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THE PHANTOM CYCLIST.

A Tale of a Race for a £1000 Prize. By A. S. Hardy.

Even as the shout, "Ensoll wins," rent the air—and pretty Elsie Moore clapped her hands—Leigh closed in on his rival again, and, riding in perfect style, left him.

No. 367. Vol. VI.] EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY. [Saturday, July 13, 1907.

THE PHANTOM CYCLIST.

A Tale of a Race for a £1,000 Prize. By A. S. HARDY.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The Fancy-dress Ball—Some Club Matters Heard—Leigh Rides Home — Kelly's Race—De Lange—The Phantom Cyclist.

It was ten o'clock, and the fancy-dress ball given by the Nomads Cycling Club at the Assembly Rooms, Kesterton, was in full swing. Men and women, boys and girls, a few of them clad in evening dress, but most of them wearing fancy costumes copied from all parts of the world, thronged the perfect floor of the ball-room, the Hungarian band was playing the latest waltz, and the many-lighted electric candelabra gave the last touch of brilliancy to the scene.

It seemed as if the majority of the dancers intended to keep it up until the small hours of the morning, but as ten o'clock struck, the strokes on the big clock of the Town Hall next door being distinctly heard, Harry Leigh, who was clad from head to foot in the dress of a white Mephistopheles, or devil, and who had whitened his face for it, to be his own property —and you can guess how I should like that."

Philip Harker spoke bitterly, but he had good reason for so doing, as Harry Leigh well knew.

"All right, old man!" Harry said. "I'll win the Castleton Cup all right enough if I can. That is what I am training for now. But I don't think you need fear Ensell's winning it again in any case. If the latest news can be relied upon, he has turned professional, and will race in Paris on Sunday next."

Philip Harker's brows clouded.

"Benham saw De Lange, the French crack, the other night," he said. "He is training in the neighbourhood during the fortnight he is staying here, using the road for his speed sprints. He told him that Ensell had decided to race in Paris. But I don't think that news strengthens my regard for him."

And the captain of the Nomads turned away with a bitter laugh.

As Harry Leigh, continuing on his way with a cheery good-night, sprang down the marble steps towards the doors, he almost ran into the arms of a pretty girl who was coming up them talking to and laughing to a good-looking youngster of nineteen. This was Will Benham, one of the best of the Nomads' racing cracks, and secretary of the club.

The girl was Elsie Moore, the "belle of Kesterton," as people called her. She had once been engaged to Phil Harker, but the engagement had been broken off owing to the interference of James Ensell, a good-looking member of the Nomads, who had taken advantage of Philip Harker's friendship to win the girl he loved from him, who had been expelled from the club, who had been given to doubtful racing in his own country, and was said now to have turned professional in Paris.

Certain it is that Ensell, as a speed rider, had improved out of all recognition during the last year, and reflecting on the intelligence, which was supposed to have come from De Lange, a French racing crack, who had come over to stay with some friends near Kesterton for a few weeks. Harry Leigh had found himself forced to admit that there was no real reason why Ensell should not take a place amongst the greatest racing cracks of the day.

"Good-evening, Miss Moore!" said Harry, stopping and extending his hand to the girl, with a smile. "I didn't know you intended to come to the dance. Have you been here long?"

"No," answered the girl, "I have only just come."

Harry, after making a sign to Benham, drew the pretty girl to one side.

"Elsie," he said, "there is Phil Harker upstairs eating his heart out for you. Won't you say a kind word to him? I never saw such a change in a man in my life. I don't think he cares for life since you've been unkind to him. He hasn't danced a dance this evening, though goodness knows he could have had chances enough."

Elsie Moore's eyes flashed.

"I have nothing to say to Mr. Harker!" she said, the look in her eyes hardening. "He behaved very badly to Mr. Ensell, and I'll never forgive him—never!"

Harry Leigh let her go. What was the use of his pointing out to her that Ensell was a cad not fit to black Philip Harker's boots? What would be the good of his explaining that Philip had nothing to do with Ensell's expulsion from the club? He would not be believed, and so infatuated was the pretty girl with Ensell, that no testimony in the world against him, however strong, would have shaken her faith in him.

"Poor Philip has got to wait until time proves Ensell to be what he is," muttered Harry Leigh, as he proceeded on his way to the door. Before he reached the exit, however, a voice hailed him.

"Hi, Harry!"

It was Benham calling him.

"My dear old chap!" cried the club secretary, as he came up. "How the deuce are you going to get home? You've three miles to go, and there isn't another train to-night. I think all the cabs in Kesterton have been chartered. You're not going to walk home in that ghostly get-up, are you? You'll frighten all the rustics there are about out of their wits!"

"I've got my racing bicycle here, Will," laughed Harry Leigh. "At this time of night the country roads are deserted, and in the cool of the night it will be a pleasure to put in a mile or more at racing pace."

"How about your togs?" said the secretary, pointing to Harry's white silk costume.

"Oh, I shan't hurt them!" answered the lad. "I got the costume from my brother's theatrical wardrobe, and it can easily be cleaned."

"You look very artistic," laughed Will Benham. "What a get-up! Those false eyebrows are a treat to look at, and that moustache is fierce enough for the devil in 'Faust' himself. But the white costume is so novel, Harry. I must say I like it, though. By the bye, I wish you haven't any streets to ride through, but merely country lanes. You would cause a sensation!"

"No one will see me as it is," said Harry Leigh; "and I shall cover the three miles in no time."

"Well, De Lange usually takes a lung-opener about this time of night before he retires to rest. He is staying with the Mortimers at Holly Lodge, as I dare say you know. Hal He usually races along the level stretch that runs into Kelly's Corner, where you make the turn. They say he's a bundle of nerves. If you see him, shout out, or else he'll take you for a ghost, and goodness knows what harm you might do then. A nervous man might never recover from the shock of seeing a ghostly thing like you riding along the highway."

"All right!" laughed Harry. "If I do run across De Lange, which isn't likely, I won't fail to warn him, I promise you."

Five minutes later, Harry Leigh, having got his racing bicycle out of the stables behind the Assembly Rooms, lit his lamp, and started out on his ride homeward.

A few swift turns of the pedals carried him beyond the village street of Kesterton, and, taking the first turning to the right, where four roads met, he lit his machine's lamp, by the rapid manipulation of his 86 gear along the level flint road.

There wasn't a breath of wind stirring. The swish of the rubber tyres upon the hard, level surface could scarcely be heard. Opening his lungs that he might breathe in the pure air of the country and expel the foul atmosphere of the ball-room, he felt a perfect ecstasy obtaining possession of him, and as he swiftly rounded a corner into the leafy lane that runs from here to Kelly's Corner, where the level mile that Will Benham had referred to began, he gave a shout of delight and literally hurled his machine onward.

The swift rush extinguished his light. But as there was no one likely to be about at that time of night, and as no policeman would be likely to interfere with him, he did not stop to relight it.

Presently he topped the brow of the hill, and shot down the incline towards Kelly's Corner. He had forgotten all about the Frenchman, De Lange, being likely to be there. He was thinking only of having the ghostly dress he wore, nor did he realise for a moment what an extraordinary figure he must cut in his strange attire.

It so happened, however, that the French racing man, De Lange, had just left Holly Lodge a short while before for his nocturnal spin. He was clad in racing get-up, and had quietly pedalled his machine to within a hundred yards of Kelly's Corner, where he had dismounted for a moment to take a breather before putting in a fast mile home.

He had turned his bicycle into a support, and was leaning against the framework, as he glanced along the road towards Kelly's Corner, thinking how beautiful and restful the scene was, and how lovely a night it was.

In the east the moon was lazily rising, and the atmospheric conditions made it look ten times its usual size. It did not give forth its customary silvery rays, but glowed red-gold, scarcely serving to give light to the dull high way.

The Frenchman was deep in a brown study, when suddenly he uttered a yell of fright.

And well he might, for as he looked it seemed to him that a phantom figure suddenly flew out of the pines at Kelly's Corner, and came swooping down upon him at an unearthly speed.

White and horrible, clad in the devil's garb, with grotesque hair upon its ghostly face, the phantom figure made at him.

De Lange's hair stiffened upon his head, and with a scream that might have been heard a mile away, he sprang into his saddle, and fixing his shoe blocks in their slots, bow, he knew not how, sped along the level mile of the highway as hard as he could go.

From behind him a terrible voice shouted "Stop! Stop!" but he paid no heed.

The Frenchman raced at world's record pace along the hard flint road.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Race — De Lange will not accept Harry's Apology — a Savate and La Boxe —After the Battle—The Mortimers—An Astonishing Proposition.

Of course, when he had turned the corner into the main road, Harry Leigh had at once caught sight of De Lange. But at the same time it never occurred to him to shout out, and before he could realise what had happened, he heard the French racing crack give vent to a terrible yell, and throw himself into his saddle and ride away like a madman.

Harry Leigh knew what had happened then. The Frenchman had taken him for a ghost. No wonder! It would not have been easy for the Frenchman to make out the outline of the bicycle in the gloom, and she tyres were quite noiseless, or even if heard, might easily have been mistaken for the sighing of the breeze at night.

"Stop! Stop!" shouted Harry, but the louder he shouted the harder the Frenchman rode.

Then Harry Leigh put down his head. Since De Lange was going so fast he thought it not half a bad idea to try and overtake him. If he could even hang on to the Parisian flyer he would be doing good work.

Harry revelled in the fun. With head bent right over the handles, and bringing all the combined muscles of body, limbs, and feet into play, and concentrating his mind upon the effort, he hurled his racing bicycle along the level stretch at a frightful speed. Once he looked up, and then, joy, he saw that, though De Lange was riding hard, he was slowly but surely coming back to him. Harry rode harder than ever. When three-quarters of the level mile had been covered, he found De Lange but a few lengths in front. The boy gritted his teeth and made a last effort, and in the final quarter of a mile he rode his man down and passed him like a flash. Then he sat up, and the Frenchman, whose eyes had been starting out of his head previously to this, saw that the white-robed figure that he had taken to be a ghost was nothing more or less than a human being clad in fancy costume, upon whose body and bicycle the moon now set her rays as if deriding the foreigner.

As Harry's bicycle slackened pace, the Frenchman came up.

"I'm sorry, monsieur," said the Nomads' crack politely, "but I think I frightened you. Believe me, I had no intention of so doing. I am sorry."

De Lange's eyes blazed; his chest heaved; his indignation was immense. Besides, now that he knew this phantom being was a man, he felt mortified at his defeat.

He—De Lange—who had never yet been beaten, had been easily defeated by a Briton, and he had always averred that the British could not race upon the bicycle!

"You are a stupid fool!" he spluttered. "I will make you pay for eat. You mad, must be imbecile. You shall be locked up. Vere ees your fight?"

Harry Leigh's smile vanished. There was no mistaking the Frenchman's rage. By this time they had descended a gentle slope, and had arrived outside some gates belonging to a small estate situated alongside the high-road. Harry Leigh dismounted. The Frenchman followed suit, leaving his bicycle in his temper upon the grass bank hard by.

"I will make you apologise!" he cried, doubling up his fists and adopting a boxing attitude that was quite good—for a Frenchman.

"You couldn't make me do anything, monsieur," said Harry Leigh, still politely, "if I didn't wish to; but as I must confess I am not attired in customary costume, and apparently gave you a bit of a fright, I willingly do so. I did not mean any harm, I assure you. As I am wearing this dress because I have just come from a fancy-dress ball at Kesterton—"

"It is not enough yet you apologise!" cried the Frenchman excitedly, foaming at the mouth in his rage. "I am ze great De Lange. All ze world has heard of me. You beat me on ze road on ze bicycle, and I make you pay for zat!"

"Upon my word," cried Harry Leigh impatiently, "you are a bit unreasonable, monsieur!"

"I care not!" spluttered the Frenchman. "You are Anglaise. You are a sportsman. You have done me ze great wrong. I will fight you ze savate. You shall adopt ze boxe, Anglaise."

De Lange had been edging nearer, and as he concluded his speech his right foot shot up like lightning, caught Harry Leigh in the side, and the next moment the youngster was on his back on the road, wondering what had hit him, for the Frenchman kicked like a mule.

In a moment, however, he had called his scattered senses together and risen to his feet. There was De Lange manœuvring about in front of him, shifting his feet like lightning, with his arms squared up in boxing fashion.

"One to me!" he cried, looking grimly determined. It was as you Anglaise say, ze first knock-down."

If Harry's side had not pained him so where De Lange had kicked him, he would have been obliged to laugh; but as it was he set his teeth grimly, and, seeing that there was nothing for it but to fight, he put up his hands, and the two combatants cautiously moved round and round each other.

Harry Leigh knew enough of the dangers of la savate to be careful to keep out of reach of De Lange's feet.

They presented two grotesque figures—De Lange clad in his tight-fitting racing-costume, and Harry Leigh in his white silk devil's robe.

The Frenchman was the first to lose his caution. He had knocked his opponent down once, and it gave him confidence. Besides, he hadn't discovered yet that Harry Leigh could box.

He came in close, lunged out with his feet, but missed, owing to Harry's dodging, and the next moment, receiving a crashing blow on the side of the head, he in his turn lay in the dust, wondering what had happened.

"That's one to me, monsieur!" said Harry, with a grim smile.

That blow rendered the Frenchman frantic. He forgot his caution altogether, and came weaving in, using his hands and feet with amazing activity.

Harry had all his work cut out to guard the blows. As it was, some of them got home, a kick from the Frenchman's left foot in the small rib giving him untold agony, and a right upper-cut, received smack on the nose, causing stars to appear before his eyes.

But he kept cool, and after landing home well once or twice, he measured his distance well, and, timing his blow until the Frenchman came rushing forward, he got home on the point of the jaw, and De Lange dropped to the ground, and lay there, knocked out of time.

Harry Leigh stood over him, waiting for him to rise.

"Do you want any more," he asked, "or have you had enough?"

"I ees plenty—suffeecient!" said the Frenchman, finding his speech with difficulty. "I have had enough."

Harry helped him to rise, and brushed the dust off his clothing with his hand.

"You are the best man," said De Lange, gripping him by the hand in true British fashion. "Now we friends. Ees it not so?"

"I'm sure I don't bear you malice, monsieur," said Harry, with a smile.

At that the Frenchman threw his arms about his neck before he could prevent him, and kissed him rapidly on both cheeks.

"Now, you must come in to my friends, ze Mortimers, and have some refreshments," he cried.

"If you'll excuse me," said Harry, "I have some one to see yet, and I'll get along. Besides, I couldn't go visiting in this costume, could I?"

"Bah! It does not matter," was the reply.

And De Lange pushed him in through the gates, for Holly Lodge was the entrance to which they stood was Holly Lodge, where the French racing crack was staying.

"Let me get my bicycle," protested Harry.

They picked their machines up, and Harry was led along a well-kept avenue to the door of a fine old house which nestled in the heart of a perfectly-kept garden. There were lights within, and Harry could hear some men laughing.

"If ees my friends playing ze bridge," explained the Frenchman. "I have my dressing-gown hanging in the hall. I will put it on, and ve will go to zem. It will not matter, as ze ladies have all gone to bed."

Harry, for the Frenchman, thinking all the time what a strange sort of fellow he was. Yet he couldn't help liking him.

De Lange opened the door of a room on the ground floor, and entered. Harry Leigh heard a yell of laughter go up.

"Why, what the deuce have you been doing to yourself, De Lange?" he heard a voice say. "You've got blood on your face, and your forehead is swollen. You look as if you have been fighting."

"It ees so," said the Frenchman; "and I have brought in my conqueror."

He pulled Harry into the room, and four young men who were seated at a card-table stared at him in amazement.

Three of them were the three brothers Mortimer, the owners of Holly Lodge, whom he knew well by sight. The other was a stranger to him.

"I'm Harry Leigh, of the Nomads," the cyclist explained, "and I have been to the fancy-dress ball at Kesterton, and as I was to come in this get-up, when I ran into De Lange and frightened him. I apologised, but he would not accept the apology, and insisted on a fight. That's the worst of it. He insisted on bringing me in here. I am sorry if I am disturbing you, gentlemen."

"Not at all!" cried Hugh Mortimer, who was the eldest of the three brothers, who had been champion cyclist of England in his day, and was a really good sort. "We're all good sportsmen here, I hope, including De Lange, and are glad to have you."

"But he ze best of it has not told you, messieurs," said the Frenchman, taking a chair. "Ven I saw him I thought he was a ghost, and I leaped on my bicycle and rode as I have nevaire before ridden. I outpaced ze

wind; but though he was behind me, he overtook me, and beat me—yes, beat me before the mile was passed. It was wonderful, amazing, extraordinary! Ah, what a rider, messieurs! What a man to beat ze Anglais! I congratulate Enoell in ze great race zat is to be ridden in Paris in July!"

"Do you mean what you say, De Lange?" said Hugh Mortimer, regarding Harry Leigh more closely. "Would you have us believe that Leigh, dressed as he is, fairly and squarely beat you?"

"Oui! And I vas affrighted!"

"Ah, that might have upset you, and caused you to ride more slowly."

"Non, non! It made me ride faster!"

"You are sure?"

"Certaine, monsieur! Ah, vhat a rider is zis man! I could make of him a champion of champions. You sent for me to discuss ze likelihood of my beating zis Anglaise Enoell. It ees not me you should employ, but zis man with ze twinkling feet. He ees magni-fi-cent!"

"Sit down, Leigh," said Hugh Mortimer cordially.

Harry was surprised at the turn the conversation had taken. He noticed that the Mortimers, especially Hugh, regarded him with a somewhat disconcerting stare. The reason was apparent when the elder of the brothers spoke again.

"Leigh," he said, "before I go any farther, I should like to know whether Enoell is a particular friend of yours. I know you were members of the same club; but is Enoell the sort of fellow who loses the friendship of all who know him if given time enough, it is possible you are not friends now."

"No," said Harry bitterly. "He wronged my best chum, Philip Harker, our present captain of the Nomads, and he behaved badly to the club. I don't think there is one of us has any fond feeling towards him now."

Hugh Mortimer breathed a sigh of relief.

"It is as well," he said; "and I am glad to hear it, because I can speak freely to you now, which would not have been the case had you still been a friend of Enoell's. The truth is, Leigh, that Enoell, who had entered into a business arrangement with us to ride Mortimer tyres, and a machine fitted with patents invented by myself and my brothers, and who received a rather large sum of money from us in consequence, has been systematically riding a rival machine and rival tyres. I believe he has received big sums from some Continental firms likewise. Unfortunately, I cannot get the law of him, as I have no regular contract with the man; but I have determined that if it lies within my power that he shall not win the great £1,000 Professional Mile Scratch Race that is to be run in Paris in July, and I have had De Lange over here to see me, looking upon him as the man most likely to defeat Enoell. But he is afraid of the flying Englishman. He scarcely thinks he is good enough. Now he tells me you have beaten him. That sounds promising. To come to the point, Leigh, if you can convince me that you are a better man than De Lange, will you place yourself in my hands, and those of the trainer whom I will appoint, and do your best to win the great £1,000 scratch race for us?"

Harry Leigh glanced at Hugh Mortimer in amazement.

"That means I shall have to turn professional," he said.

"Of course."

"But I am proud of my amateur status. Besides, I should lose any chance I have of winning the Castleton Cup."

"Let Harker go for it. He is man enough to win it if he cares to train properly," said Hugh Mortimer. "I know what has been up setting him. We gather a lot of news in our business which no one would suppose would ever reach us. His love for Miss Moore and Enoell's treachery have preyed on his mind to such an extent that he hasn't the heart to race."

Harry Leigh was more amazed than ever, for what Hugh Mortimer said was true.

"Let Harker train with you, under the care of the trainer I shall appoint!" cried the manufacturer of bicycle tyres eagerly. "Let him see that you have a big chance of defeating Enoell, and robbing that scoundrel of his prestige, and you will find he will soon be himself again. And as for Miss Moore, I don't think she will have much affection for Enoell left when she sees him defeated on the racetrack, and discredited in name as well as fame."

Harry Leigh was silent for quite a long time.

"I don't know what to say," he said at length. "I can't think I am as good a man as you would like to make out, though, of course, I know I am riding very much faster than I did at the end of last year. Will you give me till to-morrow to think it over?"

"Certainly," was the quick reply, as Hugh Mortimer cordially gripped him by the hand. "De Lange, you show your friend and everyone else out. And, mind, Leigh, I look upon you as our instrument of vengeance. Think of what a lot you will be wiping off the slate if you succeed in robbing Enoell of his one great ambition—the winning of the £1,000 prize."

ANSWERS
ONE PENNY.
Every Tuesday.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

At the Paris Velodrome—The Result of the Race for the Castleton Cup—Some Exciting Heats—The Final—or the £1,000 Prize—De Lange's Self-Sacrifice—Harry Leigh Defeats the Favourite.

"I SAY, Elsie, here's news! Well, I'm blessed! I never should have thought it!"

Elsie Moore, who, with a sunshade held in her right hand to protect her pretty head from the sun, sat in the reserved enclosure of the New Velodrome in Paris on the Sunday afternoon when the greatest event of the cycling year was to be raced for, looked up at her brother in surprise.

Bertie Moore had brought Elsie over to Paris on purpose for her to witness the downfall of Enoell, the man upon whom she had begun to centre her young affections, and whom she regarded with a strength of hero-worship that was the despair of Bertie as well as of most of those who knew her.

She had treated poor Phil Harker very badly, and all because of this handsome, reckless, untrustworthy motor-car-well of an Enoell, who, to speak plainly, was a thoroughly-paced rascal, and least calculated of all men in the world to make a woman happy.

"What is it, Bert?" asked the pretty girl, replying now to her brother's question.

"Will Denham, our secretary, has just cabled across the result of the race for the Castleton Cup. By Jove! Who would have thought it?"

"Arthur Wallace has won, of course," said the girl. "I knew he would. Since Enoell left there isn't a man in the club to touch him."

"I don't know about that," responded her brother. "There seems to me more than one. Wallace has only finished third. Baker was second. Who do you think has won?"

"Not Phil Harker?" said the girl, with a scornful curl of the lips.

"Yes," he replied. "Harker won easily, and in the fastest time the race has ever been run in."

A mighty cheer went up, for nearly every member of the Nomads who could come over to Paris to see Harry Leigh meet Enoell in the big event at the New Velodrome had crossed the Channel, and as Bert Moore made his announcement they caused the very roof of the stand to shake with their cheering.

As for Elsie, she lowered her sunshade and dug the ferrule end of it into the wood in front of her in a thoughtful kind of way. But she said nothing.

"Aren't you glad, Elsie," Bertie went on, "he's not fit to black Phil Harker's boots, as I've told you again and again. They've made a fuss over him here because he's managed to put up some world's records behind pacing motors. Any fool can do well that way. It takes a man to win a race of the kind we shall see this afternoon."

"He will win!. Enoell is bound to win!" cried the girl indignantly.

"He will not," said Bertie decidedly. "Some of us made up our minds a month or two ago that he should not. There are at least two men in to-day's race who will give him a deuce of a tussle to beat them, and Enoell's heart will fail him in a tight finish. He's got no pluck."

"I won't have you speak like that about Arthur—I won't," said the pretty girl, the tears welling into her eyes. "Nobody can say he is not a magnificent rider."

Her protest was drowned in the burst of applause which greeted the riders who turned out to contest the first heat of the £1,000 mile. Amongst them was Arthur Enoell, clad in a scarlet racing suit that became his handsome figure very well. He rode once round the three-lap concrete track, bowing to right and left in that conceited way that was characteristic with him. Then he ambled his machine back to the starting-place, where three other riders were already stationed. He evidently regarded himself as the centre of attraction in the racing that day.

Bang!

As the pistol went off the four riders got under way. Enoell was content to keep in the rear. They crawled round for the first lap, then Blaire, a Frenchman, dashed ahead, making the pace a cracker. Better and better the pace grew until the bell rang, and then Enoell, coming wide on the outside, showed what class he was by leaving his comrades behind as if they were standing still, and winning the race sitting up. It was one of the finest exhibitions of riding ever seen on that or any other track, and reminded some old stagers of the days when a class man had been able to make mere hacks of his field in the same way.

Arthur Enoell deserved the hurricane of applause which greeted his effort.

In the second heat, De Lange turned out, with Harry Leigh also as one of the competitors. De Lange was looked upon as Enoell's most dangerous rival, and a likely winner of the first prize but of Harry Leigh, the Britisher, who had adopted a tiger-like costume of yellow and black stripes, which was grotesque but striking in appearance, little was known.

"Why, that's Harry Leigh!" cried Elsie Moore, with wide-open eyes. "I noticed the name in the programme, but, of course, I could not think it was our Harry turned professional."

She said this with a half-sneer.

"What?" said her brother Bertie. "You don't like professionals, then, Elsie? How about Enoell, he's a professional, isn't he?"

"He is different," answered the girl defiantly. "He is a champion."

Bertie Moore smiled, but said nothing. He, Phil Harker, and Will Denham had been posted daily as to Harry Leigh's progress under the supervision of De Lange and a man named Hampden, a professional trainer, who had had some of the best riders in the world through his hands, and from those reports they had been able to deduce the fact that, barring accidents in the big race, either De Lange or Harry Leigh must win.

"It's rough though," muttered Bertie to himself, "that they both meet in the same heat like this. It makes Enoell's chance all the scarcer."

There was no time for further reflection, for at that moment the pistol cracked and the four riders got away.

Elsie had decided to take but a languid interest in this most uninteresting heat, but what she saw caused even her to open her eyes wide with surprise.

De Lange went away as if the race were a quarter-mile sprint. Harry Leigh kept right upon his back wheel, and the two, taking the others by surprise, open out a big gap at once. The fact of the matter was that as only the fastest loser would be admitted to the final, and as Harry Leigh wished De Lange to be in that race to bring him along, the pair had decided to cut the heat up between them, and the cunning pace was kept to, until both were half a lap ahead of the others, and going as madly as ever. The bell rang, and then Harry Leigh, putting down his head, swept past De Lange, and won by two clear lengths on the line.

De Lange threw away the race by pacing Leigh," said the girl, looking a little uneasy.

"He knew our Leigh was the better man, and didn't want to win, for in any case, Leigh must be in the final if we want Enoell beaten," said her brother sarcastically.

The girl bit her lips, but did not answer. The time, 1 minute, 31 1-5th seconds, however, made her open her eyes. Enoell had won his heat in 1 minute, 59 3-5th seconds.

In the remaining heats, Leigh's time was never even approached, and both he and De Lange had the satisfaction of finding themselves in the final.

It was late in the evening when the great final was run. The rest of the racing on the programme had been interesting, but overshadowed by the coming of the big event.

There had been a sharp shower of rain, which made the concrete surface of the track a little more dangerous to ride upon. When the riders turned out, Enoell was seen to be looking a little anxious. He had a straw thrust between his teeth, and he was extra careful as if they were standing still, and wiring the race sitting up. It was one of the finest exhibitions of riding ever seen on that or any other track, and reminded some old stagers of the days when a class man had been able to make mere hacks of his field in the same way.

Arthur Enoell deserved the hurricane of applause which greeted his effort.

In the second heat, De Lange turned out, with Harry Leigh also as one of the competitors. De Lange was looked upon as Enoell's most dangerous rival, and a likely winner of the first prize but of Harry Leigh, the Britisher, who had adopted a tiger-like costume of yellow and black stripes, which was grotesque but striking in appearance, little was known.

"Why, that's Harry Leigh!" cried Elsie Moore, with wide-open eyes. "I noticed the name in the programme, but, of course, I could not think it was our Harry turned professional."

She said this with a half-sneer.

"What?" said her brother Bertie. "You don't like professionals, then, Elsie? How about Enoell, he's a professional, isn't he?"

"He is different," answered the girl defiantly. "He is a champion."

Bertie Moore smiled, but said nothing. He, Phil Harker, and Will Denham had been posted daily as to Harry Leigh's progress under the supervision of De Lange and a man

CLUBS IN "THE BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

NEWBURY JUNIORS F.C., Runners-up BOYS' REALM League (Junior Division), 1906-7.
Secretary, Mr. A. N. Waldie, 23, Craven Street, Newbury.

In the fall of the autumn, two riders, a girl and a youth paused when riding down a leafy lane, and alighted from their machines just as the sun was sinking. The man was Philip Harker, captain of the Nomads, the girl was Elsie Moore. The old resentment and ill-feeling between them had vanished. He took her hand tenderly in his.

"Elsie," he said, "I love you! Have you forgiven me for any unkindness I may have been guilty towards you in the past?"

"It is you who must forgive," said she, lowering her head. "Oh, Phil, I can't help thinking what a lot we owe to Harry Leigh. Our whole happiness!"

"And the success of the old club," said the Nomad's captain proudly. "For though Harry is a professional, and can't ride for us now, his help came when the club was in a bad financial state and about to break up. Mortimer, too, has been very good to us."

"So they ought to be," said the girl. "For didn't Harry make their tyres famous all over the world?"

He took her hand again in his, but hearing the sound of approaching wheels, the pretty girl quickly withdrew it.

"Be quiet, Phil," she said. "Here come all the club boys!"

THE END.

SPORTING LIFE.
A wonderful Novel of School Life, of Cricket, and of Adventure at Home and Abroad.
By A. S. HARDY.
See
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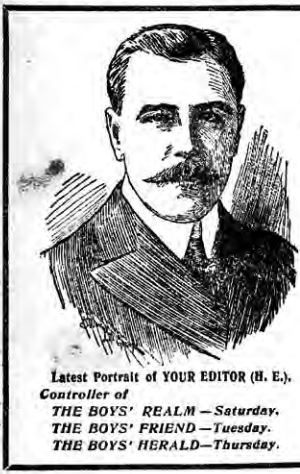
FROM YOUR EDITOR'S CHAIR.



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

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

Special Attractions for Next Week.

I AM glad to inform my readers that I have secured two splendid complete stories for next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM. One of them is entitled "The Salt Water Championship," written by A. S. Hardy. It will be found a grand tale of water polo, and calculated to fascinate every lad, no matter whether he takes interest in aquatics or not.

The other story is a tale of thrilling adventure, specially written by clever Martin Shaw, and is entitled "A Man's Ingratitude," and I can assure all my friends that it will well repay them for the time and trouble expended on its perusal.

In addition to these special attractions, long instalments of our four magnificent serials will also appear. Altogether, I think that our next issue will be one of the best penny numbers that I have published for a long time, so I should advise all my readers to make sure of their copy by ordering it in advance.

How to Become a Jockey.

ONE of my Staffordshire friends, who signs himself H. P., wishes me to tell him in the columns of THE BOYS' REALM how to become a jockey.

Well, first of all, I am going to advise my reader not to become a jockey, because personally I do not think that jockeyship, although a very clever and plucky business, is altogether the most praiseworthy occupation that a boy can select; secondly, because I think that jockeys are held open to enormous temptation, and, unless a boy has strength of mind, rarely found in a lad, he is likely to succumb, and the result, of course, will be his moral downfall.

But if my reader really thinks he has enough moral courage to "run straight," as the slang phrase has it, there is no reason why he should not take up this work.

In order to become a jockey he will, first of all, have to serve an apprenticeship as a stable lad, looking after racehorses. At first his duties will consist of all the drudgery of stable work, cleaning out horses' stalls, making up their beds, cleaning harness, and feeding the animals at their regulation times.

After a time he will be promoted to riding the horses at exercise, and from this to riding them in trials and on the racecourse are but steps in his career.

To seek a berth he must consult the sporting papers, like the "Sporting Life" and the "Sportsman." In these he will find the advertisements of the trainers wanting lads, and when he sees a likely advertisement he should make application, stating his age, height, and weight, and giving a character, or if he is near a training establishment he should make application to the head groom.

How to Increase the Height.

THE following interesting letter has been sent me by one of my staunchest supporters. I thank him most gratefully for the valuable information he provides, and also for the very kind and encouraging remarks with which he concludes his letter. As some small recompense for the trouble my chum W. B. has gone to in writing to me, I am sending him a handsomely-bound volume of a splendid adventure story. In addition, I earnestly recommend those of my readers who are anxious to become taller to carefully follow the exercises their fellow-reader has kindly supplied for their benefit:

"Dear Sir,—I notice that in last week's number of THE BOYS' REALM, June 15th, that H. W., of Kirkstall, and several other readers, desire to increase their height. I have studied and practised physical culture ever since I was fourteen. By so doing I probably saved my life. Everybody used to tell me I should never reach the age of eighteen, but, thanks to regular exercise and right living, I have passed that age by one year.

"When I was sixteen my height was 5ft. 3in., and now I am nineteen my height is 5ft. 9in. My father was small, being 5ft. 4in., and my mother is 5ft. 2in. I have also studied the physical formation of the body, and I have always found the following exercises very valuable in increasing the height and keeping the body erect.

"The real reason why so many people are under height is because their muscles are too weak to hold the body erect. The backbone, or spinal column, is made up of a number of small bones, called the vertebræ. These bones are joined together by a band of cartilage which acts as a buffer, and also absorbs all the vibration and jar when we jump or move in any way. The vertebræ are very often cramped together, and the cartilage is pressed close up. To increase the height, the cartilage must be loosened and made pliant. The muscles of the back between the shoulders should also be developed, for they help to keep the body erect by keeping the shoulders well back and the chest out.

"Exercises should be performed until tired, with the exception of Ex. 1. If they are practised regularly and properly, they will increase the height from one to two inches.

"Ex. 1. Sit on a chair, with arms folded, placing both feet beneath a table, or end of bed. Bend slowly backwards until the head touches floor. This exercise should not be practised many times.

"Ex. 2. Lay face downwards on floor, both hands held to sides. Stretch the hands out slowly from sides, and continue till they are stretched out in front of head. Return hands to sides, and repeat.

"Ex. 3. Stand erect, both hands clasped behind back. Take a deep breath, pressing the hands as far downwards as possible. Raise on the toes at same time, and throw the head well back.

"Ex. 4. Stand erect, with hands by sides. Stoop and touch the floor with finger-tips, keeping the legs straight. Bring the body to upright position, arms held out in front of body, head held down between the upper arms. Before the arms are held overhead, a deep breath should be taken, and the arms should be pressed backwards and downwards until they reach the sides again. Raise on toes when the arms are pressed back. Exhale, and repeat.

"Hanging by the hands from a bar or the top of a door, and pulling up until chin is level with hands, is also a valuable exercise for increasing height. I hope the exercises given will be found valuable to your readers.—Yours, for health and strength, W. B."

The Finest Detective Story Ever Written.

MY friends know that I am not given to boasting, and that when I say a story is excellent, I know it to be excellent, and that no one can say otherwise. As the Editor of the most successful boys' papers published in any part of the world, and also as the Editor of the largest number of boys' papers ever issued from one office, I think my friends will admit that I am qualified to form an opinion upon a story.

Well, then, I say that "The Iron Hand," the new serial story from the pen of Mr. Maxwell Scott, the creator of Nelson Lee, and the author of "The Fighting Fifth," the very popular school story now appearing in this paper, is the finest detective story ever written. It is exciting—I have read few tales more so—it is dramatic, and it enchains the interest from the start to finish of every instalment. When it is considered that it is written by an author who is a past-master in the art of detective story writing, and that it deals with the fascinating subjects of a powerful secret society, an airship, and the experiences of three detectives—Nelson Lee, a Scotsman, and an Irishman—my chums will understand the reason for my enthusiasm with regard to it.

If you liked the stories of Sherlock Holmes and Martin Hewitt, you'll like this story of Nelson Lee, entitled "The Iron Hand," ten times better. So that I advise all my chums who want to read the finest detective story ever written to go at once to their newsagents and secure this week's issue of "The Boys' Herald," my companion paper.

How to Use the Punch-ball.

THE punch-ball is one of the most excellent methods of improving oneself in the art of self-defence, and at the same time obtaining very healthy exercise.

A friend of mine, whose initials are T. R., asks me to give him some information about the proper way to use a punch-ball.

To do so here would take up too much of my space, but I may tell my young friend that the best course he can adopt is to get a book entitled, "How to Box, and Win," price 1s., which can be obtained through any newsagent. This will give him all the information he requires.

Breathing Through the Mouth.

ONE of my Irish readers, who hails from Dublin, tells me that he finds it rather difficult to breathe through his nostrils, and he wants me to tell him whether breathing through the mouth will injure his lungs.

There can be no question that the most healthy method of breathing is through the nostrils, for the reason that the membranes which line the nose act as a sort of filter upon the air which is inhaled, and purify it from the many little dust particles which are constantly to be found in the atmosphere.

Another advantage which nasal breathing gives to one is that the longer passage which the air has to traverse before it reaches the lungs in cold weather enables it to get warmed, and thus a risk of irritating the lungs by a sudden indraught of cold air is avoided.

Of course, there are thousands of people who, owing to some defect in the nasal passages, find themselves unable to breathe through the nose, and take in their air supply through the mouth, and, what is more to the point, do not seem to suffer any damage therefrom.

Still, nasal breathing is the better method, and where it can be adopted it most decidedly should be.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

SECTION 1.

Application has been made by THE LEWISHAM AND DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE for a Boys' REALM Trophy, and Your Editor has decided to present one to that organisation at the close of the cricket season. The number of clubs affiliated to this league is ten, the Secretary being:

Mr. H. Loos Richardson, 29, Radford Road, Lowisham, S.E.

THE IRONBRIDGE AND DISTRICT CRICKET CUP COMPETITION have also sent in an application for a Set of Silver Medals. In this case the League is already in possession of a cup, so that Mr. H. Bowen, the Secretary, limited his application to one set of medals. His address is: The Folley, Broseley, Shropshire. Your Editor has granted his application.

The following clubs in the Leagues mentioned have been awarded Cricket Bats for the best performance on Saturday, June 15th:

OSWALDTHISTLE AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

St. Andrew's C.C.—Sec. (of League), Mr. R. Broughton, 4, Malt Street, Accrington, Lancs.

SOUTH LONDON AUXILIARY S.S. LEAGUE.

Manor C.C.—Sec., Mr. B. W. Winter, 279, Lynton Road, Bayswater.

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

Dock Street Institute C.C.—Sec., Mr. B. Taylor, 48, Forster Street, Sunderland.

MERSEY CRICKET LEAGUE.

Clovelly C.C.—Sec., Mr. A. J. Warrington, 5, Clovelly Road, Anfield, Liverpool.

No more applications for these bats have come to hand at the time of going to press.

BOYS' REALM LEAGUE.

OSWALDTWISTLE AND DISTRICT SUNDAY SCHOOL CRICKET LEAGUE.

TABLE UP TO AND INCLUDING JUNE 15TH.

	Pld.	Won.	Lost.	Drn.	Pts.
Whalley Road	10 ..	7 ..	2 ..	1 ..	15
St. Andrew's ..	10 ..	6 ..	1 ..	3 ..	15
Emanuel ..	10 ..	6 ..	2 ..	2 ..	14
Holy Trinity ..	9 ..	5 ..	1 ..	3 ..	13
Knuzden ..	9 ..	5 ..	2 ..	2 ..	12
Moscow Mill Street	10 ..	5 ..	4 ..	1 ..	11
St. James's ..	10 ..	4 ..	4 ..	2 ..	10
St. Paul's ..	11 ..	2 ..	6 ..	3 ..	7
St. John's ..	10 ..	2 ..	7 ..	1 ..	5
*Mount Pleasant ..	10 ..	1 ..	6 ..	3 ..	5
John Street	10 ..	0 ..	8 ..	2 ..	2

* Two points deducted.

The champions of the above League will be awarded a set of silver medals by the THE BOYS' REALM at the close of the cricket season.

SECTION 2.

Your Editor has adjudged the following clubs to be the winners of our prize bats for June 15th:

JUNIOR DIVISION.

Lawthorne C.C.—Sec., S. Walkey, 391, Hawthorne Road, Bootle, Liverpool.

SENIOR DIVISION.

Northgate White Star C.C.—W. Smith, 2, Chain Street, Grafton Road, Westgate, Bradford, Yorkshire.

The following are one or two letters from the secretaries of clubs which have already received a prize:

CHRIST CHURCH (STEFNEY) CRICKET CLUB,
"69, Clinton Road, Bow, E.
"June 18th, 1907.

"Dear Sir,—Many thanks for the bat received last Saturday, also for your congratulations.

"Our fellows have not yet had a knock with the presentation bat. Should any good performance be made with same, I shall not fail to report.

"Again thanking you on behalf of the above club,
"I am, dear sir,
"Yours faithfully,
"HARRY G. DADLEY, Hon. Sec."

"67, Mozart Street, Liverpool.
"June 19th, 1907.

"Dear Sir,—I have just received the pads on behalf of Allans C.C. I wish to thank you very much. I don't think our fellows could be more pleased, even if they had won the league. The pads are of excellent quality, as we expected. We know that you don't give "trash," but good quality.

"As secretary of Allans C.C. I have offered the pads to the member of our club who shows me the most numbers of the REALM at the close of the season. I think you will agree with me that it is a good idea, as it will cause a deal more interest in the team.

"Again thanking you,
"I remain, dear sir,
"Yours respectfully,
"D. TREADOMS, Sec. Allans C.C."

"46, Forster Street, Baker, Sunderland,
"June 18th, 1907.

"Dear Sir,—Bat to hand this morning, for which accept the hearty thanks of Dock Street Institute C.C. We have used it this afternoon, and have proved it to be a good driver.

"Yours sincerely,
"B. TAYLOR, Sec."

OUR FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

On another page will be found a preliminary announcement concerning our great Football League. Every member of a football club should read it, and furthermore, should keep his eyes open for forthcoming announcements giving full details of our marvellous and unprecedented programme for the coming football season. Your Editor has hit on a splendid scheme, which will make his readers open their eyes in amazement when he propounds it to them. It is really an extension of the daring move made by THE BOYS' REALM last season, in giving away silver cups, silver medals, and footballs broadcast. This enterprise on the part of our paper took the junior footballing world by storm, and hundreds of lovers of our national winter pastime rallied around Your Editor and his staff in their attempts to still further popularise the grand old sport—football.

But during the coming season THE BOYS' REALM has something better still to offer its readers. No expense will be spared, and Your Editor feels certain that there is not a single football club secretary who, having learned about the amazing facilities offered to junior footballers by THE BOYS' REALM, will not make up his mind that his club shall participate in the feast of good things provided.

Football fans must, for their own sake, carefully watch our columns for full details of our gigantic and daring football scheme for the coming season.

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, is now starting in "The Boys' Herald." 1d. Every Thursday.

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 Sternerraig.

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

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

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

DAN CALLIS, AARON DOWNEY, GERARD INGLIS, 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 seaward cliff. Jack warns him not to do so, but a little later the lot is discovered on a ledge half-way down the face of the cliff impossible. From this perilous position he is rescued by Jack Jaunty.

A stranger arrives at Sternerraig that afternoon, and picking up an acquaintanceship with Peter Pinnick, a surly fisherman, questions him about Jack Jaunty. Peter is obliged against his will to tell the man all he knows.

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 owns a rowing-boat. Jack makes friends with some new arrivals at Sternerraig, a Mr. Bolton 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. Bolton's two daughters.

This is the cause of much bad feeling between them. Mr. Bolton's two daughters attempt to swim to the Bowl Island, and when in danger of drowning are rescued by Peter Pinnick, who is greatly elated, and taunts Jack Jaunty about his bravery.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 17th CHAPTER.
Who Wrote that Letter?

THE general opinion of the girls' adventure did not exactly coincide with that of Mrs. Bonnington.

On the point of the risk they had run everybody but the aforesaid Mrs. Bonnington agreed that the girls had shown a lot of pluck. They were not likely to attempt it again, for both were conscious that they had narrowly escaped a watery grave, and suffering from exhaustion they were obliged to remain at home for several days.

Miss Harrison, however, walked abroad alone, and it chanced that on the following Saturday—a holiday with the boys—she chose to stroll inland in the direction of a wood about a mile from the shore. It was a weird-looking spot, for the lime-trees, subject to much ill-usage from the wind, leaned in every possible direction but the right one, and the branch tips being broken in hundreds of places, the shoots grew in very jagged form. By day there was a half-ruined look about that wood, and at night it had the appearance of a witch's haunt.

Miss Harrison walked along slowly, reading a book, as was her wont, and thought little of things around her, until she heard a rapid footstep in the rear. As it sounded like that of a person wishing to overtake her, she looked back, and saw that it was Mr. Ferrula, with a ghost-like expression on his ample face.

He was bounding rather than walking along, and his intention was very obvious. Miss Harrison, with a faint smile, closed the book.

"Now for a martyrdom," she softly said.

Hard walking makes stout people short of breath, and Mr. Ferrula had to yield to the laws of Nature. When he came up he had no breath to speak of, left. His eyes were wild and full of reproach. He panted and gasped like a small steam-tug, and was altogether a frightfully unpoetical object.

"I fear you have been hurrying, Mr. Ferrula," said Miss Harrison. "Pardon me, but ought not a man of your age and—and—build, to take things more leisurely?"

"Miss Harrison," said Mr. Ferrula, "I would rather not discuss my age and build. Phew! Give me a moment, so that I may speak clearly and to the point."

They walked slowly to the edge of the wood, and there Miss Harrison stopped.

"Now, Mr. Ferrula," she said. "I hope you are in a condition to explain what you want with me."

"Is it possible," he exclaimed, "that you do not know?"

"If I did know," she said, "there would be no need for me to inquire."

"True," said Mr. Ferrula. "Well, let me come to the point at once. Why did you ask me to come to the Cleft?"

Miss Harrison started, and a look of utmost amazement spread over her face.

"Ask you—to come to the Cleft?" she exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Mr. Ferrula, may I ask if you have taken leave of your senses?"

"I—I—I have not," he replied. "Here—um—I have the letter somewhere"—he was feeling in his coat-pockets. "Oh, I forgot!"

He thrust his hand into his waistcoat and brought out a small chamois bag, suspended by a piece of string around his neck. That bag had been hanging over his heart.

"The letter herein contained," he said, as he opened the bag, "was sent to me by you."

Miss Harrison shook her head.

"What! You did not send it?"

"Of course not," was the reply.

"Odd—and yet—the writing——"

"Let me look at it, Mr. Ferrula."

He handed it to her, and she read it with a face that may be called immovable.

"And you really thought I wrote this?" she said calmly. "Really, it does not do much credit to your judgment or to your estimation of me!"

"It is not your writing, then!" he exclaimed, as the perspiration burst from his forehead.

"No; of course not. The Christian name is not mine, either. It is written by some person who knows very little of me."

Mr. Ferrula gazed seaward; then at the sky; then at the weird wood; and finally gave vent to several gasps.

"Some—thing has done this!" he said.

"I do not thank the author of this practical joke," said Miss Harrison; "but, really, you ought not to have been taken in by it."

"May I ask what your name is, Miss Harrison?"

"Oh, certainly—Irene! Nothing very striking in it."

"It is very pretty," said Mr. Ferrula pathetically. "Oh, Irene— "

"Now, Mr. Ferrula," said Miss Harrison, "I won't have it. You are old enough to know better than to go into all this sort of nonsense. Your love for me, as I suppose you will call it, is quite hopeless—if from no other reason than the fact that I am engaged."

"Engaged!" muttered Mr. Ferrula. "Oh, dear—if I had but known it from the first!"

"You could not have known it, as I did not know it myself. It is only a matter of a few days ago. But you must excuse me if I do not go into particulars. Take a gentle walk and get cool. I fear you are not constituted to endure much excitement."

She glided into the wood, and he was left alone—alone with his misery!

"I thought I saw it all the other day," he gasped; "but I was wrong. But I know it all now. He triumphs, but not for long. If I slay him at the altar, I will check his happiness—upset it—scatter it to the winds! Ha, ha!"

The sound of boyish voices broke in upon his meditations, and, raising his eyes, he saw half a dozen of them running towards him. They had their eyes on the ground, and he knew they were playing hare-and-hounds. They were looking for scent. Nickey Hopkins, Edgar Brev, and Gerard Inglis were among them, and tailing off in the distance were half a score others. Perceiving the tutor, they ran up to him.

"Have you seen Jaunty, sir?" they asked.

"No," was the gloomy reply.

"He is the hare to-day," said Nickey, "and is giving us a regular loaser."

"We all have our loasers," said Mr. Ferrula gloomily, as he stooped to pick up the letter which he a moment before had dropped.

Nickey caught sight of it, and burst into a laugh.

"Pray," said Mr. Ferrula, "what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, sir," replied Nickey; "at least, not much. There's some scent. Follow up, Tally-ho!"

And away he went, leaving Mr. Ferrula to his gloomy meditation.

The tutor saw it all. Redditch had written the letter in mockery, knowing all the while that he had gained the heart of the governess. It was a base, unmanly thing to do, and Mr. Ferrula earnestly wished that he would one day fall into the Cleft and break his neck.

That evening the Seamew came over from the Bowl, and when Jack returned, after having eluded his pursuers, he found Bob Baxter waiting for him.

"You are to go aboard for a few minutes, Master Jack," he said.

A message from the Stranger had in it all the potency of a monarch's request, and Jack, tired as he was, set out at once.

"How is Jim?" Jack asked, as they descended to the beach.

"About the same," replied Bob; "but a bit more restless, I fancy. He's taken to fashioning a sort of club with his jack-knife. We took it away for a time; but the doctor says he's harmless enough, so we let him have it again."

"But he must be making it for some purpose," said Jack.

"Heaven only knows!" replied Bob, shaking his head. "We go by what the doctor says, you know."

Jack did not exactly agree with him, but he would not say anything to that effect, because Bob had a faith in the doctor which it would be unkind to shake.

Bob by this time had got his boat out, and Jack stepping in, away they went to the Seamew, which had been brought up before the wind about a quarter of a mile from the shore. The Stranger was awaiting Jack, and received him with his accustomed cheeriness.

"Come down below," he said. "We must have a short chat together. Bob can look after the yacht."

Bob not only could, but would gladly do it, as he expressly said. Jack and his friend descended to the miniature cabin, and, the door being closed, the latter said:

"I intended to have sent for you yesterday, but I awaited this morning's letters to see if I had occasion to do so. Have you had any strangers in Sternerraig lately?"

"None that I know of," replied Jack. "We have a new boy, but, of course, he doesn't count."

"I am not so sure of that," said the Stranger thoughtfully. "What is his name?"

"Mark Ricketts."

"Hum!" said the Stranger. "Assumed, should say. Where does he come from?"

"I don't know," replied Jack.

"Does he never speak of home?"

"Never."

"Or of friends?"

"No."

"But he has letters like the rest?"

"I have never seen any," said Jack.

"A very strange boy," remarked the Stranger, "and I think we ought to know something about him. Ah, you look surprised, Jack; but I am getting interested in the movements of the world!"

"It does seem strange to hear you talking in that way," replied Jack.

"Well, don't mind that, Jack. What I want you to do is to find out all you can about this Mark Ricketts."

"How, sir?"

"In any fair way. Don't, of course, play the spy; but I need not tell you not to do that; you would not. I know. But just ascertain all you can concerning him in a straightforward manner. I am not, as you may guess, actuated by idle curiosity."

"I am sure of that, sir."

"My motive," continued the Stranger, "may be made clear to you one day; at present I would rather not say anything about it. You must want a little pocket-money."

"I have some left from your last gift," said Jack.

"But you must have some more," was the reply; "for I tell you, Jack, that it is just possible we may not see each other for some time—I am not sure, but it is possible—and should I not hold any communication with the mainland, do not be alarmed. Good-bye!"

He pressed Jack's hand, placing within it five sovereigns—a very large sum for a boy to possess. Jack did not attempt to thank him with a flowery speech, but simply said he was grateful for so much kindness, and took his leave. The first object he and Bob took notice of on shore was Peter Pinnick, in a state of inebriation.

THE 18th CHAPTER.
A Rough Wooer.

PINNICK was not only rolling, but also bawling, and he was proclaiming to all who cared to hear his merits as a man.

"Here I am—a hero," he was roaring—"a saver of purty girls, with a mean father who thinks twenty pounds squares the job. I like that. Why, I've a right to marry one on 'em, although I be a bit up in years. But a man of forty odd ain't old yet. Hallo, young Jaunty!" he cried, espying Jack. "Where have you been?"

He was standing at the bottom of the pathway, so that there was hardly room for Jack to pass and ascend the cliff.

"Please stand aside," said Jack.

Jack looked up, and saw the drummer's legs working convulsively. "Keep still," he cried, "or you will turn the drum over!"

Look Out for a New Slapton School Story Shortly.

The School on the Cliff.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Stand aside for you!" exclaimed Peter Pinnick. "I like that. Why, you whelp, you mean, measly beggar, I——"

He raised his clenched hand as if to strike the boy, who was passing him, when a thousand fires sprang up before his eyes, and he fell in a heap upon the sands. Bob Baxter had hit him somewhere about the head — it does not matter where—and brought about a mental chaos, extremely painful and bewildering.

"Go on, Master Jack," said Bob. "He's got to be civil to his betters, or I'll know the reason why. I may tell 'ee," whispered Bob, as Jack moved forward, "that I gave him the knock as much for the young lady's sake as your own. He marry an angel, and only a girl, too? Hang me! The next time I hears him say it I'll kill him outright."

"Mr. Redditch, may I have a word with you?"

"Two if you like, sir."

In the chine the two tutors had met, and now stood glaring at each other with all the deadly real hatred born of love for woman.

"Mr. Redditch," said Mr. Ferrula, drawing in a deep breath, "there are some things which a man can bear, and other things which he cannot bear. Among the latter is a serious form of practical joke such as you have been guilty of."

"Sir, I never joke!"

"Will you look at that letter?"

Mr. Redditch not only looked at the letter, but he read it slowly and carefully through, a stony smile gradually spreading over his countenance.

"I merely remark that I did not write it," he said, as he handed it back; "and you must be daft to think I did."

"Subterfuge will not avail you," said Mr. Ferrula, with an eye like a top-lighthouse. "You are a dastard!"

Mr. Redditch started violently.

"Repeat that word!" he said.

Mr. Ferrula did so, and then they closed.

A brief and inglorious struggle ensued, the tutors doing little more than hug each other and then falling upon the earth, where they rolled over twice, and then got up again. Close by were a number of ferns growing in a thick cluster, which seemed to be agitated by the violence of their movements. At least, so thought Mr. Ferrula, as he got upon his feet and glared at his rival. Mr. Redditch proceeded to knock the sand off his clothes, with a feeble smile upon his face.

"Ferrula," he said, "we have been making asses of ourselves about a woman who does not care a fig for either of us."

"Redditch," said Mr. Ferrula, with emotion, "don't try to humbug me."

"My dear fellow, I'm not dreaming of such a thing. We have both been made fools of. You were sent to the Chine in the morning, and I was sent to the North Spur in the evening."

"Then you had a letter?"

"I had."

"Have you got it with you?"

"I have."

And Mr. Redditch, in proof thereof, drew out the letter and handed it to his brother tutor.

It was a precisely similar letter to the other, barring the appointed place of meeting, and now it was the turn of Mr. Ferrula to slowly smile.

"You have seen her?" he said.

"I have," replied Mr. Redditch.

"And shown her this letter?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"Very much what she said to you, I guess, Ferrula, this is the work of some fiendish boy."

"It looks like it, Redditch; but I can't say which it is. The greater part of the little beasts write so much alike."

"But there are tricks in everybody's writing," said Mr. Redditch. "Let us go back to the house; the class-room is empty now, and we can then compare these letters with the writings of the respective boys. We are sure to find out who has done this deed."

"And having found him out he shall suffer," Ferrula said grimly.

The two victims of the practical joke walked off together, and after a short delay the forms were parted, disclosing the faces of two boys. They were Nickey Hopkins and Will Radelle, who had been wandering in the chine and hidden themselves on the approach of the tutors.

"Will," said Nickey, "you are in for it. Redditch will be sure to make out your writing."

"And won't Ferrula make out yours?" replied Will. "So there are tricks in every writing, are there? And we thought ourselves so very clever. I wonder what they will do to us?"

"Make things pretty warm for us," replied Nickey. "Got any money?"

"A little."

"Then let us go to Daddy's and have some ginger-beer."

Daddy was an endearing epithet bestowed upon the aged keeper of a small general shop in the back part of the village, where it was the least accessible to the inhabitants. Daddy was no parent, but a single old man, given to peculiar ideas and curt language, a monopoly of his class of business having made him independent to a painful degree.

As Will and Nickey entered the shop the old man, who had the appearance of a Viking chief fallen in reduced circumstances, left off weighing sugar and bent his bushy eyebrows upon them.

"Well?" he said.

"Two bottles of ginger-beer, please," said Nickey. "And let us have two that pop a bit."

"You've got to take 'em as you can get 'em," replied Daddy, as he groped under the counter; "'specially when there's a run on a article."

He brought up two of the familiar stone bottles, gave them a shake, and looked round him for a glass. One was standing on a box of dried fish, and it looked as if it stood in need of washing.

"I'll drink mine out of the bottle," said Nickey.

"So will I," said Will.

"You ain't so particular as young Jaunty," said Daddy. "I must always have a clean glass, as if he was goodness knows who. By the way, where is he to-day? It's a holiday, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Nickey. "Jack is gone to the Folly to tea."

"And Peter Pinnick's going up by-and-by," said Daddy, with a chuckle. "There ought to be some fun between the two sweethearts of that 'ere eldest gal."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Nickey. "Has you off your head?"

"No more than you are," replied Daddy. "I said two sweethearts—old 'un and young 'un."

"You are off your head, Daddy," said Nickey, as Will paid for the ginger-beer.

They went out of the shop, and descending to the beach, walked in the direction of the Folly. For once in a way both were silent for a while. Suddenly Nickey burst out with an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked Will.

"You heard what Daddy said," replied Nickey. "Fancy a pretty girl like Ivonne being insulted by such talk as that."

"Jack would punch his head if he knew it."

"Oh, no; he would not hit the old man!"

"Then he would have a go at Peter Pinnick."

"And get himself pounded to pieces," said Nickey. "No, Will, old chap, we are none of us the sort of boys who figure in penny horribles as heroes. We can't lick men as strong as Peter."

"Jack is different to us," urged Will.

"I granted," said Nickey. "But he couldn't do impossibilities, although he might try them. We had better not say anything about what we have heard. It would only drive him mad."

"It's a good job we are not in love," said Will.

"Speak for yourself," replied Nickey.

"Hallo, you spoons on anybody?"

"Perhaps."

And Nickey smiled with the air of a young man well up in love affairs generally.

"Who is it?" asked Will.

"Oh, that's tellings!"

"Can I guess?"

"If you like."

"Let me see," said Will, "there's Jennie."

"Oh, stop that!" said Nickey. "A kitchen wench. Don't make me ill!"

"Well, the cook. She's forty, but not bad looking. Now then, Nickey."

(To be continued next week.)

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The Chief Characters in this Fine Story.

ARTHUR LOVELL, Loamshire's champion batsman. 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 a 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 wonder, 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 match with Yorkshire, and Ponsonby is appointed in his place as captain. Ponsonby is not a success, and has to resign his captainship. Arthur Lovell is offered the post, but refuses the honour much to Colonel Hilton's chagrin.

Len Valance informs Kit that if Arthur Lovell will pay him £50 he will put Kit in possession of facts which he can use to the purpose of compelling James Lagden to disgorge the money he swindled Arthur's uncle out of. Kit refuses to have anything to do with the treacherous scoundrel.

(How read this week's instalment.)

South Africans v. Loamshire.

MEANWHILE, Arthur soon forgot all about Len Valance and his proposition in his keen interest in the South African match. It was for a time an open question as to who would captain Loamshire, for Blane was nothing like well enough to take up his old position. The selection finally fell upon Harding.

Harding was a quiet fellow, a very steady batsman of the stone-waller type, and a pretty useful all-round cricketer. He was the kind of man to make a passable captain, but not a brilliant leader like Lord Hawke in Yorkshire, or Lionel Palairet in Somerset. Still, it was certain that Loamshire would do better under his leadership than they had done under that of Ponsonby.

Brilliant weather heralded the arrival of the South Africans.

A goodly crowd of Loamshire folk watched for them at the railway-station, and escorted them to their hotel in Loamchester on the evening of their arrival, and there were loud cheers for the strangers from afar who had beaten Leicestershire, Essex, and the M.C.C.

Strangers, indeed, all of them were not, for of the fifteen South Africans nine have been in England before, and such names as Hathorn, Tancred, and Schwarz were not strange to England's cricket, as all the world knows, who was on the ground staff at Lord's last year.

Strangers, or old acquaintances, they were equally welcome in the cricket-loving county, and speculation ran high as to whether they would succeed in beating Loamshire, or whether the home county would inflict upon them their first defeat.

Monday morning was bright and dry, and the ground in Loamchester was early crowded with eager folk eager to see the opening of the three days' struggle between the county and the good fellows from the far-off colony.

The list of players on the visiting side was eagerly scanned. The team was the same as that played in the first match at Lord's, with the exception of Kotze taking the place of S. D. Snooke. The names read off: Sherwell, Tancred, White, Hathorn, Nourse, Kotze, Faulkner, Vogler, Sinclair, S. D. Snooke, and Schwarz. It was a fine team, and capable of giving the Loamshire men their hardest fight so far of the season.

There had been one or two changes in the Loamshire team. Chichester and Maynard, who had made so poor a show against Yorks at Bradford, were standing out of the match, two reserves taking their places.

The pavilion enclosure was as full as the six-penny ground long before the first ball was bowled. Colonel Hilton was there, and so was Molly. Poor Blane was a great deal better now, but he was unable to get down to the ground to see the match, much as he would have liked to do so.

Gay was the scene in the bright June morning.

The ground was crowded with straw hats and the bright headgear of the gentler sex, for many of the Loamshire cricket-lovers had brought their sisters and their cousins and their aunts to see how Loamshire opened the match against the visitors from the equator.

There was a buzz of cheering as the two captains were seen to toss for choice of innings.

Sherwell, the popular South African captain, won the toss, and elected to go to the wicket first. Harding led out his merry men, all in white, to field.

"The South Africans look a fine team," Kit Valance remarked to Arthur, as they walked down together. "I am keen to see how you stand up against their bowling, Lovell. You will have to look out for Kotze's lightning balls and Schwarz's googlies."

Arthur laughed lightly.

"Not to-day, Kit, I think, at all events. The South Africans are going in first, and I fancy they'll hold their own for a bit. But mind, we expect the hat-trick again from you, though I don't suppose you will do it twice in one innings again, as you did against Yorkshire."

The young bowler smiled.

"I'll do my level best, Lovell. I want to see you bat to-day."

And they went to their respective positions.

Harding, the new Loamshire skipper, was an amateur, but he had little in common with Geoffrey Lagden and his set. He was a plain, quiet, sensible man, a good cricketer, and a keen captain. He wanted his side to win, and did not care two pins for any player's special claims so long as the side got the best of the tussle. He had put Kit Valance down to bowl the first over, and he intended Kit to bowl as many as he was capable of. There was no question of leaving the young bowler in the shade as had been done by Ponsonby in the match at Bradford.

Gladly enough Kit Valance grasped the round, red ball. He was feeling in fine form, and eager to try conclusions with the men who had mowed down Warner's team in South Africa, and had already made their mark in English cricket.

He sent a couple of trials down to Tunstall, who was keeping wicket, and then Sherwell and Schwarz came out to bat for South Africa, and Kit prepared for business.

The first over was bowled from the pavilion end against Sherwell's wicket. The South African captain took up his position, and kept a straight bat, and played the first over with cool confidence.

Kit was testing him, and he found him equal to the test. The Africander skipper did not hit out, but contented himself with stopping the balls, and the over proved to be a maiden. Then Geoffrey Lagden went on to bowl against Schwarz.

Schwarz—once a well-known figure in Middlesex cricket—played up finely for South Africa against Lagden's bowling.

He stopped a couple of balls, as if to take the measure of the bowling before he let himself go, and then he began to hit out.

Away went the leather just the reach of point and cover-point, and the South Africans ran, and ran again ere the ball came in from the country, from the sure hand of Arthur Lovell straight to the wicket-keeper.

Schwarz was back on the crease in time, and the ball was tossed again to the bowler, while the scorer started putting up the figures for South Africa.

The visitors had made a start, and they soon showed that it was only an earnest of what was to come.

Schwarz hit out twice again before the over ended, and gained a 2 and a 3, the last with the last ball of the over, so that when the field crossed he still had the bowling.

The Loamshire crowd accordingly cheered the fine start made for South Africa. Schwarz had taken 7 for his side, and it was a good beginning.

"Bravo, Schwarz!"

"Bravo, Reggie!"

And the South African batsman smiled as he heard his name coupled with the cheers.

The bowling was recommencing from the pavilion end now, and Kit Valance had the ball again. Kit had keenly watched the over bowled by Lagden, trying to take the measure of the batsman. Now he was bowling with all the skill he could throw into it, and it was soon seen that his bowling was troubling Schwarz.

The old Middlesex player faced it pluckily, and stopped ball after ball, but he did not venture to hit out, and suddenly there was a crash of a falling wicket. The last ball of the over had curled in under his bat in some mysterious way, and taken his off-stump right out of the ground.

Schwarz looked at his wrecked wicket, and Kit looked at the umpire.

"How's that?"

"Out."

It was the only possible verdict, and Schwarz carried his bat back to the pavilion, and Tancred came out to join Sherwell at the wickets.

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, is now starting in "The Boys' Herald." 1d. Every Thursday.

Geoffrey Ladgen bowled again against the South African captain. He could not succeed in touching his wicket. Sherwell piled on 10 for the over, and the South African score was now 17 for one.

Then Kit Valance went on to bowl against the South African skipper. Colonel Hilton leaned forward a little in his seat in the pavilion, watching with all his eyes.

"I like Sherwell's style," the old county cricketer remarked. "But I fancy he will not stand up long against Valance's bowling."

Molly nodded her flaxen head.

"He will not survive this over, dad."

"I don't know about that," laughed the colonel. "I hope not, certainly; but even Valance's powers have their limits. Yet after his splendid performance at Bradford last week, against such batsmen as Yorkshire put into the field, I should not be surprised at anything."

But Molly proved to be right.

The Springbok skipper stopped the first ball, and then ran a 2, and then another 2. Then a 4 rewarded a powerful drive right over the boundary.

The crowd cheered as the ball was thrown back by a spectator and returned to the bowler. The fifth ball gave Sherwell 2. Down came the last ball of the over, a tempting slow one, that Sherwell was induced to hit out at. He did it, and repented it.

For there was a peculiar twist on that ball that only Kit Valance could give it, and it escaped the swiping bat by inches, and broke in true for the middle stump.

Clack!

Sherwell looked round in dismay. His middle stump was out of the ground, and his wicket looked toothless and forlorn.

"How's that?" roared Loamshire with one voice.

And the reply was inevitable:

"Out!"

"You've got hot stuff there," remarked Sherwell good-temperedly to the Loamshire skipper as he went out, and he nodded towards Kit Valance.

Harding smiled.

"Yes; I thought you would find him so," he replied. "And we are going to give you as warm a time as we can, Sherwell."

"We are ready for it," said the South African skipper, laughing.

And he went into the pavilion, and warned White, who was coming in next, to look out for a slow ball with a very dickens of a twist on it, if he had to face Kit Valance's bowling.

White said that he would, and he came out to the wickets. The bowling was now against Tancred, and Harding had put on Arthur Lovell as a change from Ladgen's bowling, which had not proved very profitable so far.

Arthur was a good change bowler, and he went on to do his best against Tancred. He kept the Africanders busy, but he was not able to touch his wicket; but as the over gave the visitors only 2, Arthur did very well.

With Tancred and White partners at the wickets, the innings went on undisturbed for some time, the runs going up slowly but steadily.

South Africa were at 50 when the ball came down to White which he had promised to look out for when Sherwell warned him in the pavilion.

He was certainly looking out for it, but that did not help him much, for the ball curled under his bat, and whipped his middle stump out of the ground in a twinkling.

"Out!"

White nodded, and carried his bat out for 23. The South African figures now read—50 for three, last man 23.

Hathorn came in to join Tancred, and knocked up 27 before he was dismissed at point by a fine catch by Geoffrey Ladgen. And now Tancred's time was coming. Ladgen bowled the next over, and Kit Valance fielded at mid-wicket. Twice the South African batsman scored a boundary, and at the third ball he thought to do the same again. But mid-wicket saw his chance. The ball came straight as a die, and Kit, who was at mid-on, made a leap for it like a kangaroo, and caught it with one hand.

There was a ringing cheer round the rails.

"Bravo, Valance! Well caught!"

Tancred went back to the pavilion. His place was taken by Nourse, and Nourse proved a regular pillar to his side, keeping up his wicket against the bowling of Kit Valance, Tweedie, Ladgen, and Lovell.

When Nourse's individual score reached 50, interest redoubled round the match ground. It was the highest score yet made, and as Hathorn had not been idle at the meantime, the South African score had gone up to a high figure.

With 120 for four wickets, South Africa was doing well, but just before lunch Hathorn was clean bowled by Tweedie, so that at the interval the figures read, 120 for five.

After lunch South Africa resumed batting in fine form. The score was at 150 when Nourse was caught out at point by Arthur Lovell, and he left the field with a total of 58 to his credit.

It was pretty certain that it would not be a "centuries" match; but the South Africans were doing so well all round that the score was likely to be a big one.

But now Kit Valance showed a little of his splendid qualities as a bowler. Kotze was at the wickets with Faulkner, and Kotze had put on 10 runs, increasing the South African score to 160, when a ball he could not stop came straight for his middle stump, and whipped it out of the ground. Vogler, the old Lord's man, came on in the place vacated by Kotze.

Faulkner and Vogler kept their ends up well, and the score slowly but surely crept up, while for a long time the bowlers laboured in vain to displace them.

Faulkner was out at last, l.b.w., and Sinclair joined Vogler. The afternoon was wearing away, and the sun sinking in the West, over the wide green fields and woods of Loamshire. On the cricket ground the game was watched with keen interest. It began to look as if the South African's innings would last over to the second day of the match. The Loamshire men were determined that it should not if they could help it.

Down went Sinclair's wicket at last, stumped by Tunstall, with the visitors' score at 160. S. J. Snooke, greeted familiarly as "Sib" by the crowd, came in.

Nine wickets were down, with half an hour more to play. But Sibley Snooke and Vogler were standing their ground splendidly.

One hundred and ninety for nine! And ten minutes more to play!

The ball was passed to Kit Valance again.

"Don't let it last over to-morrow, Valance," said Harding, with a smile.

And Kit nodded. He meant to do his best to dismiss the visitors before stumps were drawn for the close of the day's play.

But against the obstinate defence of Vogler his splendid bowling failed for the time. The over proved a maiden, but it left the Africanders still in possession of the wickets. Then an over from Geoffrey Ladgen gave them 3, and when the ball was given to Kit again, there remained three minutes before Father Time stopped in.

One hundred and ninety-eight for nine!

Kit's eye caught Arthur Lovell's for a moment. Then he threw all he knew into the bowling. The ball was cut away by Vogler, and a single was run before it came in. 199!

Kit bowled the next ball to Sibley Snooke. "Sib" hit out at it, a tremendous drive that sent the ball right away towards the long-field like a bullet.

"Another boundary," muttered Colonel Hilton, gnawing his moustache, "and no time to bowl another ball. The South Africans will bat to-morrow."

Molly clapped her little hands excitedly.

"It's not a boundary! Look at Arthur Lovell!"

Lovell was in the long-field, and he was after that whizzing ball like a shot.

"No chance!" muttered Harding.

But had he no chance? The man was running like a C. B. Fry in his best form. Now he was backing—backing away under the ball, closer and closer to the boundary. Was it a catch? No; the ball would not fall within his reach!

Back, back—his hand in the air, his shoulders against the railing, his eyes fixed on the round, dark object that was swooping down! Beyond his reach—no—a thousand times no! There is a sound between a click and a kiss—and then a tremendous roar!

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

"Hurrah!"

The ball is in the hand of Arthur Lovell. He reels a little, panting for breath; but the leather is safe in the palm of his hand. He has hardly wind enough left to gasp out: "How's that?"

"Out!"

The last South African wicket has fallen, and the visitors are all down for 199 owing to Arthur Lovell's splendid catch. The second day's play will commence with Loamshire's innings, and the Loamshire men know what they have to expect. All down for 199, and Vogler carries out his bat "not out." But what does the morrow hold in store for Loamshire?

Clean Bowled!

"MAN in!" said Sherwell, the South African captain.

And he tossed the ball to Reggie Schwarz.

It was the second day of the match on the Loamchester ground, Loamshire v. South Africans. The first day had been wholly taken up by the visitors' first innings, and at the close of play the South Africans had been all down for the very respectable total of 199.

Now it was Loamshire's turn to show what they could do in the batting line against the bowlers from the far-off veldt.

The second morning dawned bright and fair, fine cricketers' weather, and there was a goodly attendance upon the ground to see the Loamshire men bat.

The home innings opened with Arthur Lovell and Tunstall for Loamshire.

A crowded pavilion and a crowded ground watched them as they took up their positions at the wickets.

Arthur Lovell was not looking, perhaps, quite so fit as usual.

The stress of mind he had lately been through had not been without its effect upon him, and he did not feel in his usual form.

Still, he made a fine figure as he stood at the wicket, with a straight bat, and his clear, handsome eyes watchful for the ball coming from Schwarz.

The ball came down—one of the dangerous slow balls for which Reggie Schwarz is famous—and Arthur stopped it on the crease; and at the first ball he knew that Schwarz was a bowler he would have to watch. He played that over with unusual care.

He stopped every ball, and the over proved a maiden, an unusual circumstance enough with Arthur Lovell at the wicket, and which showed the watching crowd that Schwarz's dreaded "googlies" had lost none of their sting.

Kotze took the second over, against Tunstall. His bowling was very different from Schwarz's —lightning balls that seemed to come along like 4.7 shells.

Tunstall, however, was on his guard, and he stopped every one of them, though in his case, too, the over ended without a single run being scored.

Geoffrey Ladgen, looking from the pavilion while he waited for his turn, sneered.

"I wonder if we shall break our duck this side of lunch?" he said, with a yawn. "Lovell seems to think he's taking the rest cure at that wicket!"

Schwarz was bowling against Lovell again, and Lovell was stopping ball after ball without venturing to hit out.

"Wait till he gets set!" remarked Fortescue.

"It's no good taking risks at first with a bowler like Reggie Schwarz at the other end."

Ladgen shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, Lovell certainly does not seem inclined to take risks!"

The over ended, and it was another maiden.

Sibley Snooke took the next over, and Tunstall scored four off his bowling, and then a single, which brought Lovell opposite to "Sib."

Lovell received two balls from Sibley Snooke, and each of them he cut away over the boundary, showing that he was getting into form at last.

Fortescue grinned at Geoffrey Ladgen.

"What price that, Ladgen? What about the rest cure now?"

"Oh, rats!" said Ladgen.

"Hallo! There's Reggie Schwarz bowling to Tunstall. I give him one minute!"

Fortescue's allowance proved to be too generous, for the very first ball from Schwarz took Tunstall's middle stump out of the ground.

Tunstall carried out his bat with a long face for 5.

Geoffrey Ladgen drew on his batting-gloves.

"Now then in, Ladgen!" said Harding, the new Loamshire skipper, looking at him.

Ladgen nodded.

"Look out for that chap's beastly googlies!" said Tunstall, as he came into the pavilion. "I've never played anything quite like that before!"

"Oh, I'll look out!" said Ladgen.

He spoke carelessly enough; but when he arrived at the wicket and faced the bowling, he found that he had all his work cut out to keep up his stumps against those googlies.

Ladgen had sneered at Arthur Lovell's caution in playing Schwarz's bowling, but he now found that caution was very necessary.

He did not attempt a run himself, but stopped every ball on the crease, and found that it was all he could do to do that.

He drew a breath of relief when the over finished and his stumps were still intact. He had never faced any bowler exactly like Reggie Schwarz before, and he wanted time to get used to him.

And now Arthur Lovell was beginning to score. An over from Kotze gave him 11, and he still had the bowling when the field crossed and Schwarz recommenced at the other end.

One, two, three slow balls, which gave Arthur in turn a 2, a 4, and another 2. Then a puzzling googly—and there was a shout of surprise from the crowd.

Clack!

Arthur Lovell's grip tightened on the cane handle of his bat, and he looked down at his wicket.

One of the stumps was reclining at an inebriated-looking angle, and the bails were on the ground.

Arthur Lovell had been clean bowled by Reggie Schwarz!

"How's that, umpire?"

And the umpire replied tersely:

"Out!"

Arthur Lovell was out for 27!

That dreaded googly, which to so many batsmen in England and South African grounds, had proved fatal once more, and to the champion bat of Loamshire.

Arthur was not the man to complain. He had been a little shaky and shifty bowled out, and he put his bat under his arm, and walked back to the pavilion with a cheerful face.

Geoffrey Ladgen watched him go with gleaming eyes. He had never dreamed of seeing Arthur Lovell dismissed so early in the innings, and he felt a thrill of spiteful satisfaction as he saw him go off.

Now was his chance to show that Arthur Lovell was not the only pebble on the beach—that there were batsmen in the Loamshire team who were quite as valuable as the young professional of whom so much fuss was made.

And, indeed, just then Fortune seemed to smile upon Geoffrey Ladgen. He stopped all the balls that Schwarz sent him, and knocked up a good many runs from the bowling of Kotze and Sibley Snooke.

Tweedie had joined him at the wickets, and the Scottish professional was keeping up his end well.

Geoffrey Ladgen had taken 40 when Fate descended upon him, in the shape of a lightning express from Kotze.

The ball came down like a flash, and Ladgen never knew where it was until it had whipped his leg stump out of the ground.

Ladgen wrinkled his brows; but he had done the best, so far, of the Loamshire batsmen, and when the whole side was pretty well satisfied as he carried out his bat.

It was a keen triumph to read on the telegraph-board—80 for three, last man 40.

"Well done, my boy," exclaimed Colonel Hilton, as Ladgen passed him in the pavilion enclosure running in "well done, indeed!"

And Molly Hilton gave the young man a bright smile. She did not like Ladgen, but she could forgive anything to one who played up manfully for Loamshire, for the girl was as keen a cricketer as any member of the team or the county committee, and as keen as any of them on seeing Loamshire finish up the season as champion county.

Ladgen's eyes sparkled.

"Not so bad, sir," he remarked, with an affectation of modesty, "considering the bowling. Kotze seems to be a perfect demon with the leather."

"Hardly as dangerous as Schwarz, though," said the colonel. "I was surprised to see Lovell out for 27. But, of course, we can't expect centuries always."

Ladgen bit his lip. He seemed fated to hear the praises of Arthur Lovell, whatever happened.

"But you have done well, Ladgen!" the colonel went on cheerily. "When I saw Lovell's wicket go down, I was afraid it would mean a fallow-day for us. But I think we are safe from that now. Who is the next man in?"

"Harding, I believe."

It was the Loamshire skipper who went down to the wicket Ladgen had vacated. He took his middle in his quiet, steady way, and faced Kotze with his usual calmness.

It was getting near the lunch interval, and the Loamshires were as yet only three down; but of those three, two were the best batsmen on the home side.

The departure of Ladgen from the wicket was followed by a series of heavy blows for the home team.

Tweedie's wicket fell to a lightning ball from Kotze, and five minutes later Harding succumbed to one of Schwarz's deadly googlies.

Fortescue came in, only to lose his wicket for 15, to the bowling of Sibley Snooke. The Loamshire score was now exactly 100 for six. But the tale of disaster was not ended yet. Two batsmen were caught out in succession by Sherwell, the South African captain, with the Loamshire score still at 105.

Then Ponsonby's wicket fell for 12, to Vogler's bowling. Nimo down for 117. Wentworth was the last man in; his partner at the wickets being Kit Valance.

Kit was doing well, keeping his end up

OUR NEW COMPETITION.

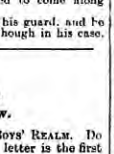
WHO IS IT?

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 No. 2," 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 the ..... Football Club." Letters must reach this office by Saturday, July 20th.

Another six portraits will appear next week.

No. 7.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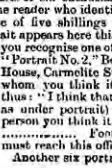
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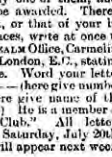
No. 11.

No. 12.

KING CRICKET.

(Continued from the previous page.)

gallantly, and stealing a run here and there. His partner might have done the same, and prolonged the life of the innings over lunch, at least; but Wentworth was too ambitious.

He began to score, and 10 rewarded his efforts; and then he hit out to a tempting slow ball from Schwarz, and landed the leather right into the hands of Vogler.

"How's that?" shouted the old player of Lord's, holding up the ball.

"Out!"

Wentworth was indubitably out. The Loamshire innings was over for 127; Kit Valance not out.

The morning had sufficed for the merry men from South Africa to finish off the home innings. Three cricketers knocked off for lunch, the visitors in high spirits. The home team were not quite so cheerful. It was pretty plain that the South Africans were above the strength of an ordinary county side, and that Loamshire would have a hard fight to hold their own.

The South Africans were to bat again after lunch, and predictions were freely uttered in the crowd that Sherwell would be in a position to declare by the time the stumps were drawn for the close of the day's play. But that remained to be seen.

The South Africans Go Ahead.

"WHAT are you doing down here again, Len?"

Kit Valance asked the question abruptly, with a dark shade coming over his face. A note had been brought to the young bowler in the pavilion, towards the end of the lunch interval, and he had gone out to meet his scapegrace brother in a secluded corner of the ground. He was annoyed to see Len again, and did not pretend to be otherwise.

"What do you want?" he went on. "Why do you keep on coming here? You've done enough mischief already, I should think."

Len smiled, in his cynical, mocking way.

"I want to see Lovell," he explained. "I sent the note to you, because I want you to arrange it. That's all I'm asking of you this time, Kit."

"You can't see him," said Kit curtly.

"Why not?"

"Because he has already refused to meet you, and he's not the fellow to change his mind without good reason."

"I should think the reason good enough, when a fortune hangs upon it," said Len Valance. "I tell you I can help him to regain the fortune James Lagden robbed his uncle of. I tell you I can make him a rich man."

"Yes; by spying on your employer and then selling his secrets," said Kit disdainfully. "I warned you that Lovell wouldn't have anything to do with it. And he won't! He has already refused to see you, Len, and it's no good your trying again."

"I have gained some more information since I saw you last," said Len eagerly. "What was only suspicion before is certainty now."

"It makes no difference. Lovell will not have a hand in any kind of dirty work. And that's what you're proposing, in plain English."

"You have to meet a rascal with his own methods," said Len.

"I don't ask Lovell to do anything risky. And there's a fortune at stake."

"And, to come to the point, I suppose you want money to work with, or something of that kind!" exclaimed the young cricketer impatiently. "Is that it?"

"Well, I think a fortune is worth a few pounds, isn't it?" said Len sulkily.

"Yes; I thought you were coming to that," said Kit.

"Well, Lovell is as poor as I am, and he has no money to advance if he wanted to—and he doesn't."

"He could borrow it of Colonel Hilton."

"Oh, dry up! You make me tired! I tell you Lovell refuses to have a hand in anything of the kind, and he refuses to meet or speak to you."

"I must know that for myself. It won't hurt him to speak a word to me, anyway."

Kit Valance set his lips.

"Look here, Len!" he exclaimed sharply. "I had better speak out plainly. Lovell hasn't forgotten that affair at Taunton. You and your rascally friends kidnapped him, and nearly lost Loamshire an important match. He has overlooked it because you're my brother, and he's my friend. But it won't be safe for you to meet him. He's said that he doesn't want to see you. If you force yourself upon him, I won't be answerable for the consequences."

"And what are the consequences likely to be?" asked Len, with a sneer. "Anything very terrible?"

"In all probability he will give you a hiding, as you deserve," said Kit bluntly. "Now, take warning by that, and don't be a fool."

Len's eyes glittered.

"He might find Jack as good as his master, if he tried that game," he said, with sulky arrogance.

Kit made an impatient gesture.

"He could soon see in his fingers, Len. Don't be a fool! He wants to have nothing to do with you. Let him alone! Hallo, it's time I got back!"

"Then you won't speak to him?"

"It would be useless."

"Will you, or won't you?"

"Well, I won't, if you want it plainly," said Kit; and he turned and walked away towards the pavilion, where the Loamshire men were preparing to take the field.

Len looked after him, with a glint in his eyes and a dark expression upon his face.

"He won't help me!" he muttered. "But I will see Lovell! I can meet him when he leaves the ground, at all events. Kit can't prevent me."

And having come to that decision, the dingy scapegrace mingled with the crowd that was already thickening round the railings to watch the commencement of the South Africans' second innings.

Kit re-entered the pavilion with a clouded brow. He knew his brother's obstinate nature, and he feared that Len would make some attempt to speak to Arthur Lovell, and induced him to enter the scheme he had planned.

Lovell, for Kit's sake, had exercised great self-control in dealing with the scapegrace; but if his patience was tried too far, it might fail him. Only ill could come of a meeting forced between the two; and Kit could not help thinking that Len meant to force one.

Lovell glanced at Kit curiously, as the young bowler came into the professional's room in the pavilion.

"Anything wrong, Kit old fellow?"

"No!" said Kit, making an effort to speak carelessly. "I'm all right. Do you know who goes on first for the Springboks?"

"Sherwell and Vogler, I believe. You will be wanted to bowl."

"Ay, ay," said Tweedie, the Scottish professional of the Loamshire team. "You are the only bowler they are nervous about, Valance. I heard Sherwell himself say so. Complimentary to me, too."

Kit laughed.

"Well, I hope I shall give them something to be nervous about," he remarked. "They are a splendid team; a fine, all-round set of cricketers. I fancy they will walk over most of our county sides, and it will be a feather in Loamshire's cap if we beat them."

The crowd buzzed with interest as Harding, the Loamshire skipper, led his men out to field, arrayed in white, with the blue Loamshire caps. Sherwell, the South African skipper, opened the second innings for his side with Vogler, the old groundsman from Lord's.

Kit was put on to bowl the first over. The meeting with his scapegrace brother had somewhat disturbed Valance, and with a fresh worry on his mind, he was some time in settling down to his usual form as a bowler.

His bowling had lost some of its sting, and the South African captain, who received the first over, knocked the ball all over the field.

Tweedie changed the bowling, without much success against the batsmen from the veldt. Geoffrey Lagden and Arthur Lovell, in turn tried their hand, and still the batsmen remained immovable at the wicket. Kit had bowled several overs, and still the wickets had remained untouched.

Meanwhile the South Africans were scoring. By twos, and three's, and four's, the score were mounting up, and the telegraph-board showed 50; and the batsmen seemed as fresh as ever.

It was evident that Sherwell and his comrade of the willow were in fine form, and many of the South African side were walking about the ground, or resting under the trees, anticipating a long wait before they were called upon, if they were wanted that day at all.

"They are getting set, now," Geoffrey Lagden remarked in an undertone to Harding as the field crossed over. "How long is this going to last?"

Harding tossed the ball to Kit Valance.

"Do your best, Valance," he said.

Kit nodded. He went on, determined to buck up and do his level best to get rid of Sherwell, and he threw all he knew into the next over.

A 2, and a 4, and then—clack! There was a shout of delight from the crowd.

"Bowled!"

"Well bowled!"

Sherwell's wicket was a wreck. The deadly batsman had been dismissed at last, and Loamshire looked up again. For now that Kit Valance had his hand in, as it were, he showed that he had not lost his old power with the leather.

His very next ball clean bowled Hathorn, who came on in place of Sherwell, and again the Loamshire crowd shouted and cheered.

"Bravo, Valance!"

"Give us the hat-trick!"

Kit smiled. He meant to make it the hat-trick if he could, but when he saw Schwarz come out to the vacated wicket he had little hope of it. And he was right.

The next ball did not take a wicket, but was cut to the boundary for 4, and from that Reggie Schwarz began to score.

When the figure reached 100 South Africa were still only two down. With the score at 110 Vogler was caught out in the slips by Tweedie from a ball bowled by Arthur Lovell. His place was taken by Nourse.

And the runs mounted up, Nourse and Schwarz backing each other up splendidly, and making the runs with tireless rapidity.

The score was at 140 when Nourse was tempted to hit out at a tempting ball from Kit Valance, which curled under his bat and knocked his wicket into a wreck.

Nourse went back to the pavilion, and Sinclair passed him coming out. Sinclair stood the bowling well, and sent the last ball of the over into the long-field with a terrific swipe, and the batsmen ran, and ran, and ran.

Arthur Lovell, who was fielding deep in the long-field, dashed after the ball, and his hand closed upon it.

His eye went back in a flash to the pitch. Schwarz was almost home, but Sinclair still wanted a yard or more to the crease from the outstretched end of his bat.

The ball flew from Arthur's hand like a bullet in the same second, as it seemed, that he had recovered it. Not to the wicket-keeper. Straight at the batsman's wicket it went—a tremendous throw-in from the country—but it was successful.

There was a crash of the ball on the stumps, and the wicket reeled to pieces, and then the hat of the Africander clumped on the crease. The crowd yelled joyously.

"How's that?"

"Out!" said the umpire.

It had been a narrow miss for Sinclair, but a miss was as bad as a mile in his case. He nodded acquiescence to the umpire's decision, and walked away with his bat under his arm, and Sibley Snooke came out to join Schwarz.

The total for the South Africans was now 155 for five wickets. The golden June afternoon was wearing away, and the elms round the match-ground of Loamshire were beginning to cast long shadows.

Still, the batting went merrily on. And now at last Schwarz's fate was upon him. A baffling googly, a very good imitation of his own ball which had brought down Arthur Lovell's wicket in the Loamshire innings, came from the hand of Kit Valance. Schwarz missed it, and down came his bails.

"Out!"

The South African score stood at 196, of which 90 belonged to Schwarz.

"Well done, Schwarz!"

"Bravo, Reggie!"

And the fine cricketer from South Africa slightly raised his cap as he walked to the pavilion in acknowledgment of the plaudits of the crowd.

Six down for 196. Last man 90!

Four more wickets to fall, and the remaining five batsmen were Kotze, White, Tancred, Sibley Snooke, and Faulkner.

It was Tancred who now came in to join Sibley Snooke at the wickets. Both of them were in fine form, and they made hay of the bowling, knocking it into every quarter of the field, and running up the score right merrily.

Kit Valance bowled splendidly, but he had the afternoon's work, of which the major part had fallen upon him, and his bowling was losing its sting now. Harding observed it, and changed more frequently; but none of the Loamshire bowlers seemed able to touch the wicket of either Tancred or Sibley Snooke.

200—210—220!

The score for the second South African innings was now greatly in excess of the first day's score, and four wickets yet to fall. But the Loamshire bowlers and fieldsmen, who had borne the heat and burden of the afternoon, were to have a rest at last.

The light was growing paler, and the fixed hour for the drawing of the stumps put a period to the South African tide of success. Harding drew a breath of relief.

"That's saved our bacon!" he remarked, as he joined Colonel Hilton in the pavilion, when the day's play had closed. "By Jove, sir, the South Africans are a tough morsel for any county team to chew, and no mistake."

The colonel nodded.

"Yes, even Kit Valance's bowling does not seem so dangerous as usual," he remarked. "I fancy you gave him a little too much towards the end, Harding."

"I think so, too, sir; but he was our only man who could touch them. It will be different in the morning. Valance will be as fresh as a daisy then, and I expect he will make short work of the wickets left over from to-day."

"I hope so. South Africa are already quite far enough ahead," remarked the colonel; "and I dislike the idea of playing for a draw. Unfinished matches are always unsatisfactory, to my mind."

Meanwhile, Arthur Lovell and his chum were exchanging comments as they changed their clothes in their quarters.

"What do you think of our chance of beating the Springboks, Kit?" Arthur asked, as he sponged over his heated face.

"Fair," replied Kit reflectively. "It will be touch and go to-morrow, I think, and it would take a wizard to tell how the match will end."

"That's what I was thinking. If we don't take their wickets pretty early, Sherwell is pretty certain to declare during the morning, so as to have a chance of finishing the match; but I think you'll take them, Kit."

Kit laughed.

"I shall try."

When they left the pavilion the two chums separated. Kit had found an old acquaintance in one of the South African players, and he went to speak to him before he left the ground. Arthur Lovell quitted the ground alone, strolling on slowly in the dying sunset, so that Kit would overtake him.

He stopped at a little rustic bridge in the lane, where the road crossed a little stream, and stood there leaning on the low stone parapet, expecting that Kit would soon come along. He looked up at the sound of a step. Then a dark frown crossed his face.

It was not Kit; but from the likeness of the new-comer to Kit Valance, Arthur knew at once whom it was. He knew again the mocking face, the unsteady eyes, the general air of dingy blackguardism which marked Kit's scapegrace brother Len.

"I want to speak to you, Lovell," said Len Valance.

And he stopped on the little bridge beside the young cricketer, resting his hand on the low parapet, and facing Arthur Lovell, unconscious or heedless of the anger gathering in Arthur's face.

(Another absorbing, long instalment of this splendid story of County Cricket will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

Len Valance was swung off his feet in the grip of Arthur Lovell—swung high into the air, and the bridge and the stream danced before his dizzy eyes. *(An incident from next week's splendid instalment.)*

THE 1st CHAPTER.
A Double Bot-back for Beaumont.

THERE was a deep hush in the great hall of Westlands School as the headmaster ascended his rostrum and settled his gold-rimmed glasses upon his high, aquiline nose. Not a boy was there but guessed what the paper that Mr. Maule held meant. The result of the Vallens Scholarship had come to hand at last.

It had been eagerly expected for the last week or more, and the suspense had put still more strain upon the relations between two of the fellows in the Sixth, already strained almost to snapping point.

Westlands, though modelled on public school lines, was a private school, and the Sixth Form fellows there were almost men, so many of the upper boys at such seats of learning as Eton and Winchester are. There were very few boys in the school over seventeen; and the two in question—Vincent Beaumont and Jim Ellison—were not more than sixteen.

But they were the school's acknowledged leaders, alike in class and in the playing field. Between them was supposed to lie the Vallens Scholarship. Between them had lain the exactitancy of the school cricket eleven, this year far stronger than it had ever been before. Beaumont had beaten his rival there. Would the tables be turned in the scholarship?

"I have this morning to make an announcement that I believe to be eagerly anticipated," began the Rev. Jasper Maule, fluttering the paper in his hand as he spoke. "The gentlemen who honoured us by adjudicating upon the papers set for the Vallens Scholarship have now completed their responsible task, and to-day's early post has brought me the result. Knowing the anxiety that some of you must feel, I will not detain you by any extended preliminary observations."

"What's the old donkey think he's doin' with all that dictionary gas, then?" whispered Rutley to Beaumont.

Rutley was chronically impatient. He was the slogger of the Westlands team, and it was said of him that he had never been known to stay at home to three successive balls from a slow bowler. He simply could not wait for them. If the bowling was very slow indeed he would get half-way down the pitch to meet it. But his eye was keen and his heart big, and for all his apparent recklessness, he often knocked up a good score. Such as he was in the cricket-field, so he was elsewhere—impatient, excitable, but clear-sighted and plucky.

"Stow it, Rut; he's got his eye on you!"

"Speaking generally, the result of the examination has equalled—I may even say exceeded—my highest expectations. The papers set were distinctly difficult, and to cope with them all, as some of the entrants did, demanded all-round ability as well as previous hard work. Of the eight boys who entered two only did less than moderately well, and two did brilliantly."

"You an' old Ellison!" whispered Rutley.

"You are all naturally anxious to know who has won the scholarship. I repeat that I will not long keep you in suspense. The maximum of marks obtainable was 1,200. One boy scored 1,157, and takes first place. Another was so near him that fifteen more marks would have put them on an equality. Two others were marked at between 1,000 and 1,050. Two more——"

Rutley groaned aloud. He could not hold in his impatience any longer. Why didn't the Head say who the fellows were, instead of puffing about like this?

"Rutley," said Mr. Maule sharply, "are you unwell?"

"Yos, sir—I mean no, sir—it was only——"

"Please be good enough not to interrupt me again. As I am about to say, the winner of the scholarship, the boy who scored over 95 per cent. of the maximum number of marks, is——"

He paused for an instant only, but long enough to fetch another stifled groan from Rutley.

"James Ellison!"

It was out at last! Vin Beaumont was beaten then! His face went red and then pale. He kept his eyes resolutely turned away from his successful rival while the cheers rose so loudly and strongly that it seemed as though they would lift the roof off the hall.

For, and not nearly equal that the answering of a couple of questions by him, or the failure to answer a like number on Ellison's part might have placed him first, is Vincent Markwell Beaumont!"

The cheering rose again, but in smaller volume, and Beaumont was hardly the popular character that he had been when the term began.

"Third, Frederick Hazell Rutley; fourth, John Severn; fifth, Thomas Gordon Wild; sixth, Stephen Cranfield. To all these I have done well, and I tender them my congratulations on the manner in which they have acquitted themselves. The remaining two—Herbert Tyler and Oswald Peter Churchward—have, I must confess, disappointed me. I looked for better things from them. Tyler has scored under 500 marks; Churchward did not reach 400."

Tyler, a sullen-looking, black-haired fellow, scowled at the faces of his comrades turned towards him. He was one of the least popular boys at Westlands, and it was his own fault that he was not liked. Churchward grinned all over his freckled face, after flushing up to the roots of his auburn hair when his name was first brought into such undesirable prominence. No one—not even Mr. Maule himself, who was not given to having favourites—could help keeping a warm corner in his heart for the irresponsible youngster whom his comrades nick-named the Churchwarden.

"I have another announcement to make," went on the headmaster; "and this, too, is an important one—in its way, almost as important as the scholarship result. It is within the knowledge of most of you that for some five seasons past we have sent a challenge to Mallhurst College to meet us on the cricket-field. This challenge has been consistently declined. On the ground—an inadequate one, to my mind—that our school is not a public school. The new headmaster of Mallhurst has, I am glad to say, taken a broader view.

"By this post I have received from him a most kind and complimentary letter. He writes in the highest terms of the well-deserved reputation which Westlands enjoys in the county, adverts to the capital record which our eleven has achieved this year, and says that his seniors, with whom he has taken counsel, are more than willing to play us, and see if they can inflict upon us our first beating this season."

He paused, and a storm of cheers broke out.

"Severn, here is a letter bearing the Mallhurst crest addressed to you, as secretary of our cricket club. I have no doubt that this contains a formal reply to your challenge."

Severn went forward immediately, and tore open the envelope in haste.

"Yes, sir," he said, almost before he had had time to run his eyes over the short note; "they'll play us! And they want to play on the county ground, if we'll agree. They have settled it all with the county committee. An' there's something about makin' it an annual event, an' always playing it at Halchester. I say, sir, this is grand news, isn't it?"

Nothing was more evident than that Mr. Maule was as pleased as the boys.

"I can see no objection to the playing of the match at Halchester," he said. "Indeed, considering the awkwardness of the railway communication between here and Mallhurst, it seems an eminently desirable arrangement. Is any date mentioned?"

"Yes, sir, the 15th—the Saturday after next, that would be. An' they want to start early, at half-past ten, they say—so that there should be plenty of time to play the game right out."

"That also seems good to me. Boys, I do not think that any of us would find it easy to work to-day, after such exciting news as the result of the scholarship examination and the arrangement of this match. I give you a whole day's holiday. Dismiss!"

They passed into the playground, a seething tide of high spirits and ardent youthful life. In all the crowd of ninety or more, there were only two discontented faces. One was that of the fellow who had just failed to win the Vallens Scholarship; the other was that of Tyler, who was still brooding over the headmaster's criticism of his efforts.

"Isn't it glorious, old man?" cried Rutley, slapping Beaumont on the back.

His chum turned with an angry look.

"You have the cheek to call me old man?" he said, with unmistakable contempt.

"Born' beaten! Oh, bang it, I'd forgotten all about the scholarship! It was the match I was thinkin' of—the match, you old dotter!"

"Why not Thomas Gordon Wild?" chanted the Churchwarden, doing a step-dance on someone's cap.

"Because he didn't win the school," suggested Severn.

"Not a bit of it! He never expected to. It was because they said unto him, 'Come forth!' an', after all, he only came fifth!"

"Oh, chuck it, Churchwarden!" said Wild. "You're too beastly funny for anything! Keep your jokes for the next visitor inectin'!"

"Don't be wild, Wild! Of course, you can't help bein' Wild, but you needn't be wild, Wild."

Then he bolted, with Wild in hot pursuit.

Ellison came up just then. He had been one of the last to leave the hall, the Head having called him back to congratulate him specially. He walked straight up to the cricket captain.

"It's all over, after a jolly tough fight, Beaumont," he said frankly. "I'm almost sorry it wasn't a dead heat, since you were so near. Can't say I'm sorry you didn't beat me, of course, for you wouldn't believe that. But I wish you'd shake hands. We haven't been on very good terms lately; but I don't know why we shouldn't be friendly again."

"Don't you?" returned Vincent Beaumont, with a sneer. "I do, though! No; I won't shake hands! An' I tell you plainly I don't believe what you say. You'd have been sick enough if it had been a dead heat!"

Ellison looked him in the face for one brief moment; then he turned and walked away. But that look of almost pitying scorn was too much for Beaumont.

"D'ye understand that I gave you the lie?" he shouted after Jim.

"Oh, chuck it, Vin! What on earth's the good of a scene of this sort?" groaned Fred Rutley.

Jim Ellison came back slowly. He had no wish to be on ill terms with Beaumont. They had been good enough friends once, though never close chums. But his was not the sort of spirit that could submit tamely to insult.

"No; he said. "I didn't quite understand that. Perhaps you'd be good enough to repeat it?"

"You're a confounded liar, then, if you want it again!"

There was a hush in the crowd around, broken by the smack of Jim's open hand upon Beaumont's face.

"Take that, then, if you must have it!"

"You'll fight, I suppose?"

"Yes, with pleasure—and at once! The sooner you get the hidin' you're spoilin' for, the better it will be for Westlands!"

"I don't think you can give it me!"

"Don't be too sure of that! Severn, will you be my second?"

"You'll be mine, Fred?" asked Beaumont, of Rutley.

"Yes; but I don't like this a bit, old man! What did you insult him for?" Ellison's a rare good chap, as I've a right in a general way; but I hate the notion of you two scrappin'."

Beaumont shrugged his shoulders.

"The fight will come off, whether you second me or not."

"Oh, I'm goin' to. But I believe you've taken on something a bit too big for you, Vin. Ellison's been having lessons in boxin' for months past; an' he's no end smart with his fists."

"Boxin' ain't quite the same thing as fightin'."

"Well, I can't see much difference, if a chap's got his heart in the right place."

Rutley was right, as was very soon made evident. From the outset, Beaumont's chance, bar accidents, was just nil. He fought pluckily, but without any science worth speaking of. Ellison, with every bit as much pluck, was an accomplished boxer. Some of the fellows said afterwards that he played with Beaumont as a cat plays with a mouse. But that was not true. There was no spark of cruelty in Jim Ellison's nature.

His error in fair dallying was a very different one. He had no wish to mark or hurt his rival more than was absolutely necessary; and so he waited his chance to deal a blow that should bring the fight to a finish without his having inflicted any great punishment upon Beaumont.

The chance came pretty early in the third round. By that time, Beaumont, though he bore scarcely a mark, had been worked into a white heat of passion by his inability to get home on Jim. Assailing furiously, he forgot even to attempt to guard; and Ellison's left landed on the point of his jaw and sent him to the ground. He could not come up to time, and the fight was over.

"Vin Beaumont had two takedowns today," said Severn to Churchward that evening, "an' Jim's give him both."

"Yes; an' the worst of it is that Vin isn't a chap that likes nicely about bein' taken down," answered the Churchwarden, with quite unwonted seriousness. "I'm afraid he'll be lookin' round for a chance to get even with Jim. An' when you're feelin' ugly, Tyler isn't the best chum you can be marchin' round with."

"What; has he taken up with Tyler again?"

"Yes; haven't you seen them together? It's a bad sign. He's like Mother Carey's chickens, that outsider—he spells a-t-o-r-m!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Batting and Bowling Prizes.

IT does not often happen that two members of an eleven are so distinctly above their colleagues, both as batsmen and bowlers, as were Vin Beaumont and Jim Ellison in the Westlands School team. On their undoubted superiority to all their comrades, and their practical equality with one another, a good deal of the team's fame was based.

"I say, Fred," said Severn to Rutley, a day or two after the fight, "those bagmen at Waverdale have scratched. We shan't have a match at all on Saturday."

"Pity, isn't it? But we'll have a jolly good pick-up practice game instead."

"Oh, that's all right, as far as it goes. It's the battin' an' bowlin' prizes I was thinkin' of."

"What about 'em?"

"Just this—that it will be left now to the Mallhurst match to settle who has them. And I, for one, would rather have had it settled before. We should have a better chance in the big match if it was."

"You don't think they'd play jealous, do you?"

"I'm jolly sure Jim wouldn't. I'm not so sure of your self, Fred. The last game he wasn't quite fair to old Jim. Why did he send Wild in out of his place in that second innings, if it wasn't to hinder Jim carryin' his bat, after hittin' off the few runs that were wanted? He'd gone for a duck himself; an' he didn't quite like the idea of Jim's gettin' ten or a dozen, not out. That would have pulled his average up by a decimal, an', it looks to me as if a decimal would settle it."

"Oh, be fair to Vin, old man! That's mere guesswork, you know. How do they stand—exactly, I mean; not there or thereabouts."

Severn lagged out his pocket-book. He was a perfect glutton for cricket statistics.

"Up to date, Beaumont's made 396 runs in sixteen innings. He's been not out twice; so that his average is 42·57."

Rutley made a grimace at the decimal.

"It's cuttin' the thing pretty fine to work

THE LAST INNINGS.

(Continued from the previous page.)

'em out to the hundredth part of a run—that's about seven inches, near as I can make it. What's Jim's figure?"

"Total, 640; innings, fifteen; no not out; average, 42.6. An' that makes them so close that if they have only one innings each in the last match, an' Jim scores 20 to Beaumont's 24, he loses, though he's ahead now!"

"An' suppose Vin scored 23?"

Severn worked it out quickly.

"Then he'd be ahead by just that hundredth of a run we were talkin' about!"

"Jigger decimals, anyway! What about the bowlin'?"

"Jim's taken one wicket more, but he's about a tenth of a run behind on the average."

"Do you know what I should do if I were you, Vin?" asked Tyler, an evening or two before the match, as he and Beaumont paced together the long lime avenue that stretched outside the school gates.

"What about?"

"Why, what we were talkin' of, naturally—the matter of the cricket prizes. I'd put Rutley on instead of Jim's cad Ellison. Rutley bowled jolly well in the practice game on Saturday, an' Ellison didn't even trouble to turn out."

"You know as well as I do that he couldn't help that. He had been there; I guess old Fred's analysis would have been a bit spoiled."

"Well, if I were in your place I'd put Rutley on first, anyway; an' I'd go on at the other end myself, an' bowl like a demon!"

"Yes; Bert, I think I can see you bowlin' like a demon!"

Tyler scowled. He was in the eleven, and could bat fairly well; but his occasional efforts as a bowler were of the most futile description.

"You might try it, anyway."

"What would you do about the battin'?"

"Put Jim in No. 6 or 7, instead of No. 3."

"But the other fellows would have something to say about that!"

"You can easily hatch up a tale good enough for them. Say you wanted a good man to strengthen the tail."

"They're rather fishy suggestions, Bert—not quite in my line, I think."

"Oh, well, let that lout carry off both the prizes! He beat you for the scholarship. He gave you a lickin' directly afterwards. It won't hurt you to suffer a couple more defeats at his hands. I don't care, anyway!"

Beaumont did not reply; but the cunning, unsportsmanlike suggestions of the other fellow lingered in his mind. The cricket captain cared at least as much about the winning of those prizes as he did about pulling off the match, and preserving the school's unbeaten record for the season.

Did he care more? That was a question he could hardly have answered himself. The match would show, perhaps. And meanwhile the poison that Tyler had instilled into his mind was working.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Match.

THE great day had come; and the county ground at Halchester was filling rapidly. In an ordinary way a match between two school elevens will hardly draw a big gate. Even at Harrow at Lord's is the exception which proves the rule; and even that is more of a society function than a match.

But there were special circumstances which helped to attract a crowd in this particular case. The county eleven was having a brilliantly successful season; and throughout the shire, cricket enthusiasm was at white heat. Then these two schools had never met before, and both were entering the lists as undefeated teams. Last, and perhaps most potent reason of all, for the average Briton dearly loves a free show, no gate-money was being charged!

"Don't you feel nervous about playin' before a crowd like this, Jim?" asked Jack Severn, as he and Ellison sat on the front seat in the pavilion and watched the people streaming in.

"Oh, I don't know. Not very, I think. What about yourself?"

"That's a very different thing. I haven't the responsibility you have. Practically the fate of the match, from our point of view, depends on you and Beaumont."

"Don't you believe it, Johnny! It may all hang on your stonewallin' tactics yet."

"I hope not! I say, Beaumont's won the toss! Look at the beggar's face—an' at Cranston's! You couldn't make any mistake about it, could you?"

The two captains had just tossed for choice of innings, and the Westlands man had called correctly.

"Oh, yes, we'll bat first!" they heard him say; and then he ran up the steps into the pavilion, and sat down to write out the batting-list.

"Severn, Beaumont," he began, and then stopped, the pen poised in his hand. Should he do as Tyler had counselled, or should he not? Only a moment he hesitated, then scrawled "Ellison," and followed with "Barr, Cranfield, Rutley, Churchward, Wild, Tyler, Browne, Detling."

For the moment, at least, he had conquered temptation. Jim was to go in first wicket down, his usual place.

The innings did not open auspiciously. Severn got one too good for him in Cranston's second over, and retired for 4. The next wicket added over 60 before the captain was caught in the long-field for a well-played 35. Barr retired after one ball only; but Cranfield settled down to play a good game, and Ellison was quite at his best. When he had scored 33, however, a marvellous catch in the slips sent him out.

Severn was busy with pencil and paper directly. When he had finished his calculation he put both away and said nothing to anyone, until Fred Rutley came back, after scoring 22 in ten minutes by a liberal use of the long handle.

"Well, how do they stand now?" he asked, seating himself by Severn's side.

"Got to go to the third place of decimals to calculate the difference between them!"

"An' who's ahead then?"

"Beaumont."

"Whew! Well, I hope one or other of 'em will put it beyond doubt in the second innings. I don't like close finishes. But Fanny decidin' a prize on the thousandth part of a run!"

The innings closed for 148, Cranfield and Churchward being the only others to reach double figures. This was hardly the sort of total that the Westlands boys were accustomed to; but then the Mallhurst bowling and fielding was of the best.

Would theirs prove as good? Matters looked hopeful when at luncheon, which was taken at half-past one, seven of the Mallhurst batsmen had fallen for 93. Cranston and Doubleday each having contributed about 40. But after lunch—during which Tyler occupied the seat next to him and was continually whispering suggestions, which Beaumont took no heed—Jim, by his breach of decent manners—Beaumont took off Ellison, who had taken five of the seven wickets, and put on Wild.

Wild did not get a wicket; but the captain scored the three runs that were outstanding, and came out with a bowling analysis not far from as good as Jim's. The total was 153.

"They wouldn't have got as many if he'd kept Ellison on," said Barr to Severn and Rutley. "It was a big mistake taking him off, to my mind."

The other two looked at one another. Neither quite believed that it had been an error of judgment.

"But it's brought him behind Jim in the bowlin'," said Severn, when Barr had moved away. "His five wickets cost 65, Jim's only 50."

"Yes. But if Ellison had been kept on it might have been five all, you see."

Rutley was feeling heartily disgusted with his chum. He felt still more so when he walked up to scan the order of going-in list for the second innings.

"Severn, Beaumont, Cranfield, Rutley, Churchward——" Why, where was Jim's name?

There it was—at No. 7! Honest Fred Rutley went hot-foot to find his captain and chum.

"I want a word with you, Vin."

"Haven't time now," replied Beaumont, looking up from the pad he was buckling, but not meeting Fred's eyes fairly and squarely.

"You've got to make time then," said Rutley, with rising indignation in his tone. "If you weren't a friend of mine I'd say it right out here before everybody, an' you wouldn't like that!"

"What on earth are you gettin' your rag out about?"

"I guess you know! Anyway, if you'll come behind the pavilion, I'll tell you."

Beaumont came, very unwillingly.

"Now then, what's made you shift Jim Ellison down to No. 7?"

"Am I captain or are you?"

"You are—an' I'm jolly sorry for it! For it's a dirty trick you're playin', Vin, an' you'll be the first to see that when you come to your senses."

"A dirty trick? What d'ye mean? I wanted to strengthen the tail end, and——"

"Don't lie to me! I won't say any more now—I don't want to spoil your battin', But 'tain't for your sake, but the school's!"

Beaumont went, pale and miserable-looking. He had an awkward temper, and Fred was impulsive and rash; but these two had never quarrelled before. There was a gulf opening between them now, though!

THE 4th CHAPTER.
The Last Innings.

BEAUMONT batted very shakily at the outset; Rutley's attack and his own conscience were troubling him. But after being missed off an easy chance at point—the first catch buttered in the match this far—he pulled himself together and settled down to a good cricket.

It was as well he did. For the Mallhurst bowling was deadly, and their fielding, bar that one bad miss of Doubleday's at point, superb. One by one, Severn, Cranfield, Rutley, Churchward, and Tyler left, not a man among them having reached double figures. The hitter, still upset by that quarrel with his chum, was clean-bowled first ball, and tried hard to persuade himself that he was glad of it; and Churchward was run out through a splendid throw-in of Ashton's from the very farthest corner of the ground.

Ellison joined his captain, whose score now stood at 45, while the total was only 55. Beaumont had hardly counted on this. When he had put Jim's name down for No. 7 he had never thought but that his own innings would have finished before his rival came in. It upset him to have the fellow he had treated unfairly opposite to him. He had only scored three more runs and Jim had not opened his account, when he played forward at a ball from Cattermole, which broke in from the off, beat him, and shifted his middle peg.

Six wickets were down for 68, and Westlands' chance of winning the game had grown small indeed. When Barr put up an easy catch to mid-off, and retired with a round 'un against his name, they looked smaller. But now Wild went in to join Jim up gallantly. Long faces grew round again. The figures on the telegraph-board moved merrily. Wild was getting most of the bowling, and was making all that he could of his chances. He had not batted so well before during the whole season; but, then, he was just the right type of fellow for such an emergency—the sort that develops in after days into leaders of forlorn hopes.

How the cheering rolled when the hundred went up! Still the pair ran up runs. It was not only the Westlands fellows who cheered. A very considerable section of the crowd had grown keen on seeing "the little 'uns" win. The Mallhurst fellows, taking an average all through, were a couple of years older, and somewhere near a couple of stone each heavier than their rivals.

But at 108 Wild had to go. Of the 52 put on he had scored no fewer than 37; and the crowd gave him an ovation as he came back, flushed and happy, to the pavilion.

The two fellows left were distinct tail-enders; and Jim Ellison did all that he could now to keep the bowling, and to hit hard and run when he got the chance. He only stayed five minutes; and Detling, after seeing Jim hit four 4's in succession, succumbed to the second ball sent down to him. The total was 140, and Jim took out his bat for a hard-hit, chance-less 50.

"Might have been a hundred more, if he'd only gone in in his right place!" groaned Wild.

"Well, you've won the batting prize, old man," said Tyler to Beaumont.

"I suppose so," replied the captain. He was feeling a bit sick with himself.

"How do you make that out, Tyler?" asked Severn.

"Why, you said yourself that there wasn't a tenth of a run between them after the last innings. Jim's made 46 and Ellison only 40, so Vin must be ahead."

"You've forgotten that Jim was not out. That alters the matter entirely, and makes him 44 and a half to Beaumont's 42 and just under a half—two clear runs ahead."

The captain's face flushed with shame and anger. He knew well enough that Severn was right, and he realised that he was hoist with his own petard. He had sent Jim in late, and so Jim had been not out, and won the prize.

"It's all rot, not countin' a not-out innin's in the divisor," said Tyler sulkily.

"So it is," agreed Severn equably. "Let's leave 'em out. Beaumont's had two not-outs, Jim one. If we don't count 'em, Beaumont's average is under 33, and Jim's just on 42."

"I'd take jolly good care he didn't get a look in for the bowlin'!" whispered Tyler to Beaumont, as they went out to field.

Mallhurst wanted only 136 for victory, and the general opinion was that they would get them. Signs of a fine struggle grew higher, however, when Jim caught and bowled Cranston, the crack batsman of the side, when he had only scored 6, and still higher when, 20 runs later, Beaumont did the hat-trick, clean bowling Doubleday and Ashton, and getting Cattermole stumped.

A little later the captain took off Jim and put on Wild. There seemed some excuse for it, for Jim's one wicket had cost close on 30; but, then, it had been the best wicket on the side; and, though he had not got another, he had looked like getting one every over. He knew, and Beaumont knew, and half the other fellows knew, that if the bowling prize had not been at stake the change would never have been made.

Hurt and angry, restraining his wrath because he would not be guilty of a scene on the field, Jim clenched his teeth and said nothing. But pent-up anger is not conducive to good play. In Beaumont's next over Walton hit one breast high to him as he fielded at cover-point. It came with a nasty spin on it; but he would have made such a catch nineteen times out of twenty. How he came to miss it he did not know; but somehow it squirmed out of his hands, and Walton went on his way rejoicing.

Beaumont knew, or thought he knew. He had no doubt—at any rate, he told himself there was no doubt—that Jim had missed it to deprive him of the wicket with which he would have been credited had the catch been made. And he vowed that, come what might, though the issue of the match depended on it, Jim should not bowl again.

"You'd better shift to short-leg, Ellison," he said, with a sneer, at the end of the over. "Go to cover-point, Churchward."

Jim had been just about to say how sorry he was he had missed the catch. But the words died on his lips, and he went to his new position with rage in his heart. Short-leg is a place that needs a good field-man to fill it properly, but it is a place that the duffer of a side is frequently given, because it often happens that the man there has very little to do.

Again Wild had failed to take a wicket, and most of the runs had come from him, and Westlands' chance was slipping away. Walton and Lambridge were well set, and the score was close on a hundred, with only four wickets down. Beaumont looked round at the end of an over, and tossed the ball to Rutley.

Ten minutes later an astonishing change had come over the game. Fred, rattling them down his fastest, had clean bowled three men, and got two more caught in the slips, and Mallhurst was still 20 off victory.

But Walton had not gone, and the last man proved a sticker. Slowly but surely the score crept up to 130 –132– 134!

The captain was still bowling. He knew he ought to have taken himself off long ago. He knew, too, that unless he got this last wicket the bowling prize would not be his. If he took it his figures would be just a shade better than Jim's—Beaumont had studied the possibilities every bit as closely as Severn—but he would never take it if Fred got another chance at the eleventh man.

This was the last ball of his over. It was very unlikely that another over would be needed. That meant that it was his last chance. He sent down a ball breaking in from leg.

Walton, fearing to let the tail-ender face Rutley's expresses again, hit out at it with all his force. It rose from his bat. Jim Ellison dashed in from short-leg.

"He'll never catch it! He'll just make a show of tryin' an' let it go," darted the quick, jealous thought through Beaumont's mind. "He knows as well as I do what it means to him!"

It was a pity that he could not have read Jim's mind. No least thought of bowling average or bowling prize was in it. Every faculty was concentrated on the winning of the match.

He meant to have that catch. It was no good to wait where he stood: the ball was rising too much. So he dashed in and jumped and grasped it, and held it, while the crowd shouted deliriously.

"Well caught, sir!" yelled Beaumont, quickest of all in his applause; and "Well caught, sir!" yelled the rest—all but sulky Tyler, who always hated Jim, though he scarcely knew why.

Westlands had won the great match by one run!

And Vincent Beaumont was utterly ashamed of himself and his meanness. Straight up to Jim he walked, and said:

"I've got to apologise to you, Ellison! I'm played jealous, an' I don't deserve to be captain at all. I should've put you in late, I kept you off bowlin', and now you've won the game for us with that splendid catch, when droppin' it would have given you the bowlin' prize!"

"Would it?" said Jim simply. "Upon my honour, I didn't know that. But it wouldn't have made any difference. Don't say any more, old man. We've won, an' if you are willin' to be friends, I am!"

"Anyway, Vin's won the bowlin' prize," said Tyler, on their homeward way.

Beaumont looked up with a frown, and Severn, from his pocket-book, with a smile.

"That's just where you're off it, Tyler," he said.

"Who has, then? There ain't any question of a totten not out here'"

"No; but there's a dark horse! Nobody thought about Rutley, you see. He'd taken 15 wickets for 180 so far this season. He got five to-day for 15, and so he just romps in ahead."

"And I'm jolly well glad of it!" said Vincent Beaumont heartily.

THE END.

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WITH PICK & LAMP.

(Continued from the previous page.)

usual, broke into a run, and on reaching Aberford made straight for Mr. Wynne Williams's house, since it was useless to go to his office at such an hour.

The lawyer was an early riser, as they knew, and they found him just about to mount his pony at the gates, for the usual before-breakfast ride with his dogs. He greeted the boys cheerfully, and was glad to see them.

On learning there was something important they wanted to settle, he sent his horse back to the stable, and asked them into the house.

"What we want to know, sir, is this," said Roddy, when they had entered the library. "Can Kenyon Price stop the road to Bryn y Garth?"

And he recounted what had happened the day before.

Mr. Williams smiled.

"Your holiday will soon be quite famous hereabouts," he said. "So your great rival has barred the road—eh? That's awkward."

"But isn't it a right o' way, sir?"

"Certainly it is. There's no doubt about that. You should see that there isn't much traffic along it, but it's the way not only to your farm, but to the Pen Madog Moors beyond."

"Thank goodness!" said Roddy. "Then what does Mr. Price mean by it, sir?"

"He can answer that best himself. I should think, perhaps he thinks he's got a right."

"I'll bet he knows jolly well he hasn't," murmured Tom.

"If he went to law with you, I dare say you'd win. But you'd probably find that expensive, and surely, even if you beat him—"

"We don't mean to go to law, sir," said Roddy. "He's no right to stop the road, then?"

"No right; but might may do it. He's got plenty of men, he can put up strong fences, and he won't be afraid of going to law if you do sue him. Landowners sometimes act like that. He's powerful, you know. You might may do it, if right doesn't. I've known it succeed."

"There are two sides to that, sir," said Roddy. "We pulled his hurdles up. Now, if there's any row, would he call the police in?"

"The police wouldn't move in an affair like that, my boy," said Mr. Williams; "they'd be afraid to meddle with it."

"I see," said Roddy—"at least, I suppose I do. Thank you, sir, very much! This is another little item to put down on that bill of yours, and it won't be long now before we're able to pay it."

The lawyer laughed heartily.

"I'll wipe that bill off, my lads; don't you worry about it. You don't owe me anything."

"We'll rather pay in full," said Roddy, "because, sir, you've been uncommonly good to us. Thanks again! Good-mornin'!"

"That's real good news that K. can't right fully stop us," said Tom. "If he does, it'll be by his money. The trouble is, nobody's much interested in the road but us. If he tried to stop one of the Aberford thoroughfares there'd soon be a fuss. But nobody cares about the road to Bryn y Garth."

"True enough now; but that's just what I mean to alter," said Rodwell. "Come on; there's our lot! Mornin', Terry!"

The boys received quite an ovation each morning when they joined the pitmen, who had not by any means forgotten the affair of the Belgians.

"Hallo, my young shaft-jumper!" shouted Evan Howarth, one of the grade hewers. "Was you had any more kick-ups in ter pit whatiefer?"

"If you does," said Jenkyns, clapping Tom on the back, "we'll clear out any quantity o' foreigners for you, an' glad o' the job!"

"Any yes, or anyone else!" said Terry. "What's ailin' you, Roddy? You look a thrifle more sayrious than usual."

"Bedad, yes, Terry!" said Roddy, in the Lloyd brogue. "The wurruld is full of throuble!"

"Is it, faith?" said Terry, drawing him aside. "See here, Roddy, if there's anywan givin' you two bhoys any more throuble, just mention it to me, an' I'll take a hand! I've seen too much ugly business happen to you to be quite aisy in my mind. It strikes me there's something wants doin' to stop it!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Rodwell.

"Well," returned the big Irishman, "if there's not a bower that side of the pit that wouldn't be glad to do ye a hand's turn, I'll answer for thim! 'Tis the rare knack o' findin' a bit o' fun ye have, an' they'd be proud to take some divarsion out of ye, if it's a fightin' on you. Is it the Belgians come back?"

"No; it ain't that," said Roddy, chuckling. "But I'll think over what you've said, Terry. Thankee!"

They went down the shaft together, and the day's work proceeded, as usual. All went smoothly underground, and the stalls were well holed out. Tom and Roddy were among the first to leave when time was up.

"Who was Terry button-holin' you about before we went down?" said Tom. "Said the man'd do a lot for us, didn't he? He seems spoilin' for a fight."

"I rather think we may be able to oblige him," replied Roddy. "It's a pity to let all that energy run to waste. But let's see how things are progressin' up our way."

They hastened homewards, expecting to find fresh difficulties placed before them, and they were not disappointed. Half-way across the Old Meadow, and blocking the road, was a new fence of quite a different kind.

Instead of sheep-hurdles, tall, heavy posts, or piles, had been stepped deep in the ground, and stood quite six feet high, with strong, log cross-bars. The cross-bars were wound and interlaced with barbed-wire, and the barrier was as formidable a one as need be met with.

Roddy and Tom observed this from the bottom of the meadow. They did not go very close, for the gang was still at work, and the whiskered stranger and the red-faced man caught sight of the boys simultaneously.

Whiskers pointed out the arrivals to his red-faced partner, and both of them made a move down towards them.

"Then they are, the beauties!" said Roddy.

"They haven't lost any time!"

"No; they seem to want to welcome us, too!"

"That bein' so, an' as they've got the whole gang with 'em, we won't provoke hostilities, so to say."

"A scrap with that lot'd end in our gettin' smashed up. An' Gripe ain't here!"

"All things considered," replied Roddy, "we'll ekirt round 'em for once, an' go home the longest way. No good pluckin' the fruit till it's ripe! Come on!"

They turned and retraced their steps down the meadow. The two rangers saw them go, and for a few moments seemed inclined to give chase. But the young adventurers had a good start, and the men thought better of it, and returned to their work.

To reach Bryn y Garth without going near them was a long job, for the way led over the shoulder of the hills, crossing gullies, dry water-courses, and very wet bogs. It was passable for foot-passengers, but the only road by which any sort of a vehicle could have approached it was Stave-Crow Farm—was the one Kenyon Price's men were barricading. Hence the great importance of that road to the boys.

They were rather late in reaching the cottage, but Dafydd was there, as usual, and had everything ready for them.

"You've seen those beggars down in the Old Meadow, of course, Dafydd?" said Roddy, as they sat down to the meal. "Have any of 'em been round to you?"

"Tried to?" said Dafydd. "In ter dinner-hour a man with a red face and two nawvies with him came up this way. But I patrolled ter boundaries in company with Gripe, whatever, and they did not like ter look of him; so they kept off our land. They did not seem very pleased."

"Good for you!" said Tom. "We aren't here to please them!"

"Those men put ter borers haf been at work in lots of places ofer ter hill," added Dafydd, "and haf made a lot of holes in ter ground. They haf also brought up a cart of machinery by ter same road which goes round ter farm."

"Then they've made a big hole an' buried themselves in it!" said Roddy. "However, we can't interfere with them very well, as they're on their own ground, or, rather, Kenyon Price's. But as soon as we've finished our tea we'll go and see what those road-stoppers have knocked off work, an' inspect the defences there. That's the most important!"

"They were working pretty late, as it was," replied Tom. "Must be on extra shifts, I should think."

The gang had cleared out, however, when the boys went down to the spot in the twilight. There was no doubt about the effectiveness of the barricade now, and they had a good look at it. Three rows of fence posts had been sunk, and the interlacing of barbed-wire made it almost impossible for even a foot-passenger to climb over without taking a good deal of time, to say nothing of torn hands and clothes. Behind these was piled—itself two heavy uprights, supported by a big-spiked gate as high as the fence, with several huge padlocks on it. It was a curious arrangement to see on a lonely moorland road, miles from any village.

"K. don't mean to leave anything to chance this time," said Tom critically. "See! They're goin' to fix up those iron stouts to support the gate-posts. When they've finished, a steam-roller'd hardly knock that gate down; and how long was you think they will take to finish it?" asked Dafydd.

Roddy inspected the work done, and made a mental calculation.

"Another day and a half, if not more," he said.

"An' to-morrow's Saturday. It looks pretty formidable already," remarked Tom. "They'll have got the fence right across the meadow to each end by Tuesday, I guess."

"No," said Roddy. "I don't think there'll be any fence here at all to-morrow night!"

"Don't you, by gum? I'd like to know how that's to happen? If we started now an' worked all night, if the gang didn't stop us, we three could hardly pull up, all this, unless we used dynamite!"

"We won't do that. I don't like dynamite," said Rodwell. "Come on up to the house!"

They returned home, and lay outside the cottage in the bracken, while the hot summer night closed over the moor and the stars blazed overhead in a velvet blue sky. Nobody spoke for some time, till presently Roddy delivered himself:

"Dafydd, my resourceful an' never-failin' mountaineer," he said, "do you think you could provide us with a whole sheep—a good one—ready killed and dressed by to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes, indeed!" said the young moorman, his eyes sparkling. "Put I thought you was having some silly objections about my bringing sheep here?"

"I don't mean steal one, you immoral person! Buy it an' pay for it, only get it cheap, from a grazier. See? An' we shall want a fire big enough to roast it whole, once it's turned into mutton. Are you up to that?"

"It iss a funny thing to want, I think," said Dafydd, opening his eyes wide; "put it could be done quite easily. Only ter sheep would go bad this weather pefore we could finish him."

"He won't have a chance. An' do you think you could get a firkin of ale an' a sack of flour from Bryn Mawr village, as well as a dozen loaves of bread?"

Dafydd whistled with surprise.

"With ter road stopped?" he said.

"Not by the road. You could hire Miller Vaughan's two mules, sling the things across 'em, pannier-fashion, an' bring 'em up across the moors. Those mules can go over any ground or rocks, an' Vaughan would be glad to let 'em out for a couple of hours. I know it's a lot to ask at short notice, but we know what a nailin' good chap you are at a pinch, Dafydd, and it'll mean a big win for us."

"I will start at daybreak, and get it all done py noon," said Dafydd promptly, "if you wass really wanting it."

"We do, indeed. I'll give you all the necessary cash. We shall have to spend a little money over this, an' it'll pay us."

"But what on earth's it all for?" exclaimed Tom. "Are you going to give the road-stoppin' gang a banquet, to show 'em we love 'em?"

"No, no; I was understand!" said Dafydd. "We will poison ter sheep and ter beer, and kill them all off. It is a fery good plan."

"You're both a bit off the track," said Roddy laughingly. "It's not for the navvy-gang at all. Get some tin mugs while you're about it, Dafydd, and if you've done in time, some round and meet us near the lower side of the Old Meadow as we come home after the morning shift. We'll have a jamboree to-morrow afternoon. An' now, let's turn in."

Roddy could say no more, and they composed themselves off to sleep. Tom and Terry were up earlier than usual next day; but Dafydd had already departed. As the boys tramped into Aberford, Roddy told Tom his plan in a few words. He, though rather astonished at first, was delighted with it, and Roddy went into the town to make a few purchases before going to the pit.

Before leaving the shaft they met Terry Lloyd.

"Phwhat's in the wind, me broth of a boy?" said the big Irishman genially. "You're looking excited."

"I'm not! I'm quite calm! Look here, Terry. You remember what you promised me yesterday? Well, I'm going to ask our grade would give us a leg up if we wanted one, an' there was a prospect of some fun?"

"Bedad, I do. An' I meant it."

"Well, you might tell about a score of 'em that I'd like a few words with 'em outside the yard when we knock off. Tell Pat, of course, an' Luke Jones." Roddy mentioned a number of other names in addition. "I've got a little excursion on."

"Is there any chance of divilment?" said Terry, brightening up.

"Lashins of it, me bhoy," answered Roddy, with a grin. And fetching their safeties from the lamp-room, they went down the shaft.

When the shift was over, and both the boys were above ground, they went for their pay. Tom's day off had made very little difference, for they had both worked like slaves to make it up, and the average was only a shilling or two under the usual. As soon as they had got their money, Terry came up, and with a wink announced that the men Roddy had named were all outside the gates.

"I wrapped a little blarney round 'em, an' they soon came," he said. "'Tis full of curiosity they are. Only make haste, or they'll think 'tis a sell."

Roddy found the hewers as Terry had said. There were sixteen of them—all hewer-grade fellows all, headed by Luke Jones and Pat Lloyd.

"Mates," said Roddy, "I take it very kind of you. What I'm proposin' is that you should all take a bit of an outing with me an' Tom here, if you've nothin' better to do. It's Saturday afternoon, an' if you'll come I can promise you some fun. You know Tom an' I have got a little place up in the hills at Bryn y Garth. I thought we'd spend the holiday there."

The pitmen pricked up their ears.

"That's a real little spot," said Roddy, "an' we'll do you well. There's a bit of a feast on—we're goin' to roast a sheep whole, an' there's lashins o' spuds an' new bread, and a few kegs of ale. We'll have some sprint races an' wrestlin' to pass the time. There's a trout stream if one wants to fish, an' everybody shall do as he likes. We ask you to be our guests."

The crowd of hewers were amazed, and they could only stare for a moment.

"Don't hang back!" cried Tom heartily. "Who's for a rippin' afternoon's sport in the open, and as much mutton and beer as he can hold?"

The miners gave a gleeful shout.

"Good for the little book hewers!" shouted Pat Lloyd. "Glory be! we're all wid you, Roddy! Lead on, an' we're yours to a cinder!"

"There's only one thing," said Roddy, as all the others joyously echoed Pat's words, "we may find a bit of a difficulty on the way, but we can overcome that."

"Difficulty! That was made to be shwept away!" said Pat. "Show us the difficulty, that's all! When will ye be ready to go?"

"Let's start right away. No use wastin' time," said Tom; and the pitmen agreeing to a man, off they started.

Each of the boys was carrying a long, and rather heavy parcel under his arm.

Aberford was soon left behind, and presently the moors were reached, and they came to the Old Meadow below Bryn y Garth. The boys nudged each other.

A little way farther the pitmen halted in surprise. Right across the way, a few hundred yards in front, they saw the formidable barricade erected by Price's gang, who were still at work on it.

"Phwhat in the name av Auld Nick is that?" cried Pat Lloyd, and the pitmen halted and stared.

"That?" replied Roddy. "Oh, that's the little difficulty I spoke about. It's been put up to stop people usin' this road. Nobody's ever to travel along it any more. Now, are we goin' round, mates, or are we goin' through?"

"Eh," cried Terry, as surprised as anybody, "to stop the road? Why, 'tis a right o' way, an' always has been! Who's put it up—an' what for?"

"I'll tell you!" called out Roddy. "Kenyon Price put it up; and he did it to spite us, so as to cut our farm off from the rest of the world. The road's barred for good!"

An angry shout went up from the pitmen.

"Are we goin' to stand this, mates?"

"Here!" roared Luke Jones, pushing his way forward. "I say no man alive shall bar any road to me! We wass free men, whatever, and that wass a free road! He has no right to put up a fence on it!"

"No," said Tom; "no more right than he has to put up that fence there, across Aberford High Street itself."

"Tear it up by the roots, mates! Down with it!" cried Luke Jones fiercely, rushing forward, and amid a couple of wild yells from Terry and Pat, the whole company followed.

No sight could have enraged the company so much as that fence right across their path. There was not a Yorkshireman yet who would not die sooner than surrender an inch of his liberty; and the insolence of a rich man's act, in barring a public road in such fashion, stirred their hot blood in a moment. They came down on the fence like wolves.

"What d'you mean by this, you ruffians!" shouted the red-faced ganger, rushing up. "Get back, or I'll have the law o' you!" he roared, clenching his fists and advancing on Terry.

"Keep your hands off av me, or ye'll be sorry for it!" said Terry. "Ah, would ye?"

His brawny fist shot out as the enraged ganger struck at him, and the man was knocked sprawling. Up he got again, and Terry, with a fierce grunt, seized him by the neck-cloth and belt, swung him off his feet, and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"We'd close the road—road, is it—ye spalpeen!" he cried. "We'd lay a hand on your betters, eh? Go in there, an' get cool!"

Carrying the man like a baby for twenty yards or so, he slung him bodily into a pool of peaty water and mud, into which the red-faced gangers were already splashing. Meanwhile the tall man with the whiskers had been dancing and shouting round Luke Jones, and was promptly knocked down for his pains.

In a very short time the coast was clear. Whiskers and his men, as soon as they had picked himself up, and the red-faced ganger crawled out of the pool and departed, shaking his fist and swearing volubly.

"Off with these grimerackles!" cried Luke Jones, clenching at the gates. "Tear 'em all down!"

"Do the thing properly!" called Roddy, opening his parcel, which contained bill-hooks, wire-cutters, and hatchets. "Lots o' tools here!"

The attack on the fence commenced amid shouts of jubilation. The lust for destruction filled everybody. They tore off the wire, hacked the crossbars down, and demolished everything.

Dafydd turned up in huge glee, as excited as the rest. The great posts were cut down, and Pat and Terry, seizing one, tore it bodily out of the ground by a splendid effort of strength. For half an hour they worked solidly, and by that time the whole fence was down.

"Now for a bonfire, mates!" shouted Pat.

"Bring the stuff together!"

The posts, bars, and woodwork were piled in one large heap, while plenty of dry land, heather, and old bracken was packed in. The wax set alight, and in a short time the whole pile was a crackling, blazing furnace. The pitmen raised a triumphant cheer.

"Who's next?" cried Terry.

A big man on a tall bay horse was galloping towards them across the moor. He was recognised in a moment. It was Kenyon Price, and his face was white with rage. He reined up his restive horse within fifty feet of the bonfire.

"By heavens," he cried hoarsely, "you shall taste gaol for this, you ruffians!"

But the pitmen were beyond caring for any man by then, and his threat roused them still more.

"'Twas you who set this fence across the road, wass it?" shouted Luke Jones, as the colliery magnate spurred further towards them. "Come here, an' we'll show you we know our rights!" he cried, darting towards the horseman.

"Chuck him on the fire!" cried several voices; and the angry pitmen made a break for Kenyon Price, as he reined his horse hastily back.

(Another long instalment will appear next week.)

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LIFE SAVING:

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

First Aid to the Drowning.

ANYONE attempting to save life, and particularly those unacquainted with the proper method of rescue and release as taught by the Royal Life-Saving Society, should exercise the greatest possible caution, as in such a case two lives may be placed in jeopardy. The desperation with which a drowning man will catch at anything to be held, and the tenacity with which he may retain his hold, would make matters difficult if the rescuer lost his presence of mind and did not know how to effect a release. In my opinion, every boy learning to swim should also be taught the very simple methods adopted by the Royal Life-Saving Society, and so make him not only an able rescuer, but also secure him against the clutch of the drowning, which has so often been the cause of a rescuer being drowned. I therefore intend to explain to my readers how to take hold of people in the water who need assistance, also how to make a release in the event of being clutched, but before doing so a few words are necessary regarding general preparations when about to

attempt a rescue.

In the first place, before entering the water to give aid, one should remove as much clothing as possible, particularly the boots and outer clothing, as these greatly impede a swimmer's movements, especially the boots. The rescuer should also consider the possibility of landing as well as draw the attention of anyone who may be near, so that if any assistance be required it may be at hand, particularly when the person saved has to be resuscitated; but in all cases of rescue the chief point to be remembered is to lose no time, as the drowning person may sink, and not rise again. In that case it may be very difficult to find the object or locate the position, especially in tidal or running water, or even in still water covering a wide area.

The general belief that a drowning person must rise three times before he finally sinks is a fallacy. The question whether he rises once, twice, or at all entirely depends upon circumstances. He may happen to struggle in such a way as to cause him to rise many times, on the other hand the struggling may be such as will cause him to sink immediately he falls into the water, for that reason every effort should be made to

render aid

as quickly as possible.

The next point to consider is how to approach and seize anyone struggling in the water. In such matters there is always an element of danger in being clutched, unless, of course, the rescuer has been properly instructed and has had considerable practice in making a release.

If one is not sure of the correct method of release, it is best to make the approach from behind, and, if he be quiet take hold of him by placing both hands on the sides of the face, covering the ears of the drowning person with the palms of the hands, turn him sharply on to his back, and swim with the back-stroke,

Off driving.

using the legs only, and carry him to a place of safety. The position described above is as in the accompanying diagram.

In carrying a person on the surface of the water, care should be taken to keep his legs well up to the surface, with the whole body as horizontally as possible. If the body be horizontal, it will be much easier to move along, because the drag which results from a perpendicular position is avoided. The legs of the drowning person can be kept from sinking by the rescuer occasionally giving them a kick and pressing them upward. Very little effort is needed in order to cause the drowning person's legs to come to the surface, and if care is taken to keep them up, much unnecessary labour will be saved.

I hope my readers will take care to practise the method illustrated this week. Remember that practice makes one perfect.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

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.

Handicapping under A.A.A. Laws.

NO one is more keen on obtaining information than a boy who has entered a race and is waiting to see how he has been handicapped. He is all "on thorns" until he is in possession of this important news, for not until then can he estimate what are his chances of winning.

The exact way in which handicaps are framed under A.A.A. laws is as follows. On the form which the competitor sends in to the secretary of the sports, stating his desire to compete, the competitor has to set forth his previous performances. This information is carefully analysed by the handicapper, who plots a handicap mark in accordance with the showings of such performances.

All open handicaps are made representing the present amateur champion at each event at scratch. When handicaps were made from the best man entering, much confusion ensued in ascertaining the relative value of the handicap marks allotted.

The present satisfactory state of the handicapping question has not been achieved without much preliminary rooting out of evils. The A.A.A. has constantly and rigorously waged war against a certain section of athletes whose delight is to

hoodwink the handicapper

by giving false and misleading information respecting previous performances. Some entry forms, whose authors have been dealt with, have been masterpieces of cunning in the art of attempting to get long marks, but the fraud invariably comes to light in the long run, and the offender quickly retires from athletics under the A.A.A. laws.

How to save a drowning person. *(See col. 1.)*

Although the handicapper is largely guided by the last performance at the particular distance shown on the form, he uses his discretion in either adding on that mark, deducting from or awarding the same one. It will readily be seen, therefore, that the handicapper must be a man of integrity, well versed in athletics from a practical point of view, such as is obtainable only from an active participation in the sport.

As a contrast to the beautifully fair methods of handicapping under A.A.A. laws, take that of some of the meetings not registered by the

Amateur Athletic Association.

It has been known for the handicappers at such meetings to have a favourite in each event. This favourite, who has to run to scratch, is placed on a mark sufficient to make him a certainty, the arrangement being that the prize is divided between him and the handicapper. It is, obvious, therefore, unless something very unforeseen happens, that other competitors have no chance of winning.

Another thing which the Association has put its foot upon, is the practice which has several times been discovered, with drastic results to those concerned, of paying a crack amateur "appearance" money or expenses. The rule of the Association with respect to this is that no one may have his expenses paid to run at a meeting except at the A.A.A. championships, or in a bona-fide inter-team race. It is well known that no sooner does a man make a name than he is eagerly canvassed to compete at meetings on account of

his "gate" drawing abilities.

When an athlete, whose income was small, and was probably gained by steady work at least six days a week, was found to be competing in various parts of the country, and widely different distances apart several times a week, and was practically doing nothing else for a living than engaging in athletics, suspicion has been aroused. It has been discovered before now that a well-known crack has accepted rail and hotel expenses, and probably a sum of money besides, to compete at a meeting where his name has been extensively advertised as a certain performer. The Association, however, is always on the alert, and the athlete is called upon for explanation. Should this not be satisfactory, and should it be proved that the athlete has accepted expenses or money in contravention of the A.A.A. laws, he is permanently suspended, no matter how great his prowess in athletics.

It will be seen, therefore, that the Association is ever keenly on the track out for transgressions of its rules, and this is why track athletics under the A.A.A. laws are so pure, and the Association so much looked up to by all sport-loving amateurs.

In conclusion, no boy who wishes to engage in track athletics can do better than do so under the auspices of the Amateur Athletic Association, by joining one of the clubs affiliated to such Association, and as shown in previous articles.

THE END.

CRICKET:

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

Wicket-keeping.

THE man behind the stumps can tell how the batsman is playing better than anyone else. It is easy for him to find out

the weak spot in defence,

and to give a hint to the bowler as to how he is likely to get rid of him.

The indifferent man "behind the sticks" who misses catches and gives byes is a weak spot in the side.

In any club outside county cricket a wicket-keeper should have a long-stop with a fast bowler. More catches go to the wicket than to anywhere else, and more batsmen are dismissed in this way than any other, especially on good pitches.

The chief duties

of a wicket-keeper are:

1. To hold catches at the wicket.
2. To stump batsmen who miss the ball.
3. To run out the man who is batting when the ball is returned from the fielders.
4. To stop byes.

An extra duty may be when the ball is played by the batsman so that the wicket-keeper alone can follow after it and save a run.

Some boys I have met forget the fact that if there is a great number of byes it is the fault of

the careless bowler,

who is always responsible for byes. If the bowling is on the spot there will be very few extras in this way. Anyone who wishes to occupy this position would do well to watch Lord's when Middlesex are playing, and watch the way MacGregor gathers the wildest returns, and he knows how to pick up the wildest throws.

The great thing if you want to stump men or run them out is to learn to receive the ball as near the wicket as possible—so that you can knock the bails off. The feet must be steady and fixed, or else the eye cannot follow the course of the ball right. When the ball comes to you, the hands should relax as the ball enters it, as it is more likely to stay where it is when the resistance is slight, as this power of relaxing saves the hands. With slow or medium-pace bowling, when chances are many in number, the ball may be taken close to the wicket to ensure a smart removal with the hands.

When shall you appeal?

If you are honestly doubtful ask, but do not be as smart in the wrong way as a young public school boy was whom I know. Often I have heard him appeal, and with the habit of indulging in what may be called "a unanimous appeal," and the shouts are loud and frequent —and often men are given out. On this occasion Robert Thoms, the greatest umpire, was standing, and one boy appealed again and again. At last Robert could stand it no longer, and he said, "Not out, sir—not nearly out! The ball did not pitch in the parish, and the question should not have been asked!"

Appeals that are not honest spoil the game. Our novice will not find it easy to take the ball on the leg side. I have seen many boys who could not take leg balls, and my advice to the young wicket-keeper is to pay more attention in his early practice to those that come over the wicket or slightly to the off. Do not worry over a few failures. Persevere and practise in games—not at the nets.

Do not practise on bad wickets at all. If the hands are tender or bruised do not use them. Remember that a good wicket-keeper is worth his weight in gold, even if he cannot bat or bowl.

Slow Bowling.

The slow bowler is an indispensable acquisition to any side, and he must not only have all the virtues of a fast bowler, but a great many more in addition. He must know how to place the ball, and have a good knowledge of length, quickness from the pitch, and change of pace. He must also be able to deceive the batsmen with a high delivery that will break either way. Slow bowling has an outstanding great advantage, and that is, it offers more opportunity to the wicket-keeper for stumping than fast bowling.

Now, the slow bowler will often find that batsmen will try to take liberty with him, and especially in trying to hit the leg stump half-volleys too much on the on-side, and sometimes absolutely to leg, a stroke that he would never try if a fast bowler were on.

A slow bowler is most valuable when there is also on the side a fast bowler, as the contrast is very marked, and demands very close attention from the field. It is a good thing to let a fast and slow bowler start the bowling at the beginning of the innings; and I remember how powerful was the Essex attack when F. G. Bull and C. J. Cartright, perhaps the fastest bowler in England, used to commence the attack.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

A FOOTBALL LEAGUE:

Mr. G. L. B. COVERDALE, the energetic Secretary of the East Riding of Yorks Football Association, gives Practical Hints on How to Form One.

Rules.

IN my last week's article I stated the preliminaries which have to be gone through in forming a football league. For the benefit of new readers, I will this week repeat these in a condensed form.

Before anything is actually done in such a matter as this, a "feeler" should be thrown out as to whether the league will receive the sanction of the County Association. Upon this being ascertained, a circular letter should be sent to all clubs likely to join the league, calling a meeting of representatives. As it is practically impossible to run a league on club subscriptions alone, it is advisable to ask some influential gentleman in the district—if possible, the local M.P.—to act as president of the league. Upon a meeting of representatives being held, suitable rules should be drawn up.

Below I outline a set of rules which I think will be found applicable for any league in this country, with perhaps one or two slight alterations and additions. The rules, I may say, are chosen from those approved by five of the largest county associations, and should commence as follows:

1.—This combination of clubs shall be known as The Football League, and shall be conducted subject to the rules, regulations, and by-laws of the Football Association and the laws of the game.

2.—The area of this league shall be not more than miles (by the nearest road) from the league headquarters, and clubs can only join the league with the consent of the management committee.

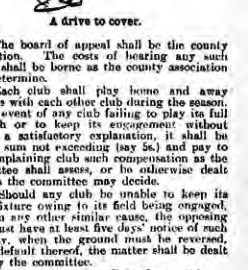
3.—The annual subscription shall be each club, payable on or before the 1st of September.

4.—The league shall consist of not more than twelve clubs in one division.

5.—The annual general meeting shall be held between the 14th and 31st of May in each year, to which each club in the league shall be entitled to send two representatives. At this meeting—of which each club shall have 7 days' notice—the secretary's report and the treasurer's audited balance-sheet shall be read.

6.—The officers of the league shall be a chairman, treasurer, and secretary. These, with one representative from each club in the league, shall constitute the committee of the league. Five form a quorum. The officers shall be elected at the annual general meeting.

7.—The committee shall conduct the business of the league. They shall convene meetings at any time they may deem necessary, hear protests and complaints, and shall have power to impose fines and suspensions and deal with any offending club or clubs, player or players, or officials, as they think fit, and shall have power to deal with any matter arising out of the competition not provided for in these rules.



A drive to cover.

8.—The board of appeal shall be the county association. The costs of hearing any such appeal shall be borne as the county association may determine.

9.—Each club shall play home and away matches with each other club during the season. In the event of any club failing to play its full strength or to keep its engagement without giving a satisfactory explanation, it shall be fined a sum not exceeding (say 5s.) and pay to the complaining club such compensation as the committee shall assess, or be otherwise dealt with as the committee may decide.

10.—Should any club be unable to keep its home fixture owing to its field being engaged, or from any other similar cause, the opposing club must have at least five days' notice of such inability, when the ground must be reversed, or, in default thereof, the matter shall be dealt with by the committee.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

Look Out for a New Slapton School Story Shortly.

The Fighting Fifth

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

BY POPULAR

MAXWELL SCOTT.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

CHOTA LAL NATH CHANDRA DAS, an Indian prince, and a new boy 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 extracting a promise from him that he will do no more gambling.

Otto Heinrich, the mysterious German, becomes acquainted with Fraulein Hoffmann, a mistress at a girls' school in the village. Being of the same nationality she makes him. Heinrich disguises himself as an old man, and stays with Fraulein Hoffmann as her uncle. He decides to take her into his confidence, and relates to her the mystery surrounding the gold locket which is in Lal's possession.

(You read this week's instalment.)

The German's Story.

"WHAT I am about to tell you," Otto Heinrich began, "forms one of the most interesting chapters in the secret history of modern Europe. It is known at present to no less than half a dozen people, and if it came to the ears of the British Government, it is more than likely that Germany would be plunged into the horrors of a long and sanguinary war; whilst it is absolutely certain that one of the most cherished ambitions of our beloved Kaiser would be shattered like a house of cards. Before I tell you my story, therefore, I must ask you to pledge your sacred word of honour that you will not breathe a syllable of what I am going to tell you to any living soul."

When Fraulein Hoffmann had given the required pledge, he smoked in silence for a moment or two, and then resumed.

"At the beginning of this year," he said, "a secret treaty was concluded between Germany and another power, whose name it is unnecessary to mention. It is enough to say that it was aimed against Great Britain.

"At that time there was living in Berlin a British political spy named John Oxley, a man of exceptional skill and infinite daring. In some way or other he got to know that a secret treaty had been signed, and that it was directed against his country; but with all his cleverness he could not learn the purport of the treaty.

"But John Oxley was a man hard to beat when he had once set his mind on a thing. In ways in which I need not describe, he wormed his way into the confidence of one of the secretaries to the Chancellor's office, and by means of judicious bribery, he induced this man to allow him to see the treaty for half a minute.

"The treaty was engrossed on a single sheet of vellum, and Oxley was armed with a powerful detective-camera in the handle of his walking-stick. With the aid of this camera, he took a snapshot of the treaty—a micro-photograph, in fact, no bigger than your finger-nail."

"But what use would that be?" inquired Fraulein Hoffmann. "Nobody could read a photograph as small as that."

"Not with the naked eye," said Heinrich; "but Oxley had only to develop the film, and print a positive from it, and it would then have been the easiest thing in the world, with the aid of a microscope, to read every word and letter of the treaty.

"To resume my story. Oxley was in the habit of wearing, suspended round his neck, a small gold locket, which apparently contained nothing but a photograph of his dead sister and a lock of her hair. As a matter of fact, however, there was a secret recess in the back of the locket which could be opened by pressing a hidden spring.

"When Oxley had taken his snapshot of the treaty, he returned to his rooms, accompanied by his German confederate. Having developed the film, he did not trouble to take a print of it, but placed the film in the secret recess in the back of the locket. He then paid his confederate the sum agreed on, and left by train for Ostend, with the object of crossing to England and handing his film to the British Government.

"An hour or two after he had left Berlin, his confederate was seized with remorse. Hurrying to the Chancellor's office, he made a clean breast of the whole affair—told all about the photograph and the locket—and then committed suicide by blowing out his brains in the presence of the Chancellor!

"Knowing all the Kaiser's hopes would be dashed to the ground, and that Germany would probably be involved in war if the photograph of the treaty ever reached the British Government, the Chancellor promptly set the wires to work, and Oxley was arrested at Hanover Station, on his way to Ostend. At least, an attempt was made to arrest him, but the manager of the place, his suspicions aroused, and, after an exciting chase, he ultimately reached Hamburg, where all trace of him was lost.

"By this time the whole police force of the German Empire was on the alert to capture him. All roads that crossed the frontiers were strictly guarded; all trains and vessels leaving the country were closely watched; all outgoing letters and telegrams were submitted to a rigorous examination.

"But in spite of these precautions, it seemed impossible that Oxley could get out of the country without being detected; but he did! There was lying at that time in the harbour at Hamburg a small British cargo-steamer named the Spearmint. She was bound for Cardiff, in Wales, and twelve hours after she had left Hamburg we learned that Oxley had swum aboard at dead of night, and had bribed the captain to smuggle him across in Cardiff.

"But he never reached Cardiff. The Spearmint left Hamburg on the sixteenth of January, and on the night of the eighteenth a violent storm broke out in the English Channel, and raged for most of the following day. Many vessels were wrecked, and amongst those which were reported to have foundered with all hands was the Spearmint!

"You can guess with what joy this news was received in Berlin. Oxley had been drowned! His locket was at the bottom of the sea! The secret of the treaty was safe!

"Alas! a rude awakening was in store for us! On the twenty-second of January an article appeared in 'The Daily Mail' relating how a foreign St. Ninian's—a young Hindoo, named Chota Lal Nath Chandra Das—had discovered an unknown badly-injured man, drifting in a water-logged boat; how this shipwrecked sailor, as he was supposed to be, had given the young Hindoo a small gold locket, which he had torn from a ribbon round his neck; how he had been in the act of telling the boy where to take the locket, when the boat had capsized, and neither man nor boat had ever been seen again.

"Again you can guess what our feelings were. For the published description of the man in the boat, and the pictures of the locket, left no room for doubt that the man was John Oxley, and the locket was that in which he had hidden the photograph of the secret treaty.

"Luckily nobody but ourselves suspected those facts. But think of the danger in which we stood! At any moment the secret recess in the back of the locket might be accidentally discovered, in which case the film would be found, a print would be taken, and the text of the treaty would be revealed.

"At a hurriedly-summoned meeting of ministers, presided over by the Kaiser, it was unanimously resolved that immediate steps should be taken to secure the locket before its secret was discovered. At the Kaiser's own suggestion, the task of securing the locket was entrusted to me, and within an hour of receiving my instructions, I was on my way to Cleveden.

"He then described the various attempts which he had made to secure the locket, and how they had failed.

"To the best of my belief," he continued, "the locket is still at St. Ninian's. Where it is hidden I do not know, and that is why I require your help."

"In what way?" she asked.

"If you encourage Mr. Trigg, and make friends with him," he said, "you can secure through him an introduction to Lal, as the schoolboys call the young Hindoo. If you can gain the boy's confidence, you can lead the conversation round to the subject of his mysterious adventure with the shipwrecked sailor, and you can ask him to show you the locket. If once he places the locket in your hands, the rest ought to be easy for a clever woman like yourself."

"If you mean that I could steal the locket——" she began, shaking her head.

"But I don't!" he interrupted. "There's no need to steal it. I'll describe it to you, as Oxley's confederate described it to us, and I'll explain how the secret spring is worked. Then, when Lal hands you the locket, you can turn it over for a moment—you can walk to the window, for instance, as if to examine it more closely—press the spring, secure the film without his seeing you, and hand the locket back to him."

"Yes, I think I could do that," she said.

"I know you could," he said. "The question is, will you?"

"On one condition," she replied.

Again that queer look flitted across Heinrich's face.

"I know what you mean," he said. "On condition that I pledge my word to secure a free pardon for your brother, who is now in prison for betraying official secrets to a foreign Power?"

"Yes."

"I have already accepted your condition. If you wish me to do so, I accept it again."

"Then I will do as you desire," said Fraulein Hoffmann. And with that she bade him good-night, and went to bed, leaving him to finish his cigar.

"An excellent woman!" he murmured, blowing out a filmy cloud of smoke. "A most excellent woman. Very clever in some ways, but very simple in others. If she only knew!"

Love on Skates.

AFTER Nipper had driven Fraulein Hoffmann home on Saturday evening, as already described, he drove down to the police-station and reported to the constable what had happened. The latter immediately wired a description of the fugitive to all the surrounding towns and villages, and then went up to Padley Wood and took possession of the cottage and its contents.

But nothing came of these proceedings. The stolen bicycle was afterwards found on the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells, but nothing of an incriminating nature was discovered at the cottage, and all the efforts of the police were unable to discover any clue to the whereabouts of Otto Heinrich.

Needless to say, the affair created an immense sensation at St. Ninian's, and little else was talked about for the next few days. Then on Wednesday morning an iron frost set in; and on Thursday night the ice on the river was reported to be strong enough to bear; and after that the boys of St. Ninian's were too busy polishing up their skates, in preparation for Saturday afternoon, to think about Otto Heinrich and his doings.

In addition to the river, there were several other places in the neighbourhood where skating could be enjoyed when the conditions were favourable. Perhaps the most sought-after of these was a large sheet of water in the grounds of the rectory, which was most familiarly known as the Rectory Pond.

Of course, the skating here was most strictly preserved—that it to say, it was not open to the general public. But whenever the "Pond" was frozen over, it was the custom of the rector to issue invitations to a select number of his friends and acquaintances, amongst whom was always included a large contingent from the teaching-staffs of the three local schools—St. Ninian's, the Grammar School, and Cambridge House.

Nipper and Dick, who were great favourites with the rector, had often been invited to join these skating parties, and consequently they were not surprised when a note came from the rector on Friday night, addressed to Nipper, and couched in the following terms:

"The pond is in ripping condition. We've invited a few friends to try their luck on the ice to-morrow afternoon, from two to seven. We shall be glad if you and Starling will come, and if you're good we'll stand you tea."

The two boys, of course, accepted this genial invitation, and immediately after dinner on Saturday, followed by the envious glances of their less favoured chums, they trudged off to the Rectory Pond.

Most of the guests had already arrived when they reached the pond, and skating was in full swing. Many familiar faces were there, and amongst them Fraulein Hoffmann, who, in a bewitching fur-trimmed costume, was gliding to and fro on the polished ice, with a grace and skill that evoked their unbounded admiration.

"By Jove, she can skate, can't she!" said Dick, whilst he and Nipper were putting on their skates.

"Not bad!" said Nipper. "But where are Piggy and the Pimple? The love-lorn loonies ought to be here to see to their—— Wotto! There they are!"

He pointed to the other side of the pond, where Mr. Trigg and Mr. Wimple, seated side by side on the bank, were feverishly scowling at each other and fumbling with their skates. The two masters had evidently just arrived, and each was straining every nerve to get his skates on first, in order to reach Fraulein Hoffmann before his rival.

The first heat of the contest was won by Mr. Wimple. That is to say, he was the first to finish buckling on his skates. With a smile of triumph he rose to his feet, but even as he struck out with his right his left foot slid from under him, and he sat down with a thud that made him see more stars in half a second than ever he had seen in his life before.

"Ha, ha! More haste, less speed!" chuckled Mr. Trigg. "The race is not always to the swift!"

With a contemptuous glance at his fallen rival, who was making frantic but ineffectual efforts to scramble to his feet, Mr. Trigg stepped on to the ice. Then a look of pained surprise overspread his face, for his left foot insisted on sailing gracefully towards the east, whilst his right slid away to the west. With a determined effort he brought his errant feet together, but no sooner had he done this than his legs retreated swiftly towards the south, whilst his body advanced rapidly towards the north, and he fell with a great and mighty fall on the top of Mr. Wimple.

How he managed to regain his feet he never knew. But he did, and, what is more, he actually succeeded in sounder across to Fraulein Hoffmann, who, to his unbounded surprise, appeared to be waiting for him.

"Good-afternoon, Mistare Trigg!" she said, with an arch smile. "I am to see you so glad."

Blushing furiously at this unexpectedly cordial reception, Mr. Trigg essayed to bow. It was a foulhardy thing to do. Only a practised skater can bow with safety, and Mr. Trigg was not a practised skater by any means.

As the upper part of his body inclined forwards the lower part shot backwards, and he smote the ice with his face. If the ice had not been so hard, his nose would probably have bored it, and in that case, as it was, the ice remained unpunctured, and his nose, instead of going through, was merely flattened to the level of his cheeks.

By that time Nipper and Dick had donned their skates, and, witnessing Mr. Trigg's downfall, they hastened to his assistance and helped him to his feet.

Somewhat to their surprise, Fraulein Hoffmann evinced neither amusement nor vexation at the antics of her would-be wooer. On the contrary, she was most sympathetic.

"You hat not—how you call it in English?—found your feet yet!" she said, smiling on the wo-begone Mr. Trigg. "Let me take your arm, until you to the ice haf grown accustomed."

Before Mr. Trigg could comply with this request, which he was only too eager to do, Mr. Wimple came flying across the pond with the speed of an express.

Somebody had helped him to his feet and had started him off with a vigorous push in the direction of Fraulein Hoffmann. A stiff breeze was blowing across the pond, and with this behind him, Mr. Wimple sailed along the glassy ice at a pace which well-nigh took his breath away.

"Look out!" yelled Nipper. "You'll be

FOOTBALL SEASON, 1907-8.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SECRETARIES OF LEAGUES AND UNATTACHED FOOTBALL CLUBS.

Register Your Club or League at Once!

During the coming Football season a large number of Solid Silver Cups, Silver Medals, and Real Match Footballs will be presented free of charge to certain Football Leagues and Unattached Clubs throughout the country. Therefore, League and Club Secretaries are requested to send at once full particulars of the League or Club to which they are attached to the Secretary of THE BOYS' REALM Football League, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C., and full particulars will shortly be sent to their private address.

Full details will also be published in the course of a week or two in the pages of THE BOYS' REALM, and readers are requested to draw the attention of their football friends to this paper.

"The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, is now starting in "The Boys' Herald." 1d. Every Thursday.

into us in a minute if you aren't careful! Pull up, man! Pull up!"

"I—I can't!" howled Mr. Wimple. "Help, help! Somebody stop me! Oo-oo-oon! Ah-hch! Ouch!"

Travelling at the rate of ten miles an hour, he crashed into Mr. Trigg from behind. With an ear-splitting yell, Mr. Trigg shot forward like a ball from a cannon's mouth. By a miracle he contrived to preserve his balance, and impelled by the momentum of the shock, and backed by the wind, he went sailing across the pond in the direction of a notice-board bearing the ominous word "Dangerous!"

"Hi! Hi!" yelled the rector. "The ice won't bear over there! Pull up! Come back!"

But Mr. Trigg could neither "pull-up" nor "come back." With feet close-pressed together, with arms outstretched, he held on his course and neared the notice-board.

The Locket Mysteriously Disappears.

FORTUNATELY, the pond was nowhere more than five feet deep, and almost before the startled spectators had realised what had happened a head bobbed up through the hole in the ice—a head that had once been adorned with a glossy black wig, but whose only adornment now was an artistic patchwork of dark brown mud and light green slime.

A pair of shoulders followed the head, and were followed in their turn by two wildly-waving arms, festooned with clinging weeds.

"Help—help!" spluttered Mr. Trigg, dashing the muddy water from his eyes and puffing like a grampus. "I am drowning! I am perishing! My wife is hanging by the tenderest shred—I mean, my life is hanging by the slenderest thread! Help—help, or my doom is sealed!"

His appearance and his accents were so mirth-provoking that many of the spectators, including Nipper and Dick, burst into a roar of unfeeling laughter. Mr. Wimple in particular appeared to derive an especial amount of satisfaction and amusement from his rival's ignominious predicament.

"He, he, he!" he chuckled, turning to Fraulein Hoffmann. "Isn't it comical? Did you ever see anything so funny in all your life? It's as good as a pantomime!"

To his mortification and chagrin, Fraulein Hoffmann withered him with a contemptuous glance; and then, without a word, skated swiftly towards the scene of the disaster.

"Miss Hoffmann—Fraulein—come back!" cried Nipper, darting after her and catching her by the arm. "The ice won't bear over there! You'll go through, too, if you go near him!"

"Let me go!" she panted, with a well-feigned air of mingled indignation and anxiety. "Mein friend vas in danger, and you—you only laugh, and say it vas ver' funny. Vile you laugh, mein friend may drown. You haf no hearts. You are cowards! Let me go! If you to rescue him are afraid, I vill do so meinself!"

Nipper's wits were sharper than those of most boys of his age, but even he was deceived by the artful German's clever acting. He thought she really cared for Mr. Trigg. He thought she really believed he was in danger, and was willing to risk her life to save him.

"We were a set of beastly cads to laugh!" he said, in a contrite voice. "But he isn't in the slightest danger, really! The pond is only four or five feet deep, and—see!—the rector and Colonel Trevor are bringing a ladder. They'll soon have him out, without our help."

Nipper's prediction proved correct, for a few minutes later the ladder having in the meantime been slid across the ice until Mr. Trigg was able to grasp the end of it—the unfortunate master was dragged out of the hole and hauled into safety.

"This is an eye-opener, and no giddy error!" said Nipper, as Fraulein Hoffmann hurried to Mr. Trigg's side and begged him to assure her that he was not seriously injured. "Did you ever dream for a minute that she cared two straws for him?"

"I didn't," said Dick. "But it's evident she does."

The two boys were not alone in this opinion, which was further strengthened when Fraulein Hoffmann declared that her nerves had been so upset by the accident to her "friend" that she thought she would go home. Accordingly, when Mr. Trigg had been despatched to St. Ninian's in the rector's brougham, Fraulein Hoffmann made her adieus to the rector's wife, and returned to her cottage on the Hillfoot road.

"Splendid!" said Otto Heinrich, when she had told her story. "Everybody will now believe that you are in love with this ridiculous creature, and this accident gives you a perfect excuse for going to St. Ninian's to inquire how he is. And if you act as well as you have acted this afternoon," he added, "you'll have no difficulty in securing an introduction to the young Hindoo who has the locket."

Meanwhile, Nipper and Dick were still marvelling at their discovery that Fraulein Hoffmann—as they thought—was in love with Montague Trigg. And their wonderment was fully shared by Wagstaffe, Bob, and Lal, when the two chums returned to St. Ninian's at the conclusion of the skating-party, and related what had happened.

"Gosh! Talk about beauty and the beast, it simply isn't in it," said Bob. "Fancy a pretty girl like Fraulein Hoffmann being mashed on a caricature like Piggy! Dash it all, I can't believe it!"

"It's a fact, all the same," said Dick. "What's more, if Nipper hadn't stopped her, she'd actually have tried to rescue Piggy herself. I tell you, she's a brick!"

"She is indeed!" said Nipper.

"She must be," said Lal; "and I, for one, am sorry we ever rotted Piggy, if she's really in love with him."

"So am I," said Bob; and the others expressed the same opinion.

They were sorrier still when, later in the evening, a rumour spread through the school that Mr. Trigg, as a result of his immersion, was dangerously ill. On making inquiries of Mrs. Rant, however, they ascertained that the rumour was false, or, at any rate, greatly exaggerated, the fact being that Mr. Trigg was suffering from nothing worse than a severe chill, in consequence of which the doctor had ordered him to keep his bed for a day or two.

Next day was Sunday, and after dinner the five chums reassembled in their study, and proceeded to discuss their programme for the afternoon.

"You can leave Lal and me out of the discussion," said Bob. "We're engaged this afternoon. We've been honoured with an invitation to take tea with ma."

"Ma" was Mrs. Shuttleworth, the headmaster's wife. It was her custom, every Sunday afternoon, to invite six of the boys, two from each house, to have tea with her. On the present occasion she had invited Bradshaw and Wyduham from the School House, Russell and Todd from Mr. Jerman's House, and Bob and Lal from Mr. Rant's House.

"Poor little dears!" said Nipper pityingly. "You have my deepest sympathy! I'd rather go to a funeral any day than to tea with ma. You'll be bored to death!"

But Nipper was mistaken. Whatever his own experience might have been, Bob and Lal were certainly not bored. On the contrary, they enjoyed themselves immensely, up to a certain point, for when they entered the drawing-room, where Mrs. Shuttleworth was dispensing tea and cake, they found her chatting to no less a person than Fraulein Hoffmann, who had called to inquire how Mr. Trigg was progressing.

A gleam of triumph leaped into Fraulein Hoffmann's eyes when the young Hindoo walked into the room. This was better luck than she had dared to hope for. When Mrs. Shuttleworth had introduced the boys to her, she laid herself out, as the saying is, to make herself agreeable to them; and so well did she succeed that in less than ten minutes they were prepared to swear she was the jolliest, nicest woman they had ever met.

"Py der way," she said presently, turning to Lal, "are you not der hero of dat romantic adventure mit der unknown man in der drifting boat?"

Lal blushingly acknowledged that he was.

"I vas most interested," she continued, "ven I spout it in der papers read. Ah, how many times, ven I haf seen you in der village, haf I desired to stop you and ask you to tell me der story in your own words. Tell me all apout it now."

Nothing loth, Lal told her the whole story.

"Vonderful!" she exclaimed, when he had finished. "Vas a romance! Vas a mystery! Oh, how I vould like to see der locket! May I?"

She held out her hand, as if she expected Lal had the locket in his pocket.

"I'll show it you with pleasure," said Lal. "But I haven't it here. Mrs. Shuttleworth will expect me half a minute, if I fetch it."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Shuttleworth readily. Lal left the room and repaired to his house-master's study, where Mr. Rant was indulging in a Sunday afternoon snooze.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir," said Lal apologetically; "but Fraulein Hoffmann is here, in ma—I mean, Mrs. Shuttleworth's drawing-room, and I've been telling her about the locket, and she'd like to have a look at it, if you've no objection."

"Not at all," said Mr. Rant, with a sleepy yawn. "You know where it is. Get it yourself."

Lal crossed the room and pressed the spring of the secret recess. The panel instantly flew open as before, and even as it did so a cry of stupefied amazement burst from Lal's lips.

The recess was empty. The locket had disappeared!

"It isn't here, sir!" he gasped. "It's gone!"

"Gone!" cried Mr. Rant, leaping to his feet, now thoroughly awake. "What do you mean, boy?"

He stared at the empty recess, and then at Lal.

Slowly but irresistibly the great car moved backwards, tumbling Mr. Watson off his feet and causing the three old men to huddle together in the ditch with cries of alarm.

"You've been here unknown to me, and taken the locket away!" he exclaimed.

"I'll swear I haven't!" said Lal indignantly. "I've never been in this room since I put the locket in this recess in your presence."

"Whom have you told about the secret recess?" demanded Mr. Rant.

"Nobody, sir," said Lal. "You told me not to say anything about it to anybody, not even to Nipper, and I haven't."

"You must have told somebody."

"On my word of honour, I haven't."

"And I haven't," said Mr. Rant. "To the best of my belief, you and I are the only persons in the world who know of the existence of this secret recess. Then where has the locket gone? Who has taken it away from here?"

They discussed the mystery of the locket's disappearance for several minutes, without being able to even hazard a guess at its solution. Then Mr. Rant went off to consult the Head, and Lal returned to Mrs. Shuttleworth's drawing-room.

"It's gone!" he blurted out, as he entered the room. "The locket, I mean! It's disappeared! Somebody must have stolen it!"

Upon Lal's utterance of these words Fraulein Hoffmann's face suddenly crossed, and was quickly followed by one of suspicion and doubt.

"Is dot der truth?" she asked. "Or does it mean dot you vould rather not der locket to me show?"

"It's the truth, of course," said Lal, in an injured voice. "The locket was hidden in a certain place, known only to Mr. Rant and me, and when I went for it just now it wasn't there. Mr. Rant is as puzzled as I am, and he's gone to see old Shuttleworth—I mean Dr. Shuttleworth—if he hadn't better send for the police at once!"

Fraulein Hoffmann was as puzzled as Mr. Rant and Lal. She knew that Otto Heinrich had not stolen the locket, and she knew of nobody else who would be likely to wish to steal it. Who, then, had taken the locket?

"I must tell Heinrich of this at once," she mentally decided; and, after sympathising with Lal in his loss, she took her departure and returned to her cottage.

"It's a lie, of course!" said Heinrich, when she had told her tale. "The boy was advised probably by Mr. Rant—not to show you the locket. It hasn't disappeared. Nobody has stolen it. It's still at St. Ninian's."

He clenched his fist and smote the table.

"And I'll find it yet!" he exclaimed, with a furious oath. "They may lie as they like, and hide it where they will, but I'll find it yet!"

A Famous Victory.

GREAT was the sensation at St. Ninian's when the news became known that the famous locket had mysteriously disappeared. Like most schoolboy sensations, however, it was not of long duration; for the following Saturday was the polling-day for the County Council election; and by Friday the question of the hour at St. Ninian's had become, not who had stolen the locket, but could Napoleon Bonaparte Boswell beat Dr. Stuart-Unwin?

"I think he can, but, it'll be a near thing!" said Sergeant Quiggin, who came up to the school on Friday evening with a message for Nipper and Dick from Mr. Boswell. "We shall need every vote we can beg, borrer, or steal! An' that's why I brought me 'ere to-night," he continued. "You'd like to 'elp Mr. Boswell to lick that measley kid-wallopee from the Grammar School, wouldn't you?"

"Of course!" said Nipper. "We've done a bit in that direction already."

"I know you 'ave," said Sergeant Quiggin. "An' I sez to Mr. Boswell this afternoon, sez I, 'Oung me, them's the two young gents to 'elp us to-morrer!'"

"How?" asked Nipper and Dick in the same breath.

"Well, it's like this," said the sergeant. "A lot o' the voters live out in the country. They won't come to Cleveden to vote unless we fetches 'em an' drives 'em back; an' we're a bit short-handed for conveyances. Colonel Trevor, of the Grange, 'as hoffered Mr. Boswell the loan of 'is motor-car, but 'is shover is ill, and there's nobody in the village knows 'ow to handle a motor-car.

"Now, Mr. Boswell sez as 'e knows that you and Master Starling 'ere are in the 'abit of drivin' Mr. Nelson Lee's car when you're at 'ome; so he's sent me to ask you if you'll take charge o' the colonel's car to-morrer, and 'elp to bring up voters from the country?"

"Will a duck swim?" cried Nipper, with sparkling eyes. "You bet we will!"

"Rather!" said Dick. "But we'll have to get leave from Mr. Rant. Come on! Let's go and board him now!"

Luckily for them—luckily for Mr. Boswell, too, as events turned out—Mr. Rant had just finished an excellent dinner, and was in one of his most gracious moods.

"Help Mr. Boswell—certainly!" he said. "After the enmity which Dr. Stuart-Unwin has displayed towards St. Ninian's, it behoves us to do everything in our power to prevent him obtaining a seat on our local governing body. If you wish to spend your half to-morrow in helping Mr. Boswell, I have no objection whatever. On the contrary, I commend you for your resolve."

"We shall require extended leave, sir, of course," suggested Nipper.

"Humph!" said Mr. Rant. "What time does the poll close?"

"It opens at eight in the morning and closes at eight at night, sir," said Nipper.

"Well, you'll have the morning off, of course. But you may leave as soon as you like after second school—before dinner, if you wish—and you needn't return until half-past eight. That will enable you to help Mr. Boswell right up to the close of the poll."

"And is that all the leave we may have, sir?" asked Nipper, in a disappointed voice.

"All? What more do you want?"

"Well, sir, they're going to count the votes to-night, after the close of the poll, and we'd naturally like to stay and hear the result."

"That's rather a tall order! What time is the result expected to be known?"

"About ten o'clock, sir."

Mr. Rant hesitated for a moment.

"All right!" he said, at last. "You can have leave till half-past ten."

Next day, accordingly, as soon as second school was over, the two boys trudged up to the Grange in quest of the motor-car. Colonel Trevor was somewhat dubious at first about trusting his car to two such youngsters, but they soon showed him that he had no grounds for his misgivings, and twenty minutes later the car was at Mr. Boswell's committee-room, where Sergeant Quiggin gave them a first list

of voters whom he wished them to fetch to the poll.

It was then about two o'clock. For the next six hours the two chums scurried to and fro across the country, picking up voters, bringing them to the polling-booth at Cleveden, and taking them home again when they had voted.

Several times, during the course of the afternoon and evening, they came across parties of Grammar School boys, who, of course, were working tooth and nail for their headmaster; and at least a dozen times they met or overtook Dr. Stuart-Unwin's chairman—Mr. Watson, the greengrocer—who, with a huge yellow rosette in his coat, and another in his hat, was driving voters to and from the poll in an ancient-looking one-horse waggonette.

Needless to say—being Nipper and Dick—they had no lack of exciting incidents and humorous interludes. Once they nearly ran into a flock of sheep on the Tunbridge Road, and once they were chased by a bull which had escaped from one of Farmer Micklem's fields. On another occasion, finding that one of their passengers was an Unwinite, which had cheated them into giving him a ride by pretending to be a Boswellite—unfortunately they didn't discover the fact until after he had voted—they refused to let him alight at his own village, but carried him ten miles further into the country, pitched him out in a lonely lane four miles from everywhere, and left him to get home as best he could!

But the crowning incident of the day—the one on which the two chums afterwards looked back with the greatest joy and satisfaction—occurred while they were making their last trip to the polling-booth.

It happened in this way. About half-past six, Sergeant Quiggin suddenly discovered in his dismay that two of Mr. Boswell's supporters, who lived at Otterdene, had been overlooked.

"I promised to send a carriage for 'em," he said to Nipper and Dick. "but I clean forgot all about it till this minute! We can't afford to lose their votes, for the fight is so close that two votes more or less will probably make all the difference between victory and defeat. But Otterdene is six miles from here, and all my 'orses are dead-beat, and I doubt if any of 'em could fetch the fellows 'ere before eight o'clock. But the motor-car——"

"Shut up, do it on the head!" said Nipper, interrupting him. "Say no more. Give us the names and addresses of the men you want, and we'll have 'em here by half-past seven!"

The wooden-legged sergeant gave them the necessary information, and a moment later the car was on its way to Otterdene.

Travelling at the rate of twelve miles an hour, they reached their destination on the stroke of seven o'clock. Five minutes were spent in hunting up the two voters and getting them into the car; and at five minutes past seven the return journey began. By that time, of course, the sun had set; but a full moon made the roads as bright as day.

Five minutes after leaving Otterdene they sighted Mr. Watson's waggonette. It was proceeding in the direction of Cleveden, and contained five passengers—three old men and two old women—all of whom, of course, were going to record their votes for Dr. Stuart-Unwin.

At the moment when the two boys caught sight of the waggonette, it was bowling along at a brisk pace about a mile ahead of them, with Mr. Watson on the box. About a quarter of a mile ahead of the waggonette the road crossed over an old stone bridge. On this side of the bridge the road was wide enough for two conveyances to pass with ease; on the other side, for a short distance, it was so narrow that it was next to impossible for two vehicles of average size to squeeze past each other.

"Dickie, my love, I've got an idea!" chuckled Nipper, the moment they caught sight of the waggonette. "According to Quiggin, this fight is so close that two votes one way or the other will probably decide it. There are five votes for Stewed Onions in that waggonette. If we can prevent 'em reaching the polling-booth before eight o'clock—eh, what?"

Dick shook his head.

"If you're thinking of running the waggonette down——" he began.

"But I'm not!" said Nipper. "No fear! I don't want to be had up for careless driving!"

"Then what's the idea?" asked Dick.

"See that bridge?" said Nipper. "If we can get across first, and pull into the narrow part of the road, we can pull the car up, and pretend that something's gone wrong with the works! Watson, of course, can't possibly get past us so long as we're blocking the way; and we can keep him at bay till it's too late for his five passengers to reach the polling-booth in time to record their votes. And that'll mean five votes less for Stewed Onions!"

He glanced at the carriage-clock in front of the motor.

"It's seven minutes past seven now," he said. "That bridge is four miles from Cleveden. If we keep Watson back till twenty minutes to eight, we can easily reach the polling-booth in time for our friends to vote, but Watson can't. What I mean is, the car can easily do four miles in twenty minutes, but Watson's old screw can't possibly do the distance in the time. And the poll closes at eight, you know. Now, do you twig the idea?"

"I do!" said Dick. "It's great! Let her rip!"

Pip, pip, pip!

Mr. Watson glanced behind him on hearing the horn of the approaching motor. It may be that a vague suspicion of what the two boys meant to do stole into his brain, for he lashed his horse into a gallop, with the obvious intention of trying to reach the bridge first.

The attempt, however, was foredoomed to failure. Long before the waggonette was still twenty yards from the bridge, the car streaked past it like a flash of lightning, shot across the bridge, and entered the narrow part of the road. Then Nipper pulled up, and he and Dick sprang out.

"It's all right!" said Nipper to the two yokels in the car. "There's nothing wrong; but we're going to pretend we've broken down, so as to keep Watson back, and Sergeant Quiggin back till it's too late for his voters to reach the poll before eight o'clock. Don't be alarmed, we'll get you to the poll in plenty of time."

The yokels grinned from ear to ear.

"Don't you worry about we, young sir!" said one of them. "There be five o' they, an' only two o' we, so if none o' we vote, it'll be three votes to the good for Mr. Boswell!"

"True," said Nipper. "But we can't afford to lose even two votes. We'll get you there in time."

Before he had time to say more the waggonette rumbled across the bridge, and pulled up a yard or two behind the car.

"Now, then, get out of the way with that cucumber-contraption!" snarled Mr. Watson. "You're bub-bub-bub-blocking up the road!"

"Half a mo'!" said Nipper sweetly.

He crawled underneath the car and pretended to examine the machinery. Dick followed his example, whilst Mr. Watson ground his teeth and anxiously consulted his watch.

Five precious minutes passed. The hands of the carriage-clock pointed to 7.25. The grins on the faces of the two yokels in the car grew broader and broader—so broad, in fact, that Mr. Watson began to smell a rat.

"I don't bub-bub-believe there's anything wrong at all!" he exclaimed, jumping down from the driving-seat of the waggonette and peering underneath the car. "This is just a pup-pup-plot to delay us."

"What's that?" demanded Nipper, crawling from under the car.

"Yes; what's that you say?" said Dick, following Nipper's example.

"You heard wot I said!" shouted the greengrocer, dancing with rage. "This is just a pup-pup-pup——"

"Pup!" said Dick. "What on earth are you talking about? There's no puppy here!"

(To be continued next week.)

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CLUB NOTICES.

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

ST. FRIDESWIDES 2nd XI (average age, 16; weak) would like to join a league within five miles of Poplar.—Apply, F. Burfield, secretary, 24, Ida Street, Poplar, E.

MERSEY JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE, First Division (average age, 16; limit, 19). Several vacancies for next season. Second Division, two sections (average age, 15; limit, 19), a few vacancies for Liverpool or Cheshire clubs. Champions of each division receive gold centre medals. Runners-up awarded silver medals.—Applications to be made at once (enclose stamp) to J. P. Hughes, 68, Waverlree Vale, Liverpool.

SEBRIGHT F.C. (average age, 15; weak) want home and away matches for next season.—Apply, G. Garner, 22, Jersey Street, Bethnal Green.

MAURICE HOSTEL F.C. (average age, 16; weak) want matches for coming season, home and away. All dates open.—Apply, H. Biggs, 6, Baron Street, Islington.

BARKING CRUSADERS F.C. (average age, 17; weak) require home and away matches for the coming season within six miles of Barking.—Apply, C. Dietz, 72, Hart Street, Barking, E.

LARNE ATHLETIC CLUB (age limit, 16-19), of Forest Gate, are desirous of extending their membership. Applications from prospective members invited.—Apply, H. Corbett, 79, Grosvenor Road, Forest Gate.

RUSHTON UNITED F.C. (average age, 15) require home and away matches for the coming season.—Apply, J. Selby, 2, Rushton Street, Hoxton, N.

VICTORIA ATHLETIC F.C. require matches for 1907-8, home or away, any dates except these: September 7th, October 19th, November 23rd, December 14th, January 4th, March 14th.—Apply, W. Wachorne, Secretary, 28, Fremont Street, South Hackney, London, N.E.

OLD HANOVERIAN F.C. (average age, 16-19) want a few players for all positions. Ground, Hackney Marshes.—Apply, T. Smith, 36, Duncan Terrace, Islington, N.

FOUR SMART PLAYERS WANTED (age, 16), outside left, goalkeeper, outside right, centre half-back, living near at hand. Small subscription. Also all dates open away, four or five miles radius of Upton Park.—Apply, Ernest Fogg, Hon. Sec., 149, Queen Road, Upton Park, E.

ANY BOY wishing to play in a football club for the following season, age not under 17, please communicate with Jack Kenyon, 23, Bower Road, Sheffield; or Harry Osgathorpe, 65, Brightmore Street, Sheffield.

FEW TEAMS WANTED to join Junior league (average age, 16). District preferred.—For particulars, apply H. Mills, 1A, Durant Street, Hackney Road, N.E.

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TWO LADS (age, 16 and 17) would like to join football club in or near Plaistow. Any position.—Alf. V. Long, 56, Stopford Road, Plaistow, E.

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North London Junior Cricket and Football League.
Season 1907-8.
PRESIDENTS:
His Worship, the Mayor of Hornsey, Alderman J. Scott Balfour, J.P., and Hamilton Edwards, Esq., Editor of THE BOYS' REALM, etc.
General League Secretary,
Mr. Stanley R. Fenton,
20, St. John's Villas,
Highgate, N.

Secretaries of Junior Parochial Football Clubs wishing to affiliate their clubs to a league are kindly invited to join the same early in the coming season. A silver challenge cup and two sets of solid silver medals to be kindly presented by THE BOYS' REALM, provided not less than a dozen clubs join, will be competed for by each team. A win will count as two points, and a draw as one point. The club gaining the greatest number of points to be the winners. Silver medals will be presented to each member of the winning team and the runners-up. The league will be divided into two sections, with six clubs in each. Each club on entering shall pay two shillings on joining the league, and shall pay a subscription of 1s. 6d. per season, due on July 31st for football, and December 1st for cricket. Clubs entering in mid-season will count as two points, and a draw as one point. The club gaining the greatest number of points to be the winners. Silver medals will be presented to each member of the winning team and the runners-up. The league will be divided into two sections, with six clubs in each. Each club on entering shall pay two shillings on joining the league, and shall pay a subscription of 1s. 6d. per season, due on July 31st for football, and December 1st for cricket. Clubs entering in mid-season will count as two points, and a draw as one point. The club gaining the greatest number of points to be the winners. Silver medals will be presented to each member of the winning team and the runners-up. The league will be divided into two sections, with six clubs in each. Each club on entering shall pay two shillings on joining the league, and shall pay a subscription of 1s. 6d. per season, due on July 31st for football, and December 1st for cricket. Clubs entering in mid-season will count as two points, and a draw as one point. Any such subscriptions and guarantees to be payable before its first match. The government of the league to be vested in a general committee, consisting of one representative from each club, a quorum to consist of five. Full particulars of the league may be had on application to the General Secretary, Mr. Stanley Reeves Fenton, 20, St. John's Villas, Highgate, N.

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BY
David Goodwin.

The angry pitman made a break for Kenyon Price as he reined his horse hastily back.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

Roddy Owen and Tom Hughes, two Welsh miltery lads, are the boys of a certain Matthew Matthews, who was the rightful owner of the Aberford and Pool Coch Pits. But these collieries are in the hands of a man named Kenyon Price, who, by foul means, dispossessed 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 the 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 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 Pool 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 hewed to their each day. In the evenings they return to Starve-Crow Farm.

Roddy has a row with some Beteian pitmen who have a spite against him. They are driven off by 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 the following day the boys lie in wait for the unknown speaker, who turns out to be Mr. Sully, the headviewer of the mines. They have hot words with him, and exit the latter of the encounter. On their way home they meet Dafydd, who seems greatly excited, and requests them to come and look at a certain piece of ground called the Old Meadow.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Enemy Becomes Active.

THEY went on till, not long before reaching their own property, they came to the place known as the Old Meadow, an enclosure bounded by loose stone walls. It had once been reclaimed from the moor, cleared of stones, and used as pasture, but now the moorland had almost swallowed it up again, for there was more heather than grass.

The road to Bryn y Garth, the only way by which that farm could practically be reached, ran right through the Meadow. And, to the amazement of the boys, right across the road, and far beyond, were set a line of sheep-hurdles, which had never been there before, completely blocking the way. Moreover, just behind them, beside the road itself, and facing the travellers, was a notice-board, with the announcement freshly painted on it:

PRIVATE ROAD.

NO THOROUGHFARE.

Trespassers
will be
Prosecuted with the Utmost Rigour of the
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KENYON PRICE, Esquire, J.P.

"Great guns!" said Tom. "Look at that!"

"Yes, infect, look at it," said Dafydd. "What wass you think of it—eh?"

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Roddy, picking up a jagged lump of rock. "I'll show you what I think of it!"

He hurled the chunk of rock with unerring aim. It struck the notice-board with a resounding bang, and the staff and board were shivered and knocked flat.

"Good shot!" said Dafydd; and he laughed aloud as he saw the notice-board keel over and fall. Roddy walked to the hurdles, and, putting one hand on them, vaulted easily over on to the other side. The others followed him.

They were hardly over when a long-legged, excited person, with short side-whiskers, looking rather like a gamekeeper, came over the stone wall that bounded the Old Meadow, and strode angrily towards the boys.

"Here's somebody who owns the earth," said Tom. "P'raps the notice-board was dear to him. Let's hear what he's got to say."

They had no difficulty in hearing it, for the stranger's voice was loud enough, and he began talking while still fifty yards away. The boys wasted for him coolly.

"What are you doin' here?" he cried, in a nasal voice.

"Admirin' the view," said Tom. "Ain't the sunset lovely. Those fleecy clouds——"

"Who knocked that there notice-board down?" growled the stranger, pointing to it.

"I did," replied Roddy.

"Ha! It was you, was it?"

The gamekeeper, or whoever he was, looked as if he were about to strike Roddy, but suddenly changing his mind, pulled out a notebook and a pencil.

"What's your name and address?" he said fiercely.

"Do you want to know who I am?" inquired Roddy.

"Yes, all three of you!" roared the man, slapping his notebook. "Who are you?"

"Oh, but Jove, don't you know me?" said Roddy. "I'm Lord Bryn. This is the Earl of Garth," he added, with a wave of his hand to Tom, "and that's Baron Dafydd, seneschal of Garth Castle. You know Garth Castle, don't you?"

The stranger was aghast for a moment. Then, frothing with rage, he gripped the ash-plant he carried with him.

"If you think you can play the fool with me, I'll show yer!" he cried, striding up to Roddy, who flushed, and held up his hand warningly.

"Steady, now," he said quietly, "or you may be making a fool of yourself in a minute."

There was something in the burly young hewer's attitude that made the man pause. He looked at the three, and decided they were too many for him. They stood their ground as if even more willing for a row than he was.

"Makin' a fool of myself!" he cried furiously. "You'll soon find——"

"Yes, as big a fool as Kenyon Price is making of himself, when he thinks he can stop this road," said Roddy.

"You'll be sorry you said that, ye young runagate," exclaimed the man, "when we come up there an'—— Good lor', what's that?" he said hurriedly, starting, and looking in the direction of the farm, whence the redoubtable bulldog came racing down the Old Meadow towards his masters as fast as he could tear. "Another blessed lord!"

"Yes; that's Sir Growley Gripe, a descendant of the noble Stick-to-'em family," said Roddy; "an' when he gets a grip of the tight part of your pants he won't need any introducin'. It ain't everybody he takes a fancy to, an' I can see from here he don't like the look of you."

"It'd be a rum thing if he did," said Tom, eyeing the stranger.

The man with the whiskers took one wavering, doubting look at the dog, and then turned and bolted.

"You'll pay for this! I'll have yer up for it!" he cried, over his shoulder.

It was one of Gripe's rules, if he saw anybody running away, to run after him. He was a dog of few ideas, but he considered the act of running away to be suspicious, and that no respectable person did it. Consequently, he gave a grunt, and set off in chase of the fleeing stranger.

Luckily for himself, the man had a good start, and his long legs carried him at remarkable speed. Gripe's legs were short, and sprinting was not his strong point. The man flew over the stone wall a really magnificent jump—and sped down the hillside; so Gripe, finding himself outclassed, and having seen the stranger fairly off the premises, came back, panting and wagging his tail. The three chums sat down on rocks and laughed till they felt quite weak.

"He's had a run for his money, anyhow," said Tom, stepping out for home again. "That was one of the men who put up this fence, I suppose?"

"Most likely the hend of 'em. One of K. P.'s estate men," said Dafydd. "He didn't know us, anyway. Half a minute. Let's chuck down some of this barrier before we go on."

They pulled down the three hurdles that crossed the road itself, and threw them down by the side. Then they went straight home to the cottage, had a wash in the brook, and then feeling ready for dinner, which was simmering in the big cooking-pot.

"That's all right, so far," said Tom; "but it looks pretty serious, don't you think? Kenyon Price wouldn't try harrin' the road like that unless he thought it was all right for him."

"He owns all that land, wass he not?" asked Dafydd. "You said he had bought it."

"Yes, he has."

"And you will pe able to do nothing with your coal here, if ter road cannot pe passed along."

"He hasn't bought the road, though," said Roddy; "he can't."

"The thing is," suggested Tom, "it's not a regular high-road, kept up by the rates. It's only a sort of track."

"It's a right of way, an' that's quite enough," Roddy replied. "He evidently thinks he can stop it, though."

"D'you suppose it's bluff, or does he mean to stick to it, now he's started this game?"

"There's no tellin'. But, if he does, I think I know a cure for it," said Roddy, with a nod. "There are more ways of hangin' a cat than one."

"What can we do? We can't waste our little store of cash goin' to law. That'd be worse than ever. And he can get plenty of men at his back, too. How d'you expect to get at him?"

"It's got to be done, an' I mean to see we do it. We've got to make sure how we stand first. That's the only thing I'm worried about. Leave it till the morning."

They could get nothing more out of Roddy, who brought out his books and settled himself down to read. There were also many calculations to make, and he had several catalogues dealing with the gear and tools they needed to buy to start work in right earnest. There was very nearly money enough now. Tom, however, was rather disturbed about the barring of the road, and thought his partner's calculations looked like counting chickens before they were hatched, since the afternoon's adventure. But Roddy went on with his work in perfect calmness.

"Suppose K. P. has us arrested for trespass?" suggested Tom presently.

"Rats!" said Roddy. "Don't interrupt a chap. I shall have to add up the column again."

They turned out earlier than usual next morning; and, after a brisk bathe in the salmon pool, they noticed that, early as it was, several men were on Kenyon Price's ground, further up the slope, very busy about something.

"Let's go and see what they're up to," said Roddy; and he led the way to the farm's boundary. A little watching soon convinced him.

"They're gettin' ready to sink a bore-hole," he said, "to try for coal."

"They was doing the same thing in several places yesterday," said Dafydd. "I meant to tell you, but ter affair on ter road put it out of my head."

"Were they, though?" said Tom. "D'you think they'll find a seam, Roddy?"

"I don't believe it a bit. They might strike just the fag end of ours, though, on their land."

"That'd be awkward, wouldn't it?"

"I don't see what harm they could do. But if there's any chance, they'll do it, you may be sure they will. We must keep an eye on 'em, specially if they sink a shaft."

"Nearly time to start," said Tom, glancing at his watch. "We shall have to hurry over breakfast. Get our grub packed, Dafydd old son?"

They set out for Aberford soon afterwards, and, passing through the Old Meadow, found the hurdles and notice-board were still down, as they had left them. When they were half-way to Aberford, however, they met a gang of eight or ten men coming up the hill, and with them was the lanky, whiskered stranger of the evening before.

Accompanying him, ahead of the rest, was a big, burly, red-faced man, who walked with rather a bullying swagger. The boys had not seen him before. The person with the whiskers scowled as he caught sight of Tom and Roddy, and, making some remark to his companion, began to stride towards them.

Roddy Prepares a Feast.

THE red-faced man called him back, however, and they went on their way, conversing earnestly, and evidently arguing about something. The rest of the gang were estate workmen and navvies.

"That looks as if they were goin' to the Old Meadow to do a little more fencin'," said Tom thoughtfully. "The beef-faced chap seems to be the boss of the gang. I don't like his looks."

"We'll find out how things stand before we do anything else. I vote," said Roddy. "Stick the pace on, an' let's make for Lawyer Williams. We can't help it if we're late."

The boys, who had been travelling faster than

(Continued on the next page.)

YOU WILL
LOOK WELL,
FEEL WELL,
AND
BE WELL,
WHEN YOU GET YOUR
STOMACH RIGHT.

This it ever occurred to you that digestion is the most important thing on earth? It is! It keeps you alive, and keeps the race alive, for life comes from digested food. Think things out! Wealth, fame, power, happiness are for the healthy. Are you healthy? If not—take Mother Seigel's Syrup. It stimulates stomach, liver, and bowels, cleanses your blood, makes indigestion impossible, and sound, vigorous health a certainty. You will find it is so.

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