed that he would live through the dreaded over.

But no. He was tempted to hit out at the last ball, and then there was a click of a hard leather, and Geoffrey Lagden held up the ball.

"Caught!"

Denton had been caught out by Lagden without breaking his duck.

Fifty for six, last man 0.

The previous day Loamshire had seemed to possess a monopoly of ducks' eggs, but now the Northern county had come in for her share.

Now Geoffrey Lagden was bowling against Hunter.

Hunter played him easily, and Lagden was not able to touch his wicket. Twelve for the over brought the Yorkshire score up to 62.

Eight wanted to win!

Colonel Hilton's face was grim and anxious now as he stared from the pavilion. If Kit Valance did not work a miracle in the next over Loamshire was doomed.

Given one more chance, Yorkshire were pretty certain to knock up the few runs they required to win that hard-fought game.

The spectators were almost as anxious as the old Loamshire cricketer.

There was a dead silence as Kit Valance was seen to take the ball and go to the crease. The young bowler was looking very quiet and cool, but there was a glint in his eyes. He meant to do all that he could do for Loamshire.

Myers was at the wicket. He waited for the ball to come, all eyes. It came!

Clack!

Away flew the ball, and the batsmen ran. Twice they crossed the pitch. They tried a third, and they rued it. For the ball came in straight as a die from the hand of Arthur Lovell, and Tunstall caught it and crashed it on the wicket before Myers's bat was quite on the crease.

"Out!"

Myers went back to the pavilion.

Haigh came in to take his place.

The over finished without another run being scored, but Haigh succeeded in keeping the timber up against Kit Valance's bowling.

Kit did his best, but Haigh had learned extreme caution from the fate of those who had gone before, and he stopped every ball dead.

There was a buzz round the field. The fieldsmen were crossing.

Colonel Hilton drew a deep breath.

Three more Yorkshire wickets to fall, and only 6 wanted to win! Kit Valance had done well; but he had been able to postpone the inevitable defeat, not to avert it. For surely, with batsmen like Haigh and Hunter at the wickets, and only Geoffrey Lagden's bowling to fear, Yorkshire could not fail to make up the necessary total in that over.



Back, back Arthur Lovell goes—his hand in the air, his shoulders against the railing, his eyes fixed on the round, dark object that is swooping down! There is a sound between a click and a hiss—and then a tremendous roar! "Caught!"

Yet the colonel remembered the glorious uncertainty of cricket, and still hoped for the best.

Geoffrey Lagden's face was somewhat pale and set as he went on to bowl. If the over proved a maiden, Loamshire might yet be saved. All that Lagden knew he put into his bowling now, his object not so much to take wickets as to prevent run-getting. But the the first ball gave Hunter 2, and the second ball gave him a single, and brought Haigh up to the batting end.

The third and fourth ball did not materialise, but Haigh ran a single for the fifth of the over, giving the batting once more to Hunter.

Yorkshire were at 68. Two more wanted to win!

Thousands of eyes followed the last ball of the over in keen anxiety. Hunter hit out, and the ball went past mid-wicket, and Arthur Lovell was after it like a shot. The batsmen did not run, and it was well for them that they did not, for Arthur Lovell returned the ball in a twinkling to the hands of the wicket-keeper, and Hunter would have been stumped before he was half across the pitch.

Loamshire had lived through that over. Two runs were still wanted to win, one to tie. And now Kit Valance went on to bowl again.

Every eye was fixed upon him.

There was one thing that could save Loamshire now, and that was the hat-trick from Kit Valance.

The side had had a narrow escape, but they would not have another. If Yorkshire lasted through this over they would knock up the 2 runs they wanted in the next.

All depended upon Kit Valance. Could he do it?

It was much to ask—very much. But after what the young bowler had shown of his quality, it did not seem impossible.

He was in no hurry to pull the watching crowd out of their suspense. His movements were quite leisurely as he pooled his sweater, and rubbed his soles thoughtfully in the little heap of sawdust. He was not flurried in the least, though he knew how much hung upon him at that moment.

Haigh was waiting for the ball. He was on his guard, and it did not seem an easy task to get through his defence. Kit Valance was ready at last. What had really been seconds had seemed minutes to the anxious spectators.

Now he was bowling. Down came the ball.

Clack!

It was the sound of wood meeting leather, but it was not the bat that hit the ball. The bat hit nothing, and the ball was on the stumps. Two of them went reeling, and the bails were on the ground.

Haigh had been cleaned bowled.

"Next man in!"

The next man in came to the wicket. He faced the bowling pluckily, but with the same result. The clack of a falling wicket soon told the tale.

Every face was eagerly excited now. The crowd forgot even to cheer. Was it to be the hat-trick again?

Another batsman came to the wicket.

"Last man in!"

The words ran through the crowd in a buzz.

Rhodes was last man in. He stood up to face Kit Valance, grim and determined. The ball came down, and Rhodes, fine batsman that he was, missed it by inches. Right out of the ground went his off-stump, whipped away by the ball.

For a moment there was silence. Then, as Rhodes was seen walking back towards the pavilion, a tremendous burst of cheering rent the air.

"Hurrah!" "The hat-trick!" "Well bowled!" "Hurrah!"

Yorkshire were all down for 68 in the second innings, and Loamshire had won the match by 1 run!

Startling News!

"KIT!"

Kit Valance gave a start, and looked up out of a brown study.

It was the day after the Yorkshire match, and the Loamshire men were at home in their own quarters. Kit Valance had finished his practice for the day at the county ground. Loamshire's next first-class fixture was the match with the South Africans on the home ground, which was due to commence on Monday. The interval was to be a rest, save for practice, and some of the Loamshire men needed it.

Kit Valance was strolling along the shady green lanes from the county ground, when a man stepped from an opening in the hedge into the sunlight.

"Kit!"

It was Len Valance.

Kit looked at his twin brother with cold, hard eyes.

He had borne with Len Valance long and patiently, for the sake of their dead mother, but the villainous trick Len had played him at Taunton had hardened his heart against the reckless blackguard who had caused him so much trouble.

"What do you want?" he asked. "How dare you show your face here!"

Len shrugged his shoulders.

"Why shouldn't I? Don't rake up ancient history, Kit."

"You narrowly escaped imprisonment over that affair in Somersetshire. You ought to have gone to penal servitude. I don't know why I wanted to save you."

"I do, Kit," said the scapegrace coolly. "It's because you are a decent fellow, and I'm not. I'm a blackguard, and I know it. You won't throw me over."

Kit's face relaxed a little.

"Still, you ought not to have been seen about here," he said. "It may do me harm to be seen talking to you, and you know it. What do you want?"

"The old want," said Len, with a laugh.

"Money, I suppose?"

"Well, as you have just pocketed six quid over the match at Bradford, Kit, you might let me have a couple," said Len persuasively.

Kit silently handed him two sovereigns, a third part of his reward for the hard-fought match at Bradford, the earnings of three hard days.

The scapegrace slipped them carelessly into his pocket; it was "easy come, easy go" with him, and the money would probably be wasted the next day on some extravagance.

"You're a jolly good sort, Kit," said Len, "and I'm sorry for that business at Taunton. I was led into it by that brute Sharp. I've cut him now."

"I'm glad to hear that, at all events."

"I thought you would be," said Len confidentially. "But really, I haven't told you what I wanted to see you about to-day."

Kit did not speak but looked at him inquiringly.

"You know I'm still with Mr. James Lagden in the City."

"Yes; I thought you would be sacked after that affair. I can't understand Mr. Lagden keeping you on," said Kit, with a puzzled look.

Len grinned.

"Influence, my boy, influence."

"What do you mean? Whose influence?" asked Kit abruptly.

"Never mind that, Kit. Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies," said Len Valance, with a wink. "I'm still with Mr. Lagden, and likely to remain there. He has done me the honour to make use of me in some delicate transactions—transactions which would hardly redound to his credit if they were exposed to the light of day. The excellent and respectable Mr. Lagden is a great deal like a whited sepulchre, Kit—nice to look at from a distance, but he won't bear a close inspection."

"I think that's very likely. He ruined Arthur Lovell's uncle, and reduced Lovell to poverty, and I believe there was foul play somewhere."

"That's just what I was going to speak about. Mr. Lagden thinks he has me under his thumb over that Taunton business, and—and one or two other things about which I need not go into details. For this reason he uses my wits when it suits him, under the impression that I shall never venture to betray him."

"What new rascality are you getting mixed up in, Len?"

"Bide a wee! Now, you know I'm a keen fellow, Kit, and there are few tricks I am not up to when I set my wits to work."

"Yes, you can do everything except run straight," said Kit bitterly.

"Exactly," said the scapegrace, with perfect coolness. "You have my character to a T. I've served Mr. Lagden, and at the same time kept my eyes open. And I have learned a little more about his affairs than he imagines. Among other matters, that affair of Arthur Lovell's smoke."

"What do you know about that?"

"I know that James Lagden swindled the man in the most barefaced way, and that it may still be possible to compel him to disgorge," said Len Valance.

Kit's eyes sparkled.

"Are you sure of that, Len?"

"Yes, quite sure, and that is why I am down here now, Kit. I want to see Lovell about it."

He grinned. "Lovell and I are not on good terms. When we met the other day we had some words—and that affair at Taunton rankles in his mind, I've no doubt."

"You are right," said Kit drily. "If it were not for my sake, Len, it would not be safe for you to get within arm's length of Lovell."

"Exactly. So I want you to act as peacemaker," said Len coolly. "I can help Lovell to see his uncle righted—if it is made worth my while!"

"But surely Lovell's uncle—the man who was swindled—is the right person to go to," exclaimed Kit.

The scapegrace shook his head.

"No, you are wrong there. I've made an inquiry or two. The old gentleman has been completely prostrated by the ruin of his fortunes, and he is in a very weak state of health. He is living at the seaside, and has to be taken great care of. He wouldn't be allowed to enter into any business, even if he wanted to. He's only a cipher now. It's with Lovell I must deal, if anybody."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Tell Lovell what I have told you—that I can help him to make James Lagden disgorge, and may be able to get his fortune back again—and that I am willing to do it on conditions."

Kit's brow wrinkled in thought.

"Do you mean that you will have to act as a spy upon Mr. Lagden—to watch him while pretending to serve his interests—and to betray him when the right time comes, Len?"

"What a beastly way of putting it," said Len, shrugging his shoulders; "but I suppose it comes to something like that."

"Then I'm pretty certain that Lovell will refuse."

"With a fortune at stake!"

"He would not act in an underhand manner with a dozen fortunes at stake."

"But surely one is justified in playing it a little low down on a trickster—fighting him with his own weapons!"

"Perhaps; but I don't know that Lovell will see it in that light. But I will tell him exactly what you say, Len, and leave it to him."

"That's right. If he will meet me and talk it over I've no doubt I shall be able to make

(Continued on the next page.)

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, starts in **"The Boys' Herald" This Week.**

KING CRICKET.

(Continued from the previous page.)

him see reason," exclaimed Leo. "And the sooner the better. Where is Lovell now?"

"On the cricket ground."

"Then why don't you go and see him at once, and ask him. Let me see him this evening, and have a chat over it, at all events," said Leo eagerly.

Kit nodded.

"Very well. You know my lodgings; come there at nine o'clock. I'll speak to Lovell at once."

"Good," said the scapegrace, with a smile of satisfaction.

And Kit Valance left him and walked back slowly to the county ground.

The young bowler's brow was very thoughtful. Len Valance's flaws was strange, and yet it was not surprising. Whether Lovell would consent to make use of the scapegrace was a question Kit could not answer.

If he did—and if the stolen fortune came back to its rightful owners—it would make a great difference to Arthur Lovell. Would it make any difference to their friendship?

Kit, of course, wished for the best, for Arthur. Yet it would not be pleasant to have the bar of wealth thrust between him and his chum, the best friend he had on earth.

Things had gone smoothly for neither of them in the Loamshire County Cricket Club; but their friendship had compensated for all.

It would be a blow to the young bowler if it ended—if the difference in their positions made it impossible for it to continue.

But he drove the thought resolutely from his mind.

After all, circumstances might change, but Arthur Lovell's true heart would never change—his friendship was a friendship till death.

Kit entered the cricket field. Some of the members were still at practice, others were standing about chatting. Among these latter there seemed to be a topic of unusual interest under discussion.

Kit thought he guessed what it was. Ponsonby had had a scene with the county committee, and thought no one outside that sacred circle knew exactly what had transpired, it was known that he had resigned the captaincy of the Loamshire team, and it was an open secret that he had resigned under pressure.

As Blanc, the former Loamshire skipper, was still confined to his bed and unable to rejoin the team, it was a question of keen interest to whom the honour of leading the Loamshires against the South Africans would fall.

Kit guessed that the new captain had now been decided upon, and what this was the extremely interesting topic now under discussion.

He wondered who it was, and as he came up towards the pavilion he caught a few words from a couple of talkers that increased his interest in the question.

"It can't be!"

"Well, I heard it from Lagden."

"I won't believe it."

Kit passed on, puzzled and wondering. Geoffrey Lagden was standing in the enclosure, talking to Tunstall and Chichester.

There was a bitter, savage sneer on Lagden's face. He did not observe Kit Valance.

"Yes," he said; "and what do you think of it?"

"Think of it!" said Tunstall hotly. "Oh, it's too rotten for words! A professional captain the Loamshires! My word!"

"Yes," said Lagden bitterly; "we're going to face the South Africans under the captaincy of a paid player—for the first time, I imagine, in county cricket history. Arthur Lovell is to be the new captain of Loamshire!"

Kit caught the words and started.

Could it be true?

Arthur Lovell the new captain of Loamshire! Could it be true?

The Chance of a Lifetime.

A PROFESSIONAL to be captain of Loamshire! Could it be true? Kit Valance walked on with his head in a whirl. If it were true, he was glad—glad for his chum's sake, and for the sake of the county.

But could it be true? Loamshire, the most exclusive of the cricket counties—Loamshire, which had finished almost at the bottom of the championship list last season, owing to that very exclusiveness! Loamshire to be captained by a professional!

It seemed incredible.

"It can't be true!" exclaimed Kit aloud, as he stopped near the pavilion and gazed at the members at practice on the ground, but with unseeing eyes. "It can't be true! It's too good to be true!"

"That's what I thought at first, Valance," said a cool, drawling voice beside him.

Kit turned his head, and saw Fortescue. The young amateur of the Loamshire team nodded to him with a smile.

"It's true!" he said.

Kit's eyes sparkled. He forgot for the moment his usual reserve, and that he, a paid player, was talking to one of the richest amateurs of the Loamshire Club.

"You are sure!" he exclaimed.

"Quite sure!"

"How do you know?"

"I had it from Colonel Hilton."

Kit drew a deep breath. If Fortescue had been told so by the colonel, the news must be true. Arthur Lovell, the champion professional bat of Loamshire, was to be captain of the county team!

"It was the colonel's work, of course," continued Fortescue. "He had a hard task of it to drag the committee along with him. You might guess that, though."

Kit laughed.

"Yes; I imagine so," he replied. "I wonder he succeeded."

"I believe that they had to accept his terms, for his resignation as chairman," said Fortescue, with a smile. "They chose the lesser evil. Loamshire cricket has been in a bad way for a long time, and without the colonel we should be lost. Even as it is, we shall drop out of first-class cricket unless we mind our P's and Q's. What is the matter with Lovell as a county captain? He is the best cricketer Loamshire ever turned out."

"You are quite right there."

"And I, for one, am jolly glad. We have a chance of beating the South Africans now. Hallo, Lovell! You have seen the colonel?"

Lovell's face was very serious.

"Yes," he said briefly.

Fortescue held out his hand in his frank, spontaneous way.

"Then let me congratulate you! I know you'll have to tread a thorny path as captain of Loamshire, but here's one who will back you up through thick and thin."

"Thank you!" said Arthur quietly; and he took the young amateur's hand. "If all were like you, Mr. Fortescue, I should have no hesitation in accepting the honour the colonel wishes me to accept."

Fortescue stared at him.

"You don't mean to say that you hesitate to become captain of Loamshire!" he almost shouted.

Arthur nodded.

"Yes; I do!"

"But—but—but——" Fortescue was utterly amazed, and did not know what to say. "But—but—are you mad, Lovell!"

"I hope not," said Arthur, with a faint smile.

"It's the chance of a lifetime!"

"I know it."

"It may mean the making of you—and of Loamshire as a cricket county."

Arthur nodded again.

"And you hesitate to accept what any other Loamshire cricketer would give both his ears to obtain!" exclaimed the young amateur.

"Yes!"

"But—but you have not refused?"

"I have asked for time to consider."

Fortescue thrust his hands deep into his pockets.

"Well, I think you're an ass!" he exclaimed. "You don't mind my saying so, do you? I always speak my mind."

"Not at all."

Fortescue walked away, with a puzzled and baffled expression upon his face. He was of too careless and thoughtless a nature to understand Arthur's difficulties, and he had never been in anything like Lovell's position.

Arthur looked at Kit Valance with a faint smile.

"Fortescue is a good sort," he remarked.

"I wish there were more like him in the Loamshire County Cricket Club. But there are few of his kind among us. Kit, old man, you know what has been offered me—the position of captain of Loamshire."

"Yes; and I was glad—very glad to hear it."

"Are you surprised that I hesitate to accept it?"

"No; not upon reflection," said Kit. "I quite understand."

"I want to consult you about it, Kit," Arthur said, with a rather restless look. "Will you come with me, now? You are the only chap I can trust and ask to advise me."

"I came back to speak to you. Let us go now."

Lovell donned his coat in the pavilion, and the two young cricketers left the Loamshire county ground together. A good many curious glances followed them.

"There they go!" said Geoffrey Lagden, with a bitter sneer. "The two professionals we are to bow down and worship by order of the committee. Oh, it's too rotten!"

"Rotten!" said Ponsonby, gritting his teeth. "That's the word. If Arthur Lovell really becomes captain of Loamshire, there will be trouble."

"There will be bitter trouble," said Tunstall. "But it may be rescinded after all."

Lagden shook his head.

"It won't! The committee follow Colonel Hilton's dictation like a crowd of dumb cattle. My pater opposed it tooth and nail, but it was no good. The colonel was determined to have his way, and he carried the committee with him. Lovell's feat against Yorkshire on the Bradford ground helped. Oh, it's too rotten! It was a fluke, of course."

"Of course," agreed several voices. "The chap was lucky."

"Well, he won't have a pleasant time as captain of Loamshire, and the team's prospects won't improve, I know that," said Lagden. "Catch me knuckling under to a paid professional!"

"Or any of us!" said Ponsonby.

"I shall resign," said Chichester.

"That will be a jolly good thing for Loamshire, won't it?" said Fortescue, joining the group, with his cheerful mocking face, and his hands in his pockets. "But oh, Chichester, old man, what shall we do for ducks' eggs when you are gone?"

There was a general giggle, and Chichester flushed hotly.

"Oh, you dry up, Fortescue!" said Lagden. "We know how chummy you are with that outsider. I say, you fellows, there's one chance, and that is that Lovell may have too much sense to accept the position the colonel wants him to take."

"Catch him refusing it!" exclaimed Ponsonby contemptuously. "Why, the fellow will be off his rocker with joy at the idea of hectoring his betters, as he'll be able to do if he's captain of Loamshire."

"Arthur Lovell wouldn't do that," said Fortescue, "if he had any betters here. But has he? I may be shortsighted, but I've never seen 'em."

"A rotten professional player," said Ponsonby. "They'll be making one of the groundsmen captain next!"

"I know some of the groundsmen who would make better captains than some amateur cricketers I know," Fortescue remarked casually.

Ponsonby's eyes flashed. He knew that Fortescue was alluding to his unfortunate captaincy of the team in the Yorkshire match.

"Oh, you don't you go into the professionals' room, and chum up with them, and have done with it!" Ponsonby exclaimed.

"That's a more suitable place for you than for me!" retorted Fortescue. "I don't make twice as much out of county cricket as any professional in the team."

And with that Parthian shot Fortescue lounged carelessly away. Ponsonby turned crimson with rage.

He was one of the "amateurs," thick as blackberries in county cricket, whose "expenses" worked out at a figure many "professionals" would have considered a dazzling income.

The group of grumblers broke up, several of them grinning at the dig Fortescue had given the late captain of Loamshire. Ponsonby's position in the club was one of the things that Fortescue had, but never appreciated at all. But Fortescue, in his happy-go-lucky way, had a way of speaking out about all sorts of things in the most uncomfortable manner.

Meanwhile, the young cricketer who was being so discussed had left the county ground with Kit, and was walking slowly down the foliage-shaded lane to Loamchester.

For some time neither of the cricket chums spoke. Arthur was in a mood of deep and almost painful thought, and Kit did not care to disturb his reflections. It was Arthur who broke the silence at last. He stopped at a stile in the leafy lane, and stood leaning against it, his brow dark with thought. Kit stopped too, and waited for him to speak. There was a moment of grim doubt and difficulty for Arthur Lovell. Upon his decision so much rested! It might mean the making or the marring of his career as a professional cricketer, and it was not easy to decide.

"You know how I stand, Kit," he said abruptly, at last. "I have nothing but my pay as a professional cricketer, enough to live upon and keep up a respectable appearance, and that is all. It is an old idea that a county captain should be a man of some standing in the county. There is a good deal of snobbishness in that assumption, yet there is a lot of truth in it."

"You could safely leave that much to the colonel's judgment," said Kit; "you will have him to back you up."

Arthur nodded.

"That's true. If it were only that——"

"And the qualities of a captain," said Kit, "you have more of them than any other man in the Loamshire team."

"I think I should make as good a captain as any man could have, without boasting," Arthur said; "and the colonel thinks so. But——"

He paused, and a troubled look came over his handsome face.

"That isn't all, Kit. I should make a good captain if the team would obey my orders, but would they?"

"They would have to obey orders or resign, as far as that goes."

"Yes; but there are ways of defying a captain without openly disobeying his orders," said Arthur. "If I had the whole feeling of the team against me, I could not lead them to victory. They would play slackly. Perhaps not on purpose, but they would naturally slacken under a captain whose views they did not care to follow. I should not lead them to victory; and I would rather not be captain than lead them to defeat."

There was a short silence.

"Blanc had his difficulties as captain," resumed Arthur. "He had all that I lack—station and money—and he was the colonel's nephew, and had plenty of friends and relations on the committee. But he didn't find it easy to lead—while he was resolved to do evenhanded justice all round. Before his time, Loamshire cricket was a hotbed of favouritism and snobbery. And if he found it hard to lead, with all the advantages he had, what should I find it?"

"Very hard, I'm afraid, Lovell."

Arthur threw up his head a little.

"As for difficulty and trouble, I don't mind that," he said; "you know I've all that on, Kit, and care nothing for it all."

"I know you would, old fellow."

"But if my captaincy means division and bitterness in the team, and slackness on the field of play, and general envy and hatred, it's better for me not to become captain."

Kit was silent. He realised it all as clearly as Arthur did, and it was hardly possible for him to give counsel. It was the chance of a lifetime!

It would be bitterly hard to let it pass when it was scarcely likely to recur. But to accept the post and sow discord in the team, to bring general failure and defeat on the club, that would be selfish and futile.

"It's a dilemma," said Kit, at last. "I wish I knew how to advise you, but I don't. There's one thing. The colonel must have foreseen many of these difficulties, and he still thinks that you ought to be captain of Loamshire."

"He foresees some of them, but far from all," said Arthur, shaking his head. "He is used to be obeyed, and has never met with that kind of passive resistance I should meet with in the team. And he is too kind and generous himself to understand the petty carping spirit that is so common in the Loamshire Club."

"Yes; I suppose you are right. Yet he will be offended, I suppose, if you refuse so splendid an offer."

"He seemed hurt and surprised when I asked for time to reflect," said Arthur slowly. "He does not understand. But I feel that I ought to refuse to take the post."

There was silence again. The position was a difficult one, and there was no clear road out of it. Whatever decision Arthur Lovell made, someone was certain to take exception to it.

And if he crushed down his own ambition, and refused the offer from purely conscientious motives, it was pretty certain that his motives would be misunderstood. He could already hear Lagden and his set sneeringly remarking that the "bounder," the "outsider," had not had the "cheek" to become captain of the county team.

"What do you think, Kit?" said Arthur, at last.

In the moment of tense difficulty, when it was impossible to come to a wholly satisfactory decision, he naturally turned to his chum—the chum he was in turn, and would be true through any change of fortune.

Kit hesitated for a moment.

"I'll speak frankly, Lovell," he said, at length. "I know you want advice, but it's hard to give. I was pleased and proud when I heard that you were to be captain of Loamshire. I knew it would be a good thing for you, and a good thing for the county. But——"

"Speak out, Kit."

"I will. Now that I have reflected, I can see, as you do, that your captaincy would probably do more harm than good. If the committee earnestly press you to take the post, I'd advise you to take it. Unless they do——"

"They won't! They are following Colonel Hilton's lead, but very few of them have any heart in the matter."

"Then," said Kit slowly, "I should refuse."

Arthur Lovell nodded.

"That is right," he said quietly. "Many chaps would have hesitated to take the responsibility of advising at such a crisis. I knew I could rely upon you. It's bitterly hard to let it go, but I feel that I must! I shall not captain Loamshire against the South Africans."

"I think you are right, Lovell. If the offer is renewed in a more cordial manner, you might change your decision. But for the present, at least, I am sure you are right."

No more was said.

The chums walked home together, both very thoughtful. But Arthur's mind was made up. For a moment he had been dazzled by the brilliant prospect that opened before him. But he felt that he had done the right thing in deciding that he would not take his chance of becoming captain of Loamshire.

The South Africans.

LOAMSHIRE was all on the qui vive for the arrival of the South Africans. At the time of the fixture with Loamshire that gallant team had already played three of their matches arranged with English teams, and had won all three. It was their to kill the cricketing world that Sherwell's fine team had all the qualities of a good cricketing side, and that if Loamshire was to win, she would have to fight hard against the merry men from the far-off veldt.

South Africa's progress had been watched keenly by Loamshire folk, in anticipation of the present fixture on the Loamchester ground. And from the start the Africanders made, it looked then as if they intended to rival the performances of their fellow-countrymen, the Springboks, on the Rugger field.

The easy victory in their first match against Leicestershire at Leicester, had been followed by the still easier conquest of Sussex at Leyton. Then the victory over the M.C.C. and Ground at Lord's by three wickets showed that the Africander success was not a fluke. They were a sterling cricketing side, and hearts were beating hard at Loamchester as the day came round for the fixture.

Arthur Lovell was not, after all, to captain Loamshire against Sherwell's side. He had notified Colonel Hilton of his intention to decline the honour, and had made it the first time a coolness had sprung up between the colonel and Loamshire's champion bat.

Colonel Hilton could not fully understand Arthur's position, and he judged without fully understanding, and so he did not make allowance for Arthur's difficulties.

He considered that Lovell might have accepted his judgment of the fitness of things, and although he showed no actual resentment, there was, as we have said, a coolness.

This was very painful to Arthur, naturally, for he liked and respected the colonel, and he was anxious to stand well with him—to say nothing of Molly Hilton. But he felt that he had done right in refusing the captaincy.

(Continued at the foot of next page.)

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.

FROM YOUR EDITOR'S CHAIR.



Latest Portrait of YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

Controller of
THE BOYS' REALM—Saturday.
THE BOYS' FRIEND—Tuesday.
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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. 3d.—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.

Our Double Number.

AT last I am able to put into the hands of my many loyal supporters what I consider to be the finest double number of THE BOYS' REALM I have ever published. I am well aware that it is a difficult matter for an editor to please everybody, but I feel sure of this, that when my friends have perused the many attractive features which this number contains they will be absolutely satisfied that they have had their money's worth. Personally, I think that the five long, complete tales I am publishing in this issue of our paper are alone well worth the twopence asked for it; but when my friends take into account that I am giving them double-length instalments of at least three of our popular serials, and hosts of interesting and instructive articles on all branches of sport, I am certain that they will vote this double number a really fine production.

I do not want to say any more about this issue of our paper. My readers have it in their hands, and it will speak for itself. I should be glad, however, if all my friends will drop me a line about it, telling me their honest opinion of its contents.

NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

On Saturday next THE BOYS' REALM will return to its usual size and price—16 pages price one penny. In the number published on that day I shall present to my readers, as I have been doing for a long time past, two fine, complete tales of sport and adventure. The first will be entitled

"THE LAST INNINGS,"

and will be a magnificent story of school and cricket from the masterly pen of Mr. Jack North. The other complete tale will be written by our popular contributor, Mr. A. S. Hardy, and will be entitled

"THE PHANTOM CYCLIST."

Long instalments of our four thrilling serials will also appear. Altogether, I think that our next issue will be one of the best penny numbers I have published for quite a long time.

THE RETURN OF NELSON LEE.

Of late I have received one or two letters from my readers bemoaning the fact that Nelson Lee does not appear in Mr. Maxwell Scott's school tale, "The Fighting Fifth." It seems that my friends are desirous of reading more of the adventures of this celebrated detective, and are therefore rather disappointed at his not appearing in the story in question. Mr. Scott has not introduced Nelson Lee in this story because he wanted "The Fighting Fifth" to be a school tale pure and simple, with little or no detective element in it. From the letters I have received concerning this story, I gather that the majority of my readers like it exceedingly much, but that there are a section of my friends who would have been glad to see Nelson Lee appear in it.

Well, well, I am sorry for their disappointment; but as I have already remarked in the opening paragraph of my Chat, it is a difficult matter for the editor of a paper to please everybody. Nevertheless, I have an announcement for my readers which will, I think, appease any little disappointment some of them may be feeling. It is this: In this week's issue of our Thursday companion paper, "The Boys' Herald," there appear the opening chapters of a powerful new story of Nelson Lee, by Mr. Maxwell Scott, entitled

"THE IRON HAND,"

and after reading this yarn right through from beginning to end, I have come to the conclusion that it is the very greatest Nelson Lee story which Mr. Scott has ever written.

Four whole pages are given up to the opening chapters of "The Iron Hand" in the current issue of "The Boys' Herald." It is illustrated by Val's clever pictures, and I am positive that it will be voted by everyone the finest detective tale they have ever read. If my friends do not agree with me after reading the first few instalments, I shall be very, very much surprised indeed. You can get your copy of "The Boys' Herald" to-day, price 1d.

A Private Detective.

IT so happens that the very first letter I pick up this week is from a reader living at Hastings signing himself "Jack C." He tells me he wants to become a private detective.

Let me straight away tell my young friend that, as a rule, the private detective has had some experience with an official body before starting in this calling for himself.

Many of the private detectives in London have been employed upon the various police forces throughout the country.

I am afraid I shall have to dampen the hopes of my reader by telling him that boys, as a rule, stand very little chance of becoming private detectives—that is to say, stand very little chance while they are young.

The ordinary routine which is followed in the making of a detective is pretty much as follows: A young man joins the police force—let us say, for example, the Metropolitan Police Force. For a year he serves as a plain, ordinary constable, during which time his conduct is closely watched by his superiors. If he betrays special aptitude in the detection of criminals, he is then drafted into the detective section, and here his real chance comes to him. As a detective police-officer he will be employed in hunting up criminals, in the tracing out of burglaries and other crimes. According to the ability, astuteness, and intelligence he displays, he will his progress be until at last he climbs to the very topmost rung of the ladder in his profession and becomes a chief detective inspector.

It may take him some years to reach this level, or he may get there in a few years; a lot depends upon himself.

This is the way in which official detectives are made. Of course, in the case of a private detective he will have to possess a natural aptitude for the ferreting out of information; in fact, he will have to be a born detective.

The ability to piece together clues, to follow them up discreetly and successfully, is given to very few men indeed, and these few are the successful private detectives who are to be found in the big cities of the universe.

I used to know one private detective who was a famous man. I am not going to mention his name, because to do so would be to reveal a secret it is not wise to publish to the world, but this gentleman enjoyed an income of something near ten thousand pounds a year. His income from several of the great European Governments ran into thousands of pounds per annum, and he lived in one of the finest thoroughfares in London, in a palatial suite of apartments. Of course, he was a man of education and tremendous ability. He was a man who held more secrets in his brain than any other living individual. He has watched over the welfare of many sovereigns and persons of high position. The lives of these persons have often been in his hands, and his foresight and shrewdness have often saved them from real peril.

Of course, such men as this are very rare; but, all the same, it shows my friend to what heights even a private detective can rise.

Does He Get Enough Sleep?

"GEORGE W." is a Cambridge reader of THE BOYS' REALM, and he tells me he is sixteen, and in an office. He has to get up every morning at three, and he finishes his work at two o'clock in the afternoon. Now, although he finishes as early as this, my young friend does not, as a rule, go to bed much before nine o'clock; in fact, I rather suspect that it is often after nine when he retires to rest. Now, he would like to know whether this gives him enough sleep. He tells me that usually, between two in the afternoon and nine o'clock at night, he either walks, plays cricket, or goes for a bicycle ride.

Honestly, I do not think that my young friend does get enough sleep. At his age he ought to get at least eight hours, and if he takes my tip he will go to bed certainly—well, before eight o'clock at night.

The hours of his work are a little bit out of the common, and, therefore, he should regulate his daily programme with a little more consistency. Growing lads need plenty of sleep, and he should make a point of getting, as I have said, at least eight hours' sleep a day.

A Cricket Question.

HORACE FULLER, a Manchester reader of THE BOYS' REALM, has written to me asking if I will publish in my Chat the signalling code for umpires as issued by the committee of the M.C.C. Certainly I will, Horace. Here it is:

Boundaries shall be signalled by waving the hand from side to side.

Byes shall be signalled by raising the open hand above the head.

Leg-byes shall be signalled by raising the leg and touching it with the hand.

Wides shall be signalled by extending both arm horizontally.

The decision "out" shall be signalled by raising the index finger above the head.

Umpires should wait until a signal has been answered by the scorer before allowing the game to proceed.

Besides signalling, the umpire should "call" distinctly for the information of the players.

On giving a decision the umpire should make sure that the batsman understands what the decision is.

I wish as many friends would make a point of writing to me when in difficulty concerning their sports. As I have set aside THE BOYS' REALM to deal specially with every outdoor sport and pastime, I am particularly anxious to answer in my weekly Chat questions similar to that sent me by Horace Fuller. I hope that this reply will cause quite a number of lads and young men to write to me for information or advice concerning their favourite sport.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

KING CRICKET.

(Continued from the previous page.)

If, later on, Loamshire realised that they could not do without him, and the colonel renewed the offer, heartily backed up by the committee, the case would be altered. At present the feeling of the club would be dead against Arthur, and under such circumstance he was certainly not the ideal captain.

"I suppose you know your own interests best, Lovell," said the colonel somewhat stiffly. "I don't want to persuade you. I think your captaincy would be a good thing for Loamshire, and for yourself as well. I won't persuade you—but have you reflected?"

"Yes, sir," said Arthur. "I decline the offer because I have reflected. My first impulse was to jump at it."

"Well, you will do as you think best, of course."

"I hope you do not think me ungrateful, sir," said Arthur miserably. "I feel to the full the honour you have done me. If I refuse, it is because I feel that Loamshire would not benefit by having me as captain."

"We do not agree on that point," said the colonel drily. "However, we will not discuss it. You have refused the chance of a lifetime. If you think you ought to do so, I do not blame you. I think you are mistaken."

And no more was said.

Arthur could not enter into an explanation of his motives without appearing to complain of the manner of the amateurs towards him, and without seeming to condemn them as snobs, actuated by envy and jealousy; and that was impossible.

He felt that the colonel was misjudging him, but there was no help for it.

Fortescue, too, was just as far from comprehending his real motives. He referred to the subject as soon as he saw Arthur after it had become known that he would not captain Loamshire against the South Africans.

"So you're not going to lead us, after all, Lovell?" said Fortescue, tapping Arthur on the shoulder with a cheerful nod.

"No," said Lovell.

"Why?"

"For many reasons," said Arthur evasively.

"Which is the same as telling me to mind my own business," said Fortescue, laughing. "Never mind, I won't pry into your motives. I suppose it was a bit above your weight, as a matter of fact, and if you think so I don't blame you for getting out of it. You'd have had a handful with the team, and you'd have found it a fearful bore, I've no doubt."

"That wasn't my reason for refusing," said Arthur quickly.

"No; not wholly, I suppose. Stage fright as well—eh? An attack of nerves?"

"Hang it, no!"

Fortescue laughed. He evidently believed that he had found out the true explanation.

"Well, I wonder you didn't try it, at all events," he said. "You'd have found it come easier if you had stuck it out. I think you're a silly ass. You don't mind my speaking frankly, do you? I always speak my mind."

"Yes, I've noticed that," said Arthur drily. And he turned away.

Equally uncomprehending were the comments of the rest of the team. Lagden, Ponsonby, and their set were highly gleeful, of course.

"The rotten outsider hadn't the nerve, after all," said Lagden. "Of course, when you come to think of it, he wouldn't."

"Hardly," agreed Ponsonby. "We would have made his life a burden if he had ventured to lead the team over us, that's a dead cert. But I felt all along that he wouldn't have the confounded nerve."

"Perhaps he's beginning to know his place," said Chichester. "I can't think what the colonel was about. Hilton's very snappy about it. He doesn't like Lovell declining."

"Like his cheek to decline!" said Ponsonby.

"Like his cheek whatever he does, poor beggar, it seems to me!" chimed in Fortescue. "Like his blooming cheek to exist at all, as a matter of fact!"

"Oh, you shut up!" said Lagden.

There was only one who understood Arthur's motives and sympathised with them, and that was needless to say, was Kit Valance. And in Kit's true friendship Arthur found compensation for the sneers and backbiting he had to endure in these days.

Kit had told Arthur of his scapegrace brother's offer without making any comment of his own, simply reproducing Valance's statement, and leaving Arthur to decide for himself what he would do. Arthur had refused to meet the scapegrace, and Len had called to see him in vain.

"I can't quite believe the story, for one thing," said Arthur frankly. "That James Lagden swindled my uncle I am certain, but I believe he's the kind of man to cover up his tracks too completely for anyone to find him out."

"But Len is employed in his office," said Kit, "and he seems to be taken into his confidence a lot. To do his dirty work, as a matter of fact!"

"Well, even so, I shouldn't care to make use of him in the way he suggests," said Arthur. "He is in James Lagden's employ, and he would become a spy on his master, and endeavour to find out his secrets to sell them. That's what it amounts to."

"Exactly."

"I shouldn't care to have a hand in any such business. If a chance came of righting my uncle, and helping him to regain the fortune James Lagden robbed him of, I'd jump at it, of course. But this spying treachery is a bit out of my line. No good ever came to anybody, I believe, from playing the rascal. And what Len Valance proposes is sheer rascality, and nothing else."

"You are right."

"Besides, I haven't forgotten that kidnapping affair at Taunton yet. If I meet him, Kit, I may not be civil, but he is your brother. We had better not meet."

"I agree with you," said Kit, with a breath of relief, "and I'll tell Len so. The best thing he can do is to let matters alone, and keep out of Loamshire."

"So I think."

And so the scapegrace did not meet Arthur. He left Loamchester in a disappointed frame of mind, but without giving up his idea. Of that Arthur was destined to hear more later on.

(Another long instalment of this enthralling story of county cricket will appear in next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM, which will return to its usual size and price—sixteen pages, one penny. Don't neglect to order your copy in advance!)

DAILY MAIL.

Off Duty Yarns.



Specially Written for THE BOYS' REALM - BY - W. MURRAY GRAYDON.

HOW GINGER TRICKED THE LOOSHAIS.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The Ambuscade—How Dannie Saved the Column—Ginger Deserts.

IT was towards the close of the day, and the sun had no chance to get through the canopied foliage; but it was very hot up there in the hills all the same, and Sergeant Raikes grumbled and perspired as he plodded along the narrow path at the heels of the guide, who was a Dheel jungleman.

Behind the sergeant walked Dannie, with his bugle swung at his side, and then came Pottle Stubbs and Teddy Binks. Now gazing ahead with keen eyes, now peering into the dense verdure that clothed the steep banks to right and left, they went slowly on with the stealth of redskins. Frequently they paused to listen, straining their ears to catch the slightest sound. A bird creaked, and Pottle Stubbs jumped nearly off his feet.

"I don't like this," he muttered. "I'm always ready for a fair and square fight; but looking for ambuscades ain't to my taste."

"Ambuscades be blowed!" answered Teddy Binks. "Them Looshai boggars ain't within twenty miles of us. I don't know what's made the colonel so nervous."

"Well, there ain't much farther to go," said the sergeant. "We ought to be at the river in another mile, and then the column will come up with us, and we'll camp for the night."

"I wish Ginger was here," remarked Dannie. "It seems lonesome without him. He's a good sort, Ginger is, and if anything was to happen to me——"

The lad paused. The native guide had stopped, raising a hand to his ear. He listened, shook his head, and went on again. For a few moments he led his companions up the rugged trail, and then, without warning, more than a dozen wild, fierce-looking savages, with dark black hair, sprang suddenly from the thickets on both sides, and threw themselves upon the startled little party, who were disarmed in the twinkling of an eye.

A dozen knives were incised in the breast of the Dheel, who fell dead; but the design was to take the others alive, and to prevent them from giving an alarm. Down went Binks and Stubbs, with brawny hands at their throats, and as Sergeant Raikes dropped upon the native guide, in the grasp of three powerful Looshais, he saw the gleam of steel here and there up the path—saw also that scores of black faces had been thrust from the bushes.

"It's an ambuscade—a big one!" he gasped, as he fought for his breath. "Blow, Dannie, blow! Give the signal! Save the colonel and the boys! Save them——"

The sergeant's words was shut off, but the appeal had been heard by the gallant young bugler, who was scuffling with two powerful savages. Yes; he must give the signal—the signal of danger. That was what he was here for—to warn the column that was advancing from the rear. By a desperate struggle, kicking and biting, he broke away from his foes, leaving his torn jacket in their hands. In a trice he was on his feet, and now, as a fierce clamour threatened him, he sprang to the top of a boulder, and from that into the trunk of a tree that was within reach.

"I'll do it!" he vowed. "I must do it!"

He knew that the daring act would cost him his life; that he would be shot down in revenge; but there was no unselfish thought, no spark of cowardice, in his mind at that terrible moment. Clutching a bough with one hand, he put the trumpet to his lips with the other, and blew with all his might. A spear grazed his shoulder, and another stuck quivering within an inch of his cheek.

Taranta, taranta!

Loud and clear the brazen notes rang down the ravine, floating through the wild jungle to the ears of the distant force of soldiers.

Taranta, taranta, taranta!

There was a chorus of bloodthirsty yells. Bang! went a matchlock, and with a report Dannie dropped the bugle, swayed, and pitched headlong into the thickets at the base of the tree.

The savages rushed upon the brave lad, to find that he was not dead, the bullet having merely grazed his skull. They would have slain him in their passion, but at the command of one of the party Dannie was hauled to his feet and his wrists were tied together. Meanwhile the other Sloggers had been overpowered and bound, and now captors and captives hurried up the trail. They joined the rest of the Looshais, and then all set off to the north at a rapid pace, knowing that the ambuscade had been spoilt.

It may be said, by way of explanation, that this was the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Great Mutiny, and that for some weeks, significantly enough, the vast Indian Empire had been in an unsettled state, with riots and disturbances throughout the country.

The agitation had spread to the Looshais, and this warlike tribe of hillmen had descended into the territory of the Rajah of Kolapur, sacked his palace, killed some of his retainers, and scuttled back to their stronghold. Colonel Podgers was ordered to punish them, and for several days he had been marching into the hills with two companies of Sloggers, and with a Dheel guide, who knew the trail that led to the jungle-fortress of the Looshais.

A couple of mule-guns were to have been sent after him by the Rajah of Kolapur, but they had not arrived by the afternoon of the fourth day, when, having outdistanced by some miles the luggage-convoy, in charge of Major Mumbles, the colonel had guarded against an ambuscade by sending Sergeant Raikes ahead with the guide, and with a small escort.

It was a wise precaution, as has been seen. The notes of the bugle, the signal agreed upon, warned the column of their danger. Scouts were thrown forward, and when they returned with the news that the Dheel had been murdered, and that the advance-guard must have been carried off alive, the force marched warily on to a little river a mile beyond the scene of the tragedy. There they encamped to wait for the luggage-convoy, and it had no more than come up, shortly after sunset, when Pottle Stubbs waded across the stream, and staggered into the camp, to tell his story in the presence of all.

"They set me free, sir," he said to the colonel; "but they've got Sergeant Raikes and Dannie Norcott and Teddy Binks, and they're taking them on to their stronghold. Old Bobagee, the Looshai chief, can talk English very well—he learnt it when he was in prison down at Lahore—and he sent me back with a message for you. Unless you withdraw the troops, sir, and march back to Kolapur, the old rascal will cut off the heads of his prisoners."

Ginger had arrived with the luggage-convoy, and it may be imagined with what feelings he listened to this tale.

"Wot, Dannie 'ave 'is 'ead cut off!" he cried. "E's my chum, colonel, and you know wot we are to each other! Won't you save 'im? Won't you push on at once, and rescue them poor fellows?"

Colonel Podgers hesitated, shaking his head. He was sorry for the captives, but his duty came first. He knew, from certain information, that the Looshai fortress would have to be shelled before it could be taken by storm; knew that it was on the summit of a steep and lofty hill, and that it was enclosed by a formidable stockade.

"I can do nothing without the mule-guns, he said. "I must wait here until they arrive."

"Quite right—quite right," assented Major Mumbles. "We must have artillery."

"And by then Dannie and the others will be dead!" declared Ginger. "Don't wait for the guns, colonel. Don't do it!"

"I must!" was the firm reply.

"Then let me go alone, sir!" begged Ginger, as a daring plan occurred to him. "The path will lead me to the fortress, and I believe I can get Dannie and the others away," he went on, with tears in his eyes.

"It is impossible, Larkins. It is madness to suggest such a thing!"

"But I can do it, sir. Please don't refuse! If I was to pretend that I was you, and that you 'ad sent me——"

"Confound your insolence!" snapped Colonel Podgers. "How dare you argue with me! Say no more, or I will put you under arrest!"

This threat silenced Ginger, and he walked sadly away. Until it was time to turn in he was in gloomy spirits, from which his comrades could not rouse him. But when the morning dawned—there was no sign as yet of the promised mule-guns—Dannie's chum was found to be missing. He had fled in the night, creeping past the sentries, and he had taken with him various articles belonging to the colonel—a sword, a braided jacket, and a pair of boots.

"By gad, the scoundrel has actually deserted!" cried Major Mumbles, when the discovery was made.

"Miscreant! Thief!" roared Colonel Podgers. "That's like Larkins! It's just like him! He ought to be shot, and he will be if I get hold of him!"

"What the deuce did he want with your togs?" asked the major.

"I don't know! He has some fool idea that he can rescue the prisoners! He will lose his own head, and serve him right!"

"I am not so sure of that," said Dr. Slammers. "With all his faults, Larkins has his head screwed on the right way. I'll bet a fiver that he saves those poor fellows. There's a sporting offer for you!"

"I'll take it," said the colonel.

"I witness the bet, Podgers," said Major Mumbles. "If Larkins brings in the prisoners, what will you do with him?"

"I'll teach him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry," the colonel replied grimly. "But you will lose your money, Slammers," he added, "Though Larkins is a plucky fellow, I admit, he hasn't a shoot of a chance. He has gone to his death!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Big-Pot Sahib Arrives — Bobagee Stands Treat—The Alarm.

COLONEL PODGERS had been correctly informed in regard to the Looshai fortress, which was in the heart of the wild jungle. It stood on the flat summit of a steep hill—not a very high one, however—and it consisted of three or four score of stoutly-built huts, surrounded by a strong palisade. At the base of the hill, on two sides, flowed a deep and rapid stream.

To this desolate place Dannie and his fellow-prisoners were brought, early on the morning after their capture. They knew why their lives had been spared, but they expected to be put to death in the end; for they were satisfied that the colonel would refuse to withdraw his force.

They were thrown into one of the huts, securely bound, and there lay, without food or water, until towards evening. And then, to their surprise and joy, a clamour suddenly rose from the village.

"A Feringhee—a Feringhee!"

The tumult spread, and when the savages ran to the main-gate, hurrying from all directions, they saw that a Feringhee was indeed approaching. There he was, coming alone over the broken ground at the foot of the hill. A tall man with red hair, who wore a braided jacket, boots of soft leather, and a sun-helmet.

It need hardly be said that the visitor was Ginger, arrayed in his borrowed finery, and prepared to play his daring part. He had followed the trail, by good luck falling in with none of the Looshai scouts who were lurking in the hills. He was very tired, for he had been tramping all day, and half of the night; but he bore himself jauntily, with unfaltering courage, as he climbed up the steep slope by a winding path, carrying his sword in his hand and waving a handkerchief in the other.

The clamour had died away, and there was hushed silence as the massive gate was swung open for the Slogger, who stepped into the enclosure and was immediately surrounded by scores of the ferocious hillmen, armed with spears and matchlocks. Fat old Bobagee was watching him with sinister, cruel eyes. Ginger's life hung by a slender thread at that moment, but he was as calm as if he had an army at the back of him.

"My name Podgers," he said, as he saluted the chief. "Me officer sahib, much big pot."

"You velly big fool!" answered Bobagee, in broken English. "What you want, Feringhee?"

"They far off, in camp," said Ginger, pointing to the south. "Me come all alone."

"Why you not obey me, officer sahib?" asked the chief. "Me send you message to go 'way from Looshai country, down to Kolapur. Why you come here?"

"Want to 'ave friendly talk. You big pot, me another. Where you put your captives?"

"Feringhees yonder," replied Bobagee, indicating a hut on the opposite side of the village. "Me no kill them yet."

This was a vast relief to Ginger, who now came to the point, and explained the object of his visit. He wanted the freedom of the prisoners, giving for them one thousand rupees in gold, fifty rifles, and a supply of cartridges. He might have spoilt all, might have roused suspicion; for it was ridiculous that one who purported to be a British officer of high rank could make humble demands, or offer firearms to his enemies. But the old chief was readily deceived, and he grinned with pleasure as he listened.

"What you say?" the Slogger continued. "Me big pot, you trust me. You take my offer, let me stop 'ere all night. To-morrow me go away, march soldiers down to Kolapur, send gold and rifles to your village. Then you set captives free, and that make peace. Me no fight your people."

"You brave man, speak wise words," answered Bobagee. "You send what you promise, then me give you two Feringhees. But you no have the young sahib, for my people velly angry with him. He spoil the trap what they set for your soldiere, and in the morning his head must be cut off."

On this point the chief was obstinate, and Ginger argued with him in vain, though only for the sake of appearance; for he knew that Dannie's peril could make no difference to his plans, that all of the captives would ultimately be killed unless he could effect their rescue. That was what he had come for, and he hoped to get them away in the course of the night, though as yet he had no clear idea how it could be done.

"I'll 'ave to agree to your terms," he said reluctantly. "You give me two prisoners, keep the young sahib."

So far, the trick had worked well. A friendly footing had been established, and when the visitor's offer had been explained to the Looshai chiefs they had approved of it, though it was evident, from the fact that they remained aloofly by the gate, that they had some fear of treachery—of an attack by the British column.

The sun had now set, and twilight was gathering. Bobagee led his guest to a large hut in the centre of the enclosure, hung with weapons and skins, where they seated themselves side by side on the floor. Food was brought to them by a young woman, and when they had eaten, and the woman had departed, the chief dropped a leopard-skin over the doorway, and then produced three bottles of champagne from under a pile of rugs.

"You big-pot Feringhee, me treat you well," he chuckled, as he squatted down again. "Me give you fizzy stuff, like officer sahibs drink. This come from down at Kolapur, from rajah's palace."

THE LEAGUE OF YOUNG athletes.

SECTION 1.—SWIMMING.

To any reader up to the age of 16 who can swim 100 yards will be awarded a handsome Diploma stating this fact, and entitling him a member of the League of Young Athletes. In addition, a BOYS' REALM Third Class Standard Medal will be awarded to any reader who can perform one of the following tests up to and including 440 yards. A Second Class Medal for 220 yards, and a First Class Medal for 440 yards, in accordance with the conditions stated at foot.

Age 12-15.

APPLICANTS MUST SWIM—	
40 yards in	35 secs.
100 " "	1 m. 55 secs.
220 " "	4 m. 0 secs.
440 " "	8 m. 30 secs.

Age 16-18.

APPLICANTS MUST SWIM—	
40 yards in	30 secs.
100 " "	1 m. 30 secs.
220 " "	3 m. 40 secs.
440 " "	8 m. 0 secs.

SECTION 2.—RUNNING.

Age 12-15.

APPLICANTS MUST RUN—	
100 yards in	14 secs.
300 " "	45 secs.
440 " "	60 secs.
880 " "	2 m. 35 secs.
One mile "	5 m. 30 secs.

Age 16-18.

APPLICANTS MUST RUN—	
100 yards in	12 secs.
300 " "	38 secs.
440 " "	57 secs.
880 " "	2 m. 15 secs.
One mile "	5 m. 10 secs.

Application must be made on the Form below, and must be accompanied by details of the performance, vouched for by a headmaster, clergyman, trainer, or some responsible adult person approved by the President. A penny stamp for return postage must be enclosed.

THE LEAGUE OF YOUNG ATHLETES.

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Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.

Ginger could hardly conceal his joy. He filled his pipe, lit it, and puffed with a relish.

"Wot-ho! I'm in luck!" he told himself. "Fancy the old scoundrel braggin' of 'is loot, and standin' me a treat! I didn't expect a chance like this. Victory be! It looks as if my little game was goin' to work all right."

Bobagee broke two of the bottles, snapping the necks with a dagger, and handed one to the Slogger.

"Now we have only friendly talk," he said.

"You bet we will, old cock!" said the Slogger. "Here's to your fine 'ealth! May your shadow never grow less!"

Darkness had fallen. The night wore on, and all was quiet in the Looshai village. The chief finished one bottle, and started on a second, now observing that most of his guest's wine was being poured on the floor. For several hours old Bobagee's tongue ran glibly, as he boasted of his prowess, and told bloodcurdling tales; but his voice was growing thicker and thicker, more incoherent, and at last, closing his eyes, he sank back with a grunt and began to snore. The champagne had conquered him, and he was in a heavy, drunken slumber.

"That settles 'im, as I 'oped it would," murmured Ginger. "'E's bowled out, thanks to the rajah's fizzy stuff. And now to play the game."

The brave soldier's chance had come, and it was a better one than he had counted on, though his task was perilous and uncertain. But he was equal to it; his head was clear, and his nerves were as firm as steel. His sword was sheathed, and he had in his belt a knife and a loaded revolver. He thrust his head under the leopard-skin that hung over the doorway, hesitated for a brief interval, and then stole out of the hut.

No fires were burning, and the moon, which had been shining brightly, had just been obscured by a dark bank of clouds. Many of the Looshais were in the vicinity of the gate, and others could be seen standing here and there; but none of them observed Ginger as he crawled on hands and knees across the middle of the enclosure. He made rapid progress, and at last he drew near to a large hut, built up against the palisade at the farther side of the village, that looked like the one which Bobagee had indicated to him.

He was not certain that it was the right place, but all doubt was dispelled when, as the moon emerged from the clouds, a man suddenly rose by the doorway where he had been squatting. It was a sentry, and he had seen the creeping figure; but before he could utter a cry or raise his matchlock the Slogger leapt upon him and dealt a quick, hard blow with the butt of his pistol.

Down went the Looshai, stunned by a rap on the skull; and a moment later, having untied the thick rope that secured the door, Ginger pushed it inward and entered the hut. By the moonlight that penetrated by a small window opposite to him, and by a hole in the roof, he observed that a number of big wooden idols stood on pedestals along the walls; and then, as he saw three dusky forms lying on the floor, the voice of Toddy Binks said eagerly:

"Blest if it ain't a Tommy! We're saved, boys!"

"Keep quiet!" bade Ginger. "Don't make a sound, for your lives!"

He was bending over his fettered comrades with his knife in his hand. Swiftly he cut the ropes that bound them, and one by one Dannie, Sergeant Raikes, and Toddy Binks rose on their cramped limbs, almost too glad and grateful for words.

"Good old pal!" said the lad. "I knew you'd do your best for us."

As he spoke he was interrupted by a husky shout close by, and the next instant the village was ringing with a wild clamour.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Siege of the Hut—Ginger Has an Idea—How the Sloggers Escaped.

THE alarm was so sudden, so unexpected, that for a moment the startled soldiers did not move.

"What a row!" gasped Sergeant Raikes. "Does it mean us?"

"It does!" exclaimed Ginger, as he sprang to the door and pulled it open. "It's the sentry, bad luck to 'im! I didn't 'it 'im 'ard enough, and 'e's come to. Look at the beggars! The game's up, boys, and we'll 'ave to fight. We can't go out there!"

He was right. It would have been madness to rush out into the bright moonlight, for already, in so brief a time, the Looshais were close to the hut, bounding forward by scores.

"We're done for!" groaned Toddy Binks.

"They won't have any mercy on us."

"Never say die!" cried Ginger. "We may find some way out of this trap if we can get a breathin'-spell. That's the first thing to be thought of. Lend a 'and, boys. Grab them idols, and we'll block the door."

The suggestion was promptly acted upon. The door was shut—it was fortunate that it opened inward—and while the sergeant bore his weight against it, the others hurriedly brought a number of idols and pedestals and heaped them up in a barricade. It was done just in time, for the savage tribesmen were now pounding upon the door, with angry cries.

"Hark! What's that?" asked Dannie, as a louder tumult was heard not far off.

"They've found old Bobagee, and they're tryin' to wake 'im," answered Ginger. "We've stirred up a hornet's nest, and no mistake."

More Looshais had joined the others, and the clamour was bloodcurdling as they assaulted the door, thumping upon it with the butt-ends of spears and matchlocks.

"It won't be long till they get in," declared Binks.

"Not if they batter it with a log," Dannie said gloomily. "That's what they'll do next."

The planks were splitting, and the barricade was shaking ominously. Ginger was almost in despair. His daring plan had failed, and he and his companions could expect no mercy from the savages, who were enraged by the trick that had been played upon them.

"It's the fortune of war," said Sergeant Raikes. "We'll die like heroes, boys."

"We ain't dead yet," replied Ginger. "Lucky I've got a pocketful of cartridges. And now watch me give the beggars a dose."

With that he jabbed his sword out through the logs with one hand, and with the other, putting his revolver to a crevice, he fired three shots. There were several yells of agony, followed by howls of rage.

"You've winged a couple of them!" exclaimed the lad. "Give them another dose!"

"It'll only make them worse," said Binks. "They'll be like fiends when they get hold of us."

"You leave them to me," bade Ginger. "I'm tryin' to gain time—that's wot my object is."

There was now a lull. Dismayed by their losses, afraid to renew the assault, the savages were now evidently discussing what should be done. Not a sound could be heard, except the groans of the wounded.

"They'll soon be at us again," said the sergeant. "They're plotting some sort of deviltry."

"Only so they 'old off for a time!" muttered Ginger. "And they'll do that. Knowin' that they 'ave us in a trap, and believin' that we 'aven't a ghost of a chance to get away, they won't be in a 'urry to wipe us out. But there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, as the old sayin' goes."

"What do you mean?" inquired Dannie. "You don't suppose there's any hope for us?"

Ginger did not answer. He loaded his revolver again, glanced up at the hole in the roof, and shook his head. Then, stepping to the window at the rear, he looked out and down.

"Any show there?" asked Binks.

"Not much of a one," was the reply. "The 'ut is built flush up with the brow of the 'ill, and this wall 'angs a bit over the edge, but the 'illside is too steep for a goat, and down at the bottom the stream is dashin' among rocks. We'd be sure to break our limbs or our necks if we were to drop."

"Let's risk it," urged the sergeant. "I'm willing to——"

"Old on!" broke in Ginger, as a brilliant idea occurred to him. "Glory be! I 'ave it! I 'ave a scheme wot ought to work like a charm, if them beggars will only keep quiet a bit longer."

"What is it?" said Dannie.

"Never mind that now! Fetch one of them idols 'ere, every scrap of you, and be jolly quick about it!"

The mysterious order was obeyed, and Ginger was the first to reach the window, staggering under the weight of one of the big wooden images. He hoisted it over and let go. There was a rolling, grinding noise, followed shortly by a heavy splash.

"'Ark, boys!" he said.

The Looshais yelled excitedly for a moment, and then they were silent again.

"That's done it!" whispered Ginger. "The beggars think we're escapin' by the window! They imagine that wot they 'eard was one of us tumblin' down the 'ill, and they can't see for the palisade! They're waitin' to make sure, and if we properly deceive them they'll scuttle down to the stream as fast as their legs can carry them. Over with the rest of the 'eathen images, boys! One for each of you! Let them rip!"

Out of the window went Dannie's idol, and two more quickly followed, dropped by Teddy Binks and the sergeant. Splash, splash, splash! Then silence, and then, a moment later, a shrill and furious clamour that receded as suddenly as it rose. The Looshais were dispersing, neatly fooled, and when the soldiers hastened to the other side of the hut and peered through the chinks of the logs, there was not a savage to be seen, though they could be heard from right and left.

"Glory be! We've tricked them!" declared Ginger. "They think we've got away! They're 'urryin' down the 'ill as fast as they can to look for us in the water! Now's our chance, boys! Now for the gate!"

In frantic haste the barricade was torn away, and as the door fell inward, with broken hinges, the four Sloggers sprang over it and dashed across the village. On they went among the deserted huts, in the bright moonlight, until they were close to the gate. Then fierce yells greeted them, and they saw in front of them a dozen Looshais armed with spears and matchlocks.



"My name Podgers," Ginger said, as he saluted the chief. "Me officer sahib, much big pot."

"Your name is Podgers," Ginger said, as he saluted the chief. "Me officer sahib, much big pot."

"We're caught!" groaned Binks.

"Not us!" cried Ginger. "Britain for ever, boys! Take my sword, Dannie: 'Ere's for it!"

The next instant the fight had begun. Several matchlocks roared, but the aim was poor, and nobody was hit. A big savage rushed at Dannie, but before he could use his spear the lad ran him through the chest. Meanwhile, Ginger was emptying his revolver, firing rapidly, and when five of the Looshais had dropped, the rest lost heart and fled, leaving the way clear.

"Hurrah, we've done it!" shouted the sergeant.

A moment later the massive gate had been unbarred and opened, and Ginger and his rescued comrades were tearing down the steep path, at the risk of breaking their necks. They reached the bottom of the hill and vanished in the jungle, while behind them, from village and stream, rang the cries of the baffled savages.

THE 4th CHAPTER.
The Storming of the Fortress—The Court-martial—After the Sentence.

KNOWING that they would be pursued, the fugitives did their best to keep ahead of their foes. They pressed steadily on through the night, and a couple of hours after sunrise, as they were still following the narrow trail, they met the vanguard of the British force. The main column, which had been overtaken by the mule-guns and was advancing to the attack, was not far off. When the four Sloggers came in sight, to be greeted with rousing cheers, a halt was at once ordered. Colonel Podgers received his sword back, and listened grimly to the thrilling tale that Ginger told him.

"All this don't excuse your desertion," he said, in a stern voice, and with a frown. "You are under arrest, Larkins!"

"Not yet, sir!" begged Ginger. "I want to fight first. Let me be in at the finish, and 'ave another swipe at those beggars! Then I'll stand my punishment, sir!"

"Very well, I agree to that," replied the colonel. "You have won the bet, Slammors," he added to the doctor, with a twinkle in his eye, "and I am heartily glad that I have lost."

The column marched on, and what happened later, when they arrived before the jungle-fortress about the middle of the afternoon, may be told in a few words. The Looshais were at first defiant, confident of being able to hold out. They shouted threats and insults, bragging of what they could do, but they soon changed their tune when the shells began to fly from the unlimbered guns, which were handled by the Rajah of Kolapur's expert artillerymen. In the course of half an hour the gate had been battered in, part of the stockade was down, and some of the huts were in flames; and then, a demand for surrender having been refused, Dannie's bugle sounded the charge, and up the hill went the gallant Sloggers with a rush.

They lost five men, shot by matchlocks, before they gained the summit and burst into the village, where they met but little resistance. There was a brief fight, in which Ginger took a leading part, and when it was over the victory was at least satisfactory, if not complete. Many of the Looshais had escaped down the farther side of the hill to the stream, and thence to the jungle, but a large number had been killed and captured, and among the prisoners was old Bobagee himself. The flames were extinguished, and the British flag was hoisted over the stronghold.

"Your period of grace has expired, Larkins," said Colonel Podgers, as he approached the culprit. "You are under arrest, and you will be tried to-morrow morning by field court-martial. I cannot overlook such a grave offence, committed in time of war."

"No, sir, of course not," replied poor Ginger. "I understand that, sir."

And with a dismal countenance he was marched off to a temporary guard-house, which happened to be the hut in which he and the Looshai chief had enjoyed the stolen champagne.

* * * * *

"We find the prisoner guilty of desertion, with extenuating circumstances."

Such was the result of the trial, and it was a solemn moment, a solemn scene, when the words fell from the lips of the colonel, who had risen to his feet with Major Mumbles on one side of him and two captains on the other. The court-martial had been held under a spreading tree in the middle of the village, and it had not taken the officers long to arrive at a verdict. Near-by the Sloggers were drawn up, and now every eye was fixed on Ginger, who seemed to feel the gravity of the occasion.

"Have you anything to say, Larkins?" Colonel Podgers went on, clearing his throat. "Is there any reason why sentence should not be pronounced?"

"No, sir, I don't suppose there is," answered Ginger, standing very straight. "I deserted, and that's all there is about it. But—but you know 'ow it was, sir. You know wot pals me and Dannie are, and wot a lot I think of 'im. If I'ad lost 'im, sir, life wouldn't 'ave been worth livin'. There 'e was among them bloodthirsty beggars, in danger of 'avin' 'is 'ead cut off, and I wanted to rescue 'im, and you refused to let me go. But I couldn't let 'im die. That's why I deserted, sir. I 'ad to go, and I took your kit because I needed it to play the game. That's all, sir. I've 'ad a fair trial, and I can't complain. I've saved Dannie, and now I'm ready to take my punishment!"

Major Mumbles and the two captains had been moved by the simple, earnest words, but not so the colonel, to judge by his stern features.

"You have been found guilty, Larkins," he said, "and the verdict is a just one. The penalty must have been death, but I agree with the recommendation to mercy, and therefore I am going to sentence you to three years' imprisonment!"

Three long years away from the world! Could it be possible? Ginger's jaw dropped, and a wild, hunted look came into his eyes. He swayed against his guards, recovered himself with an effort.

"And now, my brave fellow," continued Colonel Podgers, in an altered voice—"now I have to tell you that for valour, for your disobedient soldier, a reckless scamp, but you have performed one of the most gallant deeds that have ever come to my knowledge, Larkins, you are free!"

For a moment, Ginger was dazed, and then, as he realised the truth, he turned to Dannie with a sob of joy. He gripped his chum by the hand, speechless with emotion, while from all the delighted Sloggers burst a storm of cheers.

THE END.

(Two long, complete tales on Saturday next.)

SPECIAL LONG INSTALMENT THIS WEEK!

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 baby, was cast up on the shores of an island off the village of Sterncraig.

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 Sterncraig. 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, and **NICKEY 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 incensible. From this perilous position he is rescued by Jack Jaunty.

A stranger arrives at Sterncraig 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.

Soon after a new boy arrives at the school. His name is Mark Ricketts, and he makes a bad impression on the other boys.

Jack Jaunty and his chums play a joke on Peter Pinnick, who swears revenge. Jack makes friends with some new arrivals at Sterncraig, a Mr. Belton and his two daughters. He takes them for a tour of inspection around the cliffs.

Mr. Ferrula and Mr. Redditch, two under-masters at the School on the Cliff, are rivals for the affections of Miss Harrison, the governess of Mr. Belton's two daughters. Mr. Redditch comes into possession of a poem about Miss Harrison, written by Mr. Ferrula in an amative moment, and is greatly enraged. He is haunted by the words of the poem, which stamp themselves upon his memory.

(Now read this week's long instalment.)

THE 13th CHAPTER *(continued)*.
Mr. Ferrula and Mr. Redditch Come to Blows.

It was half-past six—a nice hour for a bathe on a warm morning; and, having dressed and provided himself with towel and drawers, Mr. Redditch hied him down to a favourite spot by the sea.

It was rather early for the boys, who, as a rule, did not appear before seven o'clock; but the demon of mischief had aroused Mr. Ferrula, and he was there preparing for a dip. He, too, had passed a fevered night, and the "Good-morning!" he gave his brother tutor was of a hunky description.

This customary greeting was all that passed between them until they had been freshed up by the sea. Neither were particularly good swimmers; as a fact, they never went out of their depth, and were much given to standing on one leg and swimming with the other, a style of natation which goes down with the inexperienced observer, but never deludes the professors.

A short stay in the sea sufficed for both, and, dripping like two mermen, they emerged therefrom and walked to the rocks, on which their clothes lay in a heap.

Still nothing was said. Towels were put to work, and the operation of drying themselves went briskly on. Suddenly Mr. Redditch began to sing:

"Oh, Fate be kind to me, and let me marry soon,
And give me as a bride the fair Miss Harrison."

To do him justice, he did not intend to sing aloud. The words seemed to come out in spite of him, and as they fell upon the ears of the startled Ferrula, that gentleman ceased his drying operations.

"So it's you who's got them?" he said. "Redditch, you are a snob!"

"Ferrula, you are an idiot!"

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; to think that you should aspire to the hand of so fair and sweet a creature! She doesn't like bald pates!"

This was personal, and, as one sin begets another, so did this unkind remark beget another personality.

"She hates carroty hair," said Ferrula, especially when it grows like a wisp!"

"Sir, you are insulting—I—— Take that!"

It was not exactly a blow in a legal sense of the word; but a well-worked flick with a towel is both painful and exasperating, and that was what Mr. Redditch gave his brother tutor.

Ferrula hit back with his towel, and before they could stop themselves, they rushed headlong into a rough and tumble fight. It was a contest between two gladiators clad in nothing but bathing costumes.

It was a deadly struggle, for they rolled about the sands, and, being in a damp condition, covered themselves with gritty particles, even to their eyes and hair.

Ere long exhausted nature gave in. They were not in training for a long fight, and both collapsed at the same moment. Letting go, they drew apart, and in a sitting position dusted the sand out of their eyes. Then, to their dismay, they found that fully a score of boys were assembled, and no doubt, judging by their faces, had enjoyed the spectacle.

The moment they were observed the boys scattered on either side, and, tossing off their clothes, plunged into the sea. Sounds of laughter echoed around as the tutors, having had another dip to wash the sand off, proceeded to dress. Both felt they had been humiliated and exposed to ridicule that might be lasting, and each blamed the other.

But behind there was a deeper feeling. They both loved the same woman. And what of her? Well, she was at that very hour sauntering about the distant beach near the Folly, in attendance on Ivonne and Laura, who, in the prettiest of bathing-dresses, were disporting themselves in the sea. When they returned, they exhibited no sign of fatigue.

"We could swim to the Bowl," said Ivonne.

"I am sure of it," said Laura, "for the deeper the water is, the more buoyant we feel."

"Suppose we try to-morrow?" suggested Ivonne, as they each donned a long cloak to hide their bathing-dresses, and set out for home.

"Try what?" asked Miss Harrison, who had been absorbed in a book.

"We thought of trying to swim to the Bowl," said Ivonne.

"You must be mad!" replied the governess. "It is miles away."

"About three, that funny old coastguardsman told us," said Ivonne.

"You cannot swim three miles."

"We can try," said Laura.

"And get drowned," returned Miss Harrison. "If you talk such nonsense, I must speak to Mr. Belton."

"We won't talk about it any more," said Ivonne.

Then, in a low tone, she added for the ear of her sister:

"But we can try to do it."

Don't forget," said Laura, in the same way, "that we shall have to come back again."

"There is only one man living there," said Ivonne, "and we could land in a quiet place where he would not see us. Papa could bring a boat and fetch us back."

"It would be fun, wouldn't it?"

"Just; I wonder if Jack could swim so far?"

"You talk a great deal about Jack, Ivonne."

"That don't matter to you, Laura, does it?"

"No; I suppose not. Come; we shall catch cold if we don't make haste home and change."

They ran off for the Folly, and Miss Harrison, with an hour to spare and released from duty for the time, wandered back in the direction to Sterncraig.



Peter Pinnick had perched himself on a barrel, and was addressing a knot of fishermen, bragging about what he had done, and exhibiting the money he had received.

THE 14th CHAPTER.
The Work of Jealousy.

THE governess walked very slowly, absorbed in her book, until she was startled by a cry overhead. Looking up, she saw a man rolling down the face of the cliff, which happily just there was not perpendicular. The person thus involuntarily descending by leaps and bounds was dressed in dark clothes, a strong contrast to a very bushy head of red hair.

Behind him followed a soft felt hat, which, no doubt, was on his head when he started on his rapid journey.

Miss Harrison was terrified, but she, being a sensible sort of woman, did not scream or go into hysterics, or run away, but waited to see if she could be of any help to this unfortunate man. As he did not fall far, but simply rolled, the chances of his not being seriously injured were in his favour.

On he came, turning quickly, clutching at every projection in vain, and finally rolled to the feet of Miss Harrison, where he lay, the most heated and rumpled being in the form of man she had ever set eyes on. He had no breath for speech, but his eyes spoke clearly enough in this way:

"I was seeking thee, fair maid, whom I fondly love; but this is not exactly the way I intended to come into thy beauteous presence."

Not to make any heedless mystery about this rapid arrival, we at once admit that it was Mr. Redditch. Miss Harrison felt very sorry for the hapless tutor, but it required all her moral strength to keep from laughing and to screw her face into a look of pity.

"It was a terrible fall," she said, after a long pause.

"It was," groaned Mr. Redditch, as he got upon his feet; "and so sudden!"

"Really; how was it?" said Miss Harrison.

"I was walking along the edge of the cliff," said Mr. Redditch, "when, looking down, I espied you. I bowed, and, I suppose, bowed too much—in fact, I bowed myself over."

Miss Harrison pulled out a handkerchief and put it to her face, presumably to hide her anguish. Mr. Redditch, feeling himself quietly all over to see what damage had been done, went on:

"It was a nasty fall, and I suffered as if I had travelled miles through the air; but I do not care. I would do more for your sake."

"I am glad you are not much hurt," said Miss Harrison serenely. "Good-bye, Mr. Redditch! I fear I have overstayed myself as it is. What a beautiful morning! I hope you will enjoy your walk back to the school!"

She was gone—vanished in a floating kind of way from the misty eyes of the tutor, and he was left wondering what her sudden departure meant.

"Now, am I annoyed or pleased?" he asked himself.

He thought the latter. No doubt she was moved by his pathetic words, and, being unable to respond at once to them, had hied homeward.

"Like a startled fawn," he said, as he proceeded on his way.

His descent down the cliffside had given him a good shaking, and bruised the more prominent parts of his legs and arms. He felt some inconvenience in walking, but he got along pretty well until it came to ascending the cliff, which he did by one of the zigzag paths cut in the face of it just without the village. On reaching the top he was far from pleased to find Mr. Ferrula seated on the ground, convulsed with laughter.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Mr. Redditch.

"I saw it all—ha, ha!" roared Mr. Ferrula. "You travelled far and very fast for so brief an interview with the dear girl!"

"Oh, you be hanged!" said Mr. Redditch, as he limped away.

Somehow, the story of Redditch's acrobatic feat got round the school, and the amusement of the boys was prodigious. Nickey must needs draw a sketch of it on one side of his slate, and forget all about it. The result was that when he presented an imperfect sum in exchange and barter for the inspection of Mr. Redditch, that gentleman, incidentally turning over the slate, beheld the work of art, crude in its conception, but unmistakable in its subject.

Acting on the impulse of sudden anger, the tutor banged the slate upon the crown of Nickey's head, with the result that it was broken, and the frame fell about his neck.

Mr. Bonnington happened to be absent from the room for a few minutes, or he would have had something to say about this exhibition of temper. Nickey took it quite coolly, and, removing the frame from his neck, laid it upon the tutor's desk.

"I shall want another slate, please," he said.

"Hopkins," said Mr. Redditch feebly, "I have been hasty, but you are a very tiresome boy. Resume your seat."

When Nickey returned to his place, Will Raddle, in a tone of anxious inquiry, asked him what his head was roofed in with.

"For I should like to get some for mine," he said. "I say, yours is bump-proof."

"I've got a bump on it as big as a muffin, if it is," replied Nickey.

The return of Mr. Bonnington restored the usual silence to the school, and there the matter ended.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and, the day having kept fine, the boys were allowed to go out and employ themselves as they pleased until teatime. Jack thought he would like to go up to the Folly, and he had not been invited, and he agreed to go with Gerard, Nickey, and Will for a walk.

"I've got a fancy for exploring the cleft," he said, as they started out.

"Against the rules," said Gerard. "Bonnington says it's dangerous."

"I know all about that," replied Jack, rather testily; "but we need not go very far in."

The cleft was near and beyond the Folly, and that was why Jack wished to go. He might have the opportunity of speaking to or seeing Ivonne. The others seemed to be aware of his main object, for they exchanged glances and smiles, but were wise enough not to say a word about it. Jack was a thoroughly good fellow, but he knew how to stand upon his dignity with both friend and foe.

To the cleft they went by way of the sea, and, the tide being favourable, they penetrated its rugged depths. It was certainly a peculiar and rather forbidding place, but once in they picked their way among the stones strewn about right up as far as they could go.

"A fellow wedged in by a fall," said Gerard, pointing to the narrow termination. "would have a poor chance of getting out. It is all solid rock a foot from the summit."

"Fancy coming down into it head-first!" said Nickey, with a shudder.

"If you ever go near it alone," remarked Will Raddle, "you are bound to do it."

Within the cleft were several small cavities, varying in depth from six feet to twenty, evidently the work of man, but of great age. The object of these was not exactly apparent, as they were not hiding places, by any means.

"I should say that once on a time people lived here," said Jack.

"What sort of people?" asked Nickey.

"Ancient Britons."

"Then I am glad I'm not an ancient Briton, and I should like something more roomy and comfortable."

They retraced their steps to the mouth of the cleft, and, as there was a tolerable easy ascent there to the top of the cliff, Jack proposed they should go up that way.

"I'll go first," he said, "and you follow in my track, one after another."

They accomplished the ascent without any mishap, beyond two or three little slips on the part of Nickey, followed by the customary critical remarks from Will. On reaching the summit Jack had a good view of the Folly; but he could not see anybody outside, so he went forward with fresh friends, intending to pass the gate with as casual an air as he could assume. But all his plans were upset by the spectacle of Ivonne, Laura, and the governess seated in the garden, and near them stood Mr. Belton and—could it be? Yes, it was—Dan Callis. Further back were Aaron Downey and Mark Ricketts.

The sight of the trio he disliked most of all in the school fairly took Jack's breath away. He stopped short a moment, and then, with a feeling that he had no right to do so, raised his cap and would have passed on. But Mr. Belton hailed him, and bade him stop.

"Come in," he said, "and bring your friends with you."

With a sensation of a most disagreeable nature—a mixture of jealousy and humiliation—Jack went in, and his friends followed. Introductions and bows took place, Mr. Belton at once explaining the presence of Dan Callis.

"This," he said, "is the son of an old college chum. I heard by the merest accident that he was here. Really, we came to be quite out of the world, and here we are with friends gathering fast around us."

Jack smiled, but there was not the usual cheerfulness in it, especially as he noticed that Dan had planted himself by the side of Ivonne, and looked as if he meant to stick there. Whether his presence was agreeable or not to Ivonne it was hard to say. Certainly she showed no signs of being displeased, but talked and laughed with him as if he were an old friend. That Dan secretly triumphed in his position was clear to Jack, although an eye less keen than that of jealousy would have failed to notice it.

Jack wished himself a hundred miles away.

"I shall be saying or doing something disagreeable, if I am not careful," he thought. "Bother the beggar! He——"

"I am having the old greenhouses fitted up, Jack," said Mr. Belton. "Come and see them."

Jack assented, and they walked away from his far end of the ground. The greenhouses were at the west end of the kitchen-garden, where they were out of sight of the lawn; and Mr. Belton unconsciously tortured Jack by keeping him there some time, explaining the nature and variety of plants with which he had filled them.

At last they started back again, and half-way encountered Ivonne approaching them, alone.

"My dear," said Mr. Belton, "is it kind of you to desert our guests?"

"They have Laura and Miss Harrison," Ivonne replied. "Did you show Mr. Jaunty the orchids?"

"He has seen everything," replied Mr. Belton pleasantly; and Jack readily endorsed his assurance.

Ivonne fell in on the other side of her father, and as they strolled back she more than once cast a glance at Jack's face, which had resumed its normal cheerful appearance. He would rather have been nearer Ivonne, of course; but, anyway, she was no longer with Dan Callis, and he was happy.

"What time are you boys expected back?" inquired Mr. Belton.

"Between six and seven," Jack answered.

"And it is now four," said Mr. Belton, looking at his watch. "Ivonne, we must give them some tea."

"I have already asked for it," said Ivonne.

What a pleasant little party it would have been but for the presence of the objectionable three! Tea, with thin bread-and-butter, strawberries and cream, goes down well, especially when partaken of in such a place as the garden of the Folly.

The magnificent view of the sea was alone a powerful stimulant to the appetite, and the jolly little meal on the lawn was peculiarly acceptable. Dan was very attractive both to Laura and Ivonne; but he had already lost ground, somehow, and his offensive politeness was not so readily accepted as before. As his spirits went down Jack's went up, and when the time came to go their mental condition was fairly reversed. Perforce they set out together; but Jack hoped that a division would take place in their numbers soon after they started.

Not so, however, for Dan stuck to him in an aggressive way, and, when they were fairly out of earshot of the house, he said:

"You seem to have the knack of thrusting yourself on decent people."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Jack.

"Isn't my meaning clear enough?" said Dan. "You don't know the Beltons, for they are people of good family, and you are a brat whose record stops at the time you were thrown up by the sea."

The next moment Dan lay stretched upon the ground, floored by a blow from Jack. None of the rest saw it done, so quickly was it dealt; but in an instant the others were between them.

"For goodness' sake," said Gerard, "don't fight here, Jack! We are not yet out of sight of the Folly."

"Let him get up and come along," said Jack, between his teeth. "We'll go to the chine; it's quiet there."

"I'm ready!" cried Dan, as he sprang to his feet, with his face white with passion. "Confound you, Jaunty, hitting a fellow when he wasn't looking!"

"Don't tell lies," said Jack; "you were looking at me, and had both arms up, when I let out. You knew what was coming; you expected it."

"Don't waste time in jawing," said Aaron Downey. "Let's get on to the chine."

THE 15th CHAPTER.
In the Chine.

THE other boys were scattered far and wide, and the small party made their way to the chine unobserved.

On the way thither both the prospective combatants became very quiet. Jack's face indicated a growing resolution to let the first fight between him and Dan Callis be the last. For good and all the question of physical superiority was to be then settled.

Dan, on his part, cooled rapidly. In the heat of the moment he had agreed to fight, and a review of the matter led him to modify his ardour. He knew that in a physical sense he was Jack's superior, being of a heavier build and, as he believed, muscularly stronger; but at the back of these things there must be pluck, or they are of little service to anyone.

But there was no going back. To shirk the encounter would bring upon him the ridicule of Aaron Downey and Mark Ricketts, which would be followed by the laughter of the whole school. And, of course, there was the possibility of his craven conduct being spoken of at the Folly.

If Jack funked the fight, he would not hesitate to speak of it himself, and he gave Jack credit for being as mean as himself, in which he was decidedly wrong.

How quiet the chine was save for the gentle trickling of the little waterfalls, sparsely supplied with water during the summer, the little noise they made adding to the impressive stillness of other things.

The boys were silent, and made their way to a small open space in the very heart of the place—a miniature arena with a level, sanded floor, and overhanging rocks to hide the combatants from anyone who might be watching on the high-level ground. A shaft of sunlight came through the foliage aloft and lit up the place, making it very beautiful to the eye. Gerard Inglis, who had a lot of poetry in his nature, thought it a pity that so beautiful a scene should be marred by a fight, but he did not say so.

"We needn't make more noise than we can help," said Jack, as he took off his coat.

"Don't shout, boys!"

"There won't be much to shout for," replied Dan, with an imperfect assumption of coolness, "when I have done with you."

"We'll shall see," said Jack quietly. "Gerard, you look after me, there's a good fellow. Nickey and Will, perch yourself on that piece of rock; you will be out of the way there."

The piece of rock was a projection a few feet overhead, which would give the boys a comfortable seat, whence they could see all and be out of harm's reach. Mark Ricketts joined them there. Aaron Downey remained below to attend on Callis.

"You've got to go in and win, Dan," he whispered. "Don't for goodness' sake let him get the grin of you."

"It's all very well to talk," growled Dan.

Jack was ready and waiting, so Dan, after tightening a belt around his waist, strode up to him.

We do not pretend to say that either of the boys were skilled pugilists, but they were young and active, and had often indulged in harmless sparring with their friends. Therefore, the encounter was not child's play by any means. Dan Callis begun with rushing, hoping to bear down Jack by sheer weight, but a smart blow on the nose stopped that game, and he became angry and cautious at the same time.

Jack, in his turn, became too venturesome, and in a bit of a scrimmage at the end of the first round, received a stunning blow on the forehead. It half dazed him for the moment, and if Dan Callis had possessed any nerve or dash he could have ended the fight there and then. But he let the opportunity slip.

Jack, without falling, recovered himself, and renewed the contest until both closed and fell side by side.

"Time!" cried Dan.

"All right," said Jack, as he got up. "You don't suppose we are going to fight upon the ground."

Both were a bit blown, and needed for breath the score moments or so that intervened between the first and second round.

The second round was brief, and the last.

Dan, after some exchanges of no great importance, received a blow between the eyes and fell. No doubt it was a nasty fall, but not quite so bad as he tried to make it out. Groaning, he lay upon the ground, and made no effort to get up again. Jack at first feared he had hurt him very seriously, but, as he bent over him he saw that he was to a great extent shamming, so he simply smiled and turned away.

"Get up, Callis," said Aaron Downey.

"I can't," was the reply.

"You won't," said Nickey, from his perch aloft.

"My back's hurt," moaned Callis.

On hearing this, Will and Nickey laughed together; and Callis, in a fury, forgot about his back, and suddenly sat upright.

"I'll break the necks of you little beggars," he hissed, "if——"

And then he remembered himself, and the blood rushed to his face with uncontrollable shame. The feeling was not lessened by the chuckling of Aaron Downey and Mark Ricketts, both of whom were unable to resist a laugh at their friend's expense. Jack, alone of all there, did not smile.

"Get up, Callis," he said, "and let us finish this business. What is the good of humbugging all day over it?"

Dan made no reply, but, still sitting, dropped his head down and began to sob in his hands. There was no mistaking the attitude. He was afraid to go on. Jack picked up his coat and waistcoat, and, tossing them upon his arm, motioned to Will and Nickey to come away. They dropped down from their perch and followed him out of the chine, Jack resuming his dress as he walked along.

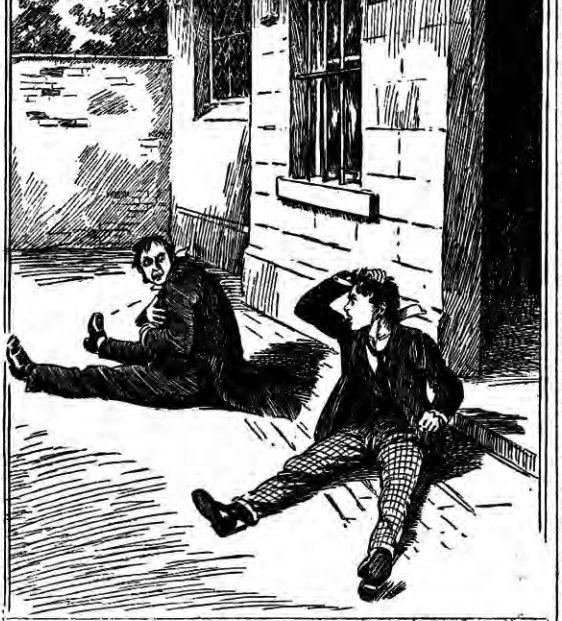
"Easily licked," said Nickey.

"Well, it's a pity him," replied Jack. "I wouldn't feel as he does now for a thousand pounds. His whole heart must have gone out of him."

They went out by the path of the chine to the summit of the cliff, and back to the house, for tea-time was near, and the boys were coming in from various directions. Dan Callis was the last into the dining-hall, and he came in alone. In a downcast, miserable way he took his seat and ate his food without exchanging any remarks with those around him.

Neither Jack nor his friends said anything about the fight, but a whisper of it had got abroad which must be attributed to Aaron Downey or Mark Ricketts. Which it was mattered not, but the story of the fight was known, and Dan's palpable cowardice lost him many supporters he had hitherto possessed.

But though beaten by Jack, he was not going to give up his position as ruler of his clique, and a few words of chaff from one of them, named Edgar Bray, in the dormitory as they were going to bed, roused him to action, and, springing across the room, he gave him two or three blows of brutal severity.



The pair collided, with the result that the serving-man was sent sprawling head over heels, while Dan also came a cropper.

Dan was boss of the dormitory in which he slept, and he did not mean to give up the post, especially to anyone smaller than himself. Edgar Bray was no match for Dan, and he had to give in. Rubbing his aching bones, he got into bed with all speed. But if Dan Callis had thus stopped what promised to be a general insurrection against his authority, he did not win back one ounce of the great weight of influence he previously possessed. That was gone for ever, as far as the boys at the school were concerned.

Jack did not make a song about his victory, nor bear himself in any way offensively towards his defeated foe, but he was glad the encounter, brief as it was, had taken place, as it settled for good and all their respective positions in the school.

Several days passed without anything of moment taking place. Bob's son, Jim, still continued in the state of curious unconsciousness of things about him, and in the opinion of the doctor there was only one chance—a poor one—of the balance of his mind being restored. And that was another scare, or something similar to whatever it was that had reduced him to such a state.

Bob and many more entertained the suspicion that Peter Pinnick could, if he chose, explain it all; but suspicion is nothing, and as the surly fisherman held aloof from all, they could not tax him with it, or do anything to obtain a little of evidence against him.

He was often away in his boat for hours at a stretch, and more than once he was gone two whole days. They thought he was lost, and were beginning to think what a good loss it was, when he returned, not to work, but to loaf about. He still frequented the Mermaid, but chose the hours in the day when the other fishermen were absent. He would sit alone and drink in the tap-room until someone came in. Then he would rise and go away.

The Stranger now often came over from the Bowl, almost every day, and so gave Bob several letters to post, receiving others in return, generally with the London postmark on the envelope.

Mr. Bonnington and Mr. Belton had become acquainted. Visits were exchanged, and Mrs. Bonnington took so kind a fancy to Ivonne and Laura that she expressed her intention of having them often over to tea and to spend the evening. To carry out this idea she invited them at once, and the first visit was the signal for much internal commotion among the boys. They did not see much of them, but a glimpse was enough for those who had not seen them before.

"The loveliest creatures on earth!" was the general verdict, and if it was not exactly correct it was in a measure justified by the real beauty of the girls.

Miss Harrison came with them, and the tutors joined the party at the tea-table. What took place there is not on record. Some inkling of the deadly feelings engendered may be gathered from the fact that, presiding at the

boys' supper-table as usual, they did little but glare at each other and scowl, indifferent to or unaware of the fact that two-thirds of the youthful beholders of their smothered hatred knew exactly what was the time of day.

The next morning after this event Mr. Ferrula received a letter with no other postmark than that of Sternecaig upon it. The writing was apparently feminine, and looked somewhat cramped, as if the writer had laboured hard to turn out a neat piece of calligraphy.

As Mr. Ferrula rarely received any letters, and none of a very interesting nature, this was a sad-letter day event in his life. He did not open it at the breakfast-table, where all the morning letters were usually handed round by the polite Gruelton, but put it into his pocket for perusal afterwards. In a quiet corner of the garden, to which the tutors were allowed access, he perused it.

As it was not a very long one we may here give it verbatim, with the two or three misspellings he observed in it.

"Dear Mr. Ferrula,—Believing you to be a man of honour, I venture to apply to you to help me in my hour of distres. I have a great trouble to contend with, and have nobody to confide in, as it is a matter I do not wish Mr. Belton to know anything about. Be a friend to me, do, and meet me somewhere, so that I may in secrecy impart to you the cause of my misery. I was thinking that the Cleft would be a nice place if you would not mind getting up very early in the morning—as soon as it is daylight. I cannot name any exact morning, as it will be difficult for me to get out without being noticed; but will you come morning after morning until I can join you? Do not let that retched Mr. Redditch know anything about this.—Your true friend,

"MOLLE HARRISON."

"P.S.—Please do not write back, so that it might make people suspicious."

"Will I go? Rather!" said Mr. Ferrula, as he kissed the letter again and again. "Will I? Oh, joy—oh, happiness unspeakable!"

It certainly puzzled him a little to find that a governess was not quite certain of her spelling, but he knew as well as anyone that teachers were not always perfect, and it was no affair of his.

THE 16th CHAPTER.
A Risky Adventure.

It was enough for Mr. Ferrula that the governess wished to see him—to confide in him; and when confidence was established would it not lead up to a warmer condition of things—even unto matrimony?

As for confiding in Redditch, he would just as soon have thought of standing up in the school-room and reading that letter aloud for the edification of all therein assembled.

The hour of meeting appointed was very early, and, as the sun was up at four o'clock, it would take a big slice off his night's rest. What did it matter? He would be there even if he had to sit up all night.

The first night he got no rest, and he was true to his word; but, as he came back at seven, haggard and disappointed, it may be assumed that the lady was unable to get out.

What a wearisome day it was, and how sleepy he was all the morning! The number of short doses he had leave him constantly going up and down between heavy drowsiness and extreme wakefulness. It was a most wretched morning, as trying to him as certain tremendous performances are to athletes.

Mr. Bonnington observed his condition, but made no remark upon it. He was inclined to think that the tutor had taken to reading in bed, and said as much to Mrs. Bonnington, who gave directions that half an inch of candle only should be supplied to him when he went to rest.

Mr. Ferrula got a short sleep that evening, and the consequence was another wakeful night. But, stimulated by love, he again sought the Cleft in the grey dawn, and awaited the fair one, who never came, until he had to run home to be in time for breakfast. Once was almost out of the question, and he just managed to nibble a little, harassed by the contemplation of Mr. Redditch's disposing of food as if for a wager.

All day long he was like a man in a dream, but he got through his duties somehow, and as soon as evening came he staggered rather than walked upstairs, and lay down as he was in his clothes upon his bed.

He was aroused by the tinkling of a bell, and, springing up, found broad daylight with him still. He sprang up and looked at his watch. It had stopped at half-past four.

"What's this?" he gasped. "That's the breakfast bell. I've slept all night!"

And so he had—in his clothes. Poor Mr. Ferrula!

He made the best toilet he could under the circumstances, and hurried downstairs. The boys were streaming into the breakfast-room with appetites sharpened by early rising. Mr. Redditch had not yet appeared. His chair remained empty until everybody was seated, and then he suddenly popped into the room, as light and beaming as a sunny morning in May.

"I am late," he said cheerily; "but I have been kept by the beauty of the morning—and—other things. I really forgot how time was flying.

He and Mr. Ferrula had each an urn, and in a skilful, rapid way they filled the teacups and passed them round. Mr. Ferrula helped himself last, and was about to drink some of the compound which cheers without intoxicating when the voice of Mr. Redditch was heard saying:

"What a delightful walk it is to the Cleft!"

Then Mr. Ferrula choked. He saw now why his brother tutor was so cheerful. He had been to the Cleft, and found the fair Miss Harrison there. And she, disappointed by the non-arrival of Mr. Ferrula, and feeling that she was scoffed at and outraged, accepted the attentions of his less worthy rival.

Oh, yes; he saw it all, and seeing, as we have pointed out, he choked! It was such an overwhelming choke that he had to leave the room, and Mr. Redditch's exposed ears he returned, calm outwardly, but suffering inwardly.

There was decorum at the table, but Jack and several others were troubled with a cough of the sort which some people get up a stop a laugh; but, of course, it was not possible for them to know the true cause of Mr. Ferrula's anguish.

Dan Callis, who had been watching them closely, suspected something, but he could not get at it without some clue, and, being resolved to get one somehow, he chose a favourable opportunity to try what he could do with Nickey.

He stopped him after breakfast as he was going out of the house.

"Nickey," he said, "it's the best joke I ever heard of."

"What joke?" asked Nickey innocently.

"Oh, the joke you are playing on Ferrula!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Nickey, opening his eyes. "I don't understand Dutch."

"You've got to understand me," said Dan, savagely seizing his arm, and pushing him round behind some shrubs that grew near the side door.

"None of that!" said Nickey.

"Out with it," growled Dan, "or I'll pound you to pieces!"

"Pound away," replied Nickey. "I've nothing to tell you!"

Dan hit him on the side of the head with his clenched fist, and it made Nickey see stars; but it did not daunt him a little bit. It only made him feel that he would rather be cut up into pieces than yield to bully's request.

"Out with it!" hissed Dan.

Nickey was no match for his antagonist; but, anyhow, if a cry would bring him help, he would not utter it just yet.

Being loth to fight Dan in the ordinary way, he was obliged to resort to what may be considered outside warfare. Stooping down as if in pain, he suddenly rose up, and, with his head, butted Dan in the stomach. Dan, with a gasp, let go, and Nickey darted off.

A minute later Dan was after him; but the solemn Gruelton coming out of the house as he darted forward, the pair collided, with the result that the serving-man was sent sprawling head over heels, while Dan also came a cropper.

"Where are you coming to, you idiot?" cried Dan.

"Pardon me, sir," replied Gruelton, picking himself up gingerly, and with an effort getting his breath, and speaking politely; "but it was hardly my fault."

"You are a blundering idiot!" said Dan, as he lounged away.

Nickey had vanished, and any pursuit of him was now helpless. As Dan sauntered off, Gruelton put his rumpled dress in order, and there was in his face a look not often seen there.

Even a worm will turn when trodden on, and Gruelton was not exactly a worm. There was more of the viper in him.

The day which opened fine became overcast, and rain was falling in the afternoon, when Mr. Bonnington was summoned from the school-room. A whispered message from Gruelton took him out in a hurry, and his disappearance caused the usual interest in the boys.

"Wonder what it is?" said Nickey.

"Mrs. Bonnington fainted," replied Will Raddle.

"Not she," said Nickey. "More likely a tramp stole something."

"Do you ever get tramps here?" asked Mark Ricketts quietly.

"Oh, yes!"

"And do they steal anything?"

"Sometimes; it isn't long ago when one of them came into the hall and stole——"

"Silence!" cried Mr. Redditch. "Mr. Ferrula, will you kindly assist me to keep order?"

Mr. Ferrula, who had been intently engaged on some form of manuscript during the past half-hour, looked up with glaring eyes.

"My classes," he said, with emphasis, "are in order. It will be as well if you look to your own!"

Mr. Redditch smiled sardonically and said no more, and Mr. Ferrula, having favoured him with another glare, resumed his writing. Again Gruelton appeared, and in his quiet, deferential way, glided across the room. He had a whispered message for each of the tutors, and, having delivered them, calmly retired, taking no more notice of the boys than he would of so many pieces of brick or stone.

After Gruelton's second visit the curiosity of the boys increased. By the demeanour of the tutors they could see that Mr. Bonnington was not coming back. Gruelton's face was, however no guide. It was never an index to anything but a perfect acquaintance with servitude.

Very rarely did Mr. Bonnington absent himself from the school-room. He was a man with a love of his work, and possessed of the knowledge that the Head ought always to be at his post. Something serious must have happened to have taken him away.

Jack Jaunty was not given to indulging in idle curiosity, but in the instinctive way which we all have experienced at times, he felt that he was associated with the absence of the master. Consequently after school was over, when he saw Gruelton in the hall, he asked him if anything serious was the matter.

"Not here, sir," replied Gruelton; "it's the young ladies at the Folly."

"Are they ill?" asked Jack breathlessly.

"No, sir; they are missing. Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington have gone over."

Jack waited to hear no more, but hurried out and ran off alone in the direction of the Folly, disregarding the shouts of some of his friends, who wanted him to join in an impromptu cricket match. About halfway there he met Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington returning.

"Why, Jaunty, where are you going?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Down to the Folly, sir," replied Jack. "I heard that something was wrong there."

"It is all right now," said Mr. Bonnington, with a curious expression of face. "They have been brought back."

"I call it really a mad thing to do," said Mrs. Bonnington; "but highly improper."

Jack did not like to ask what the girls had been doing; but he thought if he turned back with them he might hear something about it. So he did. Mrs. Bonnington went on with the Misses, and Peter remained with the husband's replies, he gathered the following facts:

The girls had endeavoured to perform a feat beyond their strength. Taking advantage of Miss Harrison's reading a book while they took an afternoon dip in the sea, they struck out for the Bowl, and were well out ere the governess perceived what they were doing.

She cried out to them to come back, but they disregarded her, and, in a state of terrible distress, she ran into the Folly, and alarmed Mr. Bonnington.

He at once came out, and, launching a small rowing-boat which he had purchased, went in pursuit. By that time the girls were nearly a mile from the shore, and had got into a strong current, which was bearing them away in a southerly direction.

Could they have swum as far as the Bowl they would not have touched it, but must have been carried by the tide right out to sea. Mr. Belton would not have been able to overtake them in time, because the girls were unable to fight their way back, and were getting exhausted.

Happily they were picked up by a boat-man, who happened to be rowing back from the direction of the Bowl. And who should that boatman be but Peter Pinnick.

"Better him than nobody," thought Jack. But he did not quite like the idea of his being made into a hero in connection with Ivonne.

"Mr. Belton behaved well," said Mr. Bonnington. "He gave the fellow twenty pounds."

"Which will be a good thing for the Mermaid," said Mrs. Bonnington, with some asperity. "Why could not some of the more respectable men have saved them?"

"Because there were not there, my dear," suggested Mr. Bonnington mildly.

"Oh, that's only a man's reason," said Mrs. Bonnington, with a woman's unreason.

Jack went back to the school, but he did not play cricket. He was in no humour for it. After walking for a while he sauntered off to the beach, where he saw Peter Pinnick, just landed after pulling round from the Folly.

He had perched himself on a barrel, and was addressing a knot of fishermen, bragging about what he had done, and exhibiting the money he had received. Catching sight of Jack he bawled out to him:

"I say, you Jaunty chap, you ain't the only one who can do a big thing. You never saved more than one life I have saved two."

"But I never asked to be paid for it," retorted Jack.

The next moment he was sorry for having said it. He felt it was ungenerous to allude to money when a thousand pounds would not have been too much—if it was necessary to pay made into a hero in connection with Ivonne.

"Paid for it!" cried Peter. "Do you think that twenty pounds squares the job? If you do, I don't. Ten pounds apiece for saving two such pretty girls is nothing. Why, I've read of kings giving their daughters to poor chaps as saved 'em."

"You've read a lot of muck in your time, Peter," remarked one of the fishermen.

"Twenty pounds is more than you earn in six months—at honest work—so you've been well paid for your job."

"Don't think so," said Peter, "and I mean to have a bit more. Now then, who's coming up to have a drink?" And he clambered off the barrel.

Not a man stirred.

"Don't come if you're above being treated," said Peter Pinnick, with a savage grin. "But you Jaunty chap, you ought to do it for the sake of the eldest gal. Ah, you may colour up and look daggers, but I sin't such a fool as some take me for."

He lounged off up the cliff in the direction of the Mermaid, leaving Jack in a boiling rage. He wished to be grateful to Peter, and for the deed he had done that day would have forgiven the past, but for his offensive remarks and evident determination to make capital out of the affair.

The fishermen looked at the boy as he followed Peter Pinnick with his angry eyes, and smiled and whispered among themselves. They also understood more about certain matters than Jack suspected. In a quiet village everybody knows the business of everybody else, and nothing is kept a secret.

Jack felt that things there. When Peter Pinnick had gained the summit of the cliff, he, too, went in the same direction, walking slowly, and thinking.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

CLUB NOTICES.

NOTICES AND CHALLENGES FROM READERS' OWN CLUBS. THESE ARE INSERTED FREE OF CHARGE.

WHITFIELD F.C. (average, 15), third-class team, want away matches. Ground not to be more than about 5 miles from Oxford Circus. Private accommodation not necessary.—R. B., 6, Whitfield Street, Tottenham Court Road, London.

NEWTOWN BRITANNIA A.F.C. want matches for the coming season.—Apply to J. Boundhill, 26 Markham Place, Newtown, Leeds.

THISTLE A.F.C. (average age, 15-16) require fixtures for coming football season. All dates open. Also a few good players wanted.—Apply, Thos. Budge, Secretary, 16, Cannon Street, Devonport.

GIFFORD ALBION F.C. require away matches within a three-mile radius of King's Cross; average, 15, weak.—Write to A. Play, 72, Richmond Road, Barnsbury, N.

ST. MATHEW'S F.C. (average age, 16-17) would like to join a league for next season. N. or N.E. London preferred. Moderate subscription.—Send particulars to O.C. Taylor, 19, Dame Street, Islington, N.

JANDAS ATHLETIC F.C. (16½; strong) require matches for the coming season, 1907-8. All dates open. Only respectable clubs need apply. A.V. Hart, Hon. Sec., 2, Fakenham Street, N.

SWAN ATHLETIC F.C. (17; weak) require matches, home and away, for coming season, 1907-8. ground, Wornwood Scrubbs.—Apply, J. H. Smith, 11, Gelshead Road, Fulham, S.W.

BRISTOL ROVERS F.C. requires fixtures for next season in or around Bristol.—Apply, F. Jeffery, 62, Heyward Road, Barton Hill, Bristol.

THE VICTOR ROVERS F.C. would like to fix matches with teams of same average (17), home or away, and are also in want of a few respectable players about 16 or 17 years of age. Small sub.—Apply W. Griffiths, Secretary, 34, Sedgwick Street, Homerton, N.E.

THE WHITE STAR F.C. require three good players for season 1907-8—two backs and a half-back. Pernils on Hackney Marshes.—Apply by letter for particulars to T. Bean, Secretary, 88, Buckhurst Street, Bethnal Green.

ALL SAINTS F.C. (14; very weak) have all dates open, home and away. Ground, Regent's Park.—Apply, H. Boyce, 72, Hampstead Road, London.

GRAPEVINE ATHLETIC F.C. (15½; weak) have dates open, home and away, for season 1907-8.—Apply, Hon. Sec., 7, Burdett Street, Devons Road, Bow, E.

WYCLIFFE C.C. (average age, 14) desire all matches in or around Bow to come home and away.—Apply E. Richmond, Secretary, 36, Leslie Road, Leyton.

HURSET C.C. (15; medium). All dates, home and away.—Apply, 5, Abbotsford Avenue, West Green, N.

ROYAL NATIONAL C.C. (13; med.) require fixtures between three and a half mile radius. All dates open.—For dates, etc., apply W. Kircher, Flushing Field, Horn's Cross, Stone, Greenhithe.

BENDISH C.C. (average age, 13; weak) are open for home and away matches for rest of season.—Apply to Mr. H. Brindley, 19, Stanley Street, Bursley; or to Mr. G. Morton, 107, Waterloo Road, Burslem.

PEABODY C.C. (average age, 13; weak) require away matches. All dates open.—Apply, W. Wallace, 18½, Peabody Buildings, Southwark Street, S.E.

LYONDALE XI. (average age, about 14; rather weak) would like away matches in any evening, or a two-evening fixture, with teams in Grimsby.—Apply to Montagu Lyons, 253, Nainton Avenue, Grimsby.

ROYAL ALBERT (average age, 14) require matches on the following dates: July 27; August 3, 24; Sept. 7.—S. Parry, Secretary, 115, Kirkwood Road, Peckham, S.E.

AJAX 2nd XI. (age, 16; weak) require matches. all dates open.—Apply, F.C. Hilling, Secretary, 102, Eugenia Road, Rotherhithe, S.E.

WAVERLEY C.C. (age, 16; weak) want away matches, all dates. Leyton and district.—J. W. Howell, 15, Cornelia Road, Leyton, E.

NAVARINO C.C. (average age, 13) would like to play respectable clubs within two miles radius of Hackney.—Apply to L. Nadel, Secretary, 235, Navarino Mansions, Dalston, N.E.

HORSPORTH VICTORIA C.C. (average age, 18) want a match on Bank Holiday Monday (Aug. 5th, 07) with a club from ten to twenty miles from Horsforth. Good ground and dressing-room.—Apply J. A. Riley, Town Street, Horsforth, Leeds.

PORTLAND SWIMMING CLUB (age, 12 to 18) require a few more members. Only respectable fellows need apply. Swimming taught to members. Baths, Davies Street, Oxford Street, W.—For further particulars, apply to R. Ward, Secretary, 4, Little Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.

RESPECTABLE BOYS (age, between 14-16) wanted to join a cricket club. Must be fair players, in district of Stoke Newington.—Apply to Secretary of Challenge Cricket Club, 10, Cazenove Road, Stoke Newington, N.

BOYS WANTED (age, 14-16) to join running club, St. Peter's Harriers, in Tottenham. Small sub. Connected with the L.C.C.U.—Apply, T. Harvey, Vice-Captain, St. Peter's Harriers, 100, Tynemouth Road, South Tottenham.

TWO FRIENDS (age, 18) would like to join a football club in West Ham and district. Willing to pay small sub.—Send to F. Pinnell, 71, Eve Road, West Ham.

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.



A FRESHMAN'S BLUE.

By JACK NORTH.

A MAGNIFICENT DOUBLE-LENGTH STORY OF THE CRICKET FIELD.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
An Ancient Feud Renewed.

A. J. BRUCE, captain of the Cambridge University Cricket Eleven, known to his intimates as "Potboy"—a nickname he had earned in an early escapade at Eton—was leaving Fenner's, the famous cricket-ground, whereon so many great players have first made their mark in first-class company, in company with an old schoolfellow, and a fellow-member of the eleven. But it is quite safe to say that "A. J." would not have been in the company of Theodore Warren Wilford if he could have avoided it. Wilford was no favourite of his.

In fact, outside his own set, composed mainly of toadies and sponges, Wilford was no great favourite anywhere. He played for Middlesex in the vacations; yet there was not a man in the Middlesex team, amateur or professional, who did not dislike him. One famous batsman had said of him "that it was a pity such an utter rotter should be so fine a cricketer." And the man to whom he spoke had gone further in replying. He denied Wilford's right to be considered a really good man on a side, however technically fine a player he might be. "I'll believe in him when I've seen him play a good innings on a wicket that's cuttin' up nastily, or when runs are badly wanted at a pinch," he said. "I don't call a man a fine cricketer who makes big scores on a billiard-table wicket, an' fails whenever things go against his side."

But Wilford was a heavy scorer, and a successful bowler, too. He had hoped that he would be elected to the Light Blue captaincy in this, his third year in the team; but the honour had gone to Bruce, a man who had never made half as many runs in a season as Wilford was in the habit of making. It was characteristic of Wilford that, though at heart he detested Bruce, ever since the latter had been chosen captain, he was still disposed to toady to him, and to force upon him his unwelcome company.

The ill-matched pair had just reached the gate of Fenner's, when a man entering—a tall, athletic, and handsome fellow, a year or so their junior—looked at Wilford, hesitated a moment, and then held out his hand.

Wilford did not take it. He surveyed the new-comer through the gold-rimmed eyeglass that he affected, and said:

"Ah, Mr. Dalleson, I believe? How d'ye do?"

Then he passed on. Bruce, who hated snobbery, and who did not know Dick Dalleson, felt hot and angry.

"Is that Dalleson, the Kate's man—fellow that made a century against St. John's on Wednesday?" he asked.

"Really, my dear Bruce, I don't know," replied Wilford, making an unsuccessful attempt to thrust his arm through Bruce's. "Certainly his name is Dalleson. I should imagine he might be at St. Catharine's. He isn't at all the sort that's likely to be at Trinity."

To Trinity College both Wilford and Bruce belonged.

"What d'ye know of him?" asked Bruce abruptly. Somehow Wilford always set his teeth on edge.

"Precious little. I am thankful to say! I had the misfortune to be at the same country grammar school with him for a term or two—though, by Jove, why the governor sent me there I never could make out—before I went to Eton. I had to give him a jolly good thrashin' the day before I left. He ran himself out in the last match of the season, and was idiot enough to blame me for it."

Bruce did not believe that story. He had got into the way of believing well under half of what Wilford told him.

"If that's Dalleson, of Kate's," he said, "I want to speak to him. I'll turn back. Excuse me!"

And he went off. Entering Fenner's again, he met a St. Catharine's man, whom he knew well. Paley and he were old chums. The former was not a cricket blue; but he was in the soccer team, and he and Bruce had played back together in many a hard-fought game.

"Oh, I say, Paley, I suppose you know Dalleson, of your college?"

"I think I may say I do. I called on him on Tuesday, and was in for a solid two hours with him on Wednesday against St. John's."

"He has just come on to the ground. I want you to introduce me. Whycroft, of St. John's, tells me he's a nailin', good all-round man. I want to make quite sure that he's goin' to turn out in the Fresher match."

"You can put him down for the first foreign match without any doubts. He's first-class—I give you my word for that. I should say that nothing but bitter black favouritism will keep him out of the team—an' there's no fear of that with old Potboy as captain!"

"That's all right, old Evidences! You come along and introduce us. That snob Wilford was at school with him, it seems; but he was half inclined to cut Dalleson dead just now, and I wouldn't ask him."

"Oh, Wilford!" said Paley; and his tone spoke volumes.

Dick Dalleson was a proud man that night, and a happy man. It was a high honour for a Freshman to find the cricket captain hoping great things from him, and making no bones about telling him so.

"We want to see whether the Kate's swan is really a swan, and not merely a goose," the Potboy had said. "But I believe you're a bird of the right feather, Mr. Dalleson!"

But in all his pride and happiness Dick did not forget Wilford's unpleasant response to his greeting. It was evident that Wilford had not forgotten and forgiven. He had feared as much. The one drop of bitterness in his cup of joy when he knew that he had won the Cambridge scholarship, for which he had worked so hard, was the knowledge that his old enemy was up at Trinity, and a big man in the University Eleven.

He remembered the sneers that had made his life miserable during the last term that he and Wilford had spent at Wington together, before the latter, whose father had just then come into a fortune, had gone to Eton.

Dick had been elected captain in preference to Wilford, and Wilford had never forgiven him for it. He remembered that row before the last match of the season, when his patience had given way at last, and his open hand had left a red mark on Wilford's cheek. He remembered the treacherous run-out that had followed, nearly losing Wington the match, and spoiling the school's unbroken sequence of victories. He remembered the thrashing he had given Wilford when the game was over. Yet all this was four or five years ago, and Dick had no wish to carry on the quarrel.

But to Wilford it was all as though it had happened yesterday. His hatred of Dalleson might have slept for a while; but it had grown rather than diminished in sleeping. The first sight of his old rival had awakened it, strong and bitter as ever. He would shy at no dirty trick that would do that rival harm. Especially was he determined that, if he could in any way prevent it, Dalleson should not win his cricket blue!

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
A Ducking in the Cam.

WITHOUT achieving anything that looked at all remarkable on paper, Dick did good all-round work in the Freshman's match. The pitch was of the billiard-table order; and his bag of seven wickets for 118 runs represented better bowling than a much more sensational analysis gained on a glue-pot wicket might have done.

Half a dozen others obtained a bigger aggregate than his scores of 38 and 45 gave him; but no man in the match made his runs in finer style, and he gave nothing like a chance in either innings. Perhaps it was his fielding that pleased the critics as much as anything, though. The neatness and quickness of his ground-work at cover-point, the accuracy of his returns, and the way in which he got to, and froze on to one extremely difficult catch, were worthy of Sidney Gregory or poor Johnny Briggs.

When the teams for the First Eleven v. Next Sixteen were made public, it was seen that Bruce had given Dalleson a place in the Eleven.

Thus once again Dick found himself playing on the same side with his old enemy.

After Wilford's rudeness at their first meeting, Dalleson had quietly ignored him. So little did he show his feelings that, as yet, no one in the eleven except Bruce suspected that there was enmity between the two. But Bruce knew, and he was keeping a watchful eye on this man whom he distrusted.

Dick got that extra good ball a little too early in his innings against the Sixteen, and left for 7. Wilford made 85; and Bruce, for the second time in his life, rattled up a three-figure score. The total of the Eleven was 412; the Sixteen had to follow on after making 185, and were eventually beaten in an innings. Most of the bowling was done by Wilford and Dalleson, who accounted between them for 24 of the 30 wickets, the Blue having slightly the better figures.

No one was surprised when, in the list of names for the team to play against Yorkshire, the first "foreign" eleven to visit Fenner's that season, "R. O. H. Dalleson, St. Catharine's" appeared. The names of the Blues playing were given first, in alphabetical order, then those of the three new men being tried. Thus, the name immediately before Dick's was "T. W. Wilford, Trinity."

Wilford gritted his teeth when he took up his "Sporting Life" and saw the juxtaposition of the names. It was like a slap in the face to him. He had not been able as yet to think of anything he could do to put a spoke in Dick's wheel. But his malice was bubbling over to an extent that made it absolutely impossible for him to keep silent.

He assailed Bruce at first, and was promptly snubbed. Then he tried two or three other members of the eleven, who did not appear especially interested in the subject. Finally he had to fall back upon his own particular cronies, who didn't actually care a hang about either Dalleson or the Light Blue Eleven in general, but who liked to keep in with Wilford for the sake of what they got out of him.

It was with one of these that he was strolling by the narrow stream of the Cam, towards Chesterton, on a glorious afternoon in May, only a day or two before the Yorkshire match.

"Yes; the fellow's an absolute rank outsider," he was saying. "At school he was up to all sorts of dirty tricks—would have been expelled from a bigger place, no doubt, but they don't often expel fellows from these little tinpot schools. His people are no class, either. I had to give him two or three thorough good thrashings years ago. I dare say I shall have to give him another before long."

"Seems a thunderin' pity that a chap like this Dalleson should ever have a look-in for his Blue!" said the sycophant.

"So it's Dalleson you're talkin' about, is it? Look here, I don't know who you are, but I tell you plainly that Wilford has lied—lied abominably, and like the dirty, backbiting cur he is! As for his ever havin' thrashed me—well, whether you believe that or not is no odds to me. But if he has done it before, let him do it again. He's goin' to have the chance, right here and now!"

But Dalleson had not come to Cambridge merely to play cricket. He was reading hard, too. He had duly attended lectures that morning, and in the afternoon had paddled a mile or two down the river in a Canadian canoe, and then, landing, had settled down with his back against a pollard-willow to study diligently a work which most people would have classed as desperately dry.

So absorbed had he been that he had hardly recognised the voices of the passers-by. Perhaps, had his own name not been mentioned, he would never have realised of whom they were talking.

"Stand out of my way, you ill-bred ruffian!" said Wilford haughtily.

But for all the hautour of his tone his cheeks had gone deadly pale.

"You say you've thrashed me," answered Dick. "Thrash me again, if you can!"

"I won't condescend to fight with you!"

"No; backbitin's more in your line than fightin'! But, once for all, will you fight?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then into the river you go!"

He seized Wilford by the collar and the slack of his flannels, gave one mighty effort, and sent him splashing into the Cam. Then he turned to the sycophant.

"I know the dirty cur can swim," he said. "He's in no danger. Are you a swimmer?"

"No-o-o!" quavered the toady—a little man whom Dick could have dealt with one-handed.

"Good thing for you! I don't know but that you deserve a duckin' pretty nearly as much as your sweet friend does. Next time he tries to take away another fellow's good name



Rostron cut Dalleson's fourth ball to point, and Holwood took an easy catch.

in your hearin', just remind him of this, will you?"

Dalleson picked up his book, got into his canoe, and pushed off just as Wilford, soaked and furious, clambered up the bank.

"You shall pay for this!" shrieked the ducked one, shaking his fist at Dick.

Dalleson took no notice. With a few powerful strokes he was round a bend of the river, without even having looked back.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
A Cloud in the Sky.

IT was by the most unlikely of chances that the little scene by the river had not been witnessed by anyone unconcerned in it; but so it happened.

Dick and Wilford did not meet again until the first morning of the Yorkshire match, when they passed each other on the pavilion steps without any sign of recognition.

It was a trying introduction to first-class cricket, that, for a boy from a country grammar school, born cricketer though he was. To bowl to Denton and Tunnicliffe and T. L. Taylor, to stand up to Hirst, Haigh and Rhodes, with watchful David Hunter behind the stumps, and Long John, octopus-like, in the slips!

But Dalleson came through his ordeal of fire with flying colours. Wilford turned almost green with hate and jealousy when he saw him running bare-headed to the pavilion, with cheers ringing out from hundreds of lusty young voices, after making 52 of the best against Hirst swerving diabolically, and Rhodes with a wicket that suited him.

Wilford himself had gone cheaply, as he often did on a bowler's pitch, fine batsman though he was on a billiard-table. Bruce, his very antithesis, a man whose pluck was greater than his skill—though the genial Potboy was no duffer—was the only man, besides Dalleson, to make any real resistance. His 38, and Dick's 52, were the only double-figure items in a total of 117.

The Tykes ran up a much higher score, Denton and Hirst adding over 150 in partnership on a fast-improving wicket. And then the Cantabs bucked up finely. The wicket was dead easy now; and Wilford ran up 90; Bruce 83; Collins 67; and Dick another 52.

And, after all, Yorkshire not only did not win, but had to struggle hard to avoid defeat. For the batsmen played the forcing game at the start to make the 250 runs required for victory in something under three hours; and the pitch was crumbling a little, and Dalleson's bowling, of perfect length and breaking back the width of the wicket, disposed of man after man until he had seven of them to his credit. And when the end came Lord Hawke and Hunter were together, last men in, and the score still lacked forty of the runs required.

In every college hall that evening they talked of the Freshman from "Kate's." At St. Catharine's, where his good-nature and manliness had already made him a favourite, he was lionised to an extent that caused him to feel quite uncomfortable. But elsewhere, from the greatest of the colleges to the least, they talked of the fresher whose bowling had so nearly beaten the White Rose champions, whose batting had been so plucky and determined, whose fielding so keen and active.

W. G. Grace brought a Gentlemen of England team to Fenner's the next week; and Dick earned golden opinions from the Master, whose wicket he got in each innings, besides taking nine or ten other wickets, and scoring 75 in the only innings he had.

A fortnight elapsed before the next game—that with Gloucestershire—and in the course of that period something happened which gave Wilford the chance he had been looking for.

Everyone remembers how the man who called himself Osmond Dalleson brought about the biggest smash that England had known for a decade. Up to the time of that smash he was spoken of with bated breath as a genius of finance. After it, all the world knew that he had merely been, like many another so-called genius of finance, a colossal swindler.

Everyone knows, too, that Osmond Dalleson was not the real name of that rascal. It was not under that name he was tried and sentenced. Perhaps, he had found the name in the Clergy List, and had liked the sound of it. Anyway, he bore it in that part of his journey from obscurity to safe anchorage in Portland Prison, during which he was so much in the public eye.

It was unpleasant for Dick to see the name he bore thus blackened; but, so far as he knew, the man Dalleson was of no kin to him, and it did not occur to him for a while that anyone would connect him with the unveiled swindler.

But gradually he began to notice that he was being given the cold shoulder. Fellows who had sought his company a week or two earlier gave him a curt nod, or crossed to the other side of the way when they saw him coming.

Conscious that he had done nothing to deserve such treatment, he stiffened his back and returned them coldness for coldness. But he could not help wondering a little whether Wilford was at the bottom of it all, and, if so, what lies his enemy had been spreading. He had as yet no suspicion as to the cause of his sudden loss of popularity.

It was on the day before the Gloucestershire match began that he found out the reason.

Two youthful groundsmen, of the type you see at Fenners's—some of them migrate to the Oval or elsewhere later on, and blossom into first-class professional cricketers—were talking eagerly together. They were not aware that Dalleson was near; and he had no idea at first that their talk concerned him.

"I tell you, I heard Mr. Bruce say it himself! 'Play or not, as you please,' he says. 'If every Blue on the side fails me, I'm not goin' to turn a man out of the eleven for something that's no fault of his!' 'No fault of his!' says Mr. Collins, as was talkin' to him. 'That's all very well! but what right has he here among us on money that has been stolen from widows and orphans?' 'That be hanged for a tale!' says Mr. Bruce. 'I happen to know that he won a scholarship at Kate's!'"

Dick started.

"What does Mr. Collins say to that?" asked the other lad.

"'I don't care whether he won a scholarship or not,' he says. 'That rascal Dalleson is his father, an' we won't have the son of a man like that among us!' 'I don't believe it,' says Mr. Bruce. 'Who's your authority?' 'That I won't say,' says Mr. Collins; 'but it's a man who knows him well. Now, I'd like to know this: if it's proved that he's the son of this man Dalleson, do you still stand by him in defiance of us all?'

"Here, Mr. Bruce, he lets out a powerful strong word or two, so he does, an' at last he busts out with: 'Yes, I do! I don't believe Dalleson is the son of a swindler. Even if it was proved that he were, I'd never believe but that he himself was the soul of honour!' He did look fine when he said that, Mr. Bruce did, just like Lewis Waller on the stage. 'An' I'll swear he isn't that man's son! If he had been he'd have taken his name off the books of Kate's directly he heard of the smash-up!'

"'If he plays, I don't!' says Mr. Collins, short-like.

"'Do as you please,' says Mr. Bruce, in that cool sort of way he has when he's real put out.

"'An Holwood don't, or Wilford, or Thorpe, or Tompion,' says Mr. Collins.

"'That will give me a chance to give four or five other men a trial,' says Mr. Bruce.

"'Will you throw away the match at Lord's for the sake of a rotten swindler's son?' asks Mr. Collins.

"Mr. Bruce did let out at that! I can't remember just the words he said—they came pourin' out so fast-like! But it amounted to this—he should give Mr. Dalleson his Blue at once, an' them as wouldn't play on the same side with him might make up their minds as Lord's wouldn't see 'em this year—not in the eleven, anyway. An if you don't believe me, go an' look at the list for the match against the Croucher's little lot!"

"I seen it, Craggy; you know I seen it. That's what made me ask you what-all was up. But what do you think on it yourself? D'ye think this 'ere Dalleson is that there Dalleson's pup?"

"Not he!" returned Craggy scornfully. "Look what a nailin' bat he is!—an' a better bowler than he is bat, if anything—an' his fieldin'—my word! 'Tisn't noways likely, that ain't, Spickenhow!"

THE 4th CHAPTER.
Dalleson's Blue.

DICK never felt quite sure that he was justified in listening to that conversation. But the doubt did not occur to him until after he had heard it to the end. Until then the news itself absorbed him. His heart warmed to Bruce as he walked away from Fenner's towards St. Catharine's. What a splendid fellow he was! It was great of him to stand up in this way for a fellow of whom he really knew so little.

Arthur Jardyne Bruce had gained a friend that day who would cheerfully have gone to the death for him.

Dick was surprised to find Bruce and Paley in his rooms when he got there. The Potboy's favourite old briar-root was well under way; but Paley looked ill at ease, and could not keep his cigarette alight.

Dalleson shook hands with both. Then he waited. He had something to say, and he it was better to let Bruce speak first.

"Well, old man," said the cricket captain, in that off-hand, friendly way of his which was so different from his manner when speaking to Wilford, "I've just looked in to say that, although it's unusual to give a Blue so early in the season, I can see no reason why yours should be withheld. It can't make much difference to your play. You can't well do better than you have been doin'; but you may feel happier to know you've got it. It isn't as though you were just on the fringe of the eleven. You're the best man we've got, an' we all know it!"

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Bruce," answered Dick. "But I'm not quite sure that I'm justified in acceptin'. I have only discovered this afternoon that, through no fault of my own, I have been a source of discord in the team. Now, I can't take my Blue if my presence means the absence of half a dozen of your best men. It would spoil our chance against Oxford, you know!"

"That's good talk, Potboy," said Paley, nodding gravely. "I don't know how Dalleson has found out the strength of the feeling against him; but I think it's a good thing he should recognise it. I may as well own that I came with you to-day because I meant that he should know of it before he accepted. But I want to say, too, here and now, that I have no share in the feeling. I've come out of friendship to Dalleson, not out of enmity."

He stretched out his hand, and Dick grasped it warmly.

"What a blitherin' ass you are, old Evidences!" said Bruce lightly. "Here's the chance of your life to get your cricket Blue—you shaped jolly well for the Seniors, but it's your last year up, an' you'll hardly scrape in for one of the three places open—an' you want to arrange things so as to spoil it! Look here, Dalleson, here's the list of the eleven against Gloucestershire. Run your eye over it, an' then we'll have some straight talk!"

Dick ran his eye over it. Collins, Thorpe, Wilford, Tompion, Holwood, Dunne—all these familiar names were absent from the list. The only old Blue down besides the captain was Charteris, the wicket-keeper, a bosom friend of the Potboy's. Dick remembered that there had been no change in the quietly genial way in which Charteris had from the first treated him.

Dick's own name stood third on the list. Then came the names of six others, each of whom had played either against Yorkshire or Dr. Grace's team. The tenth and eleventh names were those of D. E. Paley (St. Catharine's), and T. R. Winwood (Peterhouse)' seniors who, though they were good batsmen, had never been thought of seriously for places in the team.

"What do you think of it, Dalleson?"

"Well, we may put up a fight against Gloucestershire; but I'm afraid that team wouldn't make any great show at Lord's," replied Dick candidly.

"That, or something very like that, is the team that will play at Lord's unless those fellows come to their senses!" returned the Potboy, with decision. "If you don't play, I don't, an' Charteris don't! So, in any case, the only way in which we can put our best team into the field—but never mind that! Do you mind my asking you a straight question, Dalleson?"

"Ask me fifty, if you like!"

"Well, is Osmond Dalleson your father?"

"Yes," came the totally-unexpected reply.

Paley gasped and Bruce's face clouded. But the smile on Dick's face reassured them.

"The Rev. Osmond Dalleson, I should say," he added. "It was playin' it rather low-down on you fellows to trick you, even for a moment. My governor is the Rev. Osmond Dalleson, vicar of Much Weston, in the county of Essex. As for the other Osmond Dalleson, I have never even seen him, to my knowledge. I don't believe that he has even the most distant relationship to us. Certainly there can be no close kinship, for my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all only sons."

Paley and Bruce exchanged glances. They were prepared to stand by Dick in any case; but this statement relieved them mightily. They had no hesitation in accepting what he told them as true, and it gave them a glimmer of hope.

"I'm goin' to find out how this story got about," said the Potboy. "Look here, Dalleson, you've got your Blue. Don't worry about anything. The rest is my business. As for these fellows, I'll guarantee that they'll all—with one possible exception—be willin' to play with you at Lord's, an' that they'll all be sorry, whether they've the grace to own it or not, for givin' you the cold shoulder. Come along with me, old Evidences, an' help to spoil your own chance of a cricket Blue!"

THE 5th CHAPTER.
Wilford Loses His Place.

THE weakened Cambridge side not only put up a decent fight against Gloucestershire, but actually managed to win the game by two wickets.

The great little man from the West rushed up 140 runs in ninety minutes on the first day;

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

SECTION 1.

Application has been made by THE EBBW VALE AND DISTRICT JUNIOR CRICKET LEAGUE for one of THE BOYS' REALM Silver Cups, and the President of our Cricket League (Your Editor) has decided to present one to that organisation at the close of the cricket season. The secretary's address is:

Mr. James Bowen, Holly Bush Row, Rassau, near Beaufort, Mon.

The following clubs in the Leagues mentioned have been awarded Cricket Bats for the best performance on Saturday, June 8th:

SOUTH LONDON AUXILIARY S.S. UNION.

Lansdowne Institute C.C.—Sec., Thomas Vincent, Weston Street, Bermondsey, S.E.

(Lansdowne Institute scored 208 for seven wickets in 118 minutes. F. Vincent, top scorer, whose age is seventeen, made 68 runs, and got Belmont out for 40.)

BEARWOOD AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

St. Faith's C.C. — Sec., Mr. J. Jarrett, Queen's Park, Wimborne. Win by 27 runs.

Quinton C.C. — Sec., E. Darby, Meadow Road, Quinton, near Birmingham. Win by 3 runs.

BLACKBURN AND DISTRICT S.S. LEAGUE.

Christ Church C/C.—Sec., R. Boardsworth, 38, Haslingden Road, Birmingham.

Little Harwood C.C.—Sec., M. I. Johnston, 22, Warrington Street, Blackburn.

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

St. Bede's Adult School.—Sec. (of League), Mr A. E. Pink, 50, Hastings Road, Sunderland.

SOUTH LONDON CHURCH LEAGUE.

Old Charlton Church C.C. — Sec., Mr. F. G. M. Lewin, 78, Elliscombe Road, Old Charlton, S.E.

BELFAST MINOR CRICKET LEAGUE.

Mount C.C.—Sec., Mr. T. Mandforth, 199, Albert Bridge Road, Belfast.

NORTH LIVERPOOL LEAGUE.

Electric Supply C.C.—Sec., Mr. T. Marsden, Corporation Power Station, Lister Drive, Liverpool.

ST. CLARE CUP CRICKET LEAGUE.

FIXTURES FOR JULY.

July 6th.—Stockwell B. v. Choumert. St. Clare v. Primrose. St. Peter's v. Nile.
July 13th.—St. Clare v. St. Peters.
July 20th.—Choumert v. Stockwell. St. Peter's v. St. Clare. Nile v. Manwan.
July 27th.—Primrose v. Stockwell. Choumert v. Manwen.

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT NONCONFORMIST CRICKET LEAGUE.

WEEK ENDING JUNE 8th, 1907.

	Names of Clubs.	P.	W.	L.	D.	Pts
1	St. Bedes Adult School	7	6	0	1	13
2	Ballast Hills	8	4	3	1	9
3	Newbottle Institute	6	3	2	1	7
4	Y.M.C.A.	6	3	2	1	7
5	Monkwearmouth P.C.I.	7	3	3	1	7
6	Trinity Guild	7	3	3	1	7
7	Ravensworth Street	7	2	3	2	6
8	Wesley Hall	4	2	1	1	5
9	St. George's Men's Own	6	2	3	1	5
10	Dock Street Institute	6	1	4	1	3
11	Cleveland Road	7	1	5	1	3

OUR PRIZE BATS.

WHAT THE WINNERS THINK OF THEM.

ST. BEDE'S ADULT SCHOOL C.C.
50, Hastings Street, Sunderland.
June 10th, 1907.

Dear Sir,—On behalf of the above club I have to thank you for bat sent to us as prize for best performance in Sunderland and District Nonconformist League, week ending May 18th. We have used same in matches, and it has proved most satisfactory.—I remain, sincerely yours, A. E. PINK.

OUR FOOTBALL LEAGUE CHAMPIONS.

LETTER OF THANKS FROM THE SECRETARY.

CHURCH INSTITUTE,
Institute Road, North Camp.

Dear Sir,—I am very pleased to say we received the Cup and Medals safely this morning, and we are all very proud of them. I think the Cup is excellent value, and well worth playing for. The reproduction of our group photo in the REALM was a very good one. We hope to follow up our success next year.

I must thank you on behalf of the members of our club for putting up such a fine trophy for competition among our younger members.

Hoping our success will bring you more entries from Aldershot next season, I remain, yours obediently,
BANDSMAN E. [illegible], Sec.

THE RUNNERS-UP MEDALS.

LINCOLN FIELDS WESLEYAN A.F.C.
79, Sunderland Terrace,
Harefields Lane, Leeds.

Dear Sir,—I have great pleasure in stating that we have received the medals which you sent on the 4th inst. They have given great satisfaction to our players and all who have seen them. I wish you every success with your papers and all your leagues. The prizes you offer are really something worth trying for. Allow me to conclude with best wishes from all our members and players, and good luck for your future.—I remain, yours sincerely,
ERNEST GEO. [illegible].

SECTION 2.

The following clubs have been awarded bats for the best performances on Saturday, June 8th:

JUNIOR DIVISION.

Pythian Hall C.C.—Sec. E. Beddoe, 20, Ogwen Street, Liverpool.

SENIOR DIVISION.

Holmesdale C.C.—Sec. A. H. Leppard, 61, Bungalow Road, South Norwood.

CLUB NOTICES.

For a long time now our columns have been open for notices and challenges from readers' own clubs, these being inserted free of charge. The following letter shows the result of an announcement published in THE BOYS' REALM recently:

"ST. JOSEPH'S CRICKET CLUB,
184, Jack Lane, Hunslet, Leeds.
June 12th, 1907.

Dear Editor,—Some time ago I wrote to you asking you to put a notice in your paper announcing that we had open dates. Well, since then I have almost booked for the season, so please cancel the request.

Trusting you will oblige, I am, an earnest reader of your paper. ARTHUR FLANNAGAN, Hon. Sec."

Send along a notice concerning your club if your fixture-list is not yet completed.—THE SECRETARY.

MEDALS FOR GOAL SCORERS.

The following letters have come to hand from readers who have received medals for scoring twenty-five or more goals during the season:

WESTON GROVE F.C.

Dear Editor,—The medals (3) awarded to our successful members duly came to hand, and their proud recipients are highly pleased with them.

Sincerely thanking you on their behalf, I remain, yours truly, A. FALL, Secretary.
Alexandra Dining-Rooms, Victoria Road, Woolston.

Midland Road, Thrapston.

Dear Editor,—I received the silver medal quite safely which you award to goal scorers. I am very pleased with it. Thanking you very much for same, and wishing you every success with all your boys' papers, I remain yours truly C. HARRIS.

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.

but, apart from Board and Wrathall, the rest did little.

Bruce was the hero of Cambridge's first innings. He went in first for perhaps the first time in his life. Dick was his partner; and three figures had been recorded before Dick was caught for 47. Paley, Winwood, and Charteris all played good, steady cricket in company with their captain; but he outstayed them all, and when Jessop at last got his wicket, he had run up no fewer than 173, or rather more than half his side's total, and that without a chance, although he was always scoring fast.

In the county's second innings Dick bowled the Croucher with a beautiful ball before be had scored, caught and bowled Wrathall five minutes later from a hit that sent the ball back to him with something like the velocity of a cannon-shot, and got Board caught in the slips off one of those "if-strokes" of his. Langdon made a big effort, and got plucky assistance from the old Cantab, Godsell, and Edgar Barnett, the budding medico; but the cricket was very slow after the champagne of Jessop and A. J. Bruce.

There was a hard fight for the two hundred or so wanted for victory in the fourth innings. The Potboy was snapped at the wicket before he had scored. Dick and Paley added 92 for the second wicket, before the former left for 61. Winwood failed this time, and Charteris did not make a long stay. Some of the others scraped a few; but it was only the steadiness and pluck of Paley, who was 79 not out when the game ended, that pulled the Light Blues through.

There was no other foreign match until the May week—so-called, as most people are aware, because it comes in June—when Surrey and the South Africans were to be met.

Of the six recalcitrants, Tompion and Dunne returned to their allegiance for the Surrey match, and the team was thus strengthened by a good slow bowler and a resolute bat.

Collins, Holwood, and Thorpe had refused to accept without further explanation Bruce's assurance that he knew Dalleson to have been misrepresented, and the captain had scornfully refused to tell them more. Tompion and Dunne considered the Potboy's bare word good enough—they were both old Etonians—and were glad at heart to find themselves back in the team, and disposed to be more than civil to Dick.

For very good and sufficient reasons Wilford had not been approached. When he heard from Collins what had taken place, he did not quite understand this; but he pretended to do so.

"Of course, Bruce did not ask me," he said. "I know too much about Dalleson to be taken in by a piece of bluff like that. I'm not a bit surprised at what has happened. I always thought the fellow would turn out a thorough-goin' wrong 'un. Even as a youngster he was distinctly a bad egg."

"Oh, I don't know!" answered Collins, rather miserably. Collins did not feel at all happy about finding himself in the same camp with Wilford, whom he had never really liked, and in opposition to Bruce, of whom he was very fond. It was only dogged obstinacy that prevented his giving way. "I don't know. I haven't anything against Dalleson personally; always thought him a very decent chap, from the little I've seen of him. I suppose that you really are quite sure, Wilford, that this horrible shark of a swindler is his father?"

"My dear fellow, if you wish it, I am prepared to make an affidavit to the effect that Osmond Dalleson is the name of Richard Dalleson's more or less respected sire. That I have known for years. There may be two men of the same distinctly uncommon name, of course."

But the sneer and the shrug that accompanied that admission seemed to negative its value; yet Wilford knew the truth well enough.

He told himself that he was quite safe. No one could possibly prove that he knew Dalleson's father to be a clergyman in a remote Essex parish, as innocent as a child of City finance. He had never said in so many words that Dalleson, the swindler, was Dick's father.

Yet he felt very uneasy when Bruce seemed to look right through him with those keen, grey eyes of his, taking no notice of his gesture of recognition. He began to suspect that the Potboy was distinctly more astute than he had given him credit for being. Would it be good policy to tackle him on the spot, and demand his reason for this cut direct? Wilford thought it might be; but his courage did not run to it.

He and Collins, Holwood, and Thorpe made rather a forlorn little group in the pavilion at Fenner's on the first morning of the Surrey match. Everyone knew the reason of their standing out by this time; but somehow they were not getting the amount of moral support that they had expected. The tide seemed to have turned in Dalleson's favour. Bruce and Paley had been at work, denying the slander without hesitation whenever a whisper of it had been breathed in their presence.

Surrey had their strongest team up—Hayward, Hobbs, Hayes, Lees, Strudwick, Marshal (the Queenslander), John Crawford, Lord Dalmeny, and Neville Knox—and Bruce counted himself among the fortunate ones in the land when he won the toss.

At least, the first day would not be quite like the first day of the Surrey match at Oxford a week earlier, when Hobbs's wicket had been the only one that had fallen, and that not until he had scored 116; while at call of time, Marshal was 175 not out, and Tom Hayward 167!

Paley was sent in first with Dick, and they made an excellent start. The St. Catharine's men in the crowd were jubilant indeed when 80 runs went up well within the hour. Lees got past Paley's strong defence a little later, and the senior retired for a capital 36.

Dunne was sent in next. Charteris was to follow him, and then Winwood. The spectators were wondering why Bruce was keeping himself back. They had expected to see him go in first. The Potboy had, however, something else to attend to. He had arranged quite a dramatic little surprise for certain gentlemen in the pavilion.

A grey-haired, but still vigorous-looking gentleman, in clerical dress, had been met by Bruce at the pavilion gate just after Dick and Paley had walked to the wickets, and had been found a good seat by the captain, who made it very evident that this old clergyman, whom nobody seemed to know, was an honoured guest.

Dunne was out after slamming four fours; but Charteris made a good partner for Dick. It was hard to believe that the bowlers were really such famous men as Knox and Lees and Crawford. Charteris played them steadily and well; but he had met them before. But here was Dalleson, who had never faced one of them previously, hitting them all over the place as if they were Saturday afternoon trundlers!

When 150 went up, his score was 85. Then, facing Marshal, he drove to the off boundary for 4, hooked a short one for another 4, cut to boundary for yet another, and made a single off the last ball of the over. A slashing drive to the on off the first ball from Crawford reached the boundary, and a perfectly deafening roar of applause broke out.

Dick Dalleson had scored his first century in big cricket!

Ten minutes later he was out, with 125 to his credit. The Potboy met him at the pavilion door, and behind the Potboy was the grey-haired clergyman. The hero of the hour dropped his bat in sheer amazement.

"Why, dad!" was all he could say.

"Well played, my boy—well played!" cried his father, as they clasped hands.

Bruce turned to a little group near.

"I should like to introduce you fellows to Dalleson's father," he said. "Mr. Collins, Mr. Dalleson—Mr. Holwood, Mr. Dalleson—Mr. Thorpe, Mr. Dalleson!"

He pointedly ignored Wilford, who flushed, and then went pale as death.

Mr. Dalleson's manner to the three was perfectly polite, and just a trifle freezing. The letter he had received from Bruce had put him in possession of the facts of the case; and it was to set his son right in the eyes of the University that he had journeyed to Cambridge. But that dashing century had warmed his heart; and the three seemed so contrite and humbled that insensibly his reserve melted. And then Collins got him aside somehow, and burst out: "Look here, Mr. Dalleson, I can see you know all about it. I've been a wretched fool, an' I'm going to beg your son's pardon. And I'll swear I had no personal animus against him, nor had Thorpe, nor Holwood; and I know they feel just as I do."

What could Dick's father say after that? Collins had spoken out like a man; and all that remained to be done was to bury the matter in oblivion.

Bruce's stay at the wicket that day was not a long one. The success of his little drama had pleased him so much that he was quite unable to concentrate his attention upon the matter in hand; and Crawford's third ball at him made a sad mess of his wicket.

He came back to the pavilion as jauntily as if he had made a hundred instead of a duck, however; and, after getting rid of pads and gloves, sought out the trio who were, metaphorically, sitting on the stools of repentance.

"You'll play against the Africanders, I suppose, Collins—and you two, as well?"

"Oh, rather!" replied Collins; and the answers of the other two were to the same effect.

"What about Wilford?" asked Thorpe, a little uncomfortably.

"Oh, I'll attend to Wilford," answered the Potboy grimly.

He attended to him a few minutes later, in private.

"You mean to tell me that you are going to turn me out of the team?" asked Wilford, white to the very lips.

"I don't look at it quite in that light. You have made it quite impossible that you and Dalleson should play on the same side."

"But why should he have the preference? I am an old Blue. I——"

"Ask yourself that! You know that I can't ask him to play in the same team with you; and you know why. Under the circumstances, I should feel bound to prefer him to you, even if he were the inferior player. But he isn't. You may be the second best man on the side; but he is quite certainly the best."

"Then I'm to take it that I am kicked out?"

"I haven't any wish to put it as offensively as that. I don't want to be rough on a man who has done such good service as you have; but you and Dalleson can't both play. Unless he is unable to turn out at Lord's you must stand down."

Wilford went, with seven devils raging at his heart.

He was seen no more at Fenner's that week, so that he lost the excitement of seeing Surrey beaten by a dozen runs, and was not one of the crowd that nearly went mad with joy when Dalleson slammed a ball from Vogler clean out of the orchard end of the ground, thus ending a game in which Cambridge triumphed over the South African team by five wickets!

THE 6th CHAPTER.
Desperate Measures.

WHEN the return match with Surrey was being played at Kennington Oval ten days later, Wilford was representing Middlesex against Notts at Lord's, and that with so much success that very hard things were said about Bruce by people who did not know the true cause of Wilford's being dropped. And very few people outside the Cambridge eleven were in the secret.

The Potboy, for his part, did not care to explain matters. He felt that Wilford had already been punished pretty heavily, and he preferred to suffer unmerited blame himself rather than have the knowledge of his old schoolfellow's meanness made public.

But Wilford had not given up hope of getting back his place in the team, even at the eleventh hour; and to that end he was labouring assiduously. Dalleson's all-round success on a nasty wicket at the Oval was gall and wormwood to him. If anything had been needed to strengthen his resolve that would have done it. To read of his rival making scores of 50 and 72 in a game in which no other player on either side totalled 40, and securing thirteen Surrey wickets at a cost of under 9 runs each made him grit his teeth vengefully.

He vowed that, whether he got his place against Oxford or not, Dalleson should not play!

Sir Warren Wilford and his son were on very strained terms at this time. The baronet was purse-proud and obstinate; but he was honest and a good sportsman. When he learned that Theodore, of whose cricket prowess he was very proud, had been left out of the Light Blue team, he set himself to work to discover the reason. He was unable to get quite to the bottom of it; but he learned enough to direct his wrath against the real offender, not against Bruce, whom so many others were blaming.

There was a very unpleasant interview between father and son on the morning after the Middlesex v. Notts match finished.

Sir Warren had been making enquiries about his son's Cambridge debts, and the replies had added fuel to the fire of his anger.

"You have been running into debt to the extent of at least five times your allowance," he said; "and your allowance is more than double as much as the average man at your college gets. Then, because you can't behave yourself like a gentleman, you get kicked out of the Cambridge team. You will never earn distinction at anything but cricket, that's certain. I had counted on seeing you again at Lord's this year, and I don't like being disappointed. You had better realise that a stiff neck won't serve you just now!

"I know enough to know that you were in the wrong, though I haven't heard the whole story. Make your peace with Bruce, apologise to the other man, and get your place back. Otherwise—you understand me!"

"Still another reason," said Wilford to himself. "The old beggar's cutting up beastly rough, an' I shall be in Queer Street unless I can get round him in some way. An' there's no way so sure as gettin' back into the team. But I'm not goin' to humble myself to Dalleson—curse him!"

Middlesex had no match on the days when Cambridge met Sussex at Hove, and Wilford spent one day of the three on a motor-trip into Essex without a chauffeur, but with a companion of whom his father would scarcely have approved.

Disguised in goggles and a motor-coat, Ben Darke went unrecognised, alike by several friends who saw the car pass, and by several police-officers who were wont to take a flattering interest in his movements.

Much Weston appeared to be the objective of the trip. At least, the car went no further, and its occupants gave a great deal more attention than ordinary travellers would have been likely to do in the narrow lane by which the village people reached the little railway-station a couple of miles away.

"Just the bloomin' place!" said Darke, with a horrid chuckle. "The last train gets in after ten o'clock. You must make sure as he shall come by that. Likely enough there won't be no other passenger. I steals up behind him in this lane, gives him a nice little wipe o' the skull with a life-preserver, an' chucks him into the ditch! You has the motor waitin' for me around the corner there; we alters the number-plate, and gits back inter town well afore closin'-time. You shows yourself at your club—but there, I ain't needin' to tell you how to look arter yourself, Mr. Wilford; an' you may take your davy I'll look arter myself!"

"You mustn't quite kill him, you know, Ben! There would be too keen a hue and cry after that. An' you'd better take his watch an' money an' so on. Then no one will ever suspect that it's anything more than a case of ordinary highway robbery with violence."

"Oh, you leave it to me, sir. I'm up to all that. But he won't be a bowlin' out no Oxford chaps, nor yet makin' no centuwerries for a week or two arter he's got the tap on the crumpet that I'm a-goin' to give him, you bet!"

THE 7th CHAPTER.
The First Day of the Great Match.

IT was a brilliant day in early July, and already, before eleven o'clock, Lord's was crowded.

There are always plenty of stylish carriages and smart dresses, frock coats and silk hats, when Dark and Light Blues meet. Pretty faces look at the play, sometimes with but a languid interest. But for the majority there "the play's the thing." And among the really keen spectators few are keener than the big sprinkling in black coats of clerical cut. Many a remote country rectory sends up to Lord's to watch the battle of the Blues a man who cannot find time, or it may be money, to see another first-class match during the whole season.

But on that particular morning a certain grey-haired clergyman from an Essex parish, who would in the ordinary course of events have been at Lord's in time to secure a good position, was driving thither at least an hour after Cambridge had gone into the field. He had chosen the best horse he could find among the cab-horses available at the great terminus, but it could not travel fast enough to please him. No one loved animals better than that kindly grey rector; but he was urging his driver to make better speed, fast as they were travelling already.

"Where on earth is Dalleson?" Bruce had asked two hours earlier. "He had a wire callin' him home last night; but he promised to let me know the first thing this morning if there was anything that would hinder him from playin', an' I've had no word from him. But he's not here."

"Missed his train," suggested Paley.

The St. Catharine's senior, getting his chance so unexpectedly, had proved one of the mainstays of the team through the trial matches, and was up at Lord's now as a full-fledged cricket Blue.

"Surely he'd have wired if he'd done that! I tell you, I don't half like it. I had queer dreams about Dalleson last night, and I woke up this morning with a conviction that something had happened to him."

"Oh, rubbish!" said Charteris. "It isn't like you to be talkin' about dreams, Potboy. By the way, the sweet Wilford is here. What shall you do if Dalleson wires that he can't play?"

"Play Wilford, I suppose," returned Bruce, though with rather a wry face. "We should have little enough chance with both of them away. Harland might fill the place of one of our two or three weakest without lettin' us down, but he couldn't begin to replace Dalleson or Wilford. What a pity an outsider like that should be so fine a cricketer!"

The minutes passed, and still Dalleson came not. Bruce tossed with Rostron, the Dark Blue captain, and called wrong.

Just as he returned to the pavilion a telegraph boy ran up with a wire for him.

"Richard injured last night only discovered this morning may not be able to play but hopes to don't fill up place am coming myself be with you before lunch OSMOND DALLESON."

That was how it read, running on without stops or capitals, as is the way of telegraph messages. Bruce looked very grave as he handed it to Paley and Charteris.

"What shall you do, Potboy?"

"Just as he asks. What else can I do? I say, Rostron, do you mind our puttin' a sub. into the field for a bit? One of our men is delayed—quite unavoidably."

"Not at all," answered the genial giant who captained Oxford. "Who is it, may I ask?"

"Dalleson."

"H'm! Make rather a hole in your bowlin' strength, won't it?"

"I'm afraid it will."

Wilford overheard the conversation from where he sat in the front of the pavilion, and for a moment he fairly saw red.

Was all his scheming, all the risk he had taken, to prove unavailing?

His imagination pictured Arthur Jardyne Bruce in a dark lane, and behind him the amiable Benjamin Darke, armed with his trusty life-preserver. In that moment he felt that he hated the Potboy every whit as much as he hated Dalleson.

But his face betrayed nothing; and soon he was assuring himself that before luncheon he would be in the field. He knew nothing of Mr. Dalleson's wire; but he knew, or thought he knew, that it was quite impossible for Dick to play. When the news came that Dalleson had been put out of action by footpads, Bruce would have no choice but to call upon him. They would not be able to do without both him and Dalleson.

It was Harland who went into the field as substitute. Tompion and Collins started the bowling to Rostron and De Vigne, a little dark man with a sweet late cut and a wonderful way of placing the ball safe through the slips. He appreciated the expresses of Collins as much as Rostron did the slows which Tompion sent down. The scoring was fast and furious in the first hour. But then a fine catch by Bruce in the long-field disposed of the big man; and De Vigne, over-balancing himself slightly in playing forward to Tompion, had both feet outside the crease as the ball passed him, and was smartly stumped by Charteris.

At lunch the score stood 140 for three. The first hour had produced 90 runs, the second only 50. Collins had bowled really well, but he had already tired somewhat, and as they made their way to the pavilion Bruce had almost made up his mind that after all Wilford's aid would have to be sought.

He had turned to Charteris to say so, when a black-coated, grey-haired figure confronted him.

"I must speak to you in private, Mr. Bruce!" said Mr. Dalleson, still shaken and agitated from the shock he had had and his breathless journey.

They went aside together. In a few hurried sentences enough of the story was told to

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, starts in "The Boys' Herald." This Week.

enable the Potboy to gather what had befallen Dick.

"But surely after such a knock on the head there's no earthly chance of his bein' able to play, Mr. Dalleson?"

"I am not sure. The doctor is strongly against it. But he thinks he can play. Fortunately, good constitutions—and thick heads!—are hereditary in our family."

"But he won't be fit for anything," said Bruce, frowning. "I am afraid I can't keep his place open. I shall have to play Wilford instead. This means so much to us, you know, sir. Without another bowler we have no chance of winning the match. And how can your son hope to bowl after an experience like that—after bein' knocked senseless and left all night in a ditch?"

"Wilford must not play, whatever happens!" said Mr. Dalleson; and there was a tone of deep meaning in his voice. "It would be a disgrace to Eton—to Trinity—to the University that is my alma mater, as well as yours and Dick's—if such a scoundrel as he has proved himself should represent Cambridge! Look here!"

He took from his pocket a gold cigarette-case. It bore the initials "T. W. W.," and there were minute stone-scratches on it, showing that it had fallen on a hard road.

"That was found within fifty yards of where my son was attacked, and near the marks made by the tires of a motor-car, which had stood still as though waiting for somebody. Wait! The initials might be a coincidence, I grant you. There is weightier evidence."

He opened the case. It had inside a compartment for visiting-cards, and the cards in it bore Wilford's name.

"There is more yet. The telegram which called Dick home, telling him that I was dangerously ill, was forged. It was handed in at the village post-office by a lad who states that a gentleman in a motor-car gave him a shilling to take it. He happened to notice the identification-mark of the car. It was XA 597. A policeman in Chelmsford saw that car pass about seven o'clock in the evening. He saw the same car being rapidly driven in the opposite direction at somewhere about eleven o'clock the same evening, but the mark it then bore was LB 631. He is sure it was the same. He may be wrong, of course. But do you happen to know to whom the car with the mark XA 597 belongs?"

Bruce did know. It was Wilford's car, no doubt of that. Wilford had been at Chelmsford that evening then, or at least someone in his car had. Whence had he gone from Chelmsford? Was it his car that had flashed through there again later, bearing another mark? If so, the evidence against him was terribly complete.

"I say, sir, you ought to have been a detective!" he said, with genuine astonishment.

"Oh, I didn't find out all this. A friend of mine at Much Weston, a retired detective, did it all. In a couple of hours this morning he discovered more than I could have done in a fortnight. Can there be any doubt, do you think, Mr. Bruce?"

"None at all, I fear. But what are you goin' to do, sir? Have you put the matter in the hands of the police?"

"No. I know what is really my duty. But Dick will not have it so. He persists that Wilford should be given another chance. Once he has taken his name off the books of Trinity, he says, they are not likely to meet again. I must see the scoundrel and tell him our terms."

"No: that you won't, sir! You've been through enough for one day. I'll see to that. This is an end to the blackguard's cricket career. Cambridge has done with him; and he'll never play for Middlesex again. If he dares to show his face at Trinity after this, I swear that I'll shout the story from the housetops!"

He sent for Wilford, who came eagerly, sure that now, at last, he was to be given his place. But when he saw Bruce's hard-set face, and the contemptuous look in those keen grey eyes, he knew that the game was up. He denied everything at first; but Bruce soon brought him to his knees.

Half and hour later the baffled scoundrel slipped out of the gates of Lord's like a beaten cur. He had played for his stake and lost it. But he felt no slightest twinge of remorse. All he regretted was that his folly and Darke's over-tenderness had caused his plans to miscarry.

He would go abroad—that was the only thing to do. The governor could hardly refuse to supply him with money, though it would be long before he dared show his face at home again.

There was a block at the junction of Hampstead and Tottenham Court Roads with the Euston Road. Wilford's cab was the first in the line facing eastward. And there, in the first hansom of the westward-bound string, sat Dick Dalleson, his head bandaged, his face pale, but otherwise apparently little the worse! Their eyes met for an instant. Then Dick turned his head away. The policeman on point-duty held up his hand. Wilford's driver pulled to the right, into Tottenham Court Road, making for Charing Cross. A minute or two later Dalleson's cab was bowling merrily along the Outer Circle of Regent's Park, taking the shortest cut to Lord's.

"Curse that fool, Darke!" hissed Wilford, his teeth set hard under his under-lip, so that the blood spurted. "And curse my own squeamishness! Why didn't I tell him to strike to kill! And a thousand curses on Dalleson, with his thick skull and his canting forgiveness!"

THE 8th CHAPTER.

A Desperate Finish.

OXFORD batted all that first day, and made well over 300. But Bruce played great cricket on the Friday, scoring a chanceless 117. Charteris made 47, Collins 43, and Dunn 33. Dick, going in with his head still bandaged, kept up his wicket for twenty-five minutes, while Tompion hit lustily for 37; and in the end only five runs separated the two totals.

Then came pouring rain in the night, and on the Saturday morning the sun shone brightly. The wicket caked. By the time play began it was the sort that a slow or medium-paced bowler would have liked to carry about with him in his bag, and that the batsman, whose greatest asset is his forward stroke, calls "a brute."

Bruce had not allowed Dick to go into the field at all during Oxford's first innings: Rostron, who was told something less than half the truth, having readily agreed that the substitute should field all day for him.

But the injured Cantab. was not to be held back now.

"Look here, old man, I batted twenty-five minutes yesterday——"

"And had to have a stiff peg of brandy-and-soda to keep you from faintin' when you came in—don't forget that!"

"But I felt all the better for it afterwards; an' I'm quite fit—well, almost quite fit—to-day. Every run matters now. If they scrape a hundred, I'm afraid it will be too many for us. The wicket won't suit Collins; but



Dick seized Wilford by the collar and the slack of his flannels, gave one mighty effort, and sent him splashing into the Cam.

Tompion and I ought to have a chance of gettin' them out pretty cheaply on it. I mean to bowl whether you put me on or not, so there's an end of it!"

"Coolest specimen of a Fresher I ever struck!" murmured the Potboy. "Bit light-headed still, p'r'aps. Well, 'He that wull to Cupar maun to Cupar'! Go on, an' bowl, Dalleson! Kill yourself if you like; but don't die till to-morrow, for we shall want all you can do this afternoon, I'm afraid. An' don't tell your father it's my fault."

Rostron cocked up Dalleson's fourth ball to point, and Holwood took an easy catch. Tompion bowled De Vigne all over his wicket, and two Oxford wickets were down without a run scored! Six were down when the score had reached 28; Dick having taken five of them. But then he collapsed, and had to leave the field, within an ace of fainting. The tail hit out at the less deadly bowling of the man who went on in his place, and the total reached 84.

This left Cambridge 90 to win. On just such a wicket the Oxford attack had disposed of a strong Lancashire team for 65, three weeks earlier; and the general concensus of opinion was that the Light Blues would go under, though they might come very near winning.

"Steady's the word!" said Bruce. "I don't mean don't hit out; but don't hit indiscriminately. We've all the afternoon to get the runs in, an' that ought to be time enough. Paley, old man, you've a duck in the first innings to atone for. You're comin' in first with me, an' you're goin' to stay there until the runs are hit off!"

"Is that the voice of the prophet, or merely a dire threat?" asked Paley, smiling. There were half a score better batsmen than Paley in the two teams, but there was none with a stouter heart, or stronger nerves. The man who has played big football seldom suffers from either funk or stage-fright in the cricket-field.

The first wicket put up 20, of which Bruce had made 17, before the Oxford slow bowler got one past him.

Then Dunn went for a duck, and Collins for 3. Charteris could not stay, nor Holwood, nor Thorpe; and six were down for 35!

"This is awful!" groaned Bruce.

"I say, Bruce, let me go in now!" said a voice behind him; and he looked round to see Dalleson, padded and gloved for the fray. "I feel all right now, really!"

"You look it," returned the captain drily. "Why, man, you're like a ghost! I've put you down for No. 11, an' that's your place."

"Look here!" said Dick. He held out his right hand. It was steady; there was no sign of a tremor. "You might look a trifle chalk-faced if your head had been bashed like mine. But it isn't fair to deny me a chance!"

"Where's your governor?" asked Bruce, with apparent irrelevance.

"There he is!" Dalleson pointed to a seat a dozen yards away.

Bruce strode over, and spoke to the Rev. Osmond Dalleson. When he came back he said:

"All right! You can go in next."

"Had to go an' get the pater's consent, eh? Anyone might think I was a kid of twelve!" grumbled Dick. But his heart warmed to Bruce for the kindly consideration he had shown; and he felt more grateful than he could easily have told to his father for that sportsmanlike consent.

A shout from the Dark Blue partisans proclaimed Tompion's downfall. A louder shout, joined in by wearers of the Dark Blue colours, as well as the Light, greeted the progress to wickets of the Cambridge all-rounder, his head still bandaged, but stepping out as if he felt fit for anything.

"Looks all right," remarked one of the old, regular frequenters of the pavilion to another—a man who had forgotten more about first-class cricket than most men have ever known.

"Ah—looks!" was the reply. "Screwed up to the pitch—'fraid won't last long enough bring Cambridge home. May, though, if no Dutch courage supplied—can't tell—feverish look in eyes—bad bout after match over—shouldn't wonder! Someone ought to hang for this!"

Seven for 42! Tompion, the slogger, had actually been in fifteen minutes for 5, unable to get the ball away. The Oxford bowlers were dead on the spot. The fielding was keen as mustard. Not a chance had yet gone begging, not a run had been given away.

Forty-eight wanted for victory. At the wickets, Paley, the man who had never thought it possible that he would get his cricket Blue, and Dalleson, who had had to leave the field in a state of collapse in the morning, and might drop at any minute! To follow them, two nervous and inexperienced batsmen!

The Light Blues were in desperate straits. It was easily 10 to 1 on Oxford.

But the Cantabs had not given up hope yet, nor were the men in the field absolutely confident of victory.

There were men from "Kate's" scattered at various points among the crowd, and a good-sized group of them in the front row of the big mound. How they cheered when they saw the two men from their own college at the wickets together!

Paley was playing an admirable game. Without hurry or flurry, he presented to each bowler a bat that seemed wider than the bats of the other men, so truly it came down upon the good ones, and smothered break, and kept them out, and kept them down. Already he had had seven partners; but their coming and going had not disturbed him or ruffled his nerves. Good old Paley!

That was a beauty; that 4 of his off Rostron, a forcing, wristy stroke past cover! Then Dick scored 2 for a cut off Coverdale, and then a single—a dangerous chop through the slips, that was not at all like his usual form.

Forty-one wanted. Dick played a maiden-over of wicked-looking balls from the Oxford giant.

Hurrah! Paley had steered Coverdale through the slips for 2, and glanced him to leg for another brace.

Thirty-seven wanted! And now 35—31—30—27—26—22—20!

What a grand game they were playing, those two men of Kate's! Dick's strokes lacked a full fifty per cent. of their customary force and vim, truly; but, though many were the capers that the ball cut, he was getting everything fairly in the middle, and backing up for every possible run like a man in the pink of condition.

As for Paley—well, words could not describe what Cambridge thought of Paley that day!

Sixteen wanted!

"How's that?"

The click had been plainly heard. Little doubt of the verdict.

"Out!" said the umpire; and Paley's innings was over.

A ball from Rostron had broken sharply away to the off. Paley had covered it, but hastily drew back his bat, thinking it better left alone. But he had not been quite in time. It had touched the edge of the bat, so slightly that, though the click was plainly audible, the course of the ball was hardly deflected; and short-slip dashing in, had held it within four inches of the ground.

Of the 74 runs made thus far Paley had scored 47.

"Let Dalleson have the bowling as much as you can," said Bruce to No. 10.

The batsman obeyed loyally.

There followed ten minutes of awful suspense, during which only 4 runs were scored. Then Dick hit a 4—his first boundary. His partner scraped a single. The crack hooked Coverdale cleverly for 2, and cut him for 2.

Two to tie—three to win! And Dick was wondering whether he could last, praying that he might, fearing that he would not. For his head felt giddy, and his legs weak. There was a kind of red mist before his eyes at times, and the ball seemed to swing in to him out of the mist. But always thus far, just as the leather was upon him, the mist had dissolved, and he was aware of blue sky and green turf, and sighted the ball clear, and played it truly. But if once—only once—the mist should thicken!

And now No. 10 succumbed, Rostron sending his middle stump in a dance that took it over the wicket-keeper's shoulder.

Now came in Whycroft of St. John's, who had been an absolute passenger thus far in the match. His fast bowling had not taken a wicket in Oxford's first innings, and Bruce had not dared to put him on in the second, because when runs are being fought for on a caked pitch, an erratic bowler may give away a match in a single over. He had gone for a duck in Cambridge's first: he had missed two catches earlier in the day. All of this was enough to make any man nervous. Whycroft was nervous; but he was plucky, too.

Very carefully he took guard. Left shoulder well up, left elbow forward, he faced Rostron, and played back to him each of the five balls that remained of his over. And the Light Blues cheered him to the echo.

There was a stinging in Dick's ears, as he fronted Coverdale, and the red mist was thicker, and the ball came out of it with a startling suddenness. But he hit somehow; and as it travelled slowly towards mid-off, Whycroft—perhaps forgetting it was not his call; perhaps perceiving that his partner was in no case to judge—called, and ran. There was plenty of time. Both batsman had reached their creases before the ball was gathered.

Coverdale pitched up a slow on the leg-stump to Whycroft. The St. John's man, his nervousness gone now, his eye clear, wheeled round, covering his wicket, and patted it in the direction of long-leg.

Then he yelled: "Come on!" while wicket-keeper and square-leg raced for the ball, lying still less than thirty yards away. That was an easy single, but an impossible two. It made the game a tie, and some spasmodic cheers arose, but died away in a death-like silence. So much depended upon this next ball!

Dick's head was swimming now, and he could hardly stand. Did he see that ball at all? He hardly knew. At least he hit it, and hit it hard.

"Come!" cried Whycroft, and they rushed full speed ahead.

Cover-point had got the ball. He took steady aim, and flung it straight and true at the wicket towards which Dick was travelling. Dalleson heard a click just after he fell full length with his bat stretched out for the crease. Whether he had reached it he knew not. His last effort had been made.

"Howzatt, umpire!"

"Not out, sir!"

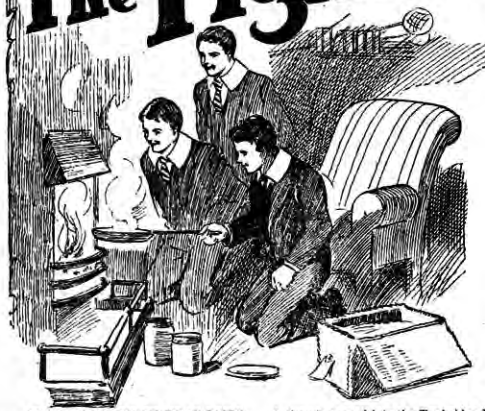
Cambridge had won by one wicket!

THE END.

(Next week the BOYS' REALM will return to its usual size and price, 16 pages, One Penny.)

ENTHRALLING LONG INSTALMENT OF MAXWELL SCOTT'S SPLENDID SCHOOL STORY.

The Fighting Fifth



MAXWELL SCOTT'S Enthralling Tale of School and Adventure.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

CHOTA LAL NATH CHANDRA DAS, an Indian prince, and a new lad at St. Ninian's School, who is placed in the Fifth Form. He is in possession of a certain gold locket, around which centres a mystery.

OTTO HEINRICH, a mysterious German, who strives by foul means to obtain possession of the gold locket.

ROBERT HAMILTON (Nipper), **DICK STARLING**, **GARDNER**, **PROCTER**, **RUSSELL**, **ARKLE**, pupils at St. Ninian's School. } Nelson Lee's wards.

Gardner is in difficulties with a bookmaker, and the mysterious German, knowing that the boy is aware of the place where Lal has concealed his locket, offers to pay the lad's debts on condition that he obtains it for him. Gardner, in desperation, consents to do so. That night Nipper and his chums plan a raid on the inmates of a rival house at St. Ninian's. On their way Nipper hears a noise in his study, and throwing the door open discovers Gardner removing the locket from its hiding-place. Gardner explains why he took the locket, and Nipper very generously lends him a five-pound note, first exacting a promise from him that he will do no more gambling.

Mr. Wimple, an under-master at St. Ninian's School, is secretly admirer of Fraulein Hoffmann, an assistant-mistress at a girls' school in the village. Mr. Wimple hears that she has ordered a horse and trap from a neighbouring stable to drive her over to a friend's house. He immediately goes and interviews the ostler, and bribes him to let him (Mr. Wimple) drive the Fraulein in his place. The ostler consents, and Mr. Wimple turns up at Fraulein Hoffmann's house with an ancient victoria. He is disguised by means of a false beard and moustache. The horse is very lively at the start, and Mr. Wimple fears that something serious will happen.

(Now read this week's long instalment.)

Mr. Wimple's Plans End in Disaster.

UP to a certain point Mr. Wimple's prediction proved more or less correct. It is true the off-wheel grazed the corner of the parapet as they crossed the bridge; and it is also true that a hen was run over, and two children nearly shared the same fate as they rushed past Temple's farm. True it is, moreover, that the horse shied at a group of schoolboys, who were playing leap-frog outside the gates of St. Ninian's, and was only prevented backing the carriage into the ditch by the presence of mind of Langley junior. With these exceptions, however, nothing occurred to seriously disturb Mr. Wimple's peace of mind until half the journey had been accomplished.

It must here be explained that the road which ran past St. Ninian's divided into two about a mile beyond the school gates. The main road followed the line of the coast, and eventually led to Eastbourne. The other road, which was known as the Tunbridge Road, ran almost due north for two miles and a half, and then divided into two forks, like the letter Y. The left-hand fork led to the Old Abbey, which some of my readers may remember; the right-hand fork ran past the Grange, and ultimately led to Tunbridge Wells. At the point where the two roads met—that is to say, in the triangular space between the forks of the Y—was a thickly-planted wood, known as Padley Wood.

To return to Mr. Wimple. His intention was to declare himself as soon as he and his fair companion had reached the open country. When, therefore, St. Ninian's had been left behind, he began to think the time had arrived for "throwing off his disguise and declaring his all-consuming passion!"

"I'd better wait till we're out of the Eastbourne Road," he muttered to himself; "but as soon as we turn into the Tunbridge Road, I'll pull up and reveal myself."

Alas for his hopes and plans! When the victoria turned into the Tunbridge Road, about a mile past the gates of St. Ninian's, the first thing Mr. Wimple saw was a well-known figure standing by the side of the road, with a large bouquet of flowers in his hand!

It was Montague Trigg, the mathematical master at St. Ninian's, and Mr. Wimple's rival for the hand and heart of Fraulein Hoffmann!

Mr. Trigg had learned—from Colonel Trevor himself, as a matter of fact—that Fraulein Hoffmann was coming to spend the week-end with them. Knowing that she would have to drive to the Grange, and knowing the route she was bound to take, he had purchased a bouquet, and had taken his stand in the Tunbridge Road with the object of waylaying her as she passed, and "scoring a point" off his hated rival.

As the victoria approached, he raised his hat and strode into the roadway.

"Pull up, driver!" he commanded.

"Pull up, indeed!" snarled Mr. Wimple, in the depths of his artificial beard. "Not likely!"

He gave the reins a vicious jerk, and the horse broke into a canter. With unexpected presence of mind, however, Mr. Trigg sprang forward, seized the reins, and forced the horse back on its haunches.

"You insolent ruffian!" he thundered, glaring at Mr. Wimple. "Why didn't you pull up when I ordered you?"

Half-crazy with anger and chagrin, Mr. Wimple snatched the whip out of its socket.

"Let go that horse's head, you—you—you animated stick of chalk!" he roared, brandishing the whip. "If you don't, I—I—I'll slash you across the face!"

Mr. Trigg stared at him in stupefied amazement. He recognised the voice.

"Good heavens! It's Wimple!" he gasped.

"Himmel! I believe you vas right!" Fraulein Hoffmann cried. "From dor first, I fink dare vas about him something peculiar."

"Peculiar?" snorted Mr. Trigg. "I should think there was! The ruffian has evidently concocted this vile plot with the object of kidnapping you! But fear not, dear lady! Montague Trigg is here to defend you! I will unmask this knavish clown!"

As he uttered these words he loosed his hold on the reins, sprang on to the step, and made a grab at Mr. Wimple's artificial beard.

The beard, of course, came off in his hand; but even as it did so, Mr. Wimple clenched his fist and drove it with all his might into his rival's face.

With an agonised howl, Mr. Trigg reeled backwards off the step. In a wild attempt to save himself, he clutched Mr. Wimple's arm. Taken off his guard, Mr. Wimple was dragged off the box; and the next instant the two masters fell floundering into the road.

Then comedy suddenly turned to tragedy.

Startled by the uproar, and by Fraulein Hoffmann's piercing screams, the horse began to rear and plunge; and ere the two masters could scramble to their feet, ere Fraulein Hoffmann could alight, the terrified animal took the bit between his teeth and bolted up the road in a series of maddened leaps and bounds!

The Paper-Chase.

A PASSING allusion has been made in a former chapter to a paper-chase in which Nipper and his chums had arranged to take part. This paper-chase, which was confined to the boys of the Fighting Fifth, took place on the Saturday after the meeting in the market-square—that is, on the same afternoon as Mr. Wimple's ill-fated adventure with the victoria.

It was an ideal day for a brisk cross-country run; clear and sunny, with just that nip of frost in the air which lends such an exhilarating charm to outdoor exercise. The snow had practically disappeared; and the roads, thanks to a drying wind, were in almost perfect condition.

Nipper and Dick had been selected as the hares, and punctually on the stroke of two o'clock, each with a couple of bags of scent slung over his shoulders, they started off at a swinging trot in the direction of Hampton Heath.

Now, in the case of ordinary schoolboys, a paper-chase is usually a more or less serious athletic contest, in which comic incidents and startling adventures are conspicuous by their absence. But Nipper and Dick were not "ordinary schoolboys!" They had a knack of finding fun, and tumbling into adventures, in the least expected places; and the present occasion proved no exception to the rule.

The fun began soon after they had crossed the old stone bridge which spanned the River Dene. From this point it was their intention to follow the Greystone Road for a little way, and then to strike across Hampton Heath. After crossing the bridge, therefore, they made for the Greystone Road; and no sooner had they turned into the road than their eyes fell on a couple of boys, one of whom was mounted on a wobbling bicycle, which he was evidently learning to ride, whilst the other was trotting behind him, with one hand on the back of the saddle.

Their backs were turned to Nipper and Dick, but the latter recognised them at a glance. The boy on the bicycle was Hyde; the one behind was Fleming. Both, as the reader will remember, were Grammar School boys; and both had taken part in that humiliating scene when Nipper, Dick, and Bob had been captured by the Grammarians and led in procession through the village.

"Hurroo!" cried Nipper, with a whoop of triumph. "Hyde and Fleming! Now's our chance to get a bit of our own back! We haven't time to pay 'em a lengthy call, but we've time to leave our cards as we pass by! Come on! You take Hyde, and I'll take Flem!"

Hearing Nipper's triumphant yell, Fleming hastily turned his head. At the sight of the two Nininites, he spun round on his heel—letting go his hold of the bicycle-saddle, of course—and placed himself in an attitude of self-defence.

"Ow-wow-ow! Don't let go, you silly owl!" screamed Hyde, as the bicycle began to wobble more violently than ever. "Catch hold, quick, or I'll be down!"



The German vaulted into the saddle, and the next instant he was flying down the hill with the Fighting Fifth in full cry.

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"There's Hamilton and Starling coming down the road!" gasped Fleming, without turning his head. "They're going to attack us! Get off, quick!"

"I—I don't know how!" moaned Hyde.

"Try!" roared Fleming.

Hyde tried, but the only result of his trying was that the bicycle swerved completely round and jammed its front wheel into the small of Fleming's back, hurling him forward like a stone from a catapult, and flinging him into the outstretched arms of Nipper!

"Pax! Pax!" howled Hyde, as the bicycle, rebounding off Fleming, shot across the road. "I give in! I surren——"

The sentence ended in an ear-splitting yell, for at that moment the front wheel of the machine crashed into the low stone wall which divided the road from the heath—the back wheel kicked up viciously—and Hyde, after sailing more or less gracefully over the wall, fell sprawling on his hands and knees in the middle of a gorse-bush!

By that time Nipper had overpowered Fleming; and after he and Dick had rubbed the Grammarian's nose in the dust, and had poured the contents of the bicycle oil-can down his neck, they gaily resumed their journey.

"I feel better after that!" said Nipper, as they sprinted across the deserted heath. "But we've lost five minutes of our start; so what do you say if, instead of going round by Hampton Wingrave, we cut through Micklem's fields and strike the Hillfoot Road in that way?"

"I'm game!" said Dick. "But you know what a cantankerous cur old Micklem is. There'll be ructions if he sees us!"

"But he won't!" said Nipper. "Stewed Onions is holding a meeting at Hillfoot this afternoon, and, as Micklem is one of his principal supporters, it's a hundred to one that he'll be there."

But Nipper was wrong.

After crossing the heath, they struck the Greystones Road again; and then, instead of following the road as far as Hampton Wingrave, as they had originally intended, they turned in at a gate, on the left-hand side of the road, and made a bee-line across the fields in the direction of Hillfoot.

Half-way across the second field, which was surrounded by impassable hedges, an angry shout fell on their ears, and a burly figure, armed with a whip, appeared at the gate for which they were making!

"Gee-whiz! It's Micklem!" gasped Dick. "We'll have to turn back!"

"No fear!" said Nipper. "I'm not going to turn back!"

"But we can't go forward, except through that gate," said Dick; "and we can't get through the gate while Micklem's there!"

"True, my son!" said Nipper. "Therefore we must lure the worthy farmer away from the gate and then dodge past him!"

"Yew young varmints! I've caught yew now!" roared Micklem, as the two boys approached the gate. "Dang me, I'll make yew smart for this!"

"Why, don't you think we're smart enough already?" said Nipper sweetly. "We're usually considered to be just about as smart as they make 'em!"

"Ho! Yew think this is a great joke, don't yew?" snarled the farmer. "But yew'll sing a different tune afore I've done with yew!"

"Pardon me, we don't sing!" said Nipper. "My friend and I are not musical!"

"None of yer insolence, now!" bellowed Micklem.

"Certainly not!" said Nipper. "But—excuse me—would you mind opening that gate? We're in a hurry."

"Open the gate? Yes, I'll open the gate!" howled the irate farmer.

As he uttered these words, he flung the gate open and rushed at Nipper with uplifted whip. With a mocking laugh, Nipper sprang aside, whilst at the same moment Dick stuck out his foot; and, after wildly pawing the empty air, the luckless farmer stumbled forward and pitched headforemost into a slime-encrusted cattle-pond in the corner of the field!

Alarmed by his yells, a number of farm-hands came rushing from the adjoining fields; but by the time they reached the scene of their master's misadventure, Nipper and Dick had darted through the gate and had gained the Hillfoot Road.

"That's another five minutes we've lost!" said Dick.

"It was worth it!" said Nipper.

"It was!" said Dick. "All the same, if we have any more interruptions, we'll be nabbed by the hounds before we're half-way round."

"Oh, we won't have any more!" said Nipper. "Two larks in one afternoon are as much as —— Wotto! I spoke too soon! Twig 'em? Stewed Onions and the cabbage merchant! And what is that I see before me? A goat! Dickie, my love, this is our day out, and no giddy error!"

This apparently incoherent outburst on Nipper's part was due to the fact that, as he and Dick sprinted round a turn in the road, they saw two men ahead of them, walking in the direction of Hillfoot, whilst twenty or thirty yards ahead of the two men, a goat was browsing on the herbage by the side of the road.

One of the men was Dr. Stuart-Unwin, alias "Stewed Onions," the headmaster of the Grammar School, and Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Boswell's opponent for the vacant seat on the County Council. The other man was Mr. Watson, the Cleveden greengrocer, and the chairman of Dr. Stuart-Unwin's election committee.

As Nipper had remarked to Dick, the doctor had arranged to have a meeting at Hillfoot that afternoon in furtherance of his candidature; and he and Mr. Watson were now on their way to that meeting.

"Bub-bub-by the way," said Mr. Watson, who was afflicted with an incurable stammer, "I understand that Mr. Bub-bub-Boswell is holding a mum-meeting at Otterdene this afternoon. He seems to be very pup-pup-popular with a certain cuc-cuc-class of the——"

Suddenly he paused as the sound of running footsteps fell on his ears. He turned his head, and a look of nervous apprehension crossed his face.

"Here are two of those St. Nun-nun-Ninian's bub-boys!" he said, in an agitated voice. "I hope they won't attempt to mum-mum-molest us!"

"They had better not try!" said Dr. Stuart-Unwin, glancing behind him and frowning at Nipper and Dick. "I say they had better not try! If they do, I will teach them such a lesson as they will not soon forget! I say I will teach them such a lesson as they will not soon forget!"

Apparently, however, the two boys had no intention of molesting them, for they trotted past without a word. Then suddenly, Nipper pulled up with a well-feigned cry of fear.

"A goat!" he gasped, pretending to catch sight of the animal for the first time. "Save me! Save me!"

He darted to the doctor, and clutched him wildly by the arm.

"Oh, sir, please, sir, kind sir, don't let this ferocious monster bite me!" he implored.

"Unhand me, boy!" said the doctor scornfully. "The goat will not harm you. I say the goat will not harm you!"

"But, see, he's looking at me!" shrieked Nipper. "I'm sure he's going to attack me! Shoo! Go away, you brute!"

As he uttered these words he let out a strident yell that would have done credit to a steamship's siren. Startled out of his five senses, the goat dashed out of the ditch and rushed at him with lowered head. With the swiftness of a lightning flash, Nipper dropped the doctor's arm and sprang aside, and ere the doctor could follow his example, the goat's head struck him in the pit of the stomach and butted him off his feet.

"You young ruffian!" roared Mr. Watson, shaking his fist at Nipper. "You did that on pup—pup—pup——"

He was going to say "on purpose," but before he could complete the word, the goat charged down on him, and the greengrocer, with a howl of terror, incontinently took to his heels.

Fast as he ran, however, he was not a match for the goat. Ere he had covered a dozen yards, something struck him on the seat of his trousers, and the next instant he went soaring through the air and descended in a sprawling heap on a pile of roadside garbage.

And before he had regained his scattered wits—before Dr. Stuart-Unwin had finally decided whether he had been the victim of an earthquake or a cyclone—Nipper and Dick had bolted round the next turn in the road, and had disappeared from view.

The House in the Wood.

After pasing through Hillfoot, the two boys headed north for Otterdene, where they found Mr. Boswell and his wooden-legged ally, Sergeant Quiggin, conducting an open-air meeting.

Having given the worthy chemist a passing cheer, they pushed on across country, in a westerly direction, till they came to that stately pile of ruins known as the Old Abbey. Then, turning south, they plunged into Padley Wood with the intention of striking the Tunbridge Road, and so returning to St. Ninian's.

In the south-east corner of the wood, about a hundred yards from the Tunbridge Road, they came upon a lonely-looking house which had originally been built for a gamekeeper's cottage. In front of it was a little garden, overgrown with weeds, and from the gate of this garden a footpath led to another gate which opened on to the road. Between the house and the road, however, the trees were so thick that nothing could be seen of the house from the road, and nothing of the road from the house.

Nipper and Dick had seen this house many times before, and knew that it had been untenanted for several years. They were somewhat surprised, therefore, as they approached the house, to observe that smoke was issuing from the chimney.

"Hallo! The keeper's cottage has got a tenant at last," said Nipper.

"And there he is, by Jove!" said Dick, as the door opened and a man came out—a tall, thin, lantern-jawed man, with a clean-shaven chin and a heavy black moustache.

Nipper glanced at the man and quivered from head to foot with suppressed excitement.

"Don't stare at him!" he said to Dick, in a low agitated voice. "Look straight ahead! Pretend not to have noticed him!"

"Why? What for?" asked his bewildered chum.

"I'll tell you in a minute!" said Nipper excitedly. "Put on a spurt! Don't look back! We mustn't put him on his guard!"

Completely mystified, Dick sprinted along by Nipper's side till they reached the gate which opened on to the Tunbridge Road. Nipper vaulted over the gate, and Dick followed his example. Then Nipper pulled up and turned on Dick, his eyes ablaze with mingled triumph and excitement.

"Didn't you recognise him?" he said.

"I'll be hanged if I did!" said Dick. "All the same, there was something familiar about the cut of his mug; but——"

"It was Otto Heinrich!" said Nipper, interrupting him.

Otto Heinrich, it will be remembered, was the mysterious German who had made so many attempts to steal the locket which Lal had received from the unknown man in the drifting boat.

"Great Scott! I believe you're right!" exclaimed Dick.

"Of course I'm right!" said Nipper. "I recognised him the moment I clapped eyes on him, in spite of his false moustache. This, no doubt, is where he has been living all these weeks."

"And a jolly good hiding-place, too," said Dick. "Do you think he twigged that you spotted him?"

"No," said Nipper confidently. "But that's why I told you not to stare at him, and not to look back, for fear of rousing his suspicions. If he guessed that we had spotted him, he'd disappear before we had time to inform the police. As it is, all we've got to do is to hurry down to the police-station and tell the constable that Heinrich is living at the gamekeeper's cottage in Padley Wood."

"Why not try to collar him ourselves?" suggested the ever-audacious Dick. "Bob and Lal and the rest of the hounds can't be very far behind us. Why not wait till they come up, and then——"

He broke off with a shout of alarm, for at that moment an ancient-looking victoria, drawn by a maddened, foam-flecked horse, came thundering down the road at break-neck speed. There was no driver on the box, but in the carriage was a lady who was wringing her hands and uttering piercing screams of terror.

As the reader has doubtless guessed the lady was Fraulein Hoffmann. As previously described, the horse had taken fright when Mr. Trigg had dragged Mr. Wimple off the box, and had bolted down the Tunbridge Road.

Never for a moment did the two chums hesitate how to act. Forgetting for a moment all about Otto Heinrich, they darted into the middle of the road, and as the terrified horse bore down on them, Nipper sprang to his head on one side, and Dick on the other.

Each boy seizing one of the reins, they forced the horse back on its haunches; but even as they brought him to a standstill, even as the wheels of the carriage ceased to revolve, Fraulein Hoffmann's overstrained nerves gave way, and she fell back on the seat in a dead faint.

"Jee—rusalem! It's Fraulein Hoffmann!" cried Nipper, running round to the side of the carriage and leaving Dick to hold the horse. "And she's fainted! Here's a pretty how-d'ye-do! What shall we do?"

Dick was about to reply, when he suddenly caught sight of Otto Heinrich's tall, thin figure coming through the wood in the direction of the gate.

"Here's Heinrich!" he exclaimed in a stage whisper.

"Where?" asked Nipper, who could not see the German on account of the intervening trees.

"Coming down the path from the house."

"Is he running?"

"No—just walking."

"Does he seem flustered or excited.

"Not a bit."

"Good business!" said Nipper, with a sigh of relief. "That shows that he doesn't suspect that he has been recognised. We'll answer him civilly when he speaks to us, as he's sure to do, and as soon as Fraulein comes round we'll drive her back to the village, and then we'll interview the constable."

He had scarcely finished speaking ere Heinrich reached the gate. At the sight of the carriage and its unconscious occupant he uttered an exclamation of surprise and hurriedly opened the gate.

Nipper and Dick were watching him narrowly. The same question was agitating both of them. They knew, of course, that Heinrich knew who they were; but did he know that they knew who he was?

Apparently he did not, for there was no trace of excitement or anger, no sign of dismay, still less of fear, on his sharp-featured face, and the only notes in his voice were those of astonishment and concern as he stepped into the road and asked: "What is the matter? What has happened?"

In a few words Nipper told all they knew of the affair.

"And you stopped the runaway horse at the peril of your lives?" said Heinrich, regarding them with an admiring glance. "That was very brave of you, and this lady, I am sure, ought to be very grateful to you. Do you know who she is?"

"Yes," said Nipper. "Her name is Fraulein Hoffmann, and she's the assistant German mistress at Cambridge House."

"That's a girls' school in Cleveden," added Dick.

Heinrich stepped into the carriage, and laid his hand on Fraulein's wrist; then he gravely shook his head.

"This is more than a fainting-fit, I'm afraid," he said. "I know a little about medicine, and I fear this is an apoplectic stroke, brought on by undue excitement. You'd better help me to carry the lady up to my house, then one of you, or both of you, can drive the victoria to the village and fetch the doctor."

He turned to Dick, who was still holding the horse's head.

"Draw the carriage to the side of the road, opposite the gate," he said. "That's the way. Now you can leave the horse; he's quiet enough now. He won't run away again. See that rug on the driver's seat? Spread it on the ground, just inside the gate."

When Dick had spread the rug, the German lifted Fraulein out of the carriage, and laid her at full length on the rug.

"Now, you two boys, catch hold of those two corners of the rug, and I'll take charge of these," he said. "So! Now lift her up. That's the style. Now, up to the house."

In this fashion they carried the unconscious Fraulein up the path, to the front door of the cottage. Here they halted for a moment, whilst Heinrich unlocked the door. Then they carried her into the house and into a sort of kitchen-living room.

There was a wooden couch in one corner of the room, and after Heinrich had laid the Fraulein on this couch he handed Nipper a key and pointed to a door on the other side of the room.

"Open that door," he said. "It's the door of the dairy. On one of the shelves inside you'll find a bottle of brandy. Please give it to me."

Nipper unlocked the door, leaving the key in the keyhole, of course, and stepped into a stone-flagged dairy, lighted by a small iron-barred window. There were several shelves running round the room, but they were all empty!

"There's no brandy here, sir," he called out.

"Help him to look for it," said Heinrich, turning to Dick.

Suspecting nothing, Dick followed Nipper into the dairy, and the moment he had crossed the threshold, Heinrich sprang to the door with a mocking laugh, pulled it to, and turned the key!

The Escape.

"Trapped!" cried Heinrich exultingly. "Oh! you were very clever, weren't you! You thought I didn't know that you had recognised me! Well, you were mistaken! I saw at a glance that you had penetrated my disguise, and I guessed what your intention was! You meant to go down to the village and inform the constable that you had run me to earth! It was a pretty scheme, but, as you British say, it hasn't come off!"

"And how long do you propose to keep us locked up here?" demanded Nipper from the other side of the door.

"It may be for years, or it may be for ever!" said Heinrich, quoting the words of a well-known song. "Anyhow, here you are, and here you remain, until——"

His voice faltered for a moment, for, on glancing round, he saw that Fraulein Hoffmann had recovered from her faint and was staring at him with wide-open eyes!

"Until I have decided your fate," he concluded, in a loud voice, at the same time whipping out his revolver and levelling it at Fraulein's head.

"Not a sound, as you value your life!" he whispered in German. "You are quite safe with me. Have no fear. I am a German, like yourself, and what I have done has been done in the interests of our beloved Fatherland. Keep quite still, and I'll carry you into the garden, where we can talk without fear of these boys overhearing us."

Thrusting his revolver into his pocket, he raised the trembling Fraulein in his arms and silently carried her out of the house.

"Can you walk now?" he asked, as he set her on her feet.

"Yes, thank you," said Fraulein Hoffmann, in a low, frightened voice. "I—I'm all right now! But who are you, and why have you imprisoned these brave boys who saved my life?"

"First of all, tell me how the accident happened?" asked Heinrich.

In trembling accents she told him of Mr. Wimple's madcap scheme for driving her to the Grange; of their meeting with Mr. Trigg;

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of the struggle between the two masters; of the bolting of the horse, and of Nipper's and Dick's plucky rescue.

"As soon as I knew I was safe, I fainted," she concluded. "When I came round, I was lying in that room from which you have just carried me, and I heard you taunting those two boys with the fact that you had trapped them. What does it all mean? Who are you, and why have you acted in this strange fashion?"

"My name is Otto Heinrich," he replied. "I am a secret-service agent—a political spy, if you like—in the employ of the German Government. I have been sent over to England to carry out a difficult and delicate investigation, whose importance you may judge by the fact that the case was placed in my hands by no less exalted a personage than the Kaiser himself!"

Fraulein Hoffmann looked at him searchingly.

"Is this the truth you're telling me?" she asked.

By way of reply, he drew from his pocket a leather case, from it he took a sheet of paper, embossed with the imperial seal. It was an autograph letter from the Kaiser, commanding all faithful German subjects to "render to our trusty servant, Otto Heinrich, all and any help he may require."

"Are you satisfied now?" he asked, when she had read the letter.

"Completely," she replied, gazing at the imperial autograph, with something of reverence in her glance. "But all this does not explain your treatment of those two boys. Surely your secret mission does not include the kidnapping of two inoffensive schoolboys?"

Heinrich smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have met those boys before!" he said. "On one occasion, in the course of my investigations, I found it necessary to break into their study at St. Ninian's. Do not ask me why. It is enough to say I was compelled to do so in order to obtain certain information. But they surprised me before I had obtained what I wanted, and I had to take to flight."

"I see," said Fraulein Hoffmann, nodding her head. "And they recognised you this afternoon as the man who broke into their study!"

"Yes, in spite of the fact that I was differently disguised on that occasion. But it was not merely the fact that they had recognised me which compelled me to act as I did just now. It was the fact that they have discovered where I am living.

"Ever since I came to this country," he continued, "I have lived in this obscure cottage under the name of Mr. Walker. I have had three narrow escapes of being captured while engaged on my investigations—twice by these boys and once by a party of warders—but, thanks to the fact that I was differently disguised on each of these occasions, nobody ever suspected that the man they were after was Mr. Walker!

"So you will now understand," he concluded, "what a serious matter it is for me that these two boys have discovered my hiding-place. Of course, I do not mean to do them any serious harm, but I cannot keep them locked up here for ever, and whenever I let them go, they will inform the police that Otto Heinrich—they know my name—is Mr. Walker, of the gamekeeper's cottage, Faulley Wood!"

"You will have to leave the neighbourhood," said Fraulein Hoffmann.

"Impossible!" he retorted. "The whole success of my plans depends on my remaining in this neighbourhood. To sum up the situation in a single sentence, therefore, before I set these boys at liberty, I must find another hiding-place within easy reach of St. Ninian's School."

"I'm sure I don't know where you'll find one," said Fraulein Hoffmann. "You will seek far, I fear, before you find another cottage so admirably suited to your purpose as this. I know of none."

"But I know of one," he answered in a meaning voice.

"Where?"

"Yours!"

"Mine!" she exclaimed, in a startled voice.

"Yes. As soon as I learned there was another German living in the district, I made it my business to find out all I could about you. You live in a secluded little cottage on the Hillfoot Road. Your only companion is a devoted maid, named Gretchen, whom you brought with you from Germany. You are a German, she is a German, I am a German! We are all loyal subjects of the Kaiser—all devoted to the interests of our beloved Fatherland."

He tapped the outside of his pocket, in which he had replaced the Kaiser's letter.

"You have read this letter," he continued. "Will you not, as a patriotic German, respond to your Emperor's appeal? Will you not assist me in the difficult task in which I am engaged? It is no little I ask—shelter for a week or two, perhaps only for a day or two, until my object is attained. And I pledge you my word that any reward—practically anything you like—will be cheerfully granted by my Government."

At the word "reward," a look of intense excitement crossed Fraulein Hoffmann's face.

"Listen!" she said eagerly. "I have a brother. He was formerly a clerk in the Foreign Office at Berlin. His name is Karl Hoffmann."

Heinrich gave a violent start, but quickly recovered his composure.

"You have heard of him, I see!" said Fraulein Hoffmann bitterly.



The luckless farmer stumbled head foremost into the slime-encrusted cattle-pond.

"Yes," he answered gravely. "He was arrested a few weeks ago on a charge of betraying official secrets to a foreign power, and was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment in a fortress."

"Do you know the details of the charge against him?"

Heinrich looked at her somewhat queerly.

"No," he said. "Do you?"

"I don't," she replied. "He was arrested after I came to England, and the affair was so hushed up that I could never learn the details of the crime he was supposed to have committed. All I know is that he was arrested, secretly tried, and sentenced, as you say, to twenty years' imprisonment.

"He is my only relative," she continued, in a voice broken with emotion. "He is the only being in the world I love. If I—if I consent to hide you in my cottage, will you pledge your word to secure a free pardon for him?"

"I will!" said Heinrich promptly.

"Then I will do as you ask," she said. "When will you come to my cottage?"

Heinrich pondered a moment or two before he replied.

"You will not go to the Grange now, I suppose?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "I shall go back home now, and wire to Mrs. Trevor that I have had an accident, and am too upset to pay her my promised visit."

"Then what I would suggest is this," said Heinrich. "I will drive you back to your cottage and return the victoria to the town. I will then walk back to this place and pack up my few belongings, all of which will comfortably go into a single bag. Bag in hand, I will then leave here and hide on the outskirts of the village until it is dark. At nine o'clock I will come to your cottage and tap at the window. If the coast is clear, you will let me in; and to-morrow I will send an anonymous note to the headmaster of St. Ninian's, telling him where the two boys are to be found."

His companion approved of these suggestions, and without any further ado they turned their backs on the cottage and walked to the gate.

To their consternation, the carriage had disappeared, but a moment later Heinrich perceived it about two hundred yards down the road. Finding himself alone, the horse had wandered down the road, in the direction of the Grange, sampling the different varieties of grass that grew by the roadside.

"You stay here, while I fetch him back," said Heinrich.

With these words, he left Fraulein Hoffmann standing at the gate, and went off in pursuit of the errant horse. At the same moment a young man on a bicycle dismounted at the bottom of the road, and began to push his machine up the hill.

In the meantime, Nipper and Dick had taken stock of their surroundings, and had convinced themselves that it was impossible to escape from the dairy by their own unaided efforts. The door resisted all their attempts to burst it open, and although it was easy enough to open the window, their united strength was unequal to the task of wrenching away the iron bars.

"We're fairly copped, and that's a fact!" said Dick ruefully. "What cases we were to think he hadn't twigged that we had spotted him! He knew all the time!"

"And how simply he bluffed us about Fraulein Hoffmann being in an apoplectic fit!" said Nipper. "Great Scott! I want to kick myself when I think of it! I knew all the time it was only a common or garden faint; yet I let him lure me in here like a Third-Form kid!"

"I wonder where he is now?" asked Dick, after listening at the door. "I don't hear him."

"I think he's carried Fraulein out of the house," said Nipper. "I'm nearly sure I heard him do so."

"To prevent her hearing us hammering at the door!" said Dick.

"Of course," said Nipper. "You see, she was unconscious when we brought her in here, so when she comes round she'll never know she's been inside the house. Ten to one he's carried her back to the carriage, and when she comes round he'll tell her he's sent us for a doctor, or some lying yarn of that kind. Then he'll drive her to the village, and come back here, and nobody will ever know that we—"

Suddenly he paused, as a brilliant idea occurred to him.

"Geo-whiz! Why didn't I think of that before!" he exclaimed, springing to the window. "I'll bet the blackguard never thought of that!"

"Thought of what?" asked Dick.

Nipper pointed through the window, which overlooked the wood.

"Twig the scent?" he said, in tones of suppressed excitement.

"By Jove, yes!" cried Dick, as his eyes fell on the bits of paper which he and Nipper had scattered whilst running through the wood. "Now, I know what you mean! The hounds will follow that scent, and therefore they'll have to pass this house!"

"Preactly!" said Nipper. "So that all we've got to do is to wait till the hounds appear, and signal to 'em, and tell 'em what's happened."

They had longer to wait than they expected, for the hounds had lost the scent, when crossing Hicklem's fields, and fully quarter of an hour elapsed before the two imprisoned boys saw them coming through the wood.

"Here they come!" said Nipper, in a low, excited whisper. "Now we sha'n't be long!"

Whipping out his handkerchief, he waved it from the window. Bob, who was leading the hounds, was the first to see it. Instinctively divining that something was wrong, he bade his companions hide behind the trees and "hold their jaw" while he crept up to the window.

When Nipper had briefly explained what had happened, Bob stole round to the front of the house, and presently returned with the news that neither Heinrich nor Fraulein Hoffmann was to be seen.

"Then they're either at the gate, or he's driven her back to the village," said Nipper. "Come in, and let us out. The key is still in the door."

Bob quickly obeyed, and a moment later Nipper and Dick, with the whole of the Fighting Fifth at their heels, were racing down the path in the direction of the gate.

By that time Heinrich had captured the horse, and had led him back to the gate. He was in the act of handing Fraulein Hoffmann into the carriage, and the cyclist already mentioned was pushing his bicycle past them on the other side of the road, when Nipper and his chums burst through the trees.

"Hurroo! There he is!" yelled Nipper. "At him! Down him! Collar of you seize the horse's head, and the rest follow me!"

What happened next was a matter of seconds only. For an instant, Otto Heinrich seemed paralysed with dismay. Then, acting on a sudden inspiration, he sprang at the passing cyclist, and with one blow of his fist sent him reeling into the ditch!

As he snatched up the fallen bicycle and turned it round, Nipper, Dick, and Bob dashed through the opening. Ere they could reach the German, however, he vaulted into the saddle, and the next instant he was flying down the hill at a speed which defied pursuit.

With shouts and yells the Fighting Fifth dashed after him. But the chase was hopeless from the first; and a moment or two later the bicycle and its rider whizzed round the corner at the bottom of the hill and disappeared from view.

The Story of the Locket.

THE few minutes which Nipper and his chums wasted in running after the escaping German gave Fraulein Hoffmann time to collect her thoughts; and by the time the boys came streaming back, she had her story all complete.

"Who is der man? Vy he run avay? Vy you after him run?" she asked in a voice that trembled with well-feigned agitation and bewilderment.

"He's a countryman of yours," said Nipper. "His name is Heinrich, and he's wanted by the police for attempted burglary at our school. He lives in that cottage in the wood—the one we carried you to, you know."

The blank look that crossed Fraulein Hoffmann's face was a splendid tribute to her superb powers as an actress.

"Ein cottage in der wood," she repeated. "I not know you carry me to any cottage."

"Just what I guessed!" said Nipper, with a glance at Dick. "Where were you when you recovered from your faint?"

"I vas by der side of der road lying," she replied. "Dare was a strange man bending over me. I not know him. I ask him vare are der grass boys who save my life. He say he vas up der road walking, and he see two boys lift me out of der carriage. He asked der boys what has happened, and ven der boys have told him, he say he will vatch py me, while der boys run down to der village for ein doctor. Vile he is talking to me," she continued, "dere horse valk avay. Der man say he will pring him pack, and drive me to der village. He pring der horse pack, and I vas just into der carriage stepping, ven you run out of der wood."

This tale so exactly agreed with what Nipper had expected that it never occurred to him for a moment to doubt its truth. Briefly he explained to Fraulein Hoffmann what had really happened—little dreaming that she knew even better than he did! Then he turned to his companions.

"You chaps had better stop here, and keep watch on the house, in case Heinrich returns," he said. "I'll drive Fraulein Hoffmann back. Then I'll go down to the police-station and tell the constable what's happened. The police will then, no doubt, take charge of the house, and submit it to a thorough search."

"And where do I come in?" growled the luckless cyclist.

"You come in the carriage, if you like," said Nipper. "You can then go with me to the police-station, and charge Herr Heinrich with stealing your machine!"

To make a long story short, Nipper's programme was duly carried out; and shortly after six o'clock Fraulein Hoffmann found herself once more in her cosy little cottage on the Hillfoot Road.

Gretchen, the German maid, was naturally greatly surprised to see her mistress back so soon; and she was still more surprised when Fraulein Hoffmann, after extracting a solemn vow of secrecy, told her as much as she thought desirable of Heinrich's story. Her enthusiasm, however, was even greater than her surprise — for Gretchen was intensely patriotic —and almost before Fraulein Hoffmann had finished her story, the little maid rushed off to prepare the spare bedroom for their forthcoming visitor.

But Otto Heinrich did not come that night, after all. Instead, then, came a telegram from Tunbridge Wells, couched in German, and reading, when translated, as follows:

"Your uncle Fritz von Mirbach, who is now in London, is coming on Monday to spend a short holiday with you. He will arrive by the 5.45 train in the evening, and will



As the terrified horse bore down on the boys, Nipper sprang to one side of it and Dick to the other.

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

(Continued from the previous page.)

be glad if you will meet him at the station."

As Fraulein had never heard of such a person as "Uncle Fritz von Mirbach," she was naturally more than a little bewildered by the receipt of this mysterious telegram. But her bewilderment was only momentary. The next moment her womanly intuition came to her aid, and she understood everything.

"Heinrich's precipitate flight has upset his plans," she mused. "As he was not able to secure his disguises, and other things before he left the cottage, he is going up to London to purchase a fresh supply, and is coming back on Monday in the assumed character of my uncle. As he asks me to meet him at the station, it is evident he does not wish me to keep his coming a secret. On the contrary, he evidently wishes me to tell people that my uncle is coming to stay with me, in order to disarm suspicion."

All of which was absolutely and completely true!

. . . .

When the 6.45 steamed into Cleveden Station on Monday evening, Fraulein Hoffmann was waiting on the platform. The moment the train drew up, an elderly, white-haired gentleman, of venerable and benevolent aspect, sprang out—with wonderful agility for one so old—and embraced the young German mistress with affectionate cordiality.

"Uncle Fritz von Mirbach," alias Otto Heinrich, had arrived.

"I have told most of my friends that my Uncle Fritz was coming to stay with me," said Fraulein Hoffmann. "Was that right?"

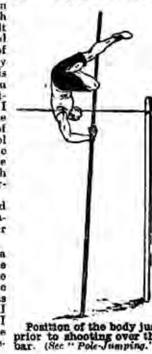
"Perfectly," said Heinrich; "that's what I wanted you to do. When I came to consider our original plan on Saturday, I realised how difficult and risky it would be for you to hide me here without anybody but Gretchen knowing. I decided, therefore, to change my plans in that respect also, and, instead of coming here secretly at dead of night, to come quite openly, and pretend to be your uncle."

"It is a much better arrangement," she agreed. "You will now be able to come in and go out just as you please, without making any attempt to conceal your movements."

"Except, of course, when I have work to do in connection with my mission," he said. "I shall then adopt a different disguise, slip out unobserved by the back door, and return under cover of darkness—just as I used to do at the cottage in Padley Wood.

"And now I have something else to tell you," he said, when they had finished supper. "I have already explained how and why I changed my mind as to the time and manner of my coming here. Well, I've changed my mind with regard to another matter, too. I have decided to take you fully and frankly into my confidence, to explain the nature of my secret mission, and to tell you exactly why I am in England, and what I am seeking to accomplish.

"I have come to this decision for two reasons" he continued. "My first reason is that you have fallen in so readily with my plans that I felt you have earned and are worthy of my confidence. My second reason is that I believe you can help me to attain the object I have in view. One of the masters of St. Ninian's School—Mr. Montague Trigg, to be precise—is in love with you, I understand?"



Position of the body just prior to shooting over the bar. *(See "Pole-Jumping.")*

Fraulein blushed and a look of vexation crossed her face.

"The man is a perfect idiot!" she said. "It is true he has pestered me with his ridiculous attentions since I came here; but I assure you I have done my best to discourage him."

"I know you have," said Heinrich; "but that does not alter the fact that he is very much in love with you. And when a man is in love with a woman," he added significantly, "it is an easy matter for the woman to make use of him—to twist him round her finger, so to speak, and to get him to do almost anything she wishes."

She looked at him with a puzzled air.

"I don't quite follow you," she said. "Are you hinting that I should make use of Mr. Trigg?"

"Yes."

"For what purpose?"

"Before I answer that question," said Heinrich, "I must first tell you what has brought me to Cleveden. May I smoke?"

Receiving her assent, he lit a cigar and throw himself back in his easy chair.

(To be continued next week.)

CRICKET:

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

Fielding. *(Continued from last week.)*

SHORT-LEG and long-leg are places that vary, and may not be necessary. They are scarcely ever seen in county cricket. Long-on and long-off are very important. The former is on the on-side of the bowler, but far behind him, and long-off may be moved round from the off-side of the bowler to almost behind extra-cover. When a man is put

on the boundary

behind extra-cover or cover, he is designated deep-cover. David Denton, Johnnie Tyldesley, and James Douglas are among some of the best men I have seen there, while E. H. D. Sewell was a safe catch. Most of these took the ball when they were trying to bring off a catch with their hands close to their bodies, about chest-high.

Never mind how many catches you miss, go on trying.

My hands are very big, and at Lord's they call them "carpet-bags." It was supposed that I held the record for the biggest hands among cricketers, but the coming of A. D. Nourse, the South African, has revealed the fact that there are cricketers whose hands are much larger than mine. My catching did not come to me all at once, in spite of my big hands.

Let me urge the necessity of throwing-in strongly and accurately.

It is an art neglected in every kind of cricket, and most fieldsmen might improve in it, if they began young. It is pitiable to see some men, who are good bats, the laughing-stock of the crowd because of the way they try to catch or throw-in a ball. Only the other day I heard an amateur say that the reason why one of our best bats had never been picked in a Test match was because he was such a wretched field. Alas, that it was so!

Wicket-keeping.

In every club there is not always one who will take the position of stumper; but, on the other hand, it has a strange fascination for some. I have known boys who have literally revelled in the prospect of danger.

The greatest exponents have been Colonials—J. M. Blackham, of Australia, and E. A. Halliwell, of South Africa. The first took part in Test matches for more than twenty years. He took part in the first Test match in 1877, and finished in 1893. During the whole of his first-class career he was peerless as a wicket-keeper. One could not help admiring him as he stood behind the stumps at a critical period of the game. With eyes as keen as a hawk, and regardless of knocks, he would take the fastest bowling

with marvellous dexterity,

and woe betide the batsman who even so much as lifted the heel of his back foot as he played forward and missed the ball.

I have seen him do marvellous things. Once, when Australia beat the Gentlemen of England, he stumped the last three batsmen. He was never a great run-getter, yet few great hitters have pulled a side out of a tight place more frequently than he has with his unorthodox batting. And how he could demoralise the bowling! Let him get a start, and it was difficult to place the field for his strokes.

E. A. Halliwell, of Johannesburg, is very quick and brilliant, and, I think, no one takes a ball quite so well on the off-side as he does. Both of these have learned the great secret of success in this difficult but delightful department of the game—namely, to take care of the hands. Blackham was never hurt until the final match he played in, when a knock on the right hand ruined his prospect of further work. Halliwell held that there was no need for anyone to injure his hands

Harry Wood, who used to keep wicket for Surrey against Tom Richardson and George Lohmann, was fearfully knocked about, and if you looked at his hands it would cure you of any desire to excel in the position. It is the same with Harry Butt, of Sussex.

The stumper occupies a place in which education and brain play a very prominent part. The wicket-keeper in an ordinary club should be the captain, as from that position he can direct the movements of the field better than from any other, and, what is better still, his instructions are unobserved by the batsmen. The great thing for a wicket-keeper is to understand the bowler and to help him. The best instance of this is the understanding which exists between the Warwickshire wicket-keeper, Lilley, and Santall, Hargreave, Field, and Morehouse, the bowlers. Lilley can tell exactly what kind of a ball is coming.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

POLE-JUMPING:

Mr. E. A. Baker, the Famous Jumping Expert, tells how REALMITES may excel at this sport.

The Poetry of Athletic Movement.

WHAT more graceful or pretty an exhibition in outdoor sport than that provided by the pole-jumper, as, with pole firmly planted in the ground, he leaps high into the air, and, with a display of agility which is the poetry of athletic movement, skims lightly over the bar, thrusting his pole away from him as he does so, a neat landing on the ground on the other side of the 11ft. or 12ft. height he has negotiated completing the performance? The fair sex present crane their pretty necks to watch his agility and skill, and wonder, midst murmurs of admiration, how the athlete can leap over so great a height merely by the aid of a long pole. The pole-jumping competition at athletic sports is always a favourite with the crowd by reason of the exhibition of athletic grace which it provides.

Pole-jumping, speaking technically, is a combination of a jump and a vault. It consists in jumping over a horizontal bar with the help of a pole of about 14ft. in length and 1¾in. in diameter in the centre, tapering to 1¼in. at each end. The end of the pole which is used to plant in the ground is spiked, to ensure a firm hold being taken.



Over! Throwing the pole away.

The art of pole-jumping is not so difficult to learn as one would suppose, and it is an exhilarating sport to the athlete who becomes proficient in it. Moreover, it provides splendid exercise for the muscles.

The initial step is to learn how to get

a proper take-off;

that is to say, one must find at what distance from the jump it is best to plant the all-important pole. Experimental practice must be taken, and observation made to ascertain the take-off best suited to the jumper. No set rule can be laid down, as individual athletes differ so much; but once the correct position of the take-off has been ascertained it should be marked and measured, so that the pole-jumper may be sure of always hitting the right spot. The proper height at which to grasp a pole must also be left for experimental practice to ascertain, this also depending very much on the individual.

In approaching the jump a run of about 20 yards is taken, and top speed should be reached some 4 yards before the pole is planted. When the pole is firmly planted, the jumper leaps into the air, aiding his efforts by a strong pull of the arms. The legs are thrown upwards, the feet being the highest part of the body. A slight turn is made during this movement, so that the front of the body is made to face the bar. While throwing the legs up into the air, the lower hand is slipped up the bar until it reached the other hand, which must not be moved, and a good, vigorous push of the arms is now given, to give the body an upward movement. The body will now have attained its highest altitude, and it will be found that the legs are poised on the further side of the bar. The legs are now thrown down, the pole is pushed violently away, and the arms are thrown up and back, to prevent them from touching the bar. The jumper is now over the bar, and should gather himself to

alight neatly

and without jar.

The foregoing movements should be studied by the young athlete. To merely jump and swing over the bar is not pole-jumping in the way it is understood in the present day. Remarkable proficiency may be acquired by any athlete who possesses pluck and agility. One of the North-country pole-jumpers who competes at athletic meetings could so manage his pole that he would climb up it whilst it was balanced in the air. But this practice, though very clever, was not thought to strictly conform to the rules of pole-jumping, and it was prohibited. The approved method of present-day pole-jumpers is as described, great care being taken to swing the legs up smartly, and complete the movement with a vigorous push of the arms. This has the effect of sending the body up to a bigger height than would otherwise be the case, and a good performance is the result.

Correct style should be sought for by the beginner. This is acquired by careful practice, first of all at low heights, until proficient. As in other jumping exercises, once the art is acquired,

little practice is necessary,

the pole-jumper keeping himself in condition athletically by means of various exercises, and an occasional sprint and a jog-trot round the track. Pole-jumping is a very fascinating sport to its devotees, everyone taking it up speedily becoming an enthusiast. Anyone with leaping ability can rapidly become expert in the art.

THE END.

LIFE SAVING:

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

Importance of the Life-Saving Art.

ASSUMING that the reader has assiduously practised the back and breast stroke, and has reached a stage of proficiency which will cause him to wish to learn how he may help someone who may be in difficulties, I propose now to give some lessons in how to save life from drowning.

Everyone will agree that all who can swim should know what to do and how to act should such an occasion arise, but it has often been proved that the ability to swim is not a guarantee that a swimmer will naturally be able to render such aid. Numbers of gallant men and women have been drowned in endeavouring to perform a rescue, either because they have not practised the subject, or have not understood the correct methods of holding a drowning person on the surface, or knew how to release themselves from his grip when clutched.

Each summer affords plenty of instances where prompt and correct assistance might have resulted in

saving a life.

Also, the want of the proper knowledge on the part of the swimmer results not only in failure to perform a rescue, but sometimes in double loss of life; as was the case only a short time ago when two men belonging to the destroyer Garry were drowned. One man, unable to swim, was knocked overboard by a wave; another dived to his rescue, and both were observed to be in a difficulty, when yet another plunged overboard to give help. But before he could reach the two men, the first rescuer had thrown up his arms and sunk. The second rescuer then rendered aid to the man who was knocked overboard, and supported him for twenty minutes till a boat arrived; but when taken on board, the man was found to be dead, and so, unfortunately, two lives were lost.

The action of the first rescuer in throwing up his arms, gives one the idea that he was not much of a swimmer; because, to throw up one's arms in the way indicated is just the right way to

cause the body to sink.

When you go for your next swim try it; you will find that as soon as the arms are lifted out of the water above the head, the head will at once sink below the surface, and if there be no kicking to counteract the downward grade, one may easily go down to a depth of five or six feet.

As a contrast to the regrettable case referred to above, I would mention the plucky act of Patrick J. Stitchiner, aged 13 years, a pupil of the "Latchmere" L.C.C. School at Battersea, in which school the subject of life-saving was taught. The following are Stitchiner's own words, given in evidence before the coroner:

"On August 1st, 1906, I was watching steamers on the Thames, and saw boys bathing. In about ten minutes I heard a faint cry for help. I did not see what was the matter for a moment, and then I saw a head come above

the surface of the water.

I took off my coat, waistcoat, and shirt, plunged in and saved the boy, but as I was bringing the boy ashore four men jumped in, and were also in danger of losing their lives. I managed to save three of them, but the fourth was drowned. The police came some time afterwards with drags and recovered the body."



The Shoot. *(See "Pole-Jumping.")*

This extraordinary act of saving life by a boy who had been taught the subject, created much interest, for which he was highly commended by the jury, and the coroner recommended him to the Royal Humane Society, which body awarded him a bronze medal and a certificate. This is the greatest honour that a swimmer can obtain. It is

the Victoria Cross of swimming,

and its possessor ranks far above the winner of a championship; although, of course, it is very nice to win a championship. But what I desire to point out is, that even if we do win championships, it is a duty which every swimmer owes to himself and to the art to be ready to render such aid as young Stitchiner was able to render.

To effect a rescue, courage and presence of mind are needed; but if these are combined with ability, which had previously been carefully acquired, perfection will be attained, and the work, which is never easy, will be performed with least possible danger.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.



THE RAJAH'S RIVAL

A TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE POLO FIELD

By A. S. HARDY.

At Simla—A Challenge Accepted—Captain Royston Tells of Rugby Days.

IN the smoking-room of the Cavalry Club at Simla sat three young officers. They were Captain Ian Keith, Lieutenant Talbot, and Lieutenant Grainger of the 4th Punjab Mounted Infantry, stationed at Simla, and they were taking a well-earned rest after an exciting time in the polo field, where they, under the direction of Captain Royston, of the 10th Bengal Lancers, who had captained their team, had just given a frightful drubbing to the best four that could be brought against them.

"By Jove!" cried young Talbot enthusiastically. "Whoever would have thought that Royston could lead a polo team like that? The way he played at back to-day was a revelation. I have never seen a man play so perfectly since poor old Hewitson's time." (Hewitson was a famous polo player who had been killed during the progress of a game by receiving a blow on the head with the head of a polo-stick after his helmet had fallen off, and who had had no equal in his day.) "I don't wonder at Royston's sending that challenge to the Rajah now. It did appear to be ridiculous; but when a man can play like he can, and can pull a team together as he has us, one ceases to wonder. I don't see why, with a little more practice, we four shouldn't play any team in the world."

"The Rajah is not in any hurry to reply to the challenge," said Lieutenant Grainger, helping himself to a drink of lemon squash. "Royston ought to have had a reply before this."

"He'll get no reply," said Captain Ian Keith, lighting up a cigar. "The Rajah and he were at dagger's drawn when they were at Rugby together. I remember even now the stir their enmity created all through the school. It wasn't Royston's fault, either. He was always a quiet, staid old stick. Jehampore was a difficult man to handle."

"As he is now," said Lieutenant Talbot. "He is an extraordinary man, to be sure. What other Indian ruler would employ Englishmen to manage and control his affairs? By the way, those three—Bailey, Simpson, and Mainwaring—are all old public-school boys. Bailey played for Roehampton, and was in the championship polo team before he came out here to Jehampore. Simpson was with Ranelagh; but I don't believe Mainwaring ever rode a pony or wielded a polo-stick until he came out to enter the service of the Rajah. But they say that at No. 2 he is a revelation. Jehampore seems to have the ability to impart all his knowledge and knack of the game to everyone he comes in contact with."

"Well," remarked Lieutenant Grainger, "we haven't a bad four, you know, in yourself, Keith, Royston, with a bad fourth in me to back you up. It will be the greatest fun in the world if the Rajah will only accept Royston's challenge to a match. My word, won't we set Simla dancing with excitement? I can see some of the ladies ordering special toilettes for the occasion!"

"That should be a subject of no interest to you boys," said Captain Keith, laughing. "You are all a long way removed from being married men, you know—a set of boys; nothing more."

"Big boys," said Talbot, sticking out his chest.

"Well, I wish Royston would hurry up," growled Grainger. "There's a post just in. He ought to know whether there is a letter by him before now or not. Here's his tea waiting for him. It's getting cold."

At that moment the door of the smoking-room opened, and Captain Royston entered. He was a singularly handsome, boyish-looking man, and the youngest captain in the Army. A distinguished career lay before him, everyone said. In action he had proved himself to be a gallant soldier; in time of peace there was not a more capable or splendid organiser.

He held a letter in his hand. It was written on superfine paper, stamped with an elaborate crest.

"From the Rajah, Royston?" inquired Talbot, sitting upright.

"Yes," answered the captain.

"Does he accept your challenge?"

"Yes."

"Hurrah—hurrah! I say, Grainger, you'll have to practice like the very deuce! You are the least fit of the three of us, and, as you play No. 2, you must polish up your hitting. You have some very fast ponies, but, by George, you will want them against the Rajah's barbs! No. 2 is the easiest and pleasantest place; but I don't think any of us will find it easy or pleasant against the Rajah's team."

"When are we to play?" asked Captain Ian Keith, his eyes sparkling at the prospect of the grim struggle ahead of them.

"Oh, Jehampore is generous!" said Royston, with an odd twinkle in his eyes, as though he could scarcely believe it possible. "The beggar must have changed a good bit since his Rugby days. He was impossible there. We can play either Saturday week, or Saturday fortnight, just as we please; or, if we prefer it, the Rajah will give us a full month to prepare. He expresses his willingness to journey to Simla and play us on Saturday, if we like. What do you think about it?"

"Better not keep him waiting too long. It would be discourteous," said Captain Keith. "We sent the challenge; we must be prepared to meet our opponents at the earliest possible date. Let us say Saturday week."

"Do you agree to that, Talbot, and you, Grainger?"

"Yes," responded the two lieutenants.

"Very well, then," said Captain Royston; "pour me out a cup of tea, one of you. I'll go and write the letter."

He seated himself at a table near by, and five minutes later the letter was written, addressed and sealed, and given to the native boy to put into the letter-box. Then, with a sigh of relief, Captain Royston joined his comrades, and leaned lazily back in his deep-seated armchair.

"How the deuce did it come about that Bailey, Simpson, and Mainwaring, of the Rajah's polo team, happened to be such fine players? When he engaged them for their different posts, did Jehampore make a stipulation that they should be able to play polo, in the same way that Bonson, the Shakespearian actor, is said to engage actors that are good cricket players?" asked Captain Keith.

"I hardly think it was like that," laughed Captain Royston. "It just happened that the men were fine riders. There were any number of applicants for each of the posts, you see. Perhaps the Rajah had met these beggars at Roehampton, or at Ranelagh, or Hurlingham, before he came out."

"What positions do they hold?" queried Grainger. "I have heard, but I've forgotten."

"Oh, Bailey is private secretary to the Rajah; Simpson is agent; and Mainwaring is a sort of general manager. He is a mighty good controlling force, I believe; has done wonders with the Rajah's affairs, controlling and managing like a genius. They say he is saving the Rajah an expenditure of £25,000 a year. Such a man is worth his place."

"And he's a splendid No. 3 at polo, too," said Keith. "Everybody says that; he's got some of the Rajah's own cunning."

"When you were at Rugby with Jehampore, how was it you two became such bitter enemies, Royston?" asked Lieutenant Talbot.

"Oh," laughed the captain of the 10th Bengal Lancers, "I don't quite know how it began. It was in the cricket field, I believe. Jehampore was a mighty good bat. He had something of the style of Ranjitsinhji about him. His wrists were as supple as a woman's, and the way he got the ball away on the leg side was a masterpiece. One day when he was fielding at point, and I at cover-point, a batsman cut a ball sharp. It was a possible catch, but wanted some holding. I can tell you, and though Jehampore tried hard for it, he didn't quite manage, and dropped the ball. I laughed at him. 'Butter fingers!' I cried. And he picked the ball up, and hurled it at my head like lightning. I dodged just in time; but it was a narrow shave. Well, you can imagine I felt in a deuce of a rage about it. After the match I asked him to apologise. He was always a stubborn beggar. He refused. If I had suffered any injury to my feelings, he said, he would pay me compensation. I told him he was an insulting young blackguard, and ought to be skinned. He got a knife out to me, and I knocked him down. He wounded me in the leg. He was a spitfire, I can tell you, and a dangerous young buck at that."

"Do you actually mean to say," said Grainger, "that he stuck a knife into you?"

"Yes; the wound was about two inches deep in the thigh. I tore the knife away from him, and knocked him down again. He cried like a baby then, and said that, by touching his face with my fist, I had dishonoured him for ever."

"I understand the point of view," put in Keith. "These native beggars are sometimes ultra-sensitive."

"Well, I told him he was a young fool," Captain Royston went on, "and said that an English schoolboy never bore malice. I asked him to shake hands; but he wouldn't. He was as sulky as a pig."

"It was jolly decent of you anyway, Royston," said Talbot. "I suppose no fuss was made of his stabbing you, was there?"

"No; I took measures for the affair to be hushed up," answered Royston. "Well, after that, Jehampore and myself were at such daggers drawn that we were quite the laughing-stock of the school. No matter what sport I went in for, Jehampore would follow and try to beat me at it. We ran against each other, wrestled with each other, swam each other, played fives against each other, jumped each other—we can't tell you what we didn't do. I nearly always won, though there were one or two things I could not beat him at—jumping, for instance. He was a marvel at that."

"And that was how you came to be known as the Rajah's Rival, I suppose," said Talbot.

"You've hit it. That was just like that. On the whole, I rather liked Jehampore. He had a deuce of a temper. There was no controlling him, and whenever he used to meet me, he would foam at the mouth with rage. He swore he would kill me someday, and most of the schoolboys were relieved when at length he finished his schooling, and went down."

"How did you part?" asked Granger.

"Oh, as usual," laughed Captain Royston. "I held out my hand, and wished him all sorts of good luck. He stuck his hand behind his back, swore he didn't see me, and didn't know me, and declared that he hoped I would go to perdition."

"Nice sort of man," said Keith.

"Oh, I don't believe he was really a bad sort," said Royston quietly. "He was eating his heart out to beat me. If he could have done that I verily believe we should have been the best of friends. He was jealous beyond all reason, and that, I believe, held him back. He can't be a bad sort. The officers who have played polo against him speak of him as being invariably courteous and considerate, and even a most generous opponent. And see, though he always professed to hate me at Rugby, look how quickly he has replied to my challenge."

"That's all right," said Grainger. "He has, as he thinks, an invincible polo team, Royston; but what is going to happen if you beat him again? Will he act in the mad way he did at school? Remember, you are in India now, and Jehampore, in many ways, is all powerful. If he wished to exact a sanguinary vengeance, he might easily do it here, you know."

"Oh, I am not afraid!" laughed the Rajah's Rival. "And as for beating him in the big match, my star is always in the ascendant against Jehampore, and I am ready and willing to wager a level hundred that we win."

The Great Polo Match—Jehampore Refuses His Rival's Hand—How the Stripes Beat the Whites—An Oath Registered.

THE polo ground at Simla presented a magnificent spectacle on the afternoon when the famous match between the Rajah of Jehampore's team, and that of Captain Royston was to be played.

The Rajah had entered the town with a magnificent train of servants, and baggage enough for an army. He had brought with him no fewer than twenty polo ponies, most of them barbs, though there was one Argentine pony, and two thorough-bred English ponies that stood 14 hands high; and there was not one amongst the twenty that could be termed a poor animal.

The Rajah had paid a fabulous price for them, all told, and he might very justly boast of possessing the finest set of polo-ponies in the world. Bailey, his secretary, Simpson, his agent, and Mainwaring, his manager, had each brought half a dozen ponies with them, in addition to those of the Rajah, and these were no mean animals, either.

It was plain that Captain Royston and his comrades had their work cut out if they meant to win, and the reason for the Rajah's triumphant series of victories over the most famous polo teams in India, could no longer be wondered at.

The general opinion of those who had some reason for expressing an opinion at all, was that the Rajah's team would win.

The game was timed to start in the middle of the afternoon, and by that time every seat on the ground was taken. The ladies were far more punctual than is usual with them, and the men, throwing off their lethargy, hurried down on horseback, or by vehicle, or afoot, as they fancied, until there was not a vacant place to be had. And from early morning onward, to within a few minutes of the match, the roadway leading to Simla was crowded with travellers, mostly Europeans, drawn, as by a magnet, by the attraction of the big match.

Two umpires had been appointed—in each case an officer attached to a Punjab regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Hugh Walker was to act as referee.

The Rajah and his three assistants were the first to make an appearance on the field. He was a tall, slim, handsome Indian prince, of very distinguished carriage, and was dressed in quite orthodox fashion. His team were plain white shirts, white drill riding-breeches, and brown boots.

They each wore the Barnard patent cork cap, that protects the head from a blow of the club, and the ponies they bestrode were well-matched in height and physique. Altogether they presented a combination that called forth a storm of applause from the onlookers.

The Rajah, serene and impassive, twirled his moustache as he waited for the appearance of his rivals. A few minutes later Royston, looking younger, and more boyish than ever, despite his flaxen moustache, was the first to turn out. He wore a broad red band running across his shirt, from shoulder to waist, as a distinguishing mark, and mastered the chestnut pony he bestrode straight up to the Rajah of Jehampore. There was a smile on his face as he held out his hand in greeting.

"How do you do, Rajah?" he said.

The native prince looked him straight in the eyes, ignored the hand outstretched.

"You forget," he said icily, "you struck me a blow at Rugby. I bear the mark still. It burns deeply into my flesh. I cannot forget that. We are enemies; is it not so?"

Captain Royston coloured deeply.

"The resentment is all yours, I assure you, Jehampore," he said. "I bear none. Well, since you will not accept my hand, we must play as we are. I believe in fair play, when I say that I hope the best team will win. I, at least, can accept defeat with good grace."

"The Rajah has cut Royston," said a subaltern of the 44th regiment, turning to a comrade. "By Jingo, he's an insolent beggar in the eyes of everybody, too. If I were Royston, I would knock his confounded head off."

"He did that at Rugby," was the dry answer.

Meanwhile a native servant, a dark, evil-faced, but handsome Sikh, who travelled with the Rajah of Jehampore wherever he went, and who had noticed his master's refusal of Captain Royston's hand, watched the English-man closely as he turned his pony about, and rode off to join his friends, and to secure his stick for the game.

"If you wish him dead, oh, my master," he said, in an intense whisper, "this English enemy of yours, I will kill him."

The Rajah brought the head of his stick back sharply, striking his servant on the knee.

"Silence, Checundah Lall!" he cried. "Dog, hold your tongue, and obey!"

The man, whose limb was tingling with agony from the blow, bowed his head, and said never a word. If his master had thrown him down, and ridden his pony over him, he would not have murmured. He had been bought up to worship Jehampore. It was said that many crimes that had been placed to Jehampore's

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, starts in "The Boys' Herald" This Week.

charge, had been committed by him. And it was common talk that in the late Rajah's time he had murdered, lied, and stolen for him.

Cheeundah Lall's age was indefinite. He looked fifty. He might have been a hundred; but he was as active as a young man still, and devoted to his master with an Oriental fanaticism, which, to an Englishman, would seem absurd.

"Go! Look after my ponies!" commanded the Rajah; and Cheeundah Lall obeyed.

The Royston team was ready. The four of them entered the field, looking a smart quartette, but they hardly caught the eye like the Rajah's lot.

The teams now lined up in the centre, facing each other.

Of the Rajah's team Bailey was No. 1, Simpson No. 2, Mainwaring No. 3, and the Rajah played at 4, back—the most difficult and important of the four positions, and that usually occupied by the captain of a team, as he can see then how the game progresses, and direct the players in front of him.

A back, in polo, must always be a good, strong hitter of backhanders, so that the ball can be sent back right through the game; and it is also his duty to hit off from the back-line—that is to say, the goal-line, when the ball has gone behind.

The players line up, 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3; facing each other, with the head of number 4's pony placed in position, between and behind numbers 2 and 3.

The field is about 300 yards long, by 200 yards wide. The goal-posts, which are 10ft. high, and bear flags at the top, are set 8 yards apart, and are fixed in the centre of the back line. They are made of Willesden paper, which is substantial to look at, but not dangerous should the players' head come into contact with them. In a half-circle in front of the goal-posts a line is drawn which is called the penalty line, and 30 yards in front of the goals a line extends right across the field from side to side, which is called the 30 yards line.

It is the duty of No. 1 to devote himself entirely to the back player—4—of the opposing side. He must stay as close to him as possible, and endeavour to ride him off the ball. The position is the most difficult in the game. He has to be quick-witted, well mounted, and if he can manage to prevent the back from reaching the ball, his own side usually have a fine chance of taking the goal. No. 2 is the crack hitter of the side. He is mounted on a fast pony, and plays forward, so that when the ball comes to him, with No. 1 stalling off the opposing back, he can get a clear run for goal.

No. 3 has to assist 4 when 4 is in difficulties, and has to be ready to drop back and take the place of 4 when 4 makes a run.

The umpires had taken up their stations on each side of the ground, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Hugh Walker, referee, being in his position, and Major Smedley advanced to throw in the ball.

A few seconds later the game began, and there was an immediate thrill of excitement as, with Bailey rushing his pony to Captain Royston's side and edging him off, the Rajah's agent, Simpson, secured the ball, and, sweeping onward with a rush, bore down like mad upon the Royston goal.

It looked as if he were going to score out of hand, but at the critical moment, Grainger, who played No. 2, got to the ball, and with a fine swinging hit sent it flying back along the close-cropped green grass. Here the Rajah, cleverly setting Talbot, the No. 1, aside, got in a fine hit, and the ball going to Simpson, he, catching it on the run, with a blow of his stick-head swept it through the Stripes' goal, and two minutes from the start the Rajah's team were a goal to the good.

The teams crossed over, and the Rajah's team again went off with a rush, threatening to carry everything before them. The native prince, well pleased with himself, seemed to be taking a huge delight in the discomfiture of Captain Royston, and as he heard the Englishman issuing orders, and saw the determined, steady way his old Rugby rival played, he smiled with joy.

The ponies were well matched. Despite the splendid reputation the Rajah's lot had acquired, it was soon that Captain Royston's team were almost as well mounted, and the way in which the captain managed his steed, and repeatedly beat Bailey, who clung to him like his shadow, called forth storms of applause.

But the minutes were flying, and the equalising goal would not come. Time and time again did Royston and his men manœuvre their way up the field, only in the vicinity of the Rajah was defending, but the ball always went behind, or, by some splendid backhanded play, was returned to midfield.

Then there was a stoppage for a little while as Lieutenant Talbot, in reaching out to take the ball from the Rajah, got his club-head entangled with that of his rival, and, being unable to disengage, came a frightful cropper on to his head.

He lay stunned for a little while, but off the umpires inquiring whether Captain Royston would replace the injured man, he got up on his feet, a bit shaky it is true, and smiled.

"No," said he. "Hang it! I'm fit enough to play!"

He was helped into the saddle, and was soon playing as well as ever.

Then the bell announced the expiration of the first ten minutes, and an interval was taken for change of ponies.

On play being resumed the pace became hotter than ever. Both sides were reserving their best ponies to the last. Time and again with brilliant long drives the Rajah seemed about to score during the second period, but just failed, and then the Royston four, getting better together, held the game until the end.

During the third period, Grainger, receiving the ball from Royston, who had cleverly robbed the Rajah, galloped three-quarters the length of the field, but just shaved the post with his shot as Bailey came up and harassed him.

Two minutes later, however, as three of the players met in a melee, Captain Royston, getting into position, with a grand backhanded stroke drove the ball between the posts, and the scores were equalised.

The Rajah's lips set in a hard, stern line. His side were not having the better of the play now, and his chagrin would not be concealed.

Breathing fire and vengeance, he dashed at Royston as the captain of the Stripes went for the ball, and with a hook of his stick-head got it away. But his hit was wild, and Simpson failing in his run through over-eagerness, the Stripes got right in front of their goal, and Royston hitting the ball to Lieutenant Talbot characterised his efforts throughout the summer, and had made his name as a polo player echo throughout India.

And when at last, on Talbot stalling off the Rajah's horse, captain Royston secured, raced ahead, and hitting the ball before him all the way, cleverly eluding Bailey, and drove it home again, it was seen that the match was over. Six minutes later the final bell sounded, and the Stripes, Royston's side, had beaten the Whites by three goals to one. The Rajah's Rival, as at Rugby, had triumphed again.

Jehampore hurled his club to the ground with an oath.

"Curse him!" he cried. "Is he always to be in my way? Is he to always rob me of my ambition and triumph over me? I wish I could see him lying dead at my feet."

The Sikh, Cheeundah Lall, coming up to take his master's pony from him, heard the words, and smiled.

But he said nothing. Nevertheless, the words were memorised and an oath registered. Cheeundah Lall was the most faithful of servants. What his master wished, that he would do.

Meanwhile, Captain Royston, smiling and happy, approached his defeated rival.

"I'm hardly afraid the better team won, Jehampore," he said. "I think we found your side a bit off colour. Nothing came off for you. Everything came off for us. That was the way of it. Won't you shake hands and be friends? Though we could not get on in the old Rugby days, I always respected you as an opponent worthy of my steel."

But the Rajah, with an ugly word trembling on his lips, and his brows knit together in a frown as black as night, turned away.

Royston Missing—The End of Cheeundah Lall—Rivals no Longer.

LIKE lightning the word ran through Simla. Captain Royston had disappeared. There had been foul play.

Nothing else could explain the mystery. Two days after the polo match, and while yet the Rajah of Jehampore lingered in Simla, Captain Royston had ridden out for a canter across the hills in the brilliant light of the early morning. He had not returned, though an hour and a half later his horse, riderless, had come back into the town, with its flank gashed as with the stroke of some sharp and heavy weapon.

What could be the explanation? Captain Royston, so universally liked, and such a popular favourite since his victory in the polo match, had not an enemy in the world. The natives adored him. He was a handsome, courtly, generous gentleman who treated his native servants with every consideration. Therefore, in a time of peace and rest such as now, who could have injured him?

Ugly rumours ran through the clubhouse. There was only one man that could have had a motive for injuring Royston, his old Rugby enemy and rival, the Rajah of Jehampore.

Jehampore had refused Royston's hand before them all at the polo match. He had refused to enter the clubhouse because Royston was a member. He had been heard to utter threats against him.

The situation was an ugly one. If, on inquiry, the Rajah were found to be guilty of murdering Captain Royston—and there was grave reason to suspect murder—and he was arrested, the entire Rajah would be set afire with the flame of insurrection.

Politically, the position was a critical one.

Jehampore, aware that he was being regarded with suspicion, took care to appear in public that day, and bore himself with a calm, conscious dignity, and expressed his sorrow at the mishap to Captain Royston in such generous terms that half the suspicion vanished. Or was it merely the cunning of the Oriental assumed to hide the track of his crime?

Before luncheon the Rajah rode to the club, entered it, and asked if any news had been heard of the captain, an action that occasioned surprise. In the afternoon he drove to Sir Hugh Walker's, and remained for some time speaking to him. In the evening, when the sun was setting fast, he appeared at the club again. His brows were concentrated into that fierce, relentless frown of his. He chatted for Captain Keith and Lieutenant Talbot and Lieutenant Grainger. They went to him, wondering.

"You believe me guilty of injuring your friend," he said. "Ah, do not deny it; I know! My actions, perhaps, have rendered you suspicious. But I would not injure one hair of his head for half my province. I know where Captain Royston is. Get your horses, and come with me."

Amazed they went for the horses, and presently were riding towards the bungalow in which Jehampore was staying during his sojourn in Simla. With the head of his bejewelled whip the Rajah himself opened the gate that led into the grounds.

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As they neared the house a native servant appeared. The Rajah addressed a command to him. He bowed, and turned away. A minute later the approach of footsteps could be plainly heard, and then two men approached, leading and supporting a third. The third was Cheeundah Lall, the Rajah's faithful Sikh. His cheeks were sunken. His eyes were dulled by a look of pain. His lips were dry, and he could scarcely hold himself up as he walked.

"My servant heard me utter angry words against Captain Royston," said the Rajah of Jehampore, pointing with his whip to Cheeundah Lall. "He was missing this morning, when he did not come to attend me as usual. Later he returned. He was half dead with fatigue, and then it was he told me that he had done me a service for which I should for ever be grateful to him. I dragged the truth from him. He said he had waited for Captain Royston amongst the rhododendron bushes, and as he came up had sprung upon him and buried his knife in his side. He had then dragged him from his horse, and with him also amongst the shrubs, leaving him to die there, where perhaps none would ever find him out."

The Rajah urged his horse a pace nearer the Sikh. He rose in his stirrups and bent his flashing eyes upon the man.

"Cheeundah Lall," he cried, "you are an old and valued servant, one whom I could trust unto the death. There is no man more faithful than you in all India. But I have no use for the servant who takes his master's words seriously. Captain Royston's life was of far more value in my eyes than yours, dog that you are! Let the thongs that have cut into your flesh remind you that your master was a man who had been brought up at an English school, and that all ideas of Oriental vengeance are abandoned by those who learn their lessons in the land of England's King. Henceforth you are no servant of mine. If you were to come crawling to my door, begging for the food that would save your life, you should not have it. Begone, and remember that I have at least spared your life. If I had not punished you with the whip, but handed you over to the justice of the English, your life would have been forfeit. They would have hanged you in the common prison for the dog you are. Go! Take him forth. Cast him into the road. Let me never see his face again."

The two native servants dragged Cheeundah Lall away. The man's eyes stared in a frightened way at his master. Something like a groan, almost instantly checked, passed his lips; then, calm and impassive, although he was suffering untold agonies through the wounds the whip had made on his body, he allowed himself to be supported from the garden, and a minute later had disappeared, to be seen no more.

The scene had made a profound impression upon the three friends. They could not help wondering what this Indian Rajah would have been like had he not had that leaven of English education and schooling to direct the course of his life.

"Let us go!" cried Grainger, turning his horse about. "I can't stay here."

"Do you know where poor Royston's body lies?" asked Lieutenant Talbot presently, as they sped on side by side towards the hills, whose crests rose one upon the other until they faded in the fast falling night.

"Yes," was the reply. "I had the news from Cheeundah Lall before he was whipped by my orders."

They sped on in silence. It was a grim, ghostly ride. The minds of the three friends were filled with thoughts of poor Royston—poor brave, light-hearted, fearless Royston—a man who had the making of a grand soldier in him if he done but live to reach such a way, to perish at the hands of a lurking assassin.

Onward they went, keeping to the bridle-track; and presently, as the Rajah paused to look about him, they fancied they could hear a low, moaning cry from a clump of rhododendrons not far away.

Grainger urged his horse forward.

"Royston—Royston!" he cried.

No answer came, and he felt sure he had been mistaken. He had not wandered far off the beaten track, and bow was it possible for them to find poor Royston there when the search-parties sent out to find him had all passed over that very ground without finding a single trace of him?

But again the moan broke the stillness of the night, for night had come.

"Royston—Royston!" cried Talbot.

And then there came a quick, exultant cry. It was from the Rajah of Jehampore, who had ridden on ahead, and was amongst the clustering rhododendrons, and who had dismounted.

"I have found him!" he cried. "And he lives—he lives!"

They went to him, and found Jehampore supporting the fainting form of Captain Royston in his arms. He had lit an electric torch, and by the aid of the artificial light he was examining the captain's features with an earnestness that a mother could not have excelled.

"Have you brandy?" he asked, speaking thickly.

Grainger had provided himself with some before starting out, and soon the flask was placed to the wounded man's lips. A slight colour came to his pale cheeks, the closed eyes slowly opened. Royston was covered with blood, and it was a mercy he was not dead. He recognised his friends and Jehampore instantly, and tried to withdraw himself from the Rajah's arms.

"Your rascally servant tried to murder me!" he cried. "You are a villain, Jehampore! I have been crawling about amongst the bushes, trying to find my way to the road; but I lost consciousness several times, and I'm too weak to go further. Let me have been left here."

"No!" cried the Rajah. "You must live, Royston—live to forgive me! Let us be friends. I never bore real enmity against you. I was only insanely, madly jealous, because you always beat me. My servant, who attacked you without my authority, I have dismissed from my service. He will never forget the flogging I inflicted on him. I am sorry. I never meant you harm. Do you believe me?"

Captain Royston's wandering eyes turned to Grainger, to Keith, and to Talbot.

"Is it true, you chaps?" he asked.

Talbot nodded in the affirmative.

"Yes," he said, "I believe the Rajah to be blameless. He's not a bad sort, after all. If it hadn't been for him we would never have found you. So, you see, you owe him your life, Royston, after all."

Royston smiled faintly.

"I was about done," he said. "I managed to bind my wound up in some way, though in crawling I'm afraid the bandage has shifted a bit. I gave myself up for lost; but I think I shall manage to pull through now. Bless you, you chaps! Rajah, I don't bear any malice. Will you shake hands now?"

The Indian prince seized Royston's hand in a vicelike grip. Tears stood in his eyes.

"You are the bravest, most generous of rivals," he said. "I admire you—I honour you. Yes, you shall no longer be the Rajah's rival, but his friend. I swear it!"

And that was the beginning of a friendship between the two which was to last till the end of their lives.

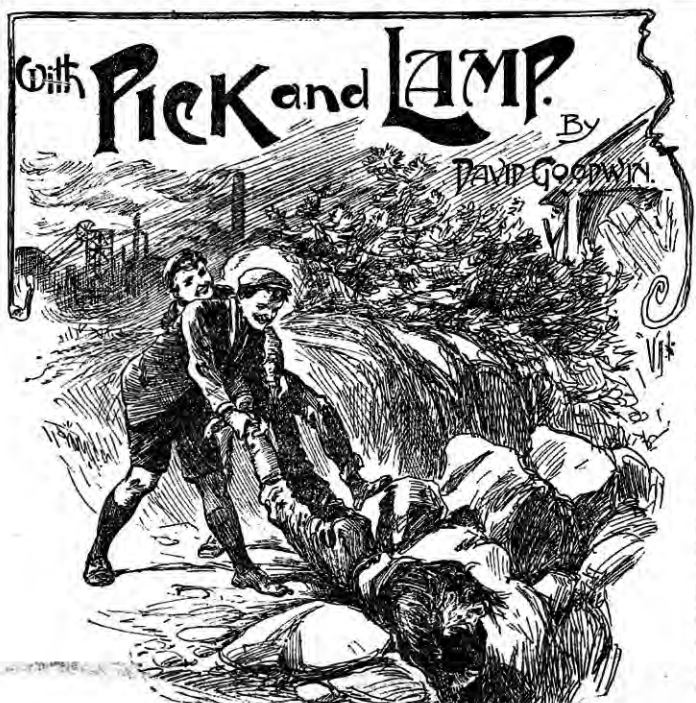
THE END.

(Two splendid long, complete stories will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM. Sixteen pages. One penny.)

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.

With Pick and Lamp.

By David Goodwin.



Tom got up and grabbed one ankle. Roddy took the other. They heaved lustily, and the dishevelled and coal-smeared form of Mr. Sully, with a scratched and purple face, was drawn feet first out of the hole.

How the Spirit came to Grief.

BOTH the boys thought there was something decidedly familiar about the dark shape that came so quietly towards them. At first they had taken it to be one of the colliery waichmen, or else some spy of Kenyon Price's, set on to follow them. But, as the figure came nearer, Rodwell gave vent to an exclamation.

"It's Dafydd!" he said.

"Dafydd?" echoed Tom, in surprise.

"Halle," remarked the mighty prowler, quietly joining them in the hollow, "we meet again—eh? Wass you found anything?"

"I say, what the dickens are you about, old cock?" said Roddy. "Is this where you spend your nights, rummagin' round under the moon? How'd you know we were here?"

"I did not know," replied the young mountaineer; "but it seemed to me you wass very curious apout something, so I followed you as soon as I saw you."

"Curious!" said Tom. "There are others, it seems to me. Out with it, my giddy Wild Man from Borneo. What is it that brings you here?"

"Ha! Are you suspicious, whatefler? You don't trust me—eh?" said Dafydd, flushing hotly.

"Of course we do, you chump! Don't we know each other by this time?"

"Well, I was come down here to learn a little apout the Aberford Pit," said Dafydd, squatting down on the coal-dust, "so that I might understand more, and perhaps be of some use to you. I haf been all ofer ter yard to-night, too," he chuckled—"right past ter night-waichmen's noses, and they nefer saw me."

"You're an uncanny bird, Dafydd," said Rodwell, grinning. "I shouldn't be surprised any time to see you carcerin' across the sky on a broomstick, or takin' a little trip to the moon!"

"You aren't the Spirit of the Mine by any chance, are you?" put in Tom.

"The what?" said Dafydd.

"Of course, he isn't, you ass!" replied Rodwell. "Never mind that; it's too long to explain here at this time o' night. But what we're thinkin', Dafydd, is that somebody puts his face to this hole in the ground here, an' talks to us down in the pits, like a mysterious voice."

Dafydd examined the fissure, dropped a scrap of coal down it, and probed it with a stick.

"That iss fery funny," he said; "but it iss not impossible, whatefler. I know of such a place in the crags of Pen Ider, where you can hear a long way through a little hole. Who wass it that talks here, and why?"

"That's what we want to find out."

"Fery well, then, if one of you hides in that bush yonder and watches for place next time you think it will happen, it should pe easy to catch him."

"An' jump on the top of his neck," said Tom; "that's what I've been thinking. He can't complain, whoever he is, if he's spotted playin' such a silly game."

"Just so," said Roddy approvingly, "and he'll be squatting down in the hollow like a rabbit, and pretty easy to stalk."

"I'll take the job on," continued Tom, "as you've got an appointment with him down below at knock off time to-morrow."

"Right," said Roddy, rising; "and we'll catch the spirit on the hop, with any luck. Now, let's get out of here quietly an' lie low, like bree rabbits, till the proper time."

They left the rough ground and withdrew northward to the edge of the moor, without encountering anybody on the way, which was natural enough considering the time. But Roddy neglected no precaution to avoid being seen.

"Well, Dafydd, old boy," he said, "I take this real kind of you, for I never thought you took enough interest in those holes in the ground, as you call 'em, to bother about colleries. But you've got lots of headpiece, an' you've done us so many good turns in other ways, that the more you know about it the better."

"I was wanting to know just how things are down here," Dafydd replied, "for I can tell you, if anything wass to happen to you two, and only me wass left, I would make it hot for Kenyon Price! By gosh—yes! They would not boass about it long!" he added darkly.

"Mustn't be revengeful. It don't pay," said Roddy. "We don't mean to let anything happen to us. There's the dawn breakin' in the east, an' in an hour or two's time we shall have to be at the pits. Not worth while goin' back to Bryn y Garth."

"It's dry an' warm enough," said Tom. "Let's curl up in the heather for an hour, an' get a snooze till startin' time."

"All right; I will get back to ter farm and look after things there," said Dafydd. "Gripe has to be fed. What will you do about breakfast?"

"We shan't suffer," said Roddy. "We'll get it in Aberford. So-long, Dafydd! See you later, an' I reckon there'll be some news."

The two young hewers promptly lay down in the warm heather, and went to sleep as though they had not a trouble in the world. The sun was well up when they awoke—which they could always trust themselves to do at any given time—and after a wash in a brook near by, they were ready to start.

"It's no use my going near Aberford, though," said Tom, "as I'm not goin' down the pit to-day. The less that's seen of me the better. I shall wait till later, an' go and lie up at the proper place in good time."

"All right," said Rodwell; "what about grub?"

"Some bread an' cheese at Carthen village yonder will do me. You'd better get your whack at Mother Bunch's. Look here, if I come across the spirit, what am I to do with him? We haven't settled that."

"If you can manage it, keep him busy till I arrive. I shall be out as quick as ever I can. But it depends on circumstances, an' who the spirit is," chuckled Roddy. "You might even judge it better to just watch him an' say nothing. I'll leave that to you, an' I know you won't make a mess of it."

"I'm not goin' to have all this watchin' for nothing," said Tom warmingly. And Roddy departed for the colliery.

He allowed himself a good breakfast at Mother Bunch's of baked potatoes and sausage-rolls.

"It ain't every day we tackle a spirit," he remarked to himself, as he set out for the yard, "an' I'd better nourish myself well, in case I faint."

He laid in a stock of rolls for dinner, and a bottle of cold tea, and declared he felt fit to parley with the Prince of Darkness himself, let alone a mere colliery demon which talked through a blow-hole.

Things were still rather disturbed in the Coed Coch when he arrived, and groups of pitmen stood here and there, conferring together. It did not altogether please Roddy, who had no wish to see a strike or a lock-out interfering with his earnings just as the necessary sum was nearly made up, and he imparted this idea to Terry Lloyd as they went to get their safety-lamps.

"Sure, the British workman isn't to be throdden under foot by bloated capitalists," protested Terry.

"What you want to do is to work off some of your wrath on the coal-seam, an' make up a good tally," replied Roddy. "You're getting too full of beans, all of you. Peace, balmy peace an' no ructions, is what's needed. Come on an' let's get to work."

"Work it off! Bedad, I'll work it off on Sully's thick head one o' these days!" snorted Terry.

"Oh, by all means! I've nothin' to say against that," said Rodwell cheerfully; "at least," he added to himself, "if somebody else don't do it before you get a chance."

Terry was in a fine hewing mood that morning, and Rodwell worked hard to keep pace with him. Tom's absence had to be considered, and was some small loss to the earnings of the young partners. Roddy could not anywhere near make up for this, of course; but he did his utmost, and quite astonished Terry and the putters.

Throughout the work he was wondering how the interview at the fissure would turn out, and what the unseen speaker would have to say. He did not expect that much profit would come from that, and was glad the time was fixed nearly at the end of the shift. It seemed an unusually long day to Roddy, and when at last the time neared, he rose and went with alacrity towards the old gallery.

The under-viewer, who looked after that section, met him in the road, but did not ask him why he was leaving his work.

"They've got orders not to pull me up, I suppose," thought Roddy. "Well, here goes!"

He made his way along the dark, deserted working till he came to the fissure, where he put down his lamp and stopped. For some time there was no sign or sound. Roddy began to wonder whether last night's expedition had been noticed, and the scheme spoiled.

"It's still no certainty that we hit on the right place," he mused. "I hope we've not been wastin' time."

A soft whistle came down the fissure just at that moment, and Roddy's face expanded in a grin.

"Spirit ahoy!" he said. "Is that you? Speak up!"

"It is I!" echoed the hollow voice through the slit in the coal.

"I began to think you wasn't goin' to turn up. You asked me to come here, didn't you?"

"I did," said the voice. "I have a proposal to make to you."

"Not about Bryn y Garth, I hope. It ain't in the market. An' besides, I don't deal with spooks!"

"It is not. I know nothing of the place you mention——"

"That's a whopper, to start with!" interjected Rodwell.

"Boy, your language is irreverent, and becomes you little. If you knew to whom you speak——"

"I rather fancy I do know."

"You are mistaken. You cannot know me. I am a mind without a body."

"I'm not, you're within kicking distance," growled Roddy. "I believe I'd find a place on you solid enough for my boot to land on! Why don't you drop this rot, an' come to business? Do you take me for a kid out of the nursery?"

"I say you do not know who I am, nor ever will!" rumbled the spirit.

"Don't I! In a short time I think I shall know more than you reckon on. However, what's this proposal, if it's nothing to do with Bryn y Garth?"

"It has to do with the Coed Coch, and no other. You have a powerful and a wealthy rival, who stands in your path. He hates you exceedingly."

"That's the first truth you've spoken as yet. But it's not news. I don't need any spirit to put me up to it."

"Would you like to get the better of Kenyon Price?" whispered the voice.

Roddy raised his eyebrows at this.

"I rather think we are gettin' the better of him," he replied, with a wink at the wall, "as far as things have gone. That's my impression."

"You may think so; but he is far too powerful and rich for you to overthrow unaided. Yet I, and I alone, can show you how to work him. With my help, you can oust him from his wrongful ownership of Coed Coch, and wrest from him your rightful share of this great property."

"Oh," said Rodwell, "then you admit Tom and I are the rightful owners, do you? You acknowledge it. Just——"

"I admit nothing," boomed the hollow voice. "I acknowledge nothing. I deny nothing. I am the Spirit of the Mine, and these things are aloof from me. But I promise you your lawful share of all this wealth and power, and I can fulfil it if you trust to me."

"If you'd stop makin' speeches through your hat, an' talk sense," said Rodwell, "we should get on faster."

"Will you trust to me?"

"Who are you?"

"The Spirit of the Mine."

"Oh, skittles!" said Roddy, in disgust. "Go on, then, if you've anything more to say."

"You are willing, then, to be guided by me?"

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.

Roddy has a row with some Belgian pitmen who have a spite against him, and one afternoon Terry Lloyd, a friendly hewer, and depart with many threats for the future.

Much to the boys' surprise Kenyon Price invites them over to his house to have a little private conversation. He mentions the seam of coal which runs through their land, and proposes to find the capital to start work on it on the condition that he has a half share in the proceeds. The boys refuse contemptuously, and Kenyon Price orders them to leave his house.

A few days later in the mine Roddy is astonished at a strange voice which emerges from a crevice in the roof of a working. It is evident that the crevice extends to the surface of the ground, and that someone is talking to him from above. That night the boys set forth to look for the upper end of this natural speaking tube. Tom, to his delight, discovers it, and a moment later the two lads see a dark figure creeping in their direction.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

"I'm game to have a go at it if there's anything in it, which I doubt. Tell me what I'm supposed to do, accordin' to you, to get my own back."

"I will do so. You must inform me first what Matthew Matthews said to you on his death-bed, and what evidence he put in your hands as to his claim on the colliery, and the steps he bade you take; also what papers and deeds he left in your possession. You have only to tell me this, and I will instruct you at once how to claim and enter into your possessions without delay. Speak! I am listening!"

Rodwell nearly fell back against the wall at this request, which came booming down the fissure in the most awe-inspiring tones. It was not the tone that astonished him, but the coolness of the demand.

"If I tell you that, you're to show me how to get hold of the Coed Coch?" he inquired, as soon as he could find breath.

"It will be yours within a week. Kenyon Price has ruled long enough. With the proofs I shall give you, he cannot stand against you, but will surrender his basely-won gains. I swear it to you—I, the Spirit of the Mine, the guardian of the everlasting centuries, who sees all things! I cannot—— Oh! Ouch! Leggo! Get off my neck!"

An agonised howl came down the fissure as the impressive speech broke off. Roddy stood rooted to the spot for a moment, and then doubled up with glee.

"Tommy's scotched the spirit!" he panted.

And, turning, he rushed off into the main road as hard as he could go. Jumping on to the first set of trams that were travelling downwards, he was borne to the shaft. Nobody questioned his right to go, and in another minute the cage-lift was bearing him rapidly up to the surface and the light of day.

The Laying of the Ghost.

THE afternoon was drawing in when Tom, after a spell of unaccustomed idleness and a square meal at the little inn at Carthen, made his way towards the Coed Coch Colliery from the east side. There was little or no traffic in that direction, the farther limits of the colliery above ground being scarcely frequented even by day.

That was all in Tom's favour, as he did not want to attract any attention. Keeping in cover as much as possible, he reached the rough ground where the sheds and the old outcrop workings were, and halted behind one of the former.

A survey of the neighbourhood from this point of vantage showed him there was not much chance of his being noticed. There was a full hour before the appointed time, but Tom went cautiously to the clump of scrubby bushes which Dafydd had suggested as a hiding-place the night before, and quietly ensconced himself in them.

It was a hot afternoon, and as there was nothing to do and nobody in sight, Tom, feeling the effects of his night out, nearly fell asleep; in fact, he had probably dozed without knowing it for half an hour, when his alertness returned to him on looking up and catching sight of a figure approaching from the direction of the colliery yard.

"Is this our bird?" thought Tom, watching him.

The man approached at a quick pace, glancing back once, and soon arrived within easy distance. There was a furtive appearance about the stranger's walk, and it did not take Tom long to recognise him.

"Phew!" murmured the boy. "Sully! Is he the Spirit of the Mine?"

A slight sense of disappointment came over Tom. He had cherished an inward belief and hope that the spirit might prove to be Kenyon Price.

He soon cheered up, however, for the newcomer's movements soon left no doubt that the boys had hit on the right solution of the mystery. Sully went straight to the hollow in the outcrop seam, and after a careful glance round the neighbourhood got inside.

Tom could have laughed aloud with glee as he heard Sully give a low, clear whistle. The boy glanced at his watch. The time was a minute or two past the hour fixed. Then Sully's voice reached him, for the bushes which screened Tom were only a few yards away.

Mr. Sully spoke in a deep, resonant tone, which the boy knew ought to carry well down the echoing tube of the fissure, then caught the words quite plainly.

"It is I!" said the head-viewer impressively.

"Ah, he's announcin' himself to Roddy as the spirit!" thought Tom. "Good beginnin'!"

Tom could hear nothing of the replies that came up the fissure, for he was too far for that. Mr. Sully's words, however, reached him perfectly well, and as the boy listened to the offer which the reader has already heard, Tom's astonishment grew greater and greater.

"My word!" he thought. "Is he goin' to give Kenyon Price away? What does he want out of it in return? What a go! Roddy'll never have anything to do with it, though. I wish I could hear what he's sayin'!"

Mr. Sully was just opening his awe-inspiring speech about being the guardian of the centuries, who saw all things, when Tom began to get alarmed lest the interview should end, and Sully retreated before the boy could stop him.

"By gum, I'll nobble him!" murmured the young hewer. "We'll teach the beast a lesson, an' make something of him! Roddy left it in my hands, an' here's where I act accordin' to my judgment. Rather! I'll keep him upended till Roddy turns up. It's dead easy, in that hole."

He came out of the bushes quietly, and crept up to the hollow. Mr. Sully was kneeling on all-fours at the bottom of it, making an impassioned speech into the fissure. Tom took one look, made one flying leap, and landed on the spirit's back, flattening him out upon his face with considerable force.

A startled yell and a gasp broke from Mr. Sully, and he protested vigorously, struggling the while. The muscular young hewer sat down calmly upon him between his shoulder-blades, and the viewer found himself as helpless as a fallen cab-horse with a thirteen-stone policeman sitting on its head. He could not even see his assailant.

"Get off, I tell you! Murder! Help!" gurgled Mr. Sully. "Who are you? Police!"

"Don't worry about police," said Tom amiably. "You don't want 'em. They're the last things you need. An' don't kick like that, or you'll hurt yourself."

"What is this outrage? I protest! You will get six months for this, you ruffian!"

A light broke in on him as he recognised Tom's voice.

"It's young Hughes!" cried the viewer violently, with much bad language. "How dare you? You shall rue this, you scoundrel! Get off!"

Tom did not get off. He sat tight, and gave Mr. Sully—whom he pretended not to recognise, for the viewer was face downwards—a lot of good advice regarding himself, his morals, his manners, and the sin of using too strong language. Before he had finished Tom saw Roddy running across the colliery-land, towards him, at full speed, and waved to him cheerfully.

"Come on, you're just in time for the show," said Tom. "Let you out of the pits, have they? I've been busy, too—look what I'm sittin' on."

"What have you got there?" exclaimed Roddy, with a wicked wink.

"I think it's a tramp. Caught him in the act of tryin' to steal coal from the out-crop."

"A tramp, eh? It isn't the Spirit of the Mine, by any chance, is it?"

"I shouldn't wonder. It smells pretty strong. A methylated spirit, maybe."

"Geroff! Let me get up!" groaned the captive.

"Perhaps we'd better have a look at it," said Roddy. "It seems excited."

"Let us do so," Tom replied. "You take one leg, an' I'll take the other. One good haul does it."

The victim's feet were sticking up, just clear of the edge of the hollow. Tom got up, and grabbed one ankle. Roddy took the other. They heaved lustily, and the dishevelled and coal-smeared form of Mr. Sully, with a scratched and purple face, was drawn feet first out of the hole.

The outraged head-viewer literally fought for breath. He could not find his voice, but stared at the boys in dumb fury. They pretended to regard him with great astonishment.

"Why, it looks like Mr. Sully, from the Coed Coch office," said Roddy, "[illegible] Tom?"

"I never saw his face [illegible]," said Tom, shaking his head. "[illegible] him rather pale. It can't be [illegible]."

"Perhaps it's because he's [illegible] wards, an' the blood's goin' to his [illegible]," suggested Roddy.

"You young gaol-birds! [illegible] How dare you commit this outrage?" [illegible] viewer, with a terrific explosion of [illegible].

"We didn't know it was you," said [illegible].

"Didn't know it was me! Ha! [illegible] think it was, you little ruffian?" [illegible] frantically. "I'll teach you——"

He strode forward, and grabbed at [illegible] Roddy interposed a sturdy arm, and [illegible] back.

"None of that!" said the young hewer [illegible]. "If it comes to ructions, I'm more'n a [illegible] for you, remember."

"We didn't know it was you," repeated Tom, with exasperating gravity. "We thought it was the Spirit of the Mine."

A change came over Mr. Sully's face, and the words checked him when he was about to become violent, in spite of Roddy's warning.

"What do you mean?" he cried [illegible]. "If you think I came here to be assaulted by you, and hear you talk gibberish——"

"Here, drop it," said Roddy, "we've had gibberish enough as it is, an' I'm full up with it, if that's what you complain of. You've played this Spirit of the Mine game on us, as if we were a couple of kids out of the nursery, an' now we've taken the trouble to spot you, let's drop it."

Mr. Sully glared at him in consternation.

"If it gives you any pleasure to stick your face into that hole, an' talk rot down it, you can do that when we've gone," continued Roddy. "But here we are, face to face, above ground, so let's talk sense. You're offerin' to give Kenyon Price away; that's the kernel of it, I suppose?"

"I'll only promise you," said the viewer savagely, "that I'll have you both in prison for this assault!"

"I wish you'd try it," replied Roddy cheerfully. "Nothin'd suit me better than to get into the witness-box, an' do a little talkin'. Come along, an' find a policeman. We'll both go with you."

"I won't!" yelled the viewer.

"But you promised just now. There's no believing anything you say. Keep your fists down, I tell you—they won't help you. Spirits shouldn't get in such a bait."

The viewer, finding he was making a larger fool of himself than was necessary, controlled his passion with an effort.

"Impertinence will not serve you," he said, in a voice that still trembled a little. "Explain quickly what you mean by this behaviour! I am waiting."

"I should have thought it was plain enough," Roddy answered. "We made up our minds to find out who it was that made use of this fissure in the coal as a speaking-tube, an' it turns out to be you. It's waste of time to pretend it wasn't you who was talkin' to me from up here to the old gallery just now. I heard what you said, an' here we are. Have you got any more o' that speech to make about my claim on Bryn y Garth?"

The viewer muttered something inaudible.

"You haven't? Well, it don't much matter. It wasn't much of a compliment you paid me; to think I was such a fool as to do what you suggested. I want no partnership with you, Mr. Sully, on any terms. We've nothing for you, either of us."

"You have nothing for me!" echoed Sully, with a bitter laugh.

"Not a bean! We don't want to buy you, to give your rascally employer away. Well, the ghost's laid—the Spirit of the Mine is a back number, I reckon. If you got a bit of rough handlin', it's no more than you deserve, Mr. Sully. What are you goin' to do about it?"

"I shall discharge you from the pits!" said the viewer, gritting his teeth.

"Don't you wish you could? But you can't do that, either. I think our best move is to go to Mr. Kenyon Price an' let him know what terms you were ready to betray him for. He'd be interested."

"Go to him! Tell him!" hissed Sully, "[illegible] and welcome! Go to his [illegible] know—I am willing!"

"[illegible] think about it. P'r'aps it [illegible] much, after all, to hear [illegible] already. Good-day, viewer! [illegible] taken off you now, an' [illegible] stand. That's a blessin', [illegible]"

[illegible] muttering under his [illegible] to the yard.

"[illegible] nicely, on the whole," [illegible]. "Quite enjoyable—[illegible]"

"[illegible]," chuckled Tom gleefully. "I hope I did right to jump on him. You left [illegible], you know, an' there [illegible]."

"[illegible] anything better. If [illegible] Kenyon Price it'd ha' been different. But as things are we've made Sally show his [illegible] of him; two real [illegible]. Did you have much trouble?"

"He never knew who I was till you hove in sight. I stalked him an' hopped on to his [illegible]. He filled up that hole beautifully, an' couldn't turn round. How did you know——"

"I heard him squeal when he was talkin' to me below, an' guessed what you'd done. By gum, but I did scoot out of the pits double quick!"

"But, my word, it's a surprise to find him givin' Kenyon Price away like that!" exclaimed Tom.

"Oh, that's all guff," said Roddy. "He wasn't givin' K. P. away. The boss put him on to the whole thing, of course."

"Eh? D'you think so?"

"Not a doubt of it. It's all a plant. They didn't think we'd find out who was doin' the spirit's part, though."

"But what's the good of it?"

"Why, to find out what Matt told us, an' to learn what evidence we've got about our claim on the Coed Coch. The one thing they're in the dark about is that. You remember Sully ferretin' round just after Matt died? K. P.'s itchin' to find out what chance we've got, an' what Matt told us on his death-bed."

"I see. They don't guess how little we really know. K. P.'s afraid we've got something up our sleeve."

"Yes. So I was to tell it all to the spirit, if you please; an' in return I'd be shown how to get hold of the colliery," snorted Roddy.

"They couldn't really have thought you'd believe in the spirit?"

"I don't know. S'pose they reckoned I'd chip in with the mysterious betrayer, an' give myself away. That's what annoys me," growled Roddy, "that they should take us for such chumps."

"Colliers are very superstitious," chuckled Tom. "Well, they've got nothin' out of us, an' we've had an afternoon's sport, an' rubbed Sully's nose in the dirt. My eye, but he did look vicious when he went away!"

"No wonder. Tom, old boy, we've done pretty well all through, but I shall be glad when we've holed our last seam in the Aberford." He glanced at his partner. "What d'you say to chuckin' it now?"

"How do we stand?"

"We might just manage, with luck, on what we've got. But it'd be awkward, an' might cripple our chance, the want o' the last few pounds. That gear we need is expensive. Still——"

"Then let's go on an' earn 'em," said Tom decisively. "We said fifty pounds, an' fifty pounds we'll have. Mustn't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar."

"Right! If you say so, we'll go ahead."

"Another week does it, I think. Then comes Bryn y Garth. Talkin' of which, isn't that Dafydd up yonder?"

"He's comin' to meet us. Must ha' got some news, I should think," said Tom. "Come out from behind that rock, my giddy mountain goat. Come an' skip it on the lea. What brings you here?"

"I wanted to hear what you would say when you [illegible] to ter Old Meadow," said Dafydd [illegible].

"The Old Meadow! What's the matter with it? Ain't it been vaccinated?" said Roddy.

"Come and see," replied Dafydd.

(Another fine long instalment will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

THE A.A.A.:

Mr. A. A. ELSON, winner of over 200 prizes, gives readers full details concerning the work of the Amateur Athletic Association, and tells them how to join.

HERE comes the advantage of taking up membership in a club and competing first under its auspices, for

the club handicapper

will quickly find out the ability of the new member, and will handicap him fairly in accordance therewith. The public handicappers rely to a great deal on the judgment of club handicappers, hence the utility of club membership. The writer has a long list of athletic clubs, with the names and addresses of their secretaries, and will be pleased to assist anyone desirous of joining if communications are addressed to the Editor of THE BOYS' REALM.

Reference has been made incidentally to the betting curse which used to pervade athletic meetings. Some years ago—happily, not now—this vice used to flourish at sports. Certainly the A.A.A. laws even at that time were strict on the point, but they were not then rigidly enforced by those responsible. One stipulation was that notices prohibiting betting should be exhibited in prominent places on the sports ground. The promoting clubs carried out to the letter the posting of the notices, and in such prominent positions that it was not infrequent to see a bookmaker plying his "trade" openly beneath one of them. At some meetings the reserved enclosure resembled a betting ring on a racecourse.

This gambling helped to produce a certain class of runner who was known as a "heat-winner," inasmuch as he was always winning heats, but

seldom won a final.

The reason was obvious. The winner of a final would be penalised several yards, but the "heat-winner," by not taking a prize, would retain his handicap mark, and would be in a winning position week after week, thereby keeping out of the final genuine competitors.

The betting fraternity were hand and glove with this section, and some of the "racing" at times was farcical by reason of their machinations. Competitors and spectators alike were fleeced, and all sorts of illegal practices were resorted to. Professional runners of the shady division, attracted by the possibility of making money through the medium of betting, entered for races in a district in which they were unknown, sometimes boldly taking the name of an amateur athlete, and, of course, his handicap marks, and at other times entering as "novices" who had never run before. In many cases the style in which they won their heats "gave the show away," but as these individuals took care rarely to win outright, and even then did not come up for the prize, they were not often proceeded against.

Even some of the amateurs themselves were not above this impersonation business. It is on record that two brothers, who were very much alike in physiognomy, but very dissimilar in their running ability, worked the trick throughout the country to a pretty tune. One brother had a long handicap mark, and the speedy one of the two a very short one. When away in a district where they were unknown, the crack took his brother's handicap allowance, and, of course, "romped home." But the pitcher went too often to the well, and [illegible] brought to an end the athletic career of "the twins."

I have said enough to show the many evils that surrounded betting and gambling at

athletic meetings,

and the unwholesome flavour it gave to the sport. It is an evil which the A.A.A. has had to contend with from the very first. When their rulings on the subject threatened to become too drastic, the Association was informed that the expulsion of the betting element meant the extinction of the "gate," or patronage, at athletic meetings, and that the sport would die out for want of support. The Association, nevertheless, stuck to their guns, and if athletic meetings have lost a part of their "gate" in consequence, they have gained in the provision of pure, wholesome sport, and in the patronage of the higher class of spectator, who loves to witness athletic contests for pure sport's sake. The recent Act of Parliament dealing with betting is the last nail in the coffin of the betting element at athletic meetings.

The concluding article will deal with the handicapping question, and what the A.A.A. have done towards making fair handicapping unbiassed and untainted.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.



THE MAN FROM SCOTLAND YARD.

An Episode in the Career of that Celebrated Detective, SEXTON BLAKE.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
A Night Tramp—The Man With the Red Beard.

THE Hackney constable slipped noiselessly and furtively round the corner, lifted the dark-lantern that hung at his belt, and played a shaft of yellow light on to the man who was lurking in the shadow of the tree. He was a slim, youngish man, with florid, discoloured features and keen eyes, and he appeared to be a type of the London coster, one who had fallen on evil days.

"I've had an eye on you, my fine fellow!" exclaimed the constable. "What are you doing here?"

"I ain't doin' nothing," was the sullen answer.

"Move on, then. No loafing is allowed!"

"I've got a right to stand 'ere, 'aven't I?"

"No; you haven't. Don't give me any of yor back talk. Move on, or I'll run you in on suspicion."

"On wot?"

"On suspicion of loitering with evil intent and felonious purpose. Your face is enough to convict you."

"I wouldn't change it for yours," said the man. "You're makin' a mistake, constable," he added, in a husky whisper. "Look at me, close. Don't you know who I am?"

"See here, are you going to——"

"Old on a bit, constable! Can you keep a secret? The fact is, I'm Mister Andrew Carnegie in disguise, and I've been tryin' to learn, on the quiet, if the good people of 'Ackney are the sort wot would appreciate one of my 'igh-class libraries. Perhaps you can 'elp me to——"

"In about three ticks," broke in the wrathful constable, "I'll help you to something you won't want. Are you going or not?"

"I'm going," was the reply. "My electric brougham is waitin' for me round the corner. Thanks to you, my good fellow, the people of 'Ackney will 'ave to do without their library."

With that the man trudged off, chuckling to himself, and the constable little imagined that he had been chaffed by Sexton Blake. Yet such was the case. Those shabby, greasy clothes concealed the person of the famous detective, who had been taking one of his long, nocturnal tramps, enjoying his favourite occupation of studying the character of the crowds that passed along the streets of the great city, reading in some faces crime and vice, suffering and tragedy, in others innocence and misfortune, honesty and happiness. To-night he had wandered far, like Haroun al Raschid, in search of adventure, and now, between eleven and twelve o'clock, he was thinking of going home to his comfortable bed at Baker Street.

But he did not seem to be in a hurry. He had met with no adventure as yet, and possibly he still hoped that something out of the common would turn up as he walked slowly on. He passed the Four Kings public-house, with its glaring lights, and when he had gone thirty yards, traversing a dark street, he heard light footfalls behind him. Turning round, he saw, by the light of a lamp-post, a man coming towards him—a man who kept looking over his shoulder, and peering across the street, as if he was afraid of something.

Sexton Blake's curiosity was aroused. At once he slipped into an area, the gate of which had been left open, and noiselessly descended the steps until his head was on a level with the pavement. The man came on, and it could be dimly seen that he was a big, powerful fellow, roughly dressed. He slouched hurriedly by, and a few seconds later, as the detective was about to leave his hiding-place, he heard somebody else approaching from one direction, and somebody from the other.

The two met by the area gate, and there was a sudden flare of light. A railway-porter on his way home had stopped to light a pipe, and for an instant the flame of the match revealed, in the act of passing the porter, a man with a reddish beard who was attired like a navvy. And in that brief instant, by one or two little signs, Sexton Blake was able to recognise the navvy as Inspector Widgeon, of Scotland Yard.

The match fell to the pavement. The railway-porter walked down the street, Inspector Widgeon hastened on in apparent pursuit of the man who had first gone by the house, and a moment later the detective had slipped out of the area and was craftily following his rival the inspector.

"Here's a lark!" he thought. "Old Widgeon in disguise and on the scent, shadowing that fellow in front of him. I shouldn't be much surprised if the blundering old sleuth-hound was on the track of the Brownlow murderer. He had better be careful, for the man is evidently suspicious, and he may lead Widgeon into a trap."

Sexton Blake lingered for a few seconds, until he was satisfied that no more Scotland Yard men were behind him, and then he pressed after Inspector Widgeon, catching a glimpse of him before he had gone far. The inspector was still visible, and the man in front of him could be seen at intervals.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Trap—Tim Slaney Lends a Hand—Over the Telephone.

PROUD and happy man was Inspector Widgeon, as he stuck to the chase in his red beard and coarse clothing, though he would have felt anything but happy had he known that he in turn was being shadowed by his rival, by the shrewd detective to whom he believed he was going to teach a lesson in skill.

"I've as good as got him," he told himself. "He can't give me the slip. I might arrest him at once, but he is a desperate fellow, and as strong as an ox. No; that would be risky. I'm not going to give him a chance to break away, after watching for him for the last five nights, in one of the foulest public-houses in London. I'll track him to his lodgings, and then I'll fetch a couple of constables, and to-morrow I'll crow over Sexton Blake. It was his opinion, was it, that the Brownlow murderer had left the country? Pretended he didn't want him—eh? Had other business to attend to, had he? Ha, ha! Sour grapes, my cunning friend Blake! You think you know everything, but I'll show you that you don't!"

The man kept straight on, as if he had a purpose in view. The neighbourhood was growing darker and drearier, more lonely and squalid; and now, still without looking back, the man abruptly vanished. Nothing could be seen of him when the inspector reached the spot, which was the mouth of a narrow passage.

"The scoundrel has taken to his heels," he thought, as he drew a revolver. "No doubt it is the trick he plays every night, to make sure that he has not been shadowed. But I'll have him yet!"

He entered the dark passage, ran noiselessly and fleetly through, between blank walls, and emerged on a vacant lot that was heaped with bricks and other rubbish, and surrounded by high, gloomy buildings. So much he saw at a glance, and then, to his astonishment, a dusky figure jumped up in front of him, brandishing a cudgel, and at the same instant he heard footsteps behind him.

"Now's your chance, Bill!" exclaimed a gruff voice.

Whack! The cudgel had hissed at Inspector Widgeon, striking the revolver from his grasp and sending it spinning through the air. He dodged a second blow, and as he sprang forward a blunt weapon, aimed at him by another man in the rear, grazed his shoulder. He seized the man in front by the wrist, causing him to let go of the club, and then fastened both hands on his throat, bearing him backward with all his might. The two fell heavily, and at once the second ruffian threw himself upon them and joined in the struggle, gripping the unfortunate inspector around the neck.

"Help, help!" he gasped hoarsely. "Help——"

"Shut up, curse you!" snarled the man on top, as he tightened his hold.

"Settle him, Bill!" wheezed the man underneath. "Pull him off! He's chokin' me!"

"And ain't I chokin' him?" was the reply. "I daren't let go now! Break away from him, that's what you want to do, mate!"

"How can I, when he's got me foul? Hurry up and do for him, Bill, before anybody hears the row! He's one of the Scotland Yard 'tecs, you can bet on that! Be quick, Bill, or he'll——"

"Help, help!" Inspector Widgeon again called faintly.

He fought desperately to the one man, while the other tried to throttle him; but the odds were too great, and he knew that in the end he must get the worst of it. For a short time he fought pluckily for his life, while his strength slowly ebbed under the suffocating grip, and he felt his own hold gradually relaxing. Then a whistle was blown, not far off. Twice it rang on the night, loud and piercing, and a moment later a man came dashing through the passage and into the vacant lot.

It was Sexton Blake, and he had no more than appeared on the scene when the ruffian, who was choking the inspector, let go of him, and sprang to his feet. He sought hastily for the cudgel that had been dropped, and at the same instant, as the detective felt in his pocket for his revolver, he discovered that he had left it at home.

"Come on, mate, and I'll tackle you with the dibs!" he cried. "Two to one ain't fair play!"

With that he jumped at the man, who, having no time to find either the club or the inspector's pistol, stood up to meet the attack. The two went at it with their fists, hammer and tongs, and for half a minute there was some clever sparring. Sexton Blake received some heavy blows, giving as good as he got, and at last, by a smashing stroke under the jaw, he bowled his antagonist clean over.



The two went at it hammer and tongs, and for half a minute there was some clever sparring. Sexton Blake received some heavy blows, giving as good as he got, and at last he bowled his antagonist clean over.

The fellow lay where he had fallen, apparently stunned, and meanwhile Inspector Widgeon had half-throttled and overpowered his man. The detective rendered prompt assistance, and after a brief and final struggle, a pair of irons were locked on the exhausted man's wrists. And then, as Sexton Blake rose to his feet, he perceived that the man he had knocked out had utterly vanished.

"Let him go!" panted Inspector Widgeon, as he glanced at his rescuer. "I have the man I want. Who are you, my brave fellow?"

"Nobody in partic'lar, sir," replied the detective, touching his cap. "I'm Tim Slaney, wot lives about 'ere when I ain't anywhere else. I 'appened to see a bloke whip into the alley, with you after 'im, and when I 'card a call for 'elp I knowed I was needed."

"So you were," declared Inspector Widgeon—"so you were. But for your timely aid these ruffians would certainly have killed me, though I fought like a tiger. Desperate fellows they were, desperate."

"I'm sure of that, sir. You're a plucky one, you are."

"I hope I am, my man," said the inspector. "I have to be in my perilous trade. But I thought the police were coming."

"It was me, sir," replied Tim Slaney. "I blew a whistle, wot I'm in the 'abit of carryin', about with me. It comes in 'andy for dogs, when I 'ave one."

As he spoke, hearing a shrill blast near-by, he pulled his whistle from his pocket, and blew it twice. The signal was answered again, and a moment later two constables hurried through the passage.

"Ah, this is fortunate!" exclaimed Inspector Widgeon. "Most fortunate! My good men, I have a prisoner for you. I have captured no less a person than Adolph Kramer!"

"Adolph Kramer!" cried the two constables in one voice, as they bent over the fettered man.

"You're right, sir," one added, as he flashed his lantern.

"I know I am," proudly declared the inspector. "I never make mistakes. Yes; this is Adolph Kramer, who murdered Mr. Brownlow, at his residence at Hornsey Rise three weeks ago. For the last five nights I have been watching for him at the Four Kings public-house, which I ascertained to be one of his old haunts; and to-night he turned up, when I recognised him, and followed him, meaning to discover where he lodged."

"And 'e must 'ave spotted you, sir," said Tim Slaney. "If 'e knowed you was to be there, so 'e set a trap for you, and 'e led you to this vacant lot, where 'e had a pal waiting to 'elp 'im do for you."

"Exactly," replied Inspector Widgeon. "No doubt that is exactly what happened. I fought the two ruffians single-handed," he added to the constables, "and I was about to get the better of them, to capture them both, when this brave fellow arrived on the scene. He tackled one of the men, who got away from him, and meanwhile I was able to put the irons on Kramer. I have not told you, by the by, that I am Inspector Widgeon, of Scotland Yard. I dare say you have heard of me?"

"Often, sir," replied one of the constables, touching his helmet.

"Who hasn't?" said the other. "A famous name, sir, yours is. And you have added to your renown, sir, by this night's work."

"I think I have," the inspector answered pompously. "Even Sexton Blake may well envy me for what I have accomplished to-night."

"To tell the truth, I never did think much of Mister Sexton Blake," put in Tim Slaney. "A sort of a muddler, I've always set 'im down for. If I should 'appen to be wanted, and 'e was after me, I'll bet I could give him the slip with both me eyes shut."

"No doubt you could," assented Inspector Widgeon, as he thrust his hand into his pocket. "Here is something for you, my good fellow."

And he gave a half-sovereign to Tim Slaney, who bit the coin to see if it was good, and then departed with a grin and a chuckle.

* * * * *

At nine o'clock on the following morning Inspector Widgeon entered his room at Scotland Yard, and nodded cheerfully to his friend, Inspector Harkness, who was writing at a desk. He hung his hat on a peg, and then, as a bell tinkled, he stopped to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!" he called.

"Hallo!" was the reply. "Is that Scotland Yard?"

"Yes; that's right!"

"I wish to speak to Inspector Widgeon, please."

"Well, he's here. He is talking now. Who is it?"

"I am Sexton Blake," came the answer over the wires. "Good morning, Widgeon! How are you feeling?"

"Chipper, and with good reason. I meant to drop in on you this morning, Blake, to tell you that I——"

"One moment, Widgeon. Let me congratulate you first. That was a splendid feat, your capture of Adolph Kramer."

"My what?"

"Your capture of Adolph Kramer."

"But—but it isn't made public yet. It isn't in the papers. How the deuce did you know anything about it?"

"I happened to be there, that's how."

"You were not there! Impossible!"

"Not at all, I assure you. Have you forgotten your friend, Tim Slaney?"

"You don't mean to tell me that you were Tim Slaney?" gasped the inspector.

"Quite right; I was playing that part last night. You ought to be grateful to me."

"I'll be even with you for this, Blake; that's all I've got to say. I don't want to talk to you, confound your cheek."

"Don't be in a hurry, my dear Widgeon. I'm not a bit envious, not a little bit, though you seemed to think I would be. I may be a muddler, but I am not in the habit of boasting, that——"

"Go to the deuce!" cried Inspector Widgeon.

And with that, as a peal of laughter vibrated merrily over the wires, he dropped the receiver as if it had been a hot-potato.

THE END.

Powerful New Serial!



THE 1st CHAPTER.
Paul Herman, Millionaire.

"HEAVEN help me! I know you now. You are Number One! Have mercy on me! Spare me, and I will confess everything!"

The scene was a sumptuously-furnished room in a palatial house in Curzon Street, Mayfair. The costly works of art which adorned the walls of the apartment, the superb old china in the inlaid cabinets, the priceless folios and rare editions which lined the bookshelves—all these betokened unlimited wealth and faultless taste.

Paul Herman, the millionaire owner of this magnificent house and all the artistic treasures it contained, was a strikingly handsome man.

In appearance he was tall and slim, with a clean-shaved face and jet-black hair and eyes. In manner he was courtly, suave, and affable; but those who knew him best had good cause to know that his suavity was the velvet glove which concealed the iron hand of a ruthless will that naught could bend or break.

His history, before he came to London, was a sealed book to all but himself. By the general public he was vaguely supposed to have acquired his enormous wealth by successful mining operations in South America. It is true that nobody knew where the mines were situated, but that was a mere detail.

He was a millionaire; he was a liberal patron of the fine arts; he entertained on a lavish scale; and these facts, added to the magnetic charm of his personality, had made Paul Herman, at the time of which we write, the idol of London society.

If only society had known the truth!

At the moment when we make Paul Herman's acquaintance he was reclining in an easy-chair, with a cigarette between his lips and a rather bored expression on his handsome face.

In front of him, guarded on each side by a stalwart and impassive footman, stood a white-faced man, whose chattering teeth, trembling knees, and wildly-staring eyes were eloquent of mingled horror, terror, and despair. It was he who uttered the words with which our story opens.

"Heaven help me!" he groaned. "I know you now. You are Number One! Have mercy on me! Spare me, and I will confess everything!"

"There is no need for you to confess," said Herman coldly. "I know all I wish to know. You wrote to Nelson Lee this afternoon, stating that you were a member of a secret society of criminals, and offering to sell him some startling information if he would call at your house to-morrow afternoon."

"I was mad," moaned the unhappy wretch—"mad with disappointment. I had expected to receive at least a hundred pounds as my share of the robbery in Park Lane, and I only received a paltry ten. I thought I hadn't been treated fairly, and in a fit of temper I wrote the letter to which you refer—though how you knew that I had written it I can't imagine."

Paul Herman stifled a yawn, and lazily flicked the ash off the end of his gold-tipped cigarette.

"It is my business to know such things," he drawled. "But we are wasting time. There is no need to prolong an interview which is as painful to me as it is to you. All the talking in the world cannot alter the fact that you have broken the first and most important rule of the league. And for that, as you know, the penalty is death!"

Mad with fear, the man broke away from the two footmen and cast himself at the millionaire's feet.

"Mercy—mercy!" he cried wildly, and his voice had all the shrillness of a frightened woman's scream. "I have told you that I wasn't responsible for my actions when I wrote to Nelson Lee. I repented of my folly as soon as I had posted the letter. I shouldn't have told him anything if he had come to see me. I won't tell him anything now—I swear I won't!"

A grim smile flitted across Paul Herman's clean-shaven face.

"I'm sure you won't!" he murmured.

He glanced at the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece; then turned to the two footmen.

"I am expecting visitors in a few minutes," he said. "Take this creature away. You know what to do with him."

The two men seized their prisoner and bore him, struggling and shrieking, from the room. For a moment or two Paul Herman could hear his piteous cries, growing fainter and fainter in the distance; then a stifled scream of horror—wild and weird as the wail of some lost soul—fell on his ears, and after that the ticking of the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece was the only sound that disturbed the gravelike silence.

"A narrow shave!" muttered Herman to himself, as he lit another cigarette. "If the cur had lived to tell his tale to Nelson Lee, the days of the league would have been numbered!"

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind ere the butler opened the door and ushered in the "visitors" to whom Paul Herman had referred.

"Sir Edgar Fawcett and Mr. Willoughby Fairfax!" announced the butler.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
Rogues in Council.

"WELL, and how have matters been progressing with the league whilst we've been away?" asked Fairfax, when he and Sir Edgar had rendered an account of their mission and had received their chief's congratulations.

"Oh, pretty much as usual!" said Herman. "We've had one or two good hauls, but nothing out of the common."

"No trouble with the police?"

"No. But we had a rather narrow escape this afternoon."

"How was that?" exclaimed his two companions in the same breath.

"One of our ordinary members—that fellow Martin, of Kennington Road—wrote to Nelson Lee this afternoon, stating that he was a member of a secret society, and was prepared to sell Lee some startling information if he would come to his house to-morrow afternoon. The matter was reported to me, through our secret service branch, within an hour of the letter being posted. I inveigled Martin here, by means which I needn't trouble to describe, and——"

He paused to light another cigarette.

"There is now a vacancy for an ordinary member in D Division," he drawled, blowing out a cloud of filmy smoke.

His two companions shuddered. Hardened as they were, familiar as they were with Herman's ruthless methods of maintaining discipline, his cold-blooded callousness sent an icy shiver down their spines.

"Have you anything big on at present?" asked Sir Edgar, hastening to change the conversation.

"Yes," said Herman; "I've two big schemes in contemplation, one of which may prove to be the biggest thing we've ever tackled. The other isn't quite so big, but it's well worth attempting, and ought to come off if you can help me."

"I?" said Sir Edgar.

"Yes. I'll explain what I mean by-and-by. In the meantime, I'd like to hear what you think of the other scheme. You've heard of Donald Stuart, of course?"

Sir Edgar nodded.

"That crack-brained fellow who has squandered a nice little fortune in experiments in airships?" he said.

"That's the man," said Herman. "Has it ever occurred to you what an immense power would be placed in our hands if we had a practicable airship at our command?"

"Hasn't it?" said Sir Edgar, with a laugh. "I've often amused myself by imagining all the gorgeous things I could do—such as holding up a liner in mid-ocean by threatening to drop a bomb aboard!—if only I had an airship that could travel through the air as swiftly and as safely as a motor-car can travel on land!"

"So have I," said Herman. "With a serviceable airship at our command, the league could treble its income in less than six months."

"That's true enough," said Fairfax. "But it will be many, many years yet before a serviceable airship is invented."

"That's just where you're mistaken," said Herman. "If my information is correct—and I've no reason to doubt its correctness—a serviceable airship has already been invented."

"By Donald Stuart?"

"Yes."

Fairfax shook his head.

"I shall believe it when I see it!" he said.

Herman shrugged his shoulders.

"It won't be my fault," he said, "if you haven't a chance of seeing it and testing it before the end of the present month—perhaps even before the end of the present week!"

"How? What do you mean?" asked Fairfax.

Herman inhaled a mouthful of smoke before he replied, and allowed it to dribble slowly through his lips.

"I have long known," he said, "that Stuart was crazy on the subject of airships, and has well-nigh beggared himself by costly experiments. A day or two after you left England, a paragraph appeared in the 'Daily Mail,' stating that Stuart had at last overcome a difficulty which had baffled him for years, and that his airship, which was confidently expected to revolutionise our present notions of aerial navigation, would shortly make its initial public appearance.

"As I've just told you, I've often thought of the immense power which would be placed in our hands if we had a practicable airship at our disposal. As soon as I read this paragraph, therefore, I sent for Rockstro, and I instructed him to go down to Wimbledon—where Stuart's place is—and find out all he possibly could about this wonderful new airship.

"Rockstro went down to Wimbledon, and commenced operations by securing an introduction to Donald Stuart. But Stuart seems to have taken a great dislike to him, and would have nothing to do with him. Rockstro therefore turned his attention to Stuart's confidential assistant—a young fellow named Owen—and with him he was much more successful.

"Owen has plenty of brains, and knows nearly as much about airships as Stuart does. But he has very little strength of will, and a man of the world, like Rockstro, can twist him round his little finger. By means of a little judicious flattery, Rockstro soon wormed his way into Owen's confidence, and practically the whole of Owen's spare time for the last three weeks has been spent in Rockstro's company.

"The information which Rockstro has obtained up to the present is this. The airship is practically finished, and all the workmen were dismissed last week. All that now remains to be done is to fix up some rather delicate electric fittings, which Stuart and Owen are doing themselves.

"A few days ago the airship made a short journey at dead of night, with only Stuart and Owen aboard; and, according to Owen, she behaved perfectly. Next day Stuart wrote to the Prime Minister, describing the result of this trial spin, stating that he wished to give the Government the first chance of purchasing the invention, and inviting the Premier to send down a small committee of experts to examine the airship. Up to the present, so far as I know, he has received no answer to his letter."

"What's the airship like?" asked Sir Edgar, as Herman paused. "Is it a real airship, or is it merely a steerable balloon?"



"Heaven help me!" groaned the man. "I know you now. You are Number One! Have mercy on me! Spare me, and I will confess everything!" A grim smile flitted across Paul Herman's face. He glanced at the ormolu clock, then turned to the footmen. "Take this creature away," he said. "You know what to do with him."

"It is a real airship," said Herman. "A true flying-machine. There is no balloon connected with it. It is something like a torpedo in shape, with [illegible] for raising it, and a propeller at the stern for driving and steering it. It can travel at the rate of forty miles an hour, and carries enough petrol to serve for forty-eight hours—roughly speaking, two thousand miles. It is provided with a searchlight, and carries three men, or four at a pinch."

"If only half of what you say is true," said Fairfax enthusiastically, "it's the most marvellous airship that has ever been invented. By Jove, just think what we could do if it were ours!"

"And it shall be ours!" said Herman quietly. "It must be ours! By hook or crook, we must get possession of it before the Government snaps it up!"

Again Fairfax shook his head.

"Your idea is to steal it, I suppose?" he said.

Herman nodded, and lit another cigarette.

"But none of us knows anything about airships," objected Fairfax. "You can't steal a motor-car if you don't know how to drive it; and it seems to me that you can't steal an airship if you don't know how to navigate it!"

"There'll be no difficulty about that," said Herman. "Rockstro tells me that Owen says the mechanism is so beautifully simple that a boy could navigate the airship with absolute ease and perfect safety. At the same time, of course, it would greatly simplify our task, both in stealing the airship and in navigating it afterwards, if we had somebody in the league who was an expert in such matters. For that reason I suggested to Rockstro that he should try to persuade Owen to throw in his lot with us."

"And a jolly good suggestion, too!" exclaimed Sir Edgar. "If Owen could be persuaded to join the league, he could help us to steal the airship, he could work it for us afterwards, and if anything went wrong with it, he would know how to repair it. Has Rockstro carried out your suggestion? Has he invited Owen to join the league?"

"He hadn't up to yesterday!" said Herman. "He may have done so this afternoon; but I haven't see him to-day. I'm expecting him every—— Ah, here he is!"

"Major Rockstro!" announced the butler, throwing open the door.

The major—a thin, wiry-looking man, rather under the average height, with a sallow face and a heavy black moustache—nodded to Herman, and shook hands effusively with Fairfax and Sir Edgar.

"We were just talking about you," said Herman. "I've told these two practically all there is to tell about Stuart's airship, and Sir Edgar was just asking me if you had sounded Owen on the subject of joining the league. Have you?"

"Not yet," said Rockstro. "He's a ticklish sort of customer to deal with, and one has to feel one's way very cautiously. However, he has arranged to lunch with me in town to-morrow, and I intend to broach the subject then."

"Do you think he'll join?"

"I do. In fact, I'm pretty sure he will."

"Any fresh news from Wimbledon? Has Stuart received any reply to his letter to the Premier?"

"Yes. He received a letter from the Premier this morning. Four men—two from the War Office, and two from the Admiralty—are coming down to examine the airship next Saturday, and if they approve of it, Stuart is to be asked to name his price."

"And it's now Monday," said Fairfax. "That doesn't leave us too much time if we intend, as you suggest, to collar the airship before the Government snaps it up. Have you thought of any plan?"

The question was addressed to Herman, but before the latter could reply the major broke in.

"It's no use discussing plans at present," he said. "We must wait till I've sounded Owen. If he consents to join the league—as I'm pretty sure he will—I'll take him to Walworth Road and administer the oath; then I'll tell him to come to Walworth Road again at ten o'clock to-morrow night, and we'll meet him there and fix up some plan for getting possession of the airship."

"I agree with all your suggestions except one," said Herman. "If Owen consents to join the league, you must tell him to come to Walworth Road at ten o'clock on Wednesday night instead of to-morrow night. I'm engaged to-morrow night."

He turned to Sir Edgar.

"Which reminds me of the other scheme to which I referred a little time ago," he said. "Sir George Langford is giving a ball at Moscar Grange to-morrow night in honour of Miss Langford's birthday, and I have been invited."

"As Paul Herman, or as Squire Mandeville?" asked Sir Edgar.

It should here be explained that Paul Herman lived a double—or, rather, a treble—life. As already stated, he was only known to the vast majority of the members of the league as "Number One." To the general public, in London, at any rate, he was only known as Paul Herman. These, however, did not exhaust the list of his aliases.

In addition to owning the house in Curzon Street, he was the owner of a fine old country house in Surrey known as Hartop Manor. Part of his time was spent at Curzon Street as Paul Herman; and part of his time was spent at Hartop Manor, where—in a different disguise, of course—he was known as "Squire Mandeville."

Only the servants at Curzon Street and the members of the ruling council knew that "Number One" was "Paul Herman." Only the members of the ruling council knew that "Paul Herman was "Squire Mandeville"; but not even the members of the ruling council knew that Paul Herman had another alias, and lived another life, of which, in due course, the reader will be fully acquainted.

"As Paul Herman, or as Squire Mandeville?" asked Sir Edgar, when Herman told him that he had been invited to the ball at Moscar Grange.

"Both!" said Herman, with a laugh. "But Paul Herman has declined the invitation, and Squire Mandeville has accepted it! I have been invited to stay the night at the Grange, and I've promised to do so."

"Well!" said Sir Edgar, as Herman paused. "Where does the big scheme come in, and in what way can I help you?"

(How this daring scheme was carried out, how Owen, the inventor's assistant, joined the League of the Iron Hand, and then decided suddenly to leave it, with most startling consequences to himself, and how Nelson Lee and an Irish detective, named O'Brien, set themselves to overthrow the secret society, will be found explained in this week's issue of "The Boys' Herald," now on sale at all newsagents everywhere.)

Look Out for Announcements Concerning Our Great Football Campaign Very Shortly.

CAMPING OUT IN CANADA.

How the Colonial Boy Spends His Summer Holiday.

THOSE readers of THE REALM who have experienced the numerous joys of camping out in some rural part of the country, and know exactly all the pleasures of such a holiday, will realise how thoroughly the Canadian boy who camps out can enjoy himself. He can get right away from the haunts of man into the recesses of the vast backwoods, and there enjoy himself to his heart's content, without fear of being disturbed by the police or being hauled up for damaging public property.

Mr. William Henry, the secretary of the Royal Life-Saving Society, who has recently been contributing to our paper, has sent Your Editor a little pamphlet giving particulars of how Canadian boys camp out. The shores of Lake Temagami are selected as the camping-place, and under the conductorship of Mr. Arthur Cockrane, of Upper Canada College, Toronto, the thing is a huge success. The camp is affiliated to the Royal Life-Saving Society.

Camp Temagami is a rendezvous where boys from various schools may meet during the summer and, under capable supervision, spend their holiday in instructive recreation and pleasure.

Living close to Nature, camping in the woods, on the trail, boating, swimming, fishing, and exploring in the heart of the best camping country in the world, gives increased strength and vigour, and a valuable physical education in the best and most natural manner possible, and also satisfies the need felt by all—of a change from the conventionalities of life.

Among the varied experiences of a season in camp, a boy frequently finds it necessary to use his judgment and act quickly on his own initiative, such training making him alert and self-reliant.

Picture a lake whose shore-line is eight hundred miles, in shape like a starfish, containing



Master Ernest Smith, a clever swimmer and member of Halifax Swimming Club. On the left are some of the prizes he has won.

twelve hundred or more islands of varying sizes, and whose limpid waters, clear as crystal, fairly teem with fish of almost every species, around whose shores is a vast, silent forest of giant pine, undesecrated as yet by the woodman's axe. Such is Lake Temagami.

Life in Camp.

The boys live in tents or log cabins, which they are taught to build for themselves, those of about equal age—or special chums—being together.

Boys are taught to swim, and soon become adepts at managing a canoe or rowboat. The water is shallow, with a firm, sandy bottom for a considerable distance in front of camp, and this advantage, combined with the fact that help is always near, practically eliminates danger.

A regular course of instruction in swimming is given, the certificate or medallion of the Royal Life-Saving Society being granted to those who learn something of the useful side of swimming, that is necessary no one should know before he can feel really at home in or on the water, or be well able to assist others in need.

When competent, examinations are held and awards given in the following order of merit:

1. Elementary Certificate.
2. Proficiency Certificate.
3. Bronze Medallion.
4. Silver Medallion.

The latter being given to those who have successfully passed the examination for the medallion of the Society, and, in addition, are able to perform several aquatic feats, which include the ability to right and empty upset canoe under two minutes, to swim a quarter mile in ten minutes, to take a clean header from a height of ten feet, a backward dive from a punt, to undress on surface of the water, forward and backward somersaults, motionless floating, or "torpedo" for twenty feet, and prove thorough ability to handle skiff and canoe.

Very few so-called expert swimmers are able to perform all these feats, yet it is astonishing what a lad can learn in a few weeks' careful tuition and a determination to succeed.

THE END.



GROUP PORTRAIT OF RETFORD SOUTH END FOOTBALL CLUB, 1906-7.

How to Form a Football League.

An Instructive New Series of Articles by G. L. B. Coverdale, Sec. East Riding of Yorkshire Football Association.

I.—Preliminaries.

IT is with some trepidation that I begin to write on this subject, for although I have had a hand in the forming of a good many leagues and competitions, it is quite another thing to put that knowledge into writing, owing to the immense amount of detail work incurred. The neglect of one small item may upset the whole arrangements.

Clubs who have perhaps been playing a year or so in friendly matches, get a hankering after Competition football, and when there are about a dozen clubs of a similar strength within reasonable distance of each other, the time is ripe to start a league. It will only require one club to take the initiative, and the others will quickly "fall into line."

Before anything is actually done in the matter, a "feeler" should be thrown out as to whether the league will receive the sanction of the County Association; in fact, the association might be written to by the prime mover of the league, and it is practically certain that a member of their council who lives in the district of the proposed league will immediately come forward and help the new organisation on its way.

A circular letter should be sent to all clubs likely to join, calling a meeting of representatives

at some convenient centre.

At this meeting the chairman, treasurer, and secretary should be elected, and should be empowered to draw up the rules of the league, with which I propose to deal in my next article. The annual subscription for each term to the league should be fixed at this first meeting, and should be anything from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per club. It is practically impossible to run a league on the subscription of the clubs alone, and as a consequence some outside help must be obtained. Therefore, the only course open is to ask some influential gentleman in the district, if possible the local M.P.—never mind whether he is a Tariff Reformer or a Free Trader—to be

the president of the League,

and if he consents it will probably mean that the income of the league benefits to the extent of a guinea.

There should also be an unlimited list of vice-presidents—a donation of 5s. or over by any gentleman entitling him to this honour. At this preliminary meeting it is as well to discuss several other points, which will enable the sub-committee to draw up the rules to the satisfaction of the clubs. One representative from each club in the league should form the full committee. The title of the league should also be decided upon. When these various points have been settled, nothing further can be done until after the sub-committee meets and drafts the rules. It is far better to leave the drafting of the rules to the three named above than to the full committee, as "too many cooks, etc."

I have made no mention of any trophy or cup for the league, which is perhaps the most important thing to think about; but now, when young clubs have such a good friend as THE BOYS' REALM, who literally gives silver cups away wholesale, this should not present any great obstacle.

Even if a league should not be fortunate enough to secure

a "Boys' Realm" Cup,

there is generally some gentleman in the district who only wants approaching in the right way, and who will then step into the breach and present a trophy. But still, a trophy isn't everything, and the great thing is good and gentlemanly football. I remember the first year I was secretary of a club, we won the league without losing a match, but we never got either trophy or medals. From a football point of view, however, it was as good a league as anyone could have wished.

I propose in my next two articles of this series to give in full a set of rules suitable for a junior league. These rules, which are some thirty in number, combine what I consider the best features of the rules approved by five of the largest county associations in England.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

OUR NEW COMPETITION.

WHO IS IT?

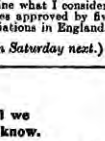
That's all we want to know.

Below are the portraits of six enthusiastic footballing readers of THE BOYS' REALM. Do you know them? To the reader who identifies any one of them, and whose letter is the first correct opened, a prize of five shillings will be awarded. There are no other conditions. Perhaps your own portrait appears here this week, or that of your bosom friend. Anyway, if you recognise one of the faces, write at once to "Portrait," BOYS' REALM Office, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C., stating whom you think it to be. Word your letter thus: "I think that No. —— (here give number as under portrait) is (here give name of the person you think it to be.) He is a member of ..... Football Club." All letters must reach this office by Saturday, July 13th.

Another six portraits will appear next week.



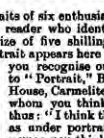
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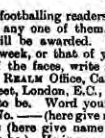
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No. 4.



No. 5.



No. 6.

FORMING A SWIMMING CLUB.

Hints to Novices Who Intend 'Doing So.

EVERY youth and young man who knows how to swim should join a club, if this is at all possible. By doing so he will obtain much more sport than if he has to take his swims by himself, and he will also have an opportunity of competing with the other members in the club races, and perhaps carrying off one or two valuable trophies.

Some of the readers of THE BOYS' REALM, however, may not be able to join a club, simply because they do not know of one suitable in their neighbourhood. Under such circumstances, the best plan for a young fellow to adopt is to start a swimming club on his own. He can do this in two ways. He can personally canvass amongst his friends, and find out those who would be willing to join such a club, or he can advertise in

the club notice columns

of THE BOYS' REALM for youths who would like to join.

A general meeting of those who desire to become members should then be called, and a chairman elected.

It is a good plan to get a gentleman of some standing in the neighbourhood to occupy the chair, as he will prevent the conversation taking a frivolous turn, and will save a sad waste of time by keeping those who attend strictly to business. The local clergyman or minister would make an admirable chairman, and if he is willing, he might be elected president.

The proceedings at this first meeting of the swimming club consist of electing a secretary and treasurer, the drafting of rules, the fixing on the name of the club, and the subscription to be paid by the members. The club colours must also be settled upon. It is desirable that the name and colours of the club should not be the same as those of any similar organisa-



Master F. G. Bangs, Secretary of Button C.C. and Harcourt Rovers F.C.

tions in the neighbourhood, as this often leads to mistakes and unpleasantness. The entrance fee need not be more than

one shilling per member.

The captain and vice-captain are not elected; the honour of holding these coveted positions being swum for at the first meeting of the club. The member who proves himself to be the champion swimmer becomes captain, the second best the vice-captain. A great deal of jealousy is saved by this method, and the best man is certain of becoming captain.

It is advisable to have about half a dozen vice presidents, as these are the gentlemen who, together with the president, are looked to to help the club out of any financial scrapes it may find itself in. It will be seen that vice-presidents are very useful people to have about.

The next points to be settled are the headquarters of the club and the times of meeting. In the case of large towns and cities, the headquarters must of necessity be

the local baths

and special facilities are generally offered to bona-fide clubs by those who own the baths, whether they be in the hands of the district council or those of private people. The ordinary price of admission to first-class baths is sixpence, but, by showing club cards, it can be arranged for members to gain admission for fourpence, a considerable reduction when a frequent bathe is indulged in. The times of meeting must be fixed to suit the members; early morning is usually best.

At the close of the season the races should be held. Some outsider, who understands what he is about, should be asked to handicap the members, to prevent favouritism. The value and nature of the prizes awarded, of course, depends on the state of the club's finances, but it is sometimes possible to induce a gentleman interested in swimming to present a cup. There is no harm in trying, anyway.

A swimming club run on these lines, with an enthusiastic secretary to do the necessary clerical work and arrange races, etc., cannot fail to be a success. Those who are wishing to form such an organisation should see that they adhere to the principles laid down in this article.

THE END.



TOM BURTON,
Builder.

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Adventure. By a Popular Author.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Caught in the Act—On the Verge of Ruin.

"IF that doesn't beat old Smithers," said Tom Burton, as he folded up the estimate, "I will eat my hat!"

Wilmer, the clerk, sitting on the other side of the desk, looked longingly at the document in the other's hands, but said nothing. Tom somewhat ostentatiously thrust it into his desk, and strode out of the office into the yard. When he had gone about a dozen yards he crept back on tiptoe, and peered through the crack of the door. As he expected, Wilmer was bending over the open desk running his practised eyes over the sheets of foolscap which had just been placed in it.

"What are you doing there?" said Tom.

Wilmer turned with a start, like a thief caught in the act. If Tom had found him at the cash-box he could not have looked more guilty. He was so taken by surprise that he could find no words to reply.

"I say, what are you doing at my desk?" Tom repeated sternly.

Wilmer pulled himself together, and cleared his throat nervously.

"I am afraid it is great impertinence," he began, looking everywhere but at Tom's face, "but having been so closely associated with all the contracts of the firm during your lamented father's lifetime, I was naturally rather curious to see the estimate for the new Town Hall."

"What did you want to see it for!"

"Merely, as I say, that, having personally prepared the estimates of the firm for so many years, I was naturally interested——"

"Look here, Wilmer, that's all rot! You wanted to see our price in order to tell Smithers, so that he could undersouts us."

Wilmer protested, but Tom saw plainly that he was right.

"Your father would never have brought such a charge against me. For over twelve years I served him, and he trusted me implicitly."

"Yes, to the cost!" replied Tom. "You have persistently sold us to Smithers, and done your best to ruin the business." (Only Tom knew how nearly the scoundrel had already accomplished his object.) "Five years ago this was fair and away the best building firm in the neighbourhood, and Smithers was practically unknown; but for four, or certainly three years, we have not had a decent contract. Smithers has always been just under our price, and had every big job in the land. Do you think I don't know how he got them? I told my father once, but he was an honourable man, and he trusted you. Do you imagine I could not see why you were so anxious to help me prepare this Town Hall estimate? Stop here in your money up to Saturday next. Take it, and clear out!"

Wilmer began to whimper.

"Think of my wife and child, sir!"

"Did you think of my mother and the children? Did it ever occur to you that they might starve or box in the streets when you had finally ruined them? Get out of this office at once, and never come back, unless you want the biggest hiding you ever had in your life!"

Then Wilmer altered his tone. He picked up the money, crammed his hat on his head, and swaggered to the door.

"All right, my boy, I'll make you pay for this! I'll bring an action for wrongful dismissal. You can't prove anything. You are a sight too cocksure. A bit of a boy like you! Think you know more of the business than men who have been in it all their lives. We'll down you yet!"

And off he went.

Tom Burton sat down at his desk with a heavy heart, but yet with a certain feeling of relief. For the last two months, since his father's death, he had been carefully going into the affairs of the business, and it was with a feeling of almost terror that he realised how near they were to ruin.

Not that he was in the slightest degree afraid for himself.

He felt pretty confident that, with a strong pair of hands and a strong head, he could give a good account of himself in the battle of life; but sometimes when poring over the books until late into the night his thoughts would turn to the future of his mother and little brothers and sisters, and he owned to himself that the prospect made him feel "a bit sick." It was a heavy responsibility for a lad of eighteen, but he braced himself to bear it.

For some time past he had been sure that Wilmer was at the bottom of their troubles, and now that he had disposed of him he felt that he had made the first step towards repairing the damage that had been done. But though he had fully made up his mind to conquer in the end, he knew that he was in for a long and hard fight.

He was sitting at his desk, deep in thought, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a bright-faced boy of fourteen, just in time for school.

"I say, Tom, cannot you come on the river to-night? Don't be always fagging in this beastly office. You haven't had a row this summer."

"Precious little rowing I shall get this year!" said Tom. "Look here, Dick, I want to talk to you. Shut the door, and come and sit down."

"Where's Wilmer?" asked Dick, looking round the office.

"Gone," said Tom briefly. "That's what I want to talk about. Wilmer's sacked because he has been playing us false, and trying to ruin the firm! And he gave a brief description of Wilmer's dismissal.

"The fact is," he concluded, "the business is in a jolly bad way, and unless we can get this contract for the new Town Hall, I am afraid we are ruined. It's going to be a pretty stiff fight even then, and I want you to help. I must have someone in the office in place of Wilmer. Hicks, the office boy, can look after the place, but I cannot let him touch the books. You are fourteen, and smart at figures. I want you to leave school, and come and help me here with the book-keeping and accounts. Will you?"

"Rather!" said Dick. "No more homelessons for me. When can I start?"

"You will have to start to-morrow morning. I will write to the school to-night. But remember it is going to be work, and jolly hard work. Smithers is evidently determined to break us, and now, if Wilmer joins him, we shall have the two scoundrels to fight against. But if we can only secure this job to-morrow it will give us a bit of a start."

"But you say Wilmer saw your figures. Won't he have given us away to Smithers by this time?"

Tom smiled.

"That was only a dummy in my desk, and the price was a good deal above what I am really quoting. The real estimate is in the safe in my bed-room. By the by, now you are in the business you had better have one of the keys. Here you are. That estimate has got to be in the town clerk's hands by eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. If anything happens to me in the meantime, don't forget that."

Tom spoke half in jest, and little knew how much would depend on his idle words.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
A Midnight Visitor—Foul Play.

TOM and Dick Burton slept on the first floor in a room overlooking the yard. In one corner was the small safe, which Tom had mentioned to his brother, and when going to bed that night he opened it and showed him a packet of papers. "This is the estimate I told you of," he said. "This will make Smithers sit up to-morrow."

"What will he do when he gets the dummy figures from Wilmer?"

"Think I am a mug to quote such a high figure, and cut in just below, or he may see through the game, in which case he will have to fight square for once, with the certainty of being beaten."

"But might he not beat us even on the square?"

"No, he can't. I'll tell you why. There is a lot of stonework in this job. Now, we have got a lot of stone of the kind required—old stock, which has been lumbering up the yard for years. We can well afford to put this in cheap for the sake of securing the job, and this is where we shall have Mr. Smithers. There is no one else competing, for he worked the council, and they decided that only local firms should be allowed to tender, and the job is too big for anyone in the town besides Smithers and ourselves. No, I think we have got him either way this time."

If Tom could have seen the dark figure crouching in the field at the bottom of the yard, perhaps he would not have felt so confident. It was Wilmer, who, having had a very bad quarter of an hour with Smithers, had come back to make a desperate effort to get a sight of the real estimate. Smithers had cursed him for a fool for being found out, and for letting the boy fool him with dummy figures.

"You infernal idiot," he cried, "to let a schoolboy like that get the better of you! Who on earth did I ever take on with such a fool? I have done with you for ever, unless you get me the real figures by seven o'clock to-morrow."

Wilmer crouched in the dark meadow, watching the window of the boys' bed-room. Presently, when the light went out, he stood up and drew in his breath sharply.

"Now for it!" he muttered. "In a quarter of an hour those boys will be fast asleep, and then comes my chance. First of all for the dog!"

He waited ten minutes, and then scaled the wall and stole noiselessly along the yard till he heard the dog's chain rattle on the kennel.

"Quiet, Nelson!" he whispered; and the dog recognised him with a sleepy wag of the tail.

Wilmer took a biscuit from his pocket, and gave it to him, watching him eat it lazily and curl up again for sleep.

"He's all right," he said, with an evil smile. "Now the ladder!"

He went to the shed, brought a short ladder, and set it against the sill of the boys' window; then he mounted cautiously.

The window was open, and he peered in. It was too dark to see much, but he heard the regular breathing of the two lads, tired out by their day's work.

With beating heart he climbed through on to the floor. He felt his task should be easy, for he knew the room and the position of the safe, but he trembled with excitement, and his hand shook as he took out a little electric lamp.

Aided by this, he found Tom Burton's clothes, took out his keys, and stole across to the safe. The key rattled against the lock as he put it in, and one of the boys stirred. Wilmer held his breath, and crouched at the safe.

After a minute he turned the lock, and silently opened the door. Then he stopped again and listened, but the sound of breathing was as regular as before, and so he flashed his lamp into the interior of the safe, and peered in.

He was bathed in perspiration and shaking in every limb. Right before him he saw a thick envelope, which he hastily caught up, but as he did so the lamp slipped from his shaking hand, and fell to the floor with a crash. Then the last remnant of his nerve forsook him, and he rushed for the window, slid down the ladder, and fled blindly through the yard and across the fields, his mind a blank, save for the one frantic desire to get away.

Presently he stopped from sheer exhaustion, and found himself nearly a mile from Burton's house, with the packet clasped tightly in his hand.

Dick Burton woke with a start.

"What's that, Tom?" he cried.

Tom was already out of bed.

"Burglar, I think," he replied, going to the window. "Yes, there is someone in the yard. Here, Nelson! Seize him! Nelson, Nelson! Why—what is the matter with the dog? The fellow has gone now, whoever he was. By, there is a ladder here. Light the gas, Dick, quick!"

When their eyes fell on the open safe both boys uttered exclamations of dismay.

"The estimate!" cried Tom. "Gone! Ah, no, here it is!" he continued, as he opened a little drawer. "That's all right, thank goodness! The money is all right, too, and so are the books. What could the fellow want, whoever he was? Look, this is the lamp, which he must have dropped—and a fine thing here. Now Dick, get into bed and be off to sleep again, you will have a busy day to-morrow. You need not go up till seven. I will go down and open the office at six, as usual."

Punctually at six o'clock Tom went down and commenced to "open the yard," as he called it. He unlocked the big gates, and the office and workshop, and then went to the stable. Here, it was always his practice to go in and look at the horses. He pushed open the door and stepped inside, into the semi-darkness, when, suddenly, he felt himself seized from behind, and a large cloth was pressed against his face, covering his eyes, nose, and mouth, nearly choking him. He struggled for a few moments ineffectually, then all was blank.

The next thing of which he was conscious was a strong smell of hay. He opened his eyes, but could see nothing; it was perfectly dark. He lay still for a minute, wondering vaguely where he was, then, in a flash he remembered being attacked in the stable. He tried to move his hands, but found that they were securely tied behind his back, up to the elbows. His legs, he discovered that they were also bound, while there was something over his mouth which made it difficult for him to breathe.

"Well, this is a fine state of things," he said to himself; "I wonder where I am?"

He kicked out as well as he could with his legs tied, and found that he was lying on some soft and clinging substance, which yielded under the pressure of his feet. He turned on his back and felt it with his fingers.

"Ah, hay, of course! I must be in the loft. I wonder what the time is? Getting late, I expect. The horses must be out, or I should have heard them. How on earth am I to get out with this sack, or whatever it is, over my head? If I move I am almost certain to fall through the trap into the stable. Phew, how hot it is!"

He wriggled himself slowly along on the hay, and at length slipped off on to the floor of the loft. Reaching out again with his feet, he found the opening for the trapdoor into the stable.

"Well, as I am not an acrobat and cannot go down the ladder with my hands and feet tied and my head in a sack, I guess I shall have to stay here till somebody comes along. I can make a noise, anyhow"—as he banged his heels on the floor of the loft. But nobody came, and he lay there listening, as it seemed, for hours, and making fruitless endeavours to release his hands.

Meanwhile, the hour for presenting the estimate for the all-important Town Hall contract was fast approaching.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
On the Stroke of Time.

WHEN Dicky Burton woke next morning he wondered vaguely what day of the week it was, and whether he had any home-lessons to do. Then he remembered the events of the previous day and night, and jumped quickly out of bed. It was a quarter past seven; the office was open, and several of the men were in the yard.

"Late first morning," said Dick; "this wont do." And in a few minutes he was dressed and down in the office.

Marsh, the foreman, came in and nodded to Dick.

"Wilmer not come?" he asked.

"Wilmer's got the sack," said Dick. "I am in his place. What can I do for you?"

Marsh looked surprised.

"Where's Master Tom?" he asked.

"Isn't he down the yard?"

"No. I have been waiting here for three-quarters of an hour. I want to know about that job at Savage's. D'you think he is in the house?"

"No, he isn't. He came out at six, as usual. He must be in the yard somewhere. He would not leave the place all open."

"Well, I came in at half-past six, and the office was open as it always is, and the neighbourhood. So was the stables and the workshop, but I ain't seen a sign of Master Tom, and I can't wait no longer. I'm going over to Savage's, and I'll come in again after breakfast."

Dick set about his work, and presently, when the office-boy arrived, went in to breakfast, but Tom did not appear. Remembering their midnight visitor, Dick was really somewhat alarmed at his brother's unexpected absence, although he kept his fears to himself and pretended that Tom had been called away on business. But, as the morning wore on and there was no sign, his anxiety increased. He made inquiries of the workpeople, but none of them had seen anything of Tom that morning.

"I can't understand it," he said to himself; "there must be something wrong. Why, he ought to be starting for the Town Hall in a few minutes with our estimate. Ah, that's it! Smithers, or Wilmer, or some of those scoundrels must have got him away somewhere on a false scent, so that he shall not present the tender, and so lose the contract."

It wanted but a few minutes to eleven when the town clerk of Sheptown entered his office that morning. He found it occupied by only one person—a stout, red-faced man, with watery blue eyes and a somewhat effusive manner.

"Good-morning, Mr. Longman—good-morning! Here I am, waiting for you, the only representative of the building trade of this borough."

The town clerk bowed coldly.

"It is five minutes to eleven, Mr. Smithers," he said; "there is plenty of time for others yet." And he took up a newspaper.

"Quite so, quite so," returned Smithers, walking to the window, which commanded a full view of the market-place, and peering anxiously out. "There is plenty of time; but somehow I may be mistaken, of course—but I don't think there is likely to be much competition for this job. You see, when the mayor—I mean the council—decided to limit the tenders to local firms, they practically killed competition. Dawes, some people might say, but it is not for me to complain."

"No, indeed!"

"Not that I am afraid of competition," continued Smithers. "I have gained most of the jobs for the past here for a long time past in fair competition, and I say with confidence that I am not afraid of losing this one." And he again peered out of the window for a possible rival.

"What about Burton's?" asked Mr. Longman.

"Oh, Burton's are no good! They never did much in the father's time, and they are not likely to do better now that a schoolboy is the head of the firm."

"The schoolboy, as you call him, is a very smart lad, and he has had two or three years with a first-class London firm."

"Ah!" said Smithers, taking out his watch. "He may be smart, but he is not quite smart enough for this contract. Time's up, Mr. Longman, I guess the job's mine!"

The clock has not struck yet," said Mr. Longman.

Mr. Smithers was not such a favourite with him as he was reputed to be with the mayor. Just then the door opened, and a small boy appeared, carrying a sealed packet. He took off his cap and bowed politely to Mr. Longman.

"I am Messrs. Burton & Son's clerk," he

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said, "and I have the honour to present to you our estimate for the Town Hall specification."

The town clerk took the package with a smile, which broadened as he noted the evident discomfiture of Smithers. Mr. Smithers looked not only very disappointed but a trifle uneasy.

"Where's your brother, boy?" he asked. "Or—or Wilmer?"

"My brother has been called away on important business," answered Dicky, with much dignity. "Mr. Wilmer is no longer in our employ."

"I will now proceed to examine the estimates," said Mr. Longman, as he cut open the envelopes and took out their contents. "Smithers, seven thousand eight hundred and fifty pounds," he read, "Burton, seven thousand five hundred. Burton's have it. I congratulate you, my boy. You will have to furnish me with proof that you are financially able to undertake the contract, and you had better tell your brother to come in and see me as soon as possible. Well, Mr. Smithers," he continued, with a chuckle; "beaten on the post—eh?"

Smithers was purple with rage and disappointment.

"Yah!" he spluttered. "They will never be able to do it. What do a couple of boys know about building? They won't get a guarantee, and you will have to come to me after all." And ramming his hat on his head, he strode out of the room.

THE 4th CHAPTER.

The Missing Title Deeds.

WHEN Dicky Burton got back to the yard the first person he met was Tom.

"Hallo, Tom! We've got the contract!" he cried.

"Good man!" was the reply. "I've been worrying all the morning, thinking that we might lose it after all."

"Where have you been?"

Tom looked rather foolish.

"In the loft," he replied, and told Dick what had happened. "I was in a rare funk when I heard the church clock strike eleven, I can tell you. Every time anyone came down the yard I had been trying to attract their attention, but nobody seemed to hear. Then at last I heard one of the men come into the stable, and I kicked for all I was worth, and old Tom Stokes came up and let me out. Now I reckon it is time I had breakfast. Come inside and tell me about the Town Hall job."

"Old Smithers was there, and asked where you were."

"Old scoundrel! I'll bet he knew better than anyone else."

"Do you think that he——"

"He may have helped, but I doubt if he would have run the risk of being caught. All the same, he must have known about it, though I expect that Wilmer actually did the job. You see, Wilmer knew that I always go into the stable first thing, before anyone is about."

"How could he have got in?"

"Easily enough, by a ladder into the loft and then down again inside. Well, what happened next?"

"Smithers looked jolly uncomfortable. You see, I only got there on the stroke of the clock, and, as he was the only other builder there, he had made up his mind that it was going to be a walkover for him. When he found we had got it he was awfully sick, and Longman chipped him a bit, which made him worse, and so he yelled out that we could never do it, and that we would not be able to get a guarantee. What is that?"

"Why, we have to show them that we have sufficient capital—ready money—to undertake the job."

"Oh, yes! Longman said that, and asked if you would go round and see him."

"Yes, I will," said Tom thoughtfully; "but I shall have to go and see the bank first. I'll go now. You had better go and mind the office, and let the boy go to his dinner."

Presently Tom followed his brother into the office, and commenced searching for something in his desk. His brow was wrinkled in a deep frown, and he looked worried.

"What's up, Tom? Lost anything?"

"Yes; some papers. I thought they were in the safe, but I can't find them. Well, they are not here," he continued, as he shut the desk again. "Have you taken anything out of the safe?"

"Only the estimate, this morning. What have you lost?"

"The title deeds of the house and yard," said Tom gravely.

"Is it important?"

"Yes, it is. Look here. We have got to get the ready money for this Town Hall job. To do so I intended to raise a mortgage, from the bank, on this place, which is the only bit of property we have got left. But I cannot do that without the deeds, and now they have gone. If we do not find them we shall lose the job after all."

They went back into the house and again ransacked the safe, but without avail.

"I'll swear they were in here. I saw them only a day or two ago. They were in a large envelope."

"Perhaps the burglar—Wilmer—took them last night. He got the safe open."

"Not likely; they would be no use to him—or Smithers. They would not know that I wanted to raise money on them."

"What will happen if we do not find them?"

"It will mean a lot of legal business, which means time and money. It would be a matter of months before we could raise a mortgage, and the Town Hall affair is urgent. If I do not show them by Saturday that I am prepared to undertake it, they have the option of cancelling the contract and going to someone else."

Every nook and cranny was ransacked over and over again. The safe, the bed-room in which it stood, and the office were searched thoroughly by the two boys, but without success, and when night came and they retired to rest, they were both dejected, but not defeated.

The following days were anxious ones for the two boys. Tom paid several visits to the bank, and when he returned he looked, if anything, more worried than before. He also had an interview with his solicitor, from which, however, he derived but little consolation.

When Friday morning came he was almost in despair.

"Why don't you go and see Longman?" asked Dick. "He was very friendly. Perhaps he could do something."

"It is not likely," replied Tom, "but there is no harm in trying." And he went.

Mr. Longman heard him sympathetically.

"I am afraid I cannot do much," he said; "but there is one thing perhaps I can do. Sit down here and write me a formal application for an extension of time—say a week. There is a meeting of the council this morning, and I think I can get it granted. The mayor, as you know, is very friendly with Smithers, and will probably oppose it, but Smithers is not popular among the council generally, and I have no doubt you will get it. That is all I can do. For the rest, I should advise you to advertise for the recovery of the deeds, and put the matter in the hands of the police. If you think your late clerk had anything to do with it you might be able to frighten him into giving them up."

In the afternoon Tom got a note from Mr. Longman, saying that the extension had been granted, and later on he met Smithers in the street.

Smithers was not in the best of tempers. He, of course, knew how things were going, and had made sure that, by the following day, the council would have cancelled their contract with Burtons', and, as a necessary consequence, would come to him to do the job, on what he flattered himself would be his own terms.

"Well, I hear you have bitten off more than you can chew with the Town Hall contract," he said.

"Ah, one hears a lot of things in a little town like this," said Tom gaily. "Only the other day I heard something which would put one of our most respected tradesmen into quod, if it were more generally known—as it may be," he added.

Smithers was silent. Tom could see that his shot had told.

"I wonder if he has the deeds?" he thought. "What is the matter with the Town Hall contract?" he asked, aloud.

(*Continued on the next page.*)

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"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, starts in "The Boys' Herald" This Week.



The crowd gave a loud cheer as they caught sight of Tom with the child in his arms. Another fireman ran up the ladder and took her from him.

"Report says you can't get a guarantee. Of course you can't. I told Longman so when you first got the contract. You two boys, who ought to be at school, seem to think you know more about building than a man who has been in the trade all his life. Why, you have sacked the only man in your business who knows anything about the trade."

"Meaning your friend, Mr. Wilmer, I presume?"

"He is no friend of mine," said Smithers sharply.

"What is he doing now?" asked Tom innocently.

"Drinking himself to death," said Smithers, without hesitation.

"Oh, so you are still in communication," thought Tom.

"Yes. So I understood from the police," he said.

Smithers looked genuinely surprised, and presently went off, leaving Tom still uncertain as to whether he knew anything about the missing deeds.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
Tom to the Rescue—Smithers Caves In.

(N the wall of the boys' bed-room was a curious-looking instrument, like a large electric bell. This was the fire alarm, connected, by an electric wire, with the headquarters of the Shepstown Volunteer Fire Brigade, of which Tom was a member. Just before midnight the boys were awakened by three loud strokes from the bell. At the first one Tom sat up in bed, at the second he sprang to the floor, and before the third rang out he had opened the cupboard by the bedside and was taking out his uniform. Dick was also out of bed, and was groping for the matches.

"How many was it?" he asked, as he lighted the gas and began to get into his clothes.

"Three, I think," was the reply. "Wait a minute, and we shall see."

After an interval of half a minute the gong sounded again—one, two, three.

"Three," said Tom, pulling on his long boots. "That's the Bridge division, the worst part of the town."

He caught up his belt and ran downstairs, buttoning his tunic as he went, closely followed by Dick, who had put on his jacket and knickerbockers over his nightshirt.

Together they raced up the street to the fire-station, which was brilliantly lighted. Herrick, the resident engineer, an old hand from the Metropolitan Brigade, had already lighted his fire in the engine, and was getting out the hose-reel.

"You are first, Burton," he said. "It is one of those tenement houses at the bottom of Acres Lane. You had better cut on with the reel, and I will send on the escape as soon as some more arrive."

The two boys ran off with the hose-reel to Acres Lane, a narrow street leading down to the river. At the bottom were half-a-dozen high houses which were let out in flats. Smoke was pouring from the doorway and front windows of one of these.

A small crowd of neighbours and loafers from the public-houses had already gathered, and the inmates were rushing out into the road, half clothed, carrying with them such articles as they had managed to lay hands on in their sudden flight.

Tom, with the rapidity born of constant drilling, fixed his hose to a hydrant, and, telling Dick to turn on the water, plunged through the smoke into the house.

The fire, he found, proceeded from a back room on the ground floor, which was already a blazing furnace, and, though he poured water into it with a will, he saw at a glance that it was already too far advanced for his single jet to have any appreciable effect.

A faint cheer, from outside, announced the arrival of the escape.

"It is to be hoped that the steamer will come soon," said Tom to himself, "or the place is done for."

He was standing in the doorway of the room, playing the hose on the ceiling and walls in a vain attempt to prevent the fire spreading, when the ceiling and part of the floor above fell with a crash. The flames at once rushed through the aperture, and he saw that the room above was already well alight. It seemed but a matter of minutes before the whole house would be ablaze from top to bottom. The heat was already terrific, and, although soaked to the skin, he felt as if he were being roasted alive by those awful flames. Would the engine never come? It seemed hours, though in reality it was only a few minutes, before he saw helmets gleaming through the smoke around him. A moment later, with a roar louder than that of the fire, a huge column of water was flung into the furnace before him, and he knew that the steamer had got to work.

Another fireman came and relieved him of his hose, and he retired to the street. The escape was now removed from the wall of the house and was standing in the road.

"All out?" he asked the escape fireman.

"Yes, I should hope so," returned the other. "Look at it."

It was indeed a fearful sight. Smoke and flames were pouring from nearly all the windows, and the firemen were expecting every moment that the roof would fall in.

Tom caught sight of Dick, on the edge of the crowd, beckoning to him.

"That is where Wilmer lives," he said, as Tom approached.

"Yes," said a woman, standing near. "Mrs. Wilmer went out just before the fire started, to fetch her drunken husband, I expect. I wonder if she took the child with her? I haven't seen her brought out."

At that moment a frenzied woman rushed, screaming, through the crowd, and would have entered the burning house had not the firemen prevented her.

"My child—my child!" she screamed.

"It is Mrs. Wilmer," said Dick.

"There is no child there," said a fireman. "Everyone has been brought out of the house."

"Which room—quick?" asked Tom.

The woman pointed to a window on the top floor, as yet untouched by the flames, but which was belching thick clouds of smoke.

Tom ran to the escape fireman.

"Was anyone brought from that room?" he asked, pointing.

"No. There was no one there."

"Put up the escape; there is a child there."

"Nonsense, man! The room is empty. I went to the window myself. Besides, it is madness to try to enter now."

Tom made no reply, but swung the escape round, and, with the help of an onlooker, got it in position and ran up the ladder.

The crowd gave a shout, partly of encouragement, partly of fear.

"Don't let him go!" exclaimed a woman.

"Why, he is only a boy!"

"Bravo, Tom!" shouted Dick; but, like a good many others, he held his breath as he saw his brother disappear through the window.

Tom scrambled to the floor and stood by the window. The heat and smoke were stifling, and the room was perfectly dark save for a red glow in the further corner, whence came an ominous crackling sound.

The child was well known to him, and he called "Nellie, Nellie!" but there was no answer. Then he started to grope round the room in the darkness. Twice he was driven back to the window for air, but at the third trial he found the bed, and, spreading his hands over it, felt the limp form of the child.

The next moment he was at the window with her in his arms, just as, with an appalling crash, the floor of the room gave way and the flames surged up around him. He clutched the window-sill as he felt the floor giving way, and hung there in sight of the crowd, who gave a loud cheer when they caught sight of the child in his arms. Another fireman ran up the ladder and took her from him, and, clambering across the sill, Tom followed him down to the ground, amid the frantic cheers of the crowd. His tunic was considerably the worse for the adventure, but, beyond some slight burns on his hands and face, he was unharmed.

Little Nellie Wilmer lay upon the ground, very white and still, but, thanks to the brave young fireman, still living. By her side her mother knelt, weeping tears of gratitude, while the father, sober enough now, stood by in silence.

* * * * * * *

The next morning Wilmer called at the office to see Tom Burton. He looked very sheepish, and fingered his hat nervously while he was speaking.

"I—I can't thank you enough for what you did last night, Master Tom," he began, in a broken sort of voice. "This here," he continued, pulling a packet, which Tom recognised as the missing deeds, out of his pocket, "is your property. I took it out of the safe the other night, when I broke in here like a burglar. I thought it was the estimate. When I found what it was I only kept it to spite you, because you turned me off. It is the drink that has brought me to this—the drink and Smithers. He lent me money, and then put the screw on, and then swore he would sell me up if I did not give him information about the business. He'll do it, too, and—and—well, I suppose you will send for the police," he concluded piteously.

"What a miserable cur the fellow is!" thought Tom.

"Did Smithers tell you to break in here?" he asked aloud.

"Yes."

"And to tie me up in the loft?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't think we need trouble the police. You come and make an affidavit to that effect, and, while I hold that, neither of us need fear any more trouble from Smithers."

Tom was right.

That night he had an interview with his trade rival. Smithers at first refused him audience, but, not to be denied, Tom forced his way into the man's presence. The angry words of defiance that rested on the contractor's lips were never uttered.

"The game is up, Smithers," said Tom coolly. "Wilmer, out of gratitude to me for rescuing his child, has told me everything. If you are wise you will fight me fair, or"—icily—"we will make a criminal prosecution of it if you like, and you shall be given every chance of defending yourself at the sessions. Wilmer's signed affidavit and his evidence will be brought against you. You can bluster it out if you prefer it. Come, what do you say?"

Say! What could Smithers say? He broke down, and he was very humble when Tom left him.

The Burtons got their contract. They fulfilled it to entire satisfaction, and so it came about that the old firm was restored to its old-time prestige, while Smithers's concern received a severe blow, from which it never entirely recovered.

THE END.

(Next week a grand complete cricketing story, by Jack North, and a thrilling tale of the cycle track, by A. S. Hardy, will appear in THE BOYS' REALM, which will return to its usual size and price,—sixteen pages, 1d.)

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