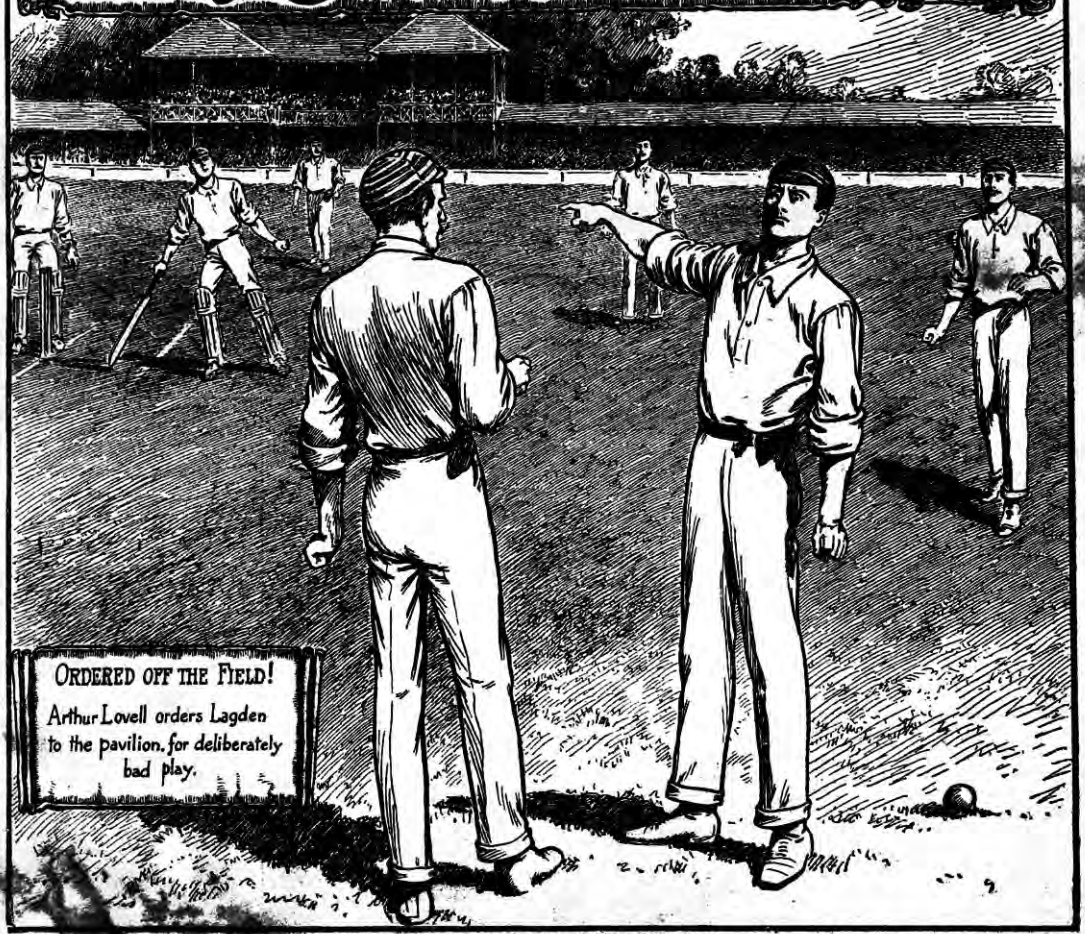
GIGANTIC OFFER TO FOOTBALL CLUBS.

The Boys' Realm

of Sport & Adventure.

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King Cricket! By Charles Hamilton



No. 2[illegible] Vol. V[illegible] EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY. [SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 1907.

KING CRICKET.

A Fascinating New Story of County Cricket.

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

*****

The Chief Characters in this Fine Story.

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

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

LEN VALANCE, Kit's twin brother.

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

JAMES LAGDEN, who has ruined Arthur's uncle

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

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

The first instalment tells how Arthur Lovell distinguishes himself in the Colt's match, in spite of the efforts which Geoffrey Lagden puts forth to keep him in the shade. Soon after, a change in his fortunes necessitates his forfeiting his status as an amateur and turning professional.

Kit Valance, Arthur's bosom chum, has a twin brother named Len, who is not a credit to his family. Lagden bribes Len Valance to injure Arthur in such a manner as to make it impossible for him to play in the next match against Yorkshire.

Len makes a bad blunder, and strikes down Blane, the captain of the Loamshire team, with a foul blow, in the dark, mistaking him for Arthur. Blane is unable to play in the coming match with Yorkshire, and Ponsonby is appointed in his place as captain. 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.

Loamshire play the South Africans, and the latter get decidedly the better of the game, defeating the home county by a large majority. Arthur and Kit break friendship through the agency of Len Valance. During the next match with Hampshire, Harding, the Loamshire captain, falls and badly sprains his leg, making it impossible for him to play for some time. The match is abandoned owing to rain. The following day Colonel Hilton again offers the captaincy of Loamshire to Arthur Lovell, and prevails on him to accept. On hearing of his acceptance Lagden hints to Arthur that his orders will not be obeyed.

(Now read this week's Instalment.)

The Match with the Champions.

CAPTAIN of Loamshire!

It seemed almost like a dream to Arthur Lovell as he stood in the pavilion on the Angel Ground at Tonbridge and looked out over the green expanse of turf.

The pitch was being rolled, and the enclosures were filling up with spectators.

The day was fine, and interest in the match between Loamshire and the champions was widespread, and the men of Kent were turning up in large numbers to see it.

Captain of Loamshire!

How Arthur Lovell's heart would have beat with pride and happiness once at the thought of it!

Even now, in spite of the difficulties that beset his path, he felt a thrill as he looked out over the pitch where the great match was to be fought.

He was captain of Loamshire—he was to lead into the field the team sent by his county to do battle with Kent, who had finished up last season as champions.

If only his captaincy had received the hearty concurrence of all the side, Arthur Lovell would have been a happy man that day.

But it was not so.

He had accepted the position against his own better judgment, and he was prepared to do all that care and patience and good-will on his part could effect to make his captaincy a success.

How would the team back him up?

That was the question.

In Kit Valance he knew he would have a loyal backer, for the cloud that had come between them made no difference to the young bowler's sterling loyalty.

In Fortescue, the careless young amateur, he had another steady supporter. In Simpson, a new member of the team, he had another.

But the rest were cold, if not hostile.

Some of them were quite capable of embarrassing him if they could, even in the presence of the enemy. He knew he had nothing but hostility to look for from Lagden and Tunstall and Ponsonby, the late captain of Loamshire, who had lost the position by proving his incapacity as a leader.

Arthur Lovell could only do his best, determined that no amount of provocation should make him lose his temper, determined that if, by patience and self-sacrifice, he could lead Loamshire to victory, he would do it.

"A penny for your thoughts, Lovell!" exclaimed the voice of the colonel at his elbow.

And Arthur turned, with a slight flush in his cheeks

Colonel Hilton looked at him steadily.

"Thinking of our chances against Kent, Lovell?"

"Yes, sir."

"We shall beat them."

"I hope so."

The colonel laid his hand on the young cricketer's shoulder.

"You are not regretting that you accepted the captaincy, Lovell?"

"It would be rather late in the day for that, sir," said Arthur, with a faint smile.

"But is it so?"

"Well, no, sir. I hope to pull off a win. I never consulted from you that I am quite aware that my captaincy is not palatable to all the team. The Loamshire men do not like being captained by a professional. But you have declared that they will back me up, and asked me to take the position on your judgment. I am prepared to do my level best!"

"I asked you to do so, Lovell, because I felt that you were the right captain for Loamshire," said the old county cricketer. "I know there is jealousy and dissension, but a sweeping victory over the champions is just the thing to pull the team together, and banish any petty feelings of that kind."

Arthur's eyes sparkled.

"You are right, sir! A win may make a lot of difference."

"And is there any reason why we shouldn't win—eh?"

"Only that Kent are a splendid team, and won the championship last year, sir."

"Quite true," said the colonel, with a nod; "but you must remember that although Kent finished as champions last year, they were beaten at the beginning of the season by Yorkshire, and later in the season they drew with the same county. Now, we have beaten Yorkshire on their own ground, Lovell!"

Arthur nodded.

"That's quite true, sir; and if we can beat the champions, we ought to be able to beat the vanquished!" he remarked, with a smile.

"We shall try hard, anyway."

"That's right! And I assure you, Lovell, that your doubts as to the backing up you will get are absolutely and entirely without foundation."

"I hope so, sir."

The colonel moved away. Arthur glanced out at the pitch. They were finishing the rolling, and the spectators were looking up at the clock.

There was a light stop beside the young cricketer.

He could know whom it was before he turned his head. Molly Hilton, a vision of beauty in white, with a rose-decked hat, was at his side. Arthur bowed low, his heart beating, as it always did when he saw Molly Hilton.

"I am glad, Mr. Lovell!" said the girl impulsively. "I felt that I must speak to you, to congratulate you."

"You mean about the captaincy?"

"Of course!"

"Thank you very much, Miss Hilton!"

She looked at him curiously.

"You do not look so happy as I expected, Mr. Lovell. But I suppose it has excited a great deal of jealousy. That is unfortunate, but I suppose it was to be looked for. I was so glad to hear that you were captain of Loamshire! I know that we shall win now!"

Arthur Lovell smiled.

Molly Hilton's hope and confidence were infectious, and he began to feel that probably his own misgivings had been too gloomy.

"We are going to put up a good fight, at all events, Miss Hilton. But you must not forget that we have the champions of England to meet."

"But you will beat them. I am sure that in September I shall go to the Oval to see you captaining Loamshire against England!"

He laughed.

"That is a long way ahead yet. Still, there's no reason why it shouldn't come to pass, if the team pulls well together."

"How glad your friend must be to see you captain of Loamshire!"

Arthur's face clouded a little.

"Yes; I suppose so," he said briefly.

She gave him a quick look.

"You and Mr. Valance are still friends, are you not? I have heard something to the contrary, but I did not believe it."

Arthur coloured a little.

His break with Kit Valance had been for a time the talk of the Loamshire Club, and it was not surprising that it had come to the ears of Molly Hilton.

"I suppose we are still good friends at the bottom," he said, smiling. "But—but we are not on the old terms. It is nothing."

"I am sorry!" said the girl simply.

Lovell's name was called just then, and he bowed to Molly Hilton and left her. It was time to prepare for the match.

The girl went to her seat before the pavilion with a thoughtful shade upon her brow.

She did not disguise from herself that she took a very deep interest in Arthur Lovell, and she was sincerely concerned to learn that he was on ill terms with his old chum. She knew that he would suffer from the breaking of old ties, though he was not the kind of man to say anything about it.

C. H. B. Marsham, the captain of Kent, won the toss, and elected to bat first.

There was a cheer from the enclosures as the two first Kent batsmen came to the wickets, the two being Hardinge and Frank Woolley, the young Kent colt.

They took their position at the wickets.

Kit Valance was to bowl the first over, and he had sent down a couple of trials to Tunstall, who was keeping wicket for Loamshire.

Kit seemed to be in fine form.

Although he was no longer on cordial terms with Arthur Lovell, Loamshire's new captain, the young bowler meant to surpass himself in this match if he could, to back up Lovell and win a victory over the champions.

"Play!"

Five thousand pairs of eyes were fixed upon Kit Valance.

He was bowling to Frank Woolley's wicket, and the young Kentish colt was on the look-out for Loamshire's champion bowler.

The Loamshire fieldsmen were fielding deep.

Clack!

Away flew the ball; the game had fairly started. For the first ball the batsman ran a single, and Kit Valance sent down the second to Hardinge.

The merry click of bat and ball rang over the Tonbridge ground, and the thousands of spectators settled down to watch a keen, exciting match.

Frank Woolley was putting on the runs at a good rate, and Hardinge was doing well, while the Loamshire bowling was divided between Tweedie and Kit Valance, the two professionals.

They were the best bowlers in the Loamshire team, which was Arthur Lovell's sole reason for giving them the bulk of the bowling.

But that fact was not gratifying to Lagden, Ponsonby, and other amateurs who considered that they excelled in the game.

"I knew how it would be," Lagden muttered to Ponsonby, as the field crossed over. "Make a professional captain, and he gives the rest of the professionals all the game."

Ponsonby nodded.

"Yes, I foresaw it," he agreed. "Colonel Hilton ought to have known it, too."

"It's like the Yorkshire match the other way round."

"Yes, I meant to make that a gentleman's game," said Ponsonby, "which was very right and proper, though the committee were down on me for it, and I had to resign the captaincy in consequence. I still think I was right."

Lagden made no reply to that.

"This is a different affair," said Ponsonby. "He's making a professional's game of it, which is a different sort of thing altogether."

Click!

Kit Valance was bowling again, and the ball had gone hot from Hardinge's bat into the ready palm of Arthur Lovell.

"Caught!"

Hardinge was out for 10.

Hutchings crossed him as he went to the pavilion, and took his place at the vacant wicket.

There was a buzz from the crowd as the great Kentish batsman appeared.

Great things were looked for from Hutchings, the mighty hitter of the champion team, and on most occasions Hutchings has more than fulfilled expectations.

But this time he had met his match in Kit Valance.

A ball from Tweedie glanced off his bat, and was fairly caught by Kit Valance, fielding at mid-on.

There was a roar.

"Caught!"

"Well caught!"

"Bravo!"

And a storm of hand-clapping followed.

Hutchings, the mighty driver, was out for 11 runs, about a tenth part of what Kent might have justly expected of him against a less dangerous opponent.

Kit Valance had been one too many for him.

There was no doubt that the young Loamshire colt was showing his best quality.

Humphreys was the next man in.

He was stumped by Fortescue with only 5 runs to his credit.

The crowd began to look somewhat disappointed.

They naturally wanted the men of Kent to win, and, with the exception of Frank Woolley, the performance of the champions so far had not been a great one.

The field crossed after the fall of Humphrey's wicket, and Geoffrey Lagden found an opportunity of speaking to Arthur Lovell.

"May I say a word, Lovell?"

Arthur looked at him.

"Certainly."

"Isn't it about time to give Kit Valance a bit of a rest?"

"He does not need it."

"Well, to put it plainly, isn't it about time some of us amateurs had a look in," said Lagden, with a sneer.

Arthur's eyes flashed.

"I am the best judge of that, Lagden."

"Oh, I know you're captain, and a little tin god in your own estimation," said Geoffrey Lagden, scornfully. "You needn't pile that on. I know all about it."

"You had better go to your place, Lagden."

"I'm going; but I tell you plainly this isn't the way to keep the captaincy, Arthur Lovell. Ponsonby got into hot water for favouring the amateurs in the Yorkshire match. You'll get into some more, I fancy, for trying to make it a professional's game."

The new captain of Loamshire bit his lip.

"You need say no more, Lagden."

Lagden shrugged his shoulders and walked to his place.

He left Arthur with a slightly troubled look upon his handsome, sunburnt face.

There was something in what Lagden said.

He had many enemies and detractors who would be only too willing to pick a weak spot in his armour.

The two professionals were the best bowlers in the Loamshire team, but it would be advisable to give them a rest before long, and Arthur had intended to do so.

He realised now that already his actions had probably been the theme of unfavourable comment in the pavilion.

He realised, too, that he must not think only of what was absolutely best for the game, but that it would be judicious, for the sake of keeping the side in a loyal temper, to make some concessions, even at the cost of giving the Kentishmen runs.

The ordinary cricket captain, of course, would be untrammelled by any such considerations. But Arthur Lovell's position was a peculiarly difficult one.

It was hard enough to get his team to pull together in any case, and he would certainly not succeed in doing it at all unless he soothed their self-love.

And a team in ill-humour with their captain was a beaten team before the game started.

Lagden smiled to himself as he saw that the next over was given to Ponsonby.

His remarks to the new county captain had not been without their effect, though Arthur Lovell's reasons for modifying his plans were not exactly what Lagden believed them to be.

Ponsonby bowled the over against Frank Woolley's wicket, and it certainly did not seem that Loamshire had gained by the change in the bowling.

The Scottish colt cut the balls all over the field, and gave the Loamshire men more exercise for the over than they had had for the half-dozen preceding ones.

When Ponsonby had bowled his last ball, Frank Woolley's score was twelve more than it had been when he started, and the young cricketer's total was now 52.

But Woolley's time was coming.

Kit Valance took the ball and went on to bowl.

Frank Woolley was on the watch, as alert as a hawk; but the ball was a baffling googly which Kit had lately perfected by hard practice on the home ground.

It surprised the young Kentishman, and took his off-stump clean out of the ground, missing the ball by inches.

"How's that?"

"Out."

Frank Woolley walked away from the wicket, and a loud cheer from the crowd followed him to the pavilion.

His performance had been a fine one.

Players like Hutchings and Hardinge had fallen easy victims to the Loamshire men, but Woolley had knocked up 62 in fifty-five minutes.

And he deserved every one of the cheers and claps, which did not cease till he was lost to sight in the pavilion.

Kent were now four down, and Huish and Fielder were at the wickets.

The next over was given to Geoffrey Lagden. A sneer curled his lip as he took the round red leather ball.

He felt that he had triumphed over the new captain of Loamshire—that Arthur Lovell had gone as far as he dared, and durst go no farther.

He was not the nature to understand that Lovell had made sacrifices for the sake of peace and the good of the team.

He felt that he had won in a tacit conflict, and the feeling mounted like wine to his head, and he was prepared for further insolence to his new captain.

His over against Fielder was, however, a very creditable one.

Fielder knocked up a couple of twos, and then a single, which brought Huish to the end opposite Geoffrey Lagden.

Huish stopped the rest of the over without a run.

Now Kit Valance took the ball again, and went on to bowl Fielder.

Fielder, the wonderful Kent bowler, was a

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passable bat, but he was not likely to keep his end up long against Kit Valance.

And he did not, that over bringing him doom.

Down went the ball, and Fielder hit out at it with a powerful drive, and there was the sharp sound of wood meeting leather.

Where was the ball?

For a second no one knew.

Then the lithe form of Kit Valance was seen to spring, and his hand went up, and there was the soft, gentle sound of a leather ball clicking into a palm.

Then there was a shout:

"Well caught!"

For Fielder's powerful drive had sent the ball straight back to the bowler, and Kit Valance had instantly seen and taken his chance.

Kit had caught the ball as it came whizzing back.

"Bowled and caught!"

"Well done!"

"Bravo!"

And Fielder, after a stare at Kit holding up the ball, walked away from the wicket.

Caught and bowled Valance!

Fielder had 6 runs to his credit on the board when he left the wicket.

Arthur Lovell gave Kit a cheery nod.

"Well done, old fellow! Well done!"

"Thank you," said Kit quietly.

A few minutes later Hubb's wicket fell for 4. It fell to a ball from Geoffrey Lagden.

Then came the interval for luncheon.

Colonel Hilton shook hands with Arthur as he came into the pavilion.

"Well done, Lovell! You are going strong, and no mistake!"

Arthur nodded, with a smile. But all his misgivings were not gone yet.

Ordered off the Field.

"GEOFFREY!"

Lunch was over, and Geoffrey Lagden had strolled away from the pavilion, and stood, with his hands in his pockets, idly watching the groundsmen rolling the pitch. It wanted ten minutes to the resumption of play.

He turned his head carelessly enough at his father's voice, and nodded.

James Lagden looked at him anxiously.

The banker, cold and unfeeling as his nature was, as he showed plainly enough in all his business transactions, was extremely proud of his handsome son, and deeply attached to Geoffrey.

The ambition of his life was to see Geoffrey famous in county cricket and allied by marriage to Colonel Hilton's family, partly from his own desire for social distinction, and partly because he sympathised with his son in every one of the latter's aims and hopes.

And it was more upon Geoffrey's account than his own that the banker entertained a bitter dislike of Arthur Lovell, the present Loamshire captain.

"Hallo, pater!" said Geoffrey. "So you've got down!"

"Yes; I was unable to get down for the morning," said Mr. Lagden. The banker, whenever business possibly permitted him, made it a point to see the matches Geoffrey played in. "I hear that Kent is batting."

"Yes; they won the toss, and Marsham went in first. They are six down for 100."

"How is the new Loamshire captain turning out?" asked the banker, with a sneer upon his thin, foxlike face.

Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders.

"Exactly as we expected."

"How do you mean?"

"He gives all the work to Valance and Tweedie that he possibly can. He intends to make a professional's game of it, as far as the bowling is concerned."

"But when you bat——"

"I expect he will send me in last, and I shall be out out for a dozen runs, or something like that," said Geoffrey bitterly.

The banker's brows contracted.

"Then you think that he is determined to put you in the shade, Geoff?"

"Doesn't it stand to reason that he is?"

The banker pursed up his thin lips.

"When Pon was captain, and we played Yorkshire, he put Lovell back all the way," said Geoffrey. "Lovell is taking a leaf out of his book now."

"The colonel must have been out of his senses to back him up for county captain."

"Oh, Lovell can do no wrong in his eyes! It's no good complaining. Lovell knows how to look out for himself. He has given me just enough of the bowling to keep up appearances. Not enough for me to make any show. I've taken one wicket."

"He was bound to favour Valance, who is his close friend, I suppose?"

"They're such friends as they were, for some reason; but, of course, he would back up a fellow-professional against the rest of us."

"He ought to be stopped!"

Geoffrey Lagden gave a shrug.

"There's no stopping a cricket captain from acting as he chooses."

"But there's one thing," said the banker thoughtfully. "This kind of favouritism is certain to turn out badly for the side, and if Loamshire are let down heavily in the match, even Colonel Hilton will see reason."

"Only the side won't be let down so badly as all that. We are doing quite as well as anybody could expect against the champions of England."

"I suppose so."

It came into his mind that Geoffrey was looking at the matter from the point of view that suited him best, and that his judgment of Lovell's tactics was coloured by his dislike of the new Loamshire captain.

But his sympathy was wholly with his son, right or wrong.

As a matter of fact, the banker was not much given to considering questions of right and wrong where his interests were concerned.

"I know it would be a risky business opposing a captain on the field," he remarked slowly. "But it must be very bitter to knuckle under to this professional player, Geoff."

"I haven't knuckled under much. I have to obey orders, of course. But we've had one little breeze, and I got the best of it!"

"Then he gave way?"

"Yes; he hasn't the nerve to go too far."

"Well, Geoff, remember that, whatever happens, you have at least one firm backer on the county committee!" said Mr. Lagden significantly. "And there are a good many members of the club who think as I do—that this outsider ought not to be allowed to ride the high horse over county cricketers."

Geoffrey nodded thoughtfully.

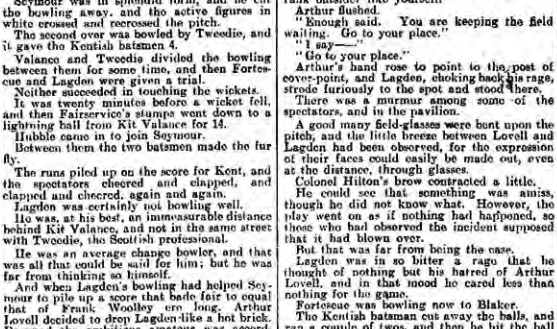
"Quite right, pater! In case of a row, it wouldn't be the same as if I disputed with Blane or Harding when they captained us. Even if I openly refused to take his orders, there would be a lot who would feel with me in the matter. Well, one thing's certain. If he tries to pass me over this afternoon, there will be trouble!"

The bell rang, and the people began to clear off the field.

Mr. Lagden went to his seat in the pavilion, and Geoffrey Lagden joined the cricketers. The Loamshire men went out to field, eleven figures in spotless white in the bright sunshine.

Kent resumed batting with Seymour and Fairservice.

CLUBS IN THE BOYS' REALM LEAGUE.



CASTLETOWN BOARD SCHOOL F.C.
A Smart Team in the Isle of Man.

Kit Valance, as usual, started the bowling.

Seymour was in splendid form, and he cut the bowling away, and the active figures in white crossed and recrossed the pitch.

The second over was bowled by Tweedie, and it gave the Kentish batsmen 4.

Valance and Tweedie divided the bowling between them for some time, and then Fortescue and Lagden were given a trial.

Neither succeeded in touching the wickets.

It was twenty minutes before a wicket fell, and then Fairservice's stumps went down to a lightning ball from Kit Valance for 14.

Hubble came in to join Seymour.

Between them the two batsmen made the fur fly.

The runs piled up on the score for Kent, and the spectators cheered and clapped, and clapped and cheered, again and again.

Lagden was certainly not bowling well.

He was, at his best, an unmeasurable distance behind Kit Valance, and not in the same street with Tweedie, the Scottish professional.

He was an average change bowler, and that was all that could be said for him; but he was far from thinking so himself.

The sneers Lagden's bowling had helped Seymour to pile up a score that bade fair to equal that of Frank Woolley ere long. Arthur Lovell decided to drop Lagden like a hot brick. Dropped the ambitious amateur was accordingly.

The overs were now divided between Valance, Tweedie, and Fortescue, and Lovell himself occasionally delivered one.

Hubble's wicket fell to Arthur's bowling and Valance's fielding, the batsman being caught out by Kit from a ball sent down by Arthur.

Hubble had taken 11 for his side ere he was caught out in the slips, and then R. N. R. Blaker brought in his bat to take Hubble's place.

Seymour was still batting strongly, and Blaker backed him up well.

Lagden's face became darker and darker as he observed that Lovell had no intention of putting him on again.

He was fielding at cover-point, Arthur being at point, and again the bowling fell to Kit Valance. When the field crossed after the over, Lagden approached the Loamshire captain.

"I want to speak to you, Lovell!" he said thickly. "You are carrying matters with a high hand, but I warn you there's a fall in store, if you don't mind your P's and Q's! I——"

Arthur looked at him steadily.

"I have given you more of the bowling than my own judgment would dictate," he said. "I have done that simply because I think that a suspicion of favouritism would do the team more harm than your bowling, which has done us learn enough, goodness knows!"

"How dare you say——"

"You are not up to the Kent batsmen, Lagden, and if you had been a sportsman, you would not have driven me to pointing you on!" said Lovell quickly. "I say that the side has suffered from your being put on!"

"And I," said Lagden, between his teeth, his face white with rage—"I say that you lie!"

Lovell turned pale.

"Lagden!"

"Yes; you lie! Make the best of that!"

Arthur's hands were tingling to knock his insulter down, but with a great effort he kept his temper, and Lagden did not know what a narrow escape he had had of having a clenched fist planted full in his sneering face.

"I won't bandy words with you, Lagden," said the Loamshire captain quietly. "This is not the place for that."

"Are you going to give me another chance?"

"No. You have no right to ask it, and if Blane or Harding were your captain at the present moment, you would not venture to attempt to dictate to him."

"That would be different," said Lagden, with a sneer. "Neither Blane nor Harding was a rank outsider like yourself."

Arthur flushed.

"Enough said. You are keeping the field waiting. Go to your place."

"I say——"

"Go to your place."

Arthur's hand rose to point to the post of cover-point, and Lagden, choking back his rage, strode furiously to the spot and stood there.

There was a murmur among some of the spectators, and in the pavilion.

A good many field-glasses were bent upon the pitch, and the little breeze between Lovell and Lagden had been observed, for the expression of their faces could easily be made out, even at the distance, through glasses.

Colonel Hilton's brow contracted a little.

He could see that something was amiss, though he did not know what. However, the play went on as if nothing had happened, so those who had observed the incident supposed that it had blown over.

But that was far from being the case.

Lagden was in so bitter a rage that he thought of nothing but his hatred of Arthur Lovell, and in that mood he cared less than nothing for the game.

Fortescue was bowling now to Blaker.

The Kentish batsman cut away the balls, and ran a couple of runs, and then he hit the ball past point, and fairly into the reach of cover-point.

Fairly into Lagden's reach—if he had been on the alert and in the mood to take it!

But he was not!

The spectators saw his chance, if he did not, and so easy a catch did it seem that they already counted Blaker out.

Arthur Lovell had swung round to follow the flight of the ball with his eye, and his glance was fixed upon Geoffrey Lagden.

The latter's hand went up lazily, there was a faint click, and the ball dropped to the ground.

Lagden had muffed the catch!

There was a roar from the "sixpenny" crowd.

"Yah! Butter-fingers!"

Lagden gritted his teeth.

He had muffed the catch, one of the easiest that ever offered itself to the grasp of a fieldsman, and he had muffed it—from carelessness—or had his motive been a treacherous one?

Arthur Lovell's eyes were blazing.

Whether Lagden had been careless, or whether he had allowed the ball to drop from sheer spite, it was certain that he could have caught it if he had tried.

"Butter-fingers!" roared the "sixpennies."

Hot words rose to Arthur Lovell's lips, but he did not utter them.

Whatever he could say would not improve matters, and would probably make them worse, for Lagden was in the mood for anything.

His eyes glittered with malice as he looked at Arthur, as if defying the Loamshire captain to call him to account.

Arthur turned away his glance.

A quarrel on the field would serve no purpose, and would only make Loamshire look ridiculous in the eyes of their opponents.

The ball was tossed back to Fortescue.

Blaker, who breathed freely again, for he had fully expected to see himself given out for an easy catch, took middle.

Down came the ball.

Naturally enough, Blaker sent it in the direction of the fieldsman who had shown his incapacity to stop the ball.

Away went the round red ball, and the batsmen ran, and ran again! And again and again! And what was Lagden doing?

He was running after the ball, certainly, to save appearances; but surely never had a fieldsman run at such a snail's pace before.

He ought to have overtaken the ball and returned it in half a minute, but, as it was, the ball after he was gathered in and returned to the bowler by extra cover-point, who was a good deal further from it than Lagden at the start.

Geoffrey Lagden came back to his place, a wicked smile on his lips.

Seymour and Blaker had scored 4 runs, and were safe at their respective wickets again.

Kit Valance exchanged an involuntary glance with Arthur Lovell.

To the young Loamshire bowler, if to no one else, it was plain enough that Lagden was allowing his spite to get the better of his loyalty, and that he was no longer to be depended upon to play up for his side.

Arthur Lovell was very pale.

Even from Geoffrey Lagden he had never expected anything like this.

It was not easy to decide what to do, and there was little time to think. The Kentish batsmen were keeping things going merrily.

Crash!

Blaker's wicket was down now, his individual total being 5, an extremely small score for such a player. A ball from Kit Valance had scattered his stumps.

C. H. B. Marsham, the captain of Kent, came on in his place—last man in.

Seymour was still batting strongly, and seemed likely to continue so to do as long as the Kentish captain backed him up at the other end of the pitch.

Fortescue was bowling to Seymour now.

Click! It was a mis-stroke for once from Seymour.

The ball went on its journey, and Arthur Lovell saw his chance from point.

He ran towards cover-point, his eyes on the ball, his hand outstretched.

Geoffrey Lagden's eyes gleamed.

He darted forward as if to make an attempt to catch the ball, seemingly anxious to make up for his former remissness.

He had calculated well.

His hand in the air struck against Arthur Lovell's, and the ball, uncaught by either fieldsman, dropped to the turf.

The catch had been missed!

A laugh came from some of the spectators, who deemed that the loss of the easy catch was due to over-zealousness on the part of cover-point.

But the Loamshire captain knew better.

The glitter in Lagden's eyes, the sneering smile curling his lips, told him as plainly as he could wish to know that the action had been intentional.

Arthur panted.

His patience, long and sorely tried, gave way at last.

His hand rose to point to the pavilion.

"Lagden, get off the field!"

Geoffrey Lagden started.

He looked into Arthur's white, enraged face, and his glance quailed.

He realised that he had gone too far at last—that he had piled provocation on provocation, till at last he had provoked resistance.

"Get off the field!"

The words rang loudly out.

The cricketers stood amazed, Loamshire men and Kentish batsmen staring dumbfounded at Lovell and Lagden.

There was a hum round the ground, a general exclaiming in the pavilion.

Arthur Lovell heeded nothing.

His eyes were fixed upon Lagden, his hand still pointed unwaveringly to the pavilion.

"Geoffrey Lagden, I order you off the field. Go!"

(Another splendid long instalment of this popular story of county cricket will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment. Our great new football scheme, detailed in this issue, will interest you.)

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. 3d.—payable in advance by British stamps. Postal Orders or Money Orders to be sent to the Publisher, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

OUR FOOTBALL PROGRAMME.

IT seems early days yet to begin talking about football, yet very soon we shall have the football season upon us once again, and the big clubs will commence their fight for League and Cup with renewed vigour. For this reason I want to give my friends some idea of what THE BOYS' REALM is going to do in the matter of our national winter pastime during the coming months. On another page will be found a comprehensive announcement giving details of our football league. If my friends will carefully read it through, they will see that I am going to do great things this year, and am prepared to present a very large number of silver cups to genuine football leagues and competitions quite free of charge. Solid silver medals and hundreds of first-class match footballs will also be given away. Every footballer should call the attention of the secretary and other officials of his club to our great football programme. Application for cups and for entry to the various branches of our league should be made at once on the forms provided.

It will be seen that there are two cups to be put up for competition in London. I am dividing the metropolis into two sections, and the champions of each section will have to play each other at the close of the season. I think there will be considerable excitement caused in connection with this branch of our league during the coming months. Then there is a special competition for clubs in the South of England, and another for clubs in the North of England. Clubs in Scotland and Ireland, too, have each a cup for which they may compete for.

All these branches of our league are quite distinct from one another, and special trophies are being prepared for the champions of each.

But, because I am devoting so much attention to our football league this season, it must not be supposed that I am going in any way to neglect the fictional side of our paper. I am even now making arrangements for no less than four new serials to start very shortly. The first of these will be a new tale of Blaptonschool, by Mr. John Finnemore, the opening chapters of which I hope to present to my readers in three weeks' time. The next new story, which will commence in our journal shortly, will be Mr. Hardy's great new football yarn, which he is even now hard at work on. As I told my friends last week, Mr. Hardy is doing all he can to make this new football tale the very best story he has ever written—and that is saying a lot.

I will not reveal just now the topic with which the other new stories, which will start in our paper shortly, will deal; but I can assure my friends that they will be really clinking yarns, and will more than sustain the name which our paper has gained for itself in the matter of enthralling stories of sport and adventure.

I shall not fail to keep my friends well supplied with complete football and other sporting tales during the coming winter. All my star authors are being pressed into service, and I feel certain that never before will so fine an array of talent have been found in our pages at one time, as will be the case when we are fairly launched on our winter's campaign. Football articles by famous internationals will be a most important feature of our paper during the football season.

I want to remind my friends that all these good things I am providing for them are going to cost a very great deal, and that it means a tremendous amount of hard work on the part of myself and my loyal staff of editors and authors and artists to fulfil the promises I have made. That they will be fulfilled I need not assure my readers, for they know that I am a man of my word. But I want my chums to do me the favour of letting all their friends who do not at present read THE BOYS' REALM know what an amazing and unprecedented programme I am preparing for their delectation during the coming months. Better still, let them have your copy of THE BOYS' REALM when you have finished with it, together with a word or two of commendation of the stories contained therein. Tell them that they are missing a really good treat by not reading THE BOYS' REALM, and make them understand that although the price of our paper is only one penny, its contents are worth quite a shilling, if not more. By doing this, you will help me to increase the circulation of our paper, and then I shall be able to give you still better stories and better articles, better pictures, better everything.

Every reader of this paper should make a special point of carefully perusing my Chat week by week, as very important announcements will be made therein from time to time. Believe me, my friends, THE BOYS' REALM is going to forge ahead during the coming months.



Tinker, still holding Pedro's head tightly, started forward and dealt the young brute a neat drive on the jaw that sent him reeling headlong against the barrow. *(An exciting incident in the grand new Sexton Blake serial starting in next week's "Boys' Herald.")*

The South African Cricketers.

I SUPPOSE all my cricketing friends are aware that on Monday, August 19th, there will be played a great test match between the South African team now in this country and a representative team of our own. I think it only right that our paper should celebrate this event in a right royal manner, and I am therefore arranging for the issue of our paper which appears in a fortnight's time to be a special test match number. In it will be found a magnificent complete test-match story from the pen of Mr. Jack North, and a number of particularly fine articles concerning the South African cricketers, and the record they have put up since they landed on these shores.

Meanwhile, let me tell my friends that next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM will contain two fine long, complete stories. The first will be from the pen of Mr. A. S. Hardy, and will be entitled "The Treloar Challenge Shield." It will deal with the fortunes of two rival cycling clubs. The other complete yarn will be a cricket story by Mr. Jack North, and will be entitled "Billy Rodwell, County Colt."

A Toothache Cure.

JACK CURZON, a reader residing at Chelmsford, has sent me a most interesting letter, in which he tells me how much he enjoys reading THE REALM, and especially "King Cricket."

However, the chief point of my reader's letter is that he suffers very badly from toothache, and he wants me to give him a cure.

My reader does not say what his toothache arises from, but I presume it is because his teeth are decayed, and the only cure possible is a visit to the dentist's to have his teeth stopped and properly treated, or else have the bad ones out.

At most hospitals there is a certain day on which a dental surgeon is in attendance, and if my reader goes on this day he will be able to have his teeth properly attended to at very little cost to himself.

If there is one thing which is more neglected than any other I think it is the teeth, and yet our teeth exercise a far greater influence, for good or evil, on our health than most people imagine.

Good teeth mean that the food may be properly masticated and passed into the stomach in a fit condition to be digested. If one has bad teeth, the stomach has to do a double dose of work, and in the course of time is bound to get deranged, with the result that ill-health follows; so my advice to all boys is to keep an eye on their teeth and not let them get into a bad state.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

Daily Mail.

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

On another page will be found particulars of our Great Football League, season 1907-8. It is very difficult in the small space at our disposal to thoroughly explain the workings of so complex an organisation, but any young footballer who does not understand exactly what he has to do should write to the Secretary, BOYS' REALM Football League, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C., enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, and stating what his difficulty is, when full explanations will be given him.

We shall also try and make everything quite clear in this corner week by week.

Beginning with our London League (see section 1), perhaps the following explanation will make any knotty points clear to those clubs thinking of entering. Any club whose members' average age does not exceed eighteen may enter this league, provided its headquarters are situate in what is known as Greater London. We shall in the course of a week or so give a map of Greater London showing its boundaries. Clubs within the prescribed area are eligible for our London League, those outside must enter the Southern League. Our London League will be split up into two divisions—Division 1, North of the Thames; Division 2, South of the Thames. These two divisions will again be divided into sub-divisions (senior and junior). The average age of the junior teams must not exceed fifteen years, and the average age of the seniors must not exceed eighteen. At the close of the season, the champion junior teams of the North and South will be required to play each other on some ground selected by the president of THE BOYS' REALM Football League, and the Cup will be presented to the winners of this match, whilst the members of the beaten team will be awarded silver medals.

The same applies to the senior champions for North and South. These will be required to play each other, and the Cup will go to the champions, the members of the other team in the final being awarded silver medals.

The ground on which these matches will be played, will be hired by THE BOYS' REALM, and the travelling fees of the clubs taking part will be refunded them, but no expense will be incurred so far as the clubs are concerned.

FIXTURE LISTS.

Secretaries of clubs entering any one of our leagues are required to send in a list of their fixtures for the season, but if this is not quite ready there is no particular hurry for a week or so. Application for addresses, however, should be made now. In sending in the fixture list, it is very important that the full name and address of the secretary of each club which will be played during the season be enclosed.

Next week we shall explain the workings of the Northern and Southern Football Leagues.

OUR CRICKET LEAGUE.

We are glad to note that the interest in our cricket league is still as great as ever, and that the clubs competing in Section 2 for our trophies are working hard week by week, so that they may keep well up in the table. Next week we shall again publish a list of the top clubs in the junior and senior divisions. Meanwhile we have much pleasure in announcing that the following clubs have been awarded cricket bats for the best performances on Saturday July 6th:

SECTION 1.

DUNDEE AND DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE.
BELMONT C.C.—Secretary of League, Mr. J. A. Reid, 12, Bellefield Avenue, Dundee.

ST. CLARE CUP CRICKET LEAGUE.
NEW C.C.—Secretary of League, Mr. G. Such, 31, Kempshead Road, Camberwell, S.E.

SWINTON AND DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE.
UPPER HAUGH C.C.—Secretary, Mr. J. Carr, 2, Green Piece Cottage, Upper Haugh.

SOUTH LONDON AUXILIARY SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION CRICKET LEAGUE.
COLLINGWOOD MISSION C.C.—Secretary of League, W. S. Coombes, 5, Portland Place, Clapham Road, S.W.

NORTH LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT AMATEUR CRICKET LEAGUE.
YORK C.C.—Secretary, J. Thorne, 124, Makin Street, Walton.

SOUTH LONDON CHURCH OF ENGLAND CRICKET LEAGUE.
ST. PAUL'S C.C.—Secretary, T. C. Vile, 85, Brewery Road, Plumstead.

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT NONCONFORMIST CRICKET LEAGUE.
WESLEY HALL C.C.—Secretary, W. Ranken, 12, Hazeldene Terrace, Pallion, Sunderland.

BLACKBURN AND DISTRICT SUNDAY SCHOOL CRICKET LEAGUE.
LITTLE HARWOOD WESLEYAN C.C.—Secretary, S. Johnston, 22, Warrington Street, Blackburn.

LITTLE DARWEN ST. JAMES C.C.—Secretary, H. Dowrick, 21, Hope Brow, Lower Darwen.

IRON BRIDGE CRICKET ASSOCIATION.
JACKFIELD C.C.—Secretary, G. Roe, Jackfield, Salop.

HANLEY AND DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE.
CLOUGH HALL C.C.—Secretary, H. Huges, 18, Nelson Buildings, Kidsgrove, Staffs.

SENIOR DIVISION.
ST. JUDE C.C.—Secretary, W. Hooke, 39, Oswin Street, St. George's Road, Southwark.

JUNIOR DIVISION.
KENTISH TOWN OLD BOYS C.C.—Secretary, H. L. Reynolds, 75, Delfour Road, West Ealing.

PORTRAIT NO. I.
LIST OF WINNERS IN THIS COMPETITION.

The following readers have been awarded the sum of five shillings under the conditions laid down in connection with our first portrait contest: W. E. Brown, 21, St. Clement's Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy; T. Elson, 1, Twiford Terrace, Mount Bridge, Boston, Lincs.; R. Shallcross, 136, Medlock Road, Woodhouses, Ashton-under-Lyne; A. Hill, 8, Williamson Street, Holderness Road, Hull; L. Roberts, 97, St. Peg Lane, Cleckheaton, Yorks.; W. Mellor, 18, St. Thomas' Place, Wellington Road, Stockport.

The readers whose portraits were published are members of the following clubs:

No. 1—All Hallows F.C.
No. 2—Boston All Saints F.C.
No. 3—Woodhouses F.C.
No. 4—East Hull Albions F.C.
No. 5—St. John's F.C.
No. 6—Springfield F.C.

Register Your Football Club To-day! (See page 168.)

Off Duty Yarns.



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

THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SADDOO'S GRANDFATHER.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

At the Canteen—Queer Tales—Ginger Resents an Insult.

IT happened up at the hill-station of Jeeling, where there are a few bungalows for civil-service sahibs, some huts for the native servants, and a fine camping-ground; where also, if a man is anything of a sportsman, he can slaughter jungle-fowl, shoot panthers and wolves, and bag an occasional tiger. The Sloggers had gone to the camp of exercise at Jeeling, and among those who were lounging that afternoon in the canteen, where the story proper begins, were our heroes, Dannie and Ginger.

Among others there was Tranter, of the Fusiliers, who had once been in the Secret Service, though he never admitted it. It was said of him that he knew more of the under-world than most men know of their own parents, and that he had often been over the border into the Land of Strange Things, which are never spoken of aloud: for India is full of mystery, as it always will be, and if Tranter chose to tell half that he knew—

But those are other stories, which may be told some day. To return to the canteen, the talk at first had been of big-game shooting, and then, a question of sword having roused Tranter from his usual lethargy, he had turned the conversation on to one of the most curious of the many superstitions that are prevalent among the natives—namely, that of transmigration, which means, in other words, the belief that the spirit of the dead often passes into the body of some animal, and there leads another life, which fact is frequently made known to the sorrowing relatives of the deceased person.

"Ah, tommy rot! It's what I call it!" said Ginger, when he had listened to several tales bearing on the subject.

"Shut up!" murmured Dannie. "You think you know everything!"

Tranter, who was in one of his loquacious moods, ignored the interruption.

"I once knew a syce down at Lucknow," he continued, "who slept every night in the stall of a battery elephant, because he was under the impression that the beast was his brother. I dare say they are still sleeping together. But the most curious case I can recall was that of a Pathan, up beyond the Indus, who firmly believed that the spirit of his sister had transmigrated to the body of a tiger. The man was a mountaineer, and he frequently saw the tiger prowling about his hut. He used to talk to it, from behind a closed door, and one day, meeting the animal in the forest, he went boldly up to it, and called it by his sister's name, and tried to stroke its head. But he never tried that again."

"Why not?" asked Ginger. "Wot 'appened?"

"The tiger ate him," replied Tranter, with a grim smile.

"It would 'ave been a queer sort of a tiger if 'e 'adn't. Got any more yarns like that, Tranter? They 'elp to pass the time away."

"I know one that can beat the tiger story, come to think of it," said Pottle Stubbs. "You can believe me or not, but when I was stationed down at Poona a matter of twelve years ago, and was sent with a letter to Government House, I'll be jiggered if I didn't see a native sentry salutin' a tabby cat, just as if it was his superior orficer. I was struck all of a heap at first, and when I inquired about it, this was the tale what they told me. It seems that back in 1858, Sir Robert Grant, the Governor of Bombay, died at Government House, and that evening, when he hadn't been dead more than a couple of minutes, the sepoy sentry on guard seen a cat come out of the house, and walk up and down a path what the Governor was always fond of walking along. The sepoy told his pals, and they went and put the matter before a holy man, who explained to them that the soul of the Governor had gone into the body of the cat, which must, therefore, be treated with such military honours as was due to his excellency. But the sepoy couldn't identify the cat again, so from that time on, to make sure, the sentries at Government House have been in the habit of salutin' every blessed cat that passes in or out."

"You ought to be a writer of fiction," said Dannie.

"How many drinks have you had, Pottle?"

"Stubbs is quite right," Tranter put in gravely. "I was at Poona six months ago, and the native sentries at Government House are still saluting cats, on the chance that one of them may be the reincarnation of Sir Robert Grant."

There was a moment of silence, while Ginger looked sadly into his empty pewter.

"It's a queer country, is India," he said. "I've seen a lot of queer things myself, though I've never 'ad any knowledge of this transmigrashun business. Of course, the natives believe in it—they swallow anything—but it stands to reason that the whole thing is nonsense. Fancy the spirit of a 'uman being passing into the body of an animal! It's all rot! Wot do you think, Tranter?"

The Secret Service man shrugged his shoulders and glanced coldly at the Slogger, whom he regarded with contempt.

"If you had been where I've been, and had seen half the things that I've seen," he answered, "you would believe more than would be wise for any man. I might tell you the tale of the Jogs Sect and the Red Bull of Bikanir. No; I wouldn't tell that to anybody."

Tranter had lapsed into one of his silent moods, from which it was dangerous to rouse him. His eyes were full of mystery, and presently, without another word, he left the canteen.

"Always leaves a bad taste in my mouth, that chap does," remarked Pottle Stubbs.

"He knows a lot," said Toddy Binks. "That reminds me, Ginger, to ask whether any of your relatives happened to die in India?"

"They did not, as it 'appens. Wot put such a fool question into your 'ead, Toddy?"

"Nothing much; only it occurred to me, after what Tranter said, that I seen somebody the other day what looked exactly like you, and it just struck me that it might be one of them cases of transmigrashun——"

"Who was 'e?" Ginger demanded, in an ominous tone.

"He was a big ape, with reddish hair, and freckles on his nose. I seen him in the jungle, over by the water-pool, and I says to him, says I: 'Ginger, old man, what are you doin' up a tree? Come out of it!' At that he used some bad language, same as you do, but when I seen his tail wag, I knew he couldn't be——"

The sentence ended in a yell, and there were roars of laughter, mingled with whoops of rage, as Ginger sailed into his tormentor with clenched fist.

"Call me a monkey, will you?" he howled. "Thought one of my relatives 'ad turned into an ape, did you? Wait till I get through with you! I'll give you transmigrashun, you scut!"

It did not take long. In about ten seconds Toddy Binks had a black eye and a bleeding nose, and a moment later Ginger was striding across the camp with Dannie at his heels.

"I feel better now," he said. "I ain't the sort of man to be insulted with impunity, not me! Come along, my son. We'll borrow that fowling-piece from the major's syce, and 'ave a go at the jungle-fowl!"

— —

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Voice in the Forest—The Grey Wolf—Ginger Has a Plan.

IT was dark and cool and pleasant in the forest that surrounded the station, and Ginger's injured feelings were gradually soothed, his resentment was forgotten, as he pushed through the leafy solitude with Dannie by his side, and the borrowed gun on his shoulder. There was no sport to be had, however. For an hour the two Sloggers wandered about, not seeing so much as a feather, and then, as they were thinking of retracing their steps, the lad suddenly held up a warning hand.

"Hark! What's that?" he whispered.

It was a voice speaking in the native tongue, not far off. "Come, Pulkee, come," it was saying. "Fear not, but come to thy affectionate grandson." The invitation was repeated, but there was no answer.

"I thought at first it was a wild pig grunting," said Dannie, in a tone of disappointment. "It's some 'Indoo talking," replied Ginger. "We'd better ask 'im the way back, for I ain't sure I know it."

They still heard the voice as they went on, treading lightly, and when they emerged on an open glade, within a few yards, they saw a curious sight. At one side of the glade a big grey wolf was squatted on its haunches, and on the other side, stretching his hands appealingly towards the animal, stood a middle-aged native.

"It's Saddoo, the grass-cutter," muttered the lad. "What can he be doing?"

Ginger had thrown the fowling-piece to his shoulder; but before he could fire at the wolf, or even take aim, the native ran to him, seized the barrel of the weapon, and pulled it aside.

"Spare him, sahib, spare him!" he begged.

The savage animal had promptly turned and bounded into the forest, with a dismal howl, and the native would have sped after it had not Ginger grabbed him by the arm.

"See wot you've done, you 'eathen!" he cried angrily. "You've made me lose 'im!"

Tears crept into the eyes of Saddoo, the grass-cutter, who dwelt half a mile from the station, in a clearing in the jungle. For a moment he tried to break away.

"You would have shot my grandfather!" he wailed. "And now, alas, you have frightened him!"

"Frightened your wot?" exclaimed the puzzled Slogger.

"My grandfather, sahib. He may go far off, and never come back. Alas, what a misfortune!"

"Look 'ere, talk sense!" bade Ginger. "Gone dotty, ain't you? I didn't see no grandfather. All I seen was a big wolf wot would 'ave jumped at you in two more ticks."

"That was him, sahib," declared the Hindoo.



Ginger had thrown the fowling-piece to his shoulder; but before he could fire at the wolf the native ran to him, seized the barrel of the weapon and pulled it aside. "Spare him, sahib, spare him!" he begged.

"Ay, ay, it is true! Listen, and you shall hear. Five days ago my grandfather, Pulkee, died of old age, and at the time when his spirit passed, from the window of my hut I saw a great wolf trotting towards the forest. He looked back very mournfully, before he disappeared. And that was my grandfather, sahib. His spirit had passed from his body into that of the wolf."

"Well, I'll be blowed!" said Ginger, scratching his head. "Do you know wot this is, Dannie? It's one of them cases of transmigrashun, wot Tranter was tellin' us of. You're a silly fool," he added, to the native. "You ought to know that such things can't be. You trot off 'ome, and don't think no more about it."

"But the sahib does not understand," replied Saddoo. "I know well that the spirit of my departed grandfather is in the wolf, for every evening after sunset he has come to my hut, and has taken away the food that I put there for him. And he is very tame, sahib, as you must have seen. He crept out of the forest while I was cutting grass, and he would have come to me if you had not frightened him away."

"I would 'ave made a jolly good meal off you, that's wot 'e would 'ave done," vowed Ginger. "That wolf is no more your grandfather than I am."

But Saddoo was not to be convinced that he was wrong, though Ginger argued with him for a time. His faith could not be shaken—the superstition was too deep-rooted for that—and he presently went off in great sorrow, after telling the Sloggers what direction to take.

"I don't know what to believe," Dannie said uneasily. "I wonder if there could have been anything in those yarns of Tranter's? Rather queer, ain't it, that the wolf should come to the hut for food every evening?"

"If it does come, which I ain't denying," replied Ginger, "I want to know something more about this 'ere transmigrashun business. We'll pay a visit to the 'Indoo to-morrow, my son, and meanwhile we'll keep quiet about wot we've learned. The boys would only laugh at us if we told 'em the tale."

It rained at Jeeling the next day, however, and on the following day the Viceroy arrived unexpectedly, which meant a general inspection and a lot of extra work. Thus the better part of a week passed before our two chums, finding themselves free one morning after early parade, went off with no little curiosity to the hut of the grass-cutter. Saddoo was at breakfast, such as it was, with his wife Yana. The faces of both looked pinched, and there was only a handful of rice on the table.

"'Ow about your deceased grandfather?" asked Ginger.

"Are you still feeding him?" inquired the lad.

"He still comes every evening, when the sun has set," replied Saddoo. "You did not frighten him away, sahibs, as I feared."

"E 'as been eating you out of 'ouse and 'ome, I can see that," declared Ginger. "You look like a couple of skeletons. See 'ere, this won't do. You'll be starved to death if you keep it up."

"Can I refuse to feed the spirit of my grandfather?" murmured the Hindoo. "No, sahib, no. The gods would be angry with me. It has been a heavy burden upon us, it is true; but there will be an end of it now. When the wolf came last evening, he spoke to me——"

"Spoke to you?" gasped Dannie.

"Ay, sahib, it was even so. He spoke with the voice of Pulkee my grandfather."

The two chums exchanged swift, meaning glances. The truth had flashed upon them, and they saw a chance of some sport ahead.

"First time I ever 'eard of a wolf wot could talk," said Ginger. "And wot did the spirit of your grandfather say?"

"He asked for the gold bangle that my wife Yana wears on her ankle," replied Saddoo. "He told me that on the next evening, which will be to-night, I must put the bangle behind the bush yonder, in the middle of the path where I have been placing the food."

"What does he want with that?" inquired Dannie. "He can't eat it."

"He wishes to take it to a holy man," answered the Hindoo, "who will then change his spirit from the body of the wolf into that of a bird, so that he can fly away into the forest, and thus find plenty of food without troubling us to provide for him."

"Which will be a jolly good thing for you and your wife," said Ginger, winking at the lad.

"It will, sahib. Pulkee always had a large appetite."

"I'd like to see your grandfather again, before 'e changes into a bird and does a bunk for good and all," continued Ginger. "Wot do you say to it? Couldn't you manage to let us 'ave a peep at the wolf to-morrow, when 'e comes after that gold bracelet?"

"I dare not," replied Saddoo, shaking his head. "Spirits are very timid, and he might not come if he knew that you were here."

"E won't know anything about it. We'll see to that all right. Look 'ere, I don't mind givin' you a couple of rupees."

"And you won't harm my grandfather?"

"'Arm your grandfather? No fear!"

Saddoo still hesitated, and then, as the coins were pressed into his hand, his scruples melted away. It was pitiful to see his wan face brighten as he glanced at his wife, who shared his joy; for the money meant food to them, and both needed it badly.

"That settles it, then," said Ginger, in a husky voice. "And now you be off to your

OFF DUTY YARNS.

(Continued from the previous page.)

work, and tell your wife to spend them rupees, so she'll 'ave a jolly good feed ready for you when you're done cutting grass. Me and my chum will be along this evening, before it's time for the spirit of your grandfather to come."

"What are you going to do?" asked Dannie, as he left the hut.

"I'll show you, my son," replied Ginger, "before I get through with that wolf, 'e'll jolly well wish 'e could turn 'imself into a bird."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

The Night Watch—The Coming of Saddoo's Grandfather—The Two Wolves.

THE day seemed a long one to the two Sloggers, and when they set off that evening, having obtained leave of absence, Ginger had concealed in his pocket an old-fashioned pistol, of the type known as a popper-box, that he had borrowed from the same individual who had loaned him the gun.

"It's a rum old thing!" said Dannie, who was allowed to examine the weapon as he went along. "Will it shoot?"

"I'll shoot the way I want it to," replied Ginger, with a chuckle. "It's charged with fine shot, and if I was to try it on you at twenty paces, with your back turned, you'd be standin' up in mess instead of sittin' down!"

"I understand," said the lad; and he did. "But that fowling-piece would have done better," he added.

"It wouldn't 'ave done at all, my son! The game would be spoilt if I was to turn up with a firearm not could be seen. Saddoo would think I meant to shoot 'is grandfather."

Avoiding the path from the station, they kept under cover until they were close in the rear of the grass-cutter's humble dwelling, into which they glided swiftly and furtively, as if they were afraid of being seen from without. The sun had just dipped below the horizon, and Saddoo and his wife were finishing supper. Their faces glowed with happiness, for with the five rupees they had purchased a plentiful supply of rice and meat, and they were quite willing to part with the gold bangle, since they fully believed that the sacrifice would rid them of the spirit of old Pulkeo, and that they would no longer have to satisfy his voracious appetite.

"Well, 'ere we are!" said Ginger. "'Ave you put the bracelet out yet?"

"Not yet," answered the Hindoo, observing with relief that the sahibs carried no firearms. "I will do so shortly. I have taken your money, and I cannot break my word," he added. "But you must be very quiet, for I would not have the spirit know that you are here!"

"Don't you worry about that," Ginger assured him. "Ow soon is your grandfather likely to come?"

"He will be earlier to-night," was the reply.

"Did 'e tell you that?"

"He did, sahib."

"Earlier than usual?" inquired Dannie, with a vague suspicion in his mind. "Why is that? Did the wolf come only once last night?" he continued shrewdly.

"He was here twice," replied Saddoo. "He came first just when it was dark, and ate the food that was set out for him. Then he went away, and after a time he came back to speak of my wife's bangle."

"You didn't tell us that before," said the lad.

"You did not ask me, sahib."

This was disturbing news to the Sloggers, by reason of what it suggested, and they felt superstitious fears rising within them.

"Do—do you suppose there can be two wolves?" Dannie whispered to his chum.

"Glory be, I 'ope not!" muttered Ginger. "But it ain't likely. No; there's only the one."

They wanted to believe that, you may be sure, but they could not get rid of the fear that there might indeed have been two wolves, which would have been a difficult thing to explain. The sunset glow was now fading. There was a cleared space in front of the grass-cutter's abode, and across this a path led to the edge of the forest. At one side of the path, and about ten yards from the doorway, was a clump of bushes. At the farther side of these the woman Yana placed the gold bracelet and a wooden bowl filled with rice and chupatties, and when she had returned to the hut and closed the door, the little party of four began their vigil, huddled together near the open window. Saddoo and his wife were uneasy, and the soldiers shared their restlessness.

"We won't 'ave to wait long," said Ginger.

The minutes dragged slowly by. The dusk twilight came and faded, but not a sound was heard, except the far-off cry of a panther and the bark of a jackal. The purple darkness of the night fell, and there was another interval of hushed silence. But now the moon was rising, and as it crept above the tree-tops, casting a silvery glow, a twig suddenly snapped.

"He comes, sahibs," whispered the Hindoo—"the spirit of my grandfather comes!"

"There he is!" said Dannie, in a low, excited voice. "Look, Ginger!"

Something big and black had broken cover at the edge of the jungle, and as it approached it was seen to be a huge wolf. It came straight on, with a clumsy, shuffling gait, until it reached the clump of bushes, which partly concealed it.

"He's eating," murmured Dannie.

"Shut up, you ijut!" breathed Ginger.

"Hush, sahibs—hush!" entreated Saddoo.

When a few seconds had passed the wolf reappeared, holding something bright in its jaws. It had turned around, and was moving back towards the forest, but before it had gone more than a couple of yards Ginger whipped the antique pistol from his pocket, took a keen aim, and pulled the trigger. Crash! went the weapon, and with a piercing yell the animal reared up, danced about in agony, and then flopped to the ground.

"You've bagged him!" said Dannie.

"Alas—alas, you have killed my grandfather!" shrieked the Hindoo.

"I've shot a blessed thief, that's wot I've done!" exclaimed Ginger.

Saddoo and his wife were wailing loudly, beating their breasts in frantic horror. Ginger sprang to the door, and as he ran out into the night, followed by the others, the wolf jumped upon its hind-feet and bounded away. It sped on until it was close to the borders of the jungle, and then, to the astonishment of all, it was attacked by another wolf that leapt out from the thickets.

"Two of them!" gasped Ginger. "Don't I wish I 'ad a gun 'ere!"

The two animals were rolling over and over in the grass, fighting savagely. For a few seconds there was a tumult of snarls and yelps, mingled with appeals for help in Hindustani, and then, as the Sloggers drew near the spot, the second wolf plunged into the forest and vanished. And now, as the other animal scrambled to its feet, it shed its shaggy wolf-skin, and appeared as the figure of a man.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Dannie. "I knew it!"

"It is Namgay, the old shikari!" cried the enraged Hindoo, as he seized the impostor. "Pig of a thief! Son of a burnt father! It was you who have been robbing us!"

"Beat him," urged Yana—"beat him, Saddoo!"

And Saddoo did, raving in his passion. He kicked his prisoner and shook and hammered him, until he was out of breath; and then, having vainly begged for mercy, Namgay broke away and limped into the jungle, where he was lost to sight.

"Let 'im go!" bade Ginger. "'E's been punished enough, wot with the clawing 'e got and the way you thumped 'im. And, wot's more, I've put as many shot into 'is 'indquarters as the lid of a popper-pot 'as 'oles in it!"

"Here's your bangle!" said the lad, handing it to Yana. "The thief dropped it."

"And there's a wolf-skin for you!" said Ginger. "It'll keep you and your wife warm at nights in the cool season, Saddoo. As for the real wolf, it ain't likely you'll ever see him again. Come along, Dannie," he added; "we've 'ad all the fun we wanted!"

* * * * *

On the following evening, in the regimental canteen, the two Sloggers told the whole story to a crowd of Tommies. It happened that Tranter was present, and he listened closely to the narrative.

"This is very interesting," he said. "And which of the two wolves had been taking the food?"

"It must 'ave been the real one," admitted Ginger. "I 'ad a talk with old Namgay to-day, and 'e swears that 'e never touched a bite. 'E 'eard about the wolf comin' after the grub wot Saddoo 'ad been puttin' out for it, and that's wot made 'im 'ead to play the game and steal the bracelet."

"There you are!" said Tranter. "And now tell me why the wolf came after the food? Did it come before the death of old Pulkeo?"

"No; it didn't."

"Then why did it come afterwards?"

"That's wot puzzles me."

"Was it because the spirit of Saddoo's grandfather was in the body of the wolf?" asked Tranter.

"I don't see wot else it could 'ave been," replied Ginger, scratching his head. "I can't 'elp feeling that there must be something in this transmigrashun business."

The others thought the same, and they think so to this day. Nor will the truth ever be known, for India is the land of eternal mystery.

THE END.

(Two splendid long, complete tales will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM. Do not miss your copy! Order it to-day!)



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

BY POPULAR

MAXWELL SCOTT.

No 4

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**, **BUSSELL**, **ARKLE**, pupils at St. Ninian's School. } Nelson Lee's wards.

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 sides with him. Heinrich disguises himself as an old man, and stays with Fraulein Hoffman 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.

Fraulein Hoffmann is astonished beyond measure to meet her brother Karl, whom she thought to be captive in a German prison on a charge of treachery to his country. He also is in search of the gold locket, which contains a minute plan of a German treaty which he intends selling to the British Government.

He breaks into St. Ninian's the same night, and endeavours to steal the locket, but is prevented in the nick of time by the appearance of Nipper and Dick. Dr. Shuttleworth now places the locket in the school safe, which has a combination letter-lock, the key of which is only known to himself and his two assistant masters.

Mr. Trigg and Mr. Wimple, two humorous characters who are both deeply enamoured of Fraulein Hoffmann, are astounded to see her, whilst walking on the heath, rush up to a young man, and throwing her arms around his neck, embrace him.

(You must note week's instalment.)

The Great Reconciliation.

IT was the fraulein's brother, of course, whom that lady kissed, as the reader has doubtless guessed. After his escape from St. Ninian's, on Saturday night, he had deemed it wise to change his lodgings. Up to then he had lodged in the village, but on Monday morning he had shifted his quarters to the neighbouring hamlet of Hampton Wingrave; and on Tuesday he had written to his sister, asking her to meet him the following afternoon in this secluded ravine on Hampton Heath.

Mr. Trigg, of course, knew nothing of this. He did not even know that Fraulein Hoffmann had a brother, much less that he was in that neighbourhood. He thought he was witnessing a lovers' secret meeting. And so did Mr. Wimple, who, having followed Mr. Trigg, arrived at the edge of the ravine just in time to see Fraulein Hoffmann fling her arms around Karl's neck and kiss him!

"Did you see that?" demanded Mr. Trigg in tragic tones.

"I did!" said Mr. Wimple gloomily. "She—she kissed him!"

"Kissed him!" repeated Mr. Trigg. "Wimple, we have been grossly deceived!"

"We have been basely betrayed!" said Mr. Wimple.

"She has trifled with our affections!"

"She has played with our most sacred feeling!"

"She gave me to understand that she loved me."

"She led me to believe that she regarded me as something dearer than a friend."

"And all the time she was in love with somebody else!"

"With whom she was holding clandestine meetings on this lonely heath!"

"And this is the woman for whom we fought a sanguinary duel!"

"For whom we strove to shed each other's blood!"

"Wimple, we have been fools!"

"Trigg, we have been idiots!"

"To think that two such noble souls, linked together by a common calling, should have quarrelled over a worthless creature like this!"

"It was ridiculous!"

"It was a crime against humanity!"

As Mr. Trigg uttered those words, he flung his bonquet to the ground, and viciously stamped on it. Mr. Wimple followed suit. Then, moved by the same impulse, each man turned to the other, and held out his hand.

"From this moment our quarrel ends!" said Mr. Trigg.

"From this moment we are lifelong friends!" said Mr. Wimple.

For several seconds the two men stood wringing each other's hands; then once again they glanced down into the ravine.

Fraulein Hoffmann and her brother were pacing to and fro, with their arms round each other's waists.

"Bah! Let us away!" said Mr. Trigg disgustedly.

"Yes; let us away!" said Mr. Wimple. "Come with me to my rooms. I have a bottle of rare old whisky, in which we will drink confusion to perfidious womankind, and pledge our new-born comradeship!"

In gloomy silence the two men retraced their steps to the Hillfoot Road. Heinrich was standing at the cottage gate, smoking his pipe.

"Hallo! Didn't you find her?" he asked, addressing Mr. Trigg.

"We did!" said Mr. Trigg haughtily. "We found her—in the arms of her lover!"

"Her lover?" repeated Heinrich in a puzzled voice.

"She kissed him!" said Mr. Wimple.

"And we left them walking up and down the ravine with their arms around each other!" added Mr. Wimple. "You may well stare! Such perfidy is incredible! But at last our eyes are opened! We have done with her for ever!"

"We never wish to hear her name again!" said Mr. Trigg.

With which remark he linked his arm in that of Mr. Wimple, and they strode off in the direction of the village. Heinrich thoughtfully scratched his chin.

"A couple of idiots, I know," he mused. "But she has evidently met somebody on the heath. And she kissed him! Her brother escaped from prison last week. Is it possible—" He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and thrust it into his pocket. "I must investigate this!" he muttered; and he crossed the road, and passed through the gate which gave admittance to the heath.

How Mr. Trigg and Mr. Wimple Died Together.

ON reaching Mr. Wimple's rooms, which, as the reader may remember, were over Mr. Pye's confectionery shop, Mr. Wimple produced his bottle of "rare old whisky," a couple of tumblers, and a carafe of water. Having poured out a liberal dose of the whisky into each of the glasses, he filled up the tumblers with water, handed one to Mr. Trigg, and took the other himself.

"Here's long life and prosperity to our noble selves!" he said, raising his glass; "and confusion to all perfidious women!"

"Especially Germans!" said Mr. Trigg feelingly.

They clinked their glasses; then each man raised his tumbler to his lips, and took a drink. And then a strange thing happened. Mr. Wimple suddenly doubled up, and collapsed into the nearest chair, coughing and spluttering and gasping for breath.

Mr. Trigg hurriedly set down his glass, pressed both hands to the pit of his stomach, and staggered back with an expression of anguish on his face, that could hardly have been rivalled by one of the victims of the Spanish Inquisition.

"I am poisoned!" he moaned. "Poisoned by the man I trusted like a brother! This is a deed, and passedly dot—I mean a pout and fastardly dot—that is a foul and dastardly plot to lure me to my doom!"

"Vinegar!" groaned Mr. Wimple. "Vinegar! I remember now!"

A look of relief crossed Mr. Trigg's face.

"Vinegar!" he repeated. "What do you mean? I demand an explanation."

The explanation was soon given. Mr. Wimple had originally had two bottles of whisky. Having emptied one, he had used it as a receptacle for vinegar; and this was the bottle he had taken from the cupboard, instead of the one which contained whisky.

When Mr. Trigg had graciously accepted his host's apologies, the proper bottle was produced; and thereafter all was peace and harmony.

Now, neither Mr. Wimple nor Mr. Trigg was in the habit of drinking whisky, except in microscopical doses; and by the time they had finished their second glass, both of them were distinctly affected. In the case of some men,

ON SALE TO-DAY.

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too much whisky makes them merry; in the case of others it makes them quarrelsome. In the case of Mr. Wimple and Mr. Trigg it made them gloomy and tearful, not to say morbid.

"You might not think it, Wimple," said Mr. Trigg; "but I have a very tender heart, and that woman's perfidy has broken it. Perhaps you think I bear it very well, but you see before you, Wimple, a shattered, broken-hearted man! I shall never smile again!" He brushed a furtive tear from his eye. "Oh, Emma, Emma," he sighed, "why has thou treated thy devoted Montague thus? What have I to live for now?"

"You have me to live for!" murmured Mr. Wimple.

"You!" ejaculated Mr. Trigg, in accents of biting scorn. "You—a podgy, red-haired——"

"Podgy!" said Mr. Wimple, "Beware of endangering our friendship at this early stage of its existence! It is but young, and will not bear too great a strain! Take care lest you rouse the dormant lion!"

Mr. Trigg broke down, and dissolved into tears.

"Forgive me, Wimple!" he sobbed. "I'm not responsible for what I say! My heart is broken, and my reason shattered! I am not fit to live! I have no desire to live! And why should I live?" he exclaimed, staggering to his feet. "What is life without love? I ask you, Wimple; what is life without love?"

Mr. Wimple solemnly shook his head.

"I give it up," he said.

"What is a legless stocking without a foot?" demanded Mr. Trigg. "Nothing! Such is life without love! I cannot face it, Wimple! My mind is made up! My resolution is taken! I shall commit suicide!"

"And so shall I!" said Mr. Wimple.

"To-day I die!" said Mr. Trigg.

"So do I!" said Mr. Wimple.

"It is useless to try to turn me from my foll purpose!" said Mr. Trigg.

"I'm not trying!" protested Mr. Wimple.

"I am now going down to the beach," said Mr. Trigg, "and I am going to seek oblivion from my sufferings in a watery grave."

"And I'm coming with you," said Mr. Wimple. "We will die together!"

Many curious glances and a good deal of giggling greeted the two masters as, arm in arm, they left the house and marched down to the beach.

"Want a boat, gentlemen?" asked one of the fishermen, touching his sou'-wester.

Mr. Trigg waved him aside with a melodramatic gesture.

"For a voyage on which we are about to embark we need no boat!" he said, in tragic tones. "Away! Seek not to distract two desperate men who are about to commit an unpreadented act of tuneful immolation!"

The fisherman gasped; then he turned to his mate and tapped his forehead.

"Dotty!" he said. "quite dotty!"

"Drunk, if you ask me!" replied his mate. "Lawks a mussy, wot is the world up to now!"

Mr. Trigg had squatted down on the wet sand, a few feet beyond the reach of the waves.

"We had better take off our boots and stockings," he said.

"Certainly," said Mr. Wimple. "It is the usual thing, I believe."

Oblivious of the fact that a crowd was rapidly gathering on the beach, the two men solemnly removed their boots and stockings and rolled their trousers up above their knees. Then, holding each other's hand, they waded into the glistening surf.

"Into the valley of death!" said Mr. Trigg, shutting his eyes. "Courage, comrade! Falter not. The eyes of England are upon us!"

It was scarcely true that the eyes of England were upon them, but by this time the eyes of a large proportion of the inhabitants of Cleveden were certainly upon them.

"Hi! Come back, you lunatics! Pip, pip! Twig his legs! Fancy paddling at this time of the year! At their age, too! Mind the stop! Keep off the grass! You oughter be ashamed of yerselves! A nice example to yer schoolards! Come out o' that, yer silly fatheads!"

Such were a few of the shouts and comments of the ribald crowd on the beach. If Mr. Trigg and Mr. Wimple heard them, they paid no heed to them. Hand in hand, they waded out till the water was up to their knees. Then they faltered, and finally halted.

"It—it's very wet!" said Mr. Wimple.

"And very cold!" said Mr. Trigg, whose teeth were chattering.

"Death by drowning is a very unpleasant death," said Mr. Wimple.

"Extremely unpleasant!" said Mr. Trigg. "I wonder at you suggesting such a mad idea!"

"Me?" gasped Mr. Wimple. "I didn't suggest it. It was you!"

"Don't let us quarrel!" said Mr. Trigg.

"I don't want to quarrel," said Mr. Wimple. "But don't you think we'd better—or—return to dry land and discuss the matter more fully?"

"Your advice is sound," said Mr. Trigg. "A question of this kind should not be decided hastily. We have acted somewhat impulsively, I fear. Let us——"

The sentence ended in an ear-splitting yell.

"Ooh—ah—eh—oy!" yelled Mr. Trigg, drawing one foot out of the water and displaying an enormous crab clinging to his big toe. "Take it off, Wimple—take it off!" he cried.

"I—I daren't!" faltered Mr. Wimple, drawing back in terror.

"Keep away—keep away!" he shrieked, as Mr. Trigg hopped after him.

"Be a man!" howled Mr. Trigg. "If you call yourself my friend, seize this ferocious monster by the throat and force him to——"

He was going to say "to relax his grip"; but before he could complete the sentence he overbalanced himself and fell into Mr. Wimple's arms.

Unprepared for this, Mr. Wimple also lost his balance, and the next instant he was floundering on his back in the surf, with Mr. Trigg on the top of him; whilst the crab—annoyed, perhaps, by all this fuss—let go his hold of his victim's toe and waddled away.

When the spectators had recovered from their convulsions of hilarity, some of them waded into the sea and hauled the two masters ashore.

By that time the cold and wet had effectually sobered Mr. Wimple and Mr. Trigg, and, after distributing the contents of their pockets in the form of hush-money, they shamefacedly slunk away, and returned to their respective rooms.



Mr. JAMES FRANCIS, Treasurer of the Ebbw Vale and District Junior Cricket League.

The Secret Word.

As previously mentioned, Karl Hoffmann removed to Hampton Wingrave on Monday morning, and on Tuesday he wrote to his sister, asking her to meet him in the ravine on Hampton Heath on Wednesday afternoon.

How they met has already been described; and when Mr. Trigg and Mr. Wimple saw them walking up and down the ravine, with their arms round each other's waists, Karl was telling his sister the story of his adventure at St. Ninian's on the previous Saturday night.

"Heinrich told me all about it," she said, when he had concluded his tale, "and I guessed at once that you were the unknown burglar."

"Then Heinrich has heard of the affair?" he asked.

"Everybody in Cleveden has heard of it."

"Of course, Heinrich doesn't suspect who the burglar was?"

"No."

"Has he discovered where the locket is now?"

"Yes. You know the big dining-hall at St. Ninian's?"

"On the right-hand side of the quadrangle gate?"

"Yes. Well, there's a safe built into the wall, in which they keep the school plate and other valuables. The safe is fitted with a letter-lock, and the word that opens it is only known to the headmaster and Mr. Rant and Mr. Jerman. Heinrich has ascertained that the locket is now in that safe."

"What does he propose to do?"

"He can't do anything at present. He says I must continue my visits to the school, and try to discover the word that opens the safe."

"There's not much hope of your doing that."

"That's what I told him."

"All the same, it's our only chance. When are you going to St. Ninian's again?"

"Mrs. Shuttleworth, the headmaster's wife, has invited me to spend the afternoon with them next Wednesday—a week to-day."

"Have you accepted?"

"Yes."

"If by any chance you discover the secret word that opens the safe, you won't tell Heinrich?"

"Of course not."

"You'll write to me and tell me the word?"

"I will. But, as you say, there's not much hope of my discovering the word. Still, if I do, you may rest assured that I'll let you know at the earliest possible opportunity."

Half an hour later they parted, Fraulein Hoffmann returning to her cottage, and Karl returning to Hampton Wingrave; and neither of them had the remotest suspicion that Otto Heinrich had been watching them in the ravine for twenty minutes or more, and had recognised Karl as Fraulein Hoffmann's brother.

A week elapsed. Again it was Wednesday afternoon. Fraulein Hoffmann was sitting in Mrs. Shuttleworth's drawing-room at St. Ninian's. On a footstool at her feet sat little Mabel, the headmaster's youngest daughter.

"And is German writing different to English writing?" asked Mabel, continuing the conversation.

"Oh, yes!" said Fraulein Hoffmann.

"I'd like to see some German writing," said Mabel. "Will you write your name for me in German?"

"Mit der greatest pleasure!" said Fraulein Hoffmann, with a smile. "But vare shall I write it, little one?"

Mabel dived her hand into the pocket of her frock, and produced a red-backed notebook.

"Mabel," said her mother severely, "that's your father's! Where did you get it?"

"I found it on his study table this morning," said Mabel. "Daddy wouldn't mind me taking it, I know."

"He would mind very much, I'm sure!" said Mrs. Shuttleworth. "Give it to me at once!"

Mabel pouted, and showed signs of impending tears.

"I want Fraulein to write her name in it," she said.

"Very well," said her mother indulgently. "Fraulein may write her name in it, and then you must give it to me."

Mabel drew a pencil out of the back of the notebook, and handed it and the book to Fraulein Hoffmann.

"Now, write your name in German," she said.

Smiling at the child's eagerness, Fraulein Hoffmann opened the book at random. The page at which she opened was partly covered with writing. Half unconsciously she glanced at the writing, and this is what she read:

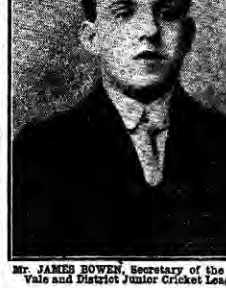
Key-word of safe.
Port
Bard
Dora
Wake
Dust."

"Port," "Bard," "Dora," "Wake" had a pencilled line drawn through them. The only word that was not crossed out was "Dust."

Fraulein Hoffmann, as the reader has doubtless discovered by now, had more than her share of womanly intuition. In a flash she grasped the meaning of this column of crossed-out words.

As Heinrich had told her, the word which opened the safe in which the locket now reposed was changed every week, and was only known to Dr. Shuttleworth and the two housemasters.

Evidently whenever the word was changed the doctor jotted it down in his notebook. "Port" had been the word which opened the safe at one time, "Bard" at another, "Dora" at another, "Wake" at another.



Mr. JAMES BOWEN, Secretary of the Ebbw Vale and District Junior Cricket League.

When the word had been changed, the doctor had crossed it out, and had written down the new word, and as "Dust" was the last word of the column, and had not been crossed out, it was evident that "Dust" was now the word that opened the safe.

Quivering with excitement, Fraulein Hoffmann quickly turned over the page, found a blank one, and wrote her name for Mabel's edification.

Whilst the child was scrutinising the unfamiliar characters, and asking Fraulein Hoffmann to spell them out for her, Dr. Shuttleworth entered the room.

He shook hands with Fraulein, and had chatted with her for several minutes before his eye alighted on the notebook in Mabel's hand.

"You little rascal!" he exclaimed, playfully pulling her ear. "Where did you get that?"

"I found it on your study table," said Mabel. "You don't mind, do you?"

"Well, I'll forgive you this time, but don't let it occur again," he said, with a laugh.

He took the notebook from the child, and slipped it into his waistcoat-pocket. But the mischief had then been done, and two hours later, in her cottage on the Hillfoot Road, Fraulein Hoffmann was scribbling a note to Karl, telling him that the word which opened the safe was "Dust."

The Raid on the Mechanics' Institute.

ALTHOUGH the Grammarians had patched up their feud with the Peterkinnites, it must not be supposed for a moment that they had included Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Boswell in the armistice. On the contrary, the Grammarians were as hostile as ever to the insolent chemist who had beaten their headmaster in the fight for the vacant seat on the County Council.

When, therefore, it came to the ears of Arnold and his three most intimate chums—Crosby, Fleming, and Sattershaw—that Mr. Boswell was about to give a complimentary tea to those who had worked for him at the election, the four Grammarians immediately laid their heads together with a view to devising some plan for spoiling the harmony of the proceedings.

The tea, it should be explained, was to be held—if that is the proper word—at five o'clock on a certain Wednesday afternoon; as a matter of fact, on the Wednesday afternoon on which Fraulein Hoffman paid her visit to Mrs. Shuttleworth, as described in our last chapter, and discovered the key-word of the safe.

Tea was to be served in the upper room of the Mechanics' Institute—the same room in which Dr. Stuart-Unwin and his supporters had held that never-to-be-forgotten meeting which Nipper and his chums had so effectually broken up. After tea there were to be speeches from Mr. Boswell, Sergeant Quiggin, and others; and the proceedings were to terminate with a concert.

After the four Grammarians had discussed many plans for upsetting these arrangements, Arnold was seized with a brilliant inspiration. In half a dozen excited sentences he explained his plan to the other three. It was certainly a most ingenious and daring plan, but, as Crosby hastened to point out, it was marred by one apparently fatal defect.

"That's all jolly fine," said Crosby, when Arnold had expounded his scheme. "I don't deny that we could do all you say, and I admit it'd be a holy score for us if it came off; but it doesn't seem to have occurred to you that we can't stop in the room for ever! How are we going to escape, when we've had our fling, without being collared and half murdered?"

"That's where the beauty of my plan comes in!" said Arnold. "There's a manhole in the ceiling—a kind of trapdoor, you know—which we can easily reach by planting one of the tables on the platform, and sticking a chair on it. I've done it, so I know what I'm talking about!"

"Well," said Crosby, "and when we've reached the manhole, what then?"

"The manhole leads into a sort of loft, underneath the slates," said Arnold. "I've been in it, and I know every inch of it. It extends all the way underneath the roof, from back to front, and from side to side."

"And we could hide in the loft till the coast was clear!" said Crosby. "If that's your idea——"

"But it isn't!" said Arnold. "At the back of the building there's a window in the loft—at least, it isn't a proper window, but a square hole, with a wooden door, and a few feet below the window there's the lean-to roof of Grimshaw's joiner's shop.

"The sun sets about six o'clock on Wednesday," he continued, "and it'll be quite dark by half-past. By that time, too, Grimshaw's shop and yard will be deserted. So all we've got to do is to hold the fort till half-past six, then climb through the manhole, drop out of the window, crawl down Grimshaw's roof, and misele!"

A chorus of approving shouts greeted the conclusion of Arnold's speech, and without any further ado the four boys set to work to discuss and arrange the details of their plot.

In the meantime Mr. Pye, the village confectioner, who had been entrusted with the contract for the tea, was working himself to a shadow—boiling hams, roasting joints of beef, baking pies, and turning out tarts and cakes by the gross.

At two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon he and his assistant, Miss Smith, escorted all these provisions, together with a cartload of crockery, trestles, table-tops and forms, to the Mechanics' Institute. Here they were joined by Sergeant Quiggin and three or four fishermen, with whose help they erected three long tables, flanked them with forms and chairs, and piled them with crockery and eatables.

At four o'clock the sergeant and the fishermen took their departure, to "wash and brush up," in readiness for the tea-fete five o'clock. Half an hour later Miss Smith also took her departure, and also for the same reason. Her departure left old Pye the only occupant of the building; and two minutes after she had left, Arnold and his three confederates were under an archway on the opposite side of the street, glided across the road, and vanished through the front door of the institute.

As previously mentioned, the front door opened into a square tiled lobby, with doors on each side, and a staircase at the end. At the top of the stairs was a landing, on which were three doors. The big door in the middle—a substantial structure of oak—led into the room in which the tea was to be held. The smaller doors on each side led into cloak-rooms.

At the foot of the staircase the four Grammarians halted, whilst Arnold drew from under his waistcoat a roll of thick brown paper, which he crumpled up and laid on the floor of the lobby. Striking a match, by rubbing it on his trousers, he set fire to the paper; then he and his chums crept up the stairs, without a sound, and stole into one of the cloak rooms.

THE BOYS' FRIEND.
ONE PENNY EVERY TUESDAY.

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

(Continued from the previous page.)

In less than a minute the lobby was filled with the smoke of the burning brown paper. As soon as the smoke began to curl up the staircase, Arnold glided to the outside of the big oak door—which was shut, with the key on the outside—and bellowed at the top of his voice: "Fire! Fire! Fire!" Then he darted back into the cloak-room, and rejoined his chums.

He was only just in time, for he had barely gained the shelter of the cloak-room when the big oak door was suddenly and violently flung open, and old Pye rushed out in a state of wild alarm.

Perceiving that the lobby below was full of smoke, Pye dashed down the stairs in a series of panic-stricken leaps and bounds. And even before he reached the bottom of the stairs, the four conspirators darted out of their hiding-place, rushed into the big room, removed the key from the outside of the door, shut the door, and locked it on the inside.

Needless to say, it did not take Pye many seconds to discover the origin of the smoke. He was not a particularly sharp-witted old man, but even he, when he saw the crumpled heap of smouldering brown paper, had wit enough to understand that he had been the victim of a practical joke. It is hardly necessary to add that he had no suspicion who were the authors of the joke, or what their object had been.

Having opened the front door, he picked up the reeking ball of paper and pitched it into the gutter. On the opposite side of the street the youthful son of the local butcher was innocently gazing into a shop window. He turned round, when Pye opened the institute door, and stared at the smouldering heap of paper with unfeigned curiosity.

"All right, you Tommy Wilshaw!" shouted Pye, shaking his fist at the lad. "You wait till I catch you, an' I'll make you sit up!"

"Wot for?" demanded Master Tommy, in an injured voice.

"You come 'ere, an' I'll show you what for!" retorted Pye. "Scarin' honest folk out of their lives! I'll tell your father when I see 'im, you see if I don't!"

Leaving Tommy in a state of mingled indignation and bewilderment, Pye stumped upstairs again. It did not occur to him at first that it was rather curious that the door of the big room, which he had left open, was now closed. But when he tried to open it, and found that it was locked, and that the key was no longer in the keyhole on the outside, as it had been a few minutes ago—well, it began to dawn on him that perhaps he had been too hasty in condemning Tommy Wilshaw! And his suspicions were confirmed when the sound of someone sharpening a knife on a steel was wafted from the interior of the room.

"Who's there?" he shouted, rattling the handle of the door. "Hi! You inside! Who are you, and what d'you mean by lockin' this door?"

A peal of mocking laughter was the only answer he received. There were only four boys inside the room, as the reader knows, but each of them laughed in half a dozen different keys, so that Pye was convinced that the room was in possession of quite a crowd of people. But who they were he could not imagine.

"Open this door at once!" he roared. "D'you 'ear? Open it at once!"

"These tarts are delicious," said a muffled voice inside the room. "I didn't think old Pye had brains enough to bake such ripping tarts. Take my tip and try 'em."

"Thanks; but I'm busy on this pork pie at present," said another voice. "I'll sample the tarts later."

"Here, give me that knife," said a third voice. "You don't know how to carve a ham."

Pye nearly had a fit. He literally danced with rage, and beat on the door with his fists.

"Let them eatables alone!" he howled. "Let me in! Open this door at once, or I'll send for the constable!"

"I wish you would," said Arnold, in a disguised voice. "Send for the constable, and then we can give you in charge for selling stuff unfit for human food. This ham is diseased."

For a moment indignation held Pye speechless.

"Diseased!" he bellowed at last. "Diseased! You dare to say that my 'am is diseased!"

"Putrid!" said Arnold.

"Absolute offal!" added Crosby, also in a disguised voice.

"Perfectly poisonous!" chimed in Tattersall.

"Cover it up!" said Fleming. "Chuck it under the table, before the smell proves fatal, and let us see if this round of beef is any better."

To say that Pye was half frantic as he listened to these insulting remarks on the quality of the viands he had provided is but feebly to describe his feelings. Purple in the face, foaming at the mouth, he kicked and hammered at the door, and threatened the unknown invaders with all the penalties of the law. Then it suddenly occurred to him to peer through the keyhole and try to see who the invaders were.

Unluckily for Pye, Arnold and his chums were waiting for this, and the moment Pye applied his eye to the outside of the keyhole, a jet of soapy water, projected from a small glass syringe, squirted through the keyhole and sent him staggering back from the door with a yell of mingled wrath and pain. For soapy water, though it does no damage, is not the pleasantest thing in the world to have in your eye.

At this moment two of the invited guests arrived. Hearing Pye's yell, they rushed upstairs and found him hopping about the landing, with one eye tightly closed and tears streaming down from the other.

Whilst he was explaining the situation to them, other guests arrived, and after they had heard his story, and had made several vain attempts to break open the door, somebody suggested fetching Mr. Boswell.

"Just what I was thinkin' myself," said Pye. "I'll go for 'im myself."

"An I'll go for the constable," said Tozer, the coxswain of the Cleveden lifeboat.

A moment later Pye was on his way to the chemist's shop, and Tozer was on his way to the police-station, whilst Arnold and his chums were barricading the door with forms and tables, and arranging for the defence of the windows.

The Siege, and How it Ended.

IN the meantime Sergeant Quiggin, having arrayed himself in his Sunday best, had called for Mr. Boswell, and the two men were on the point of leaving the chemist's shop when Pye arrived with his startling news.

"Taken possession of the room, and locked 'emselves in, and wolfin' the grub!" roared Sergeant Quiggin, bristling with anger and excitement. "How did they get in?"

Pye briefly explained the ruse by which he had been lured out of the room.

"They must 'ave been hidin' in one of the cloak-rooms," he said, "an' as soon as I ran downstairs, they must 'ave popped into the room and locked the door."

"How many of them are there?" demanded Mr. Boswell.



A perfect blizzard of tarts and cheesecakes rattled about the constable's head, until his helmet, face, and uniform were a picturesque patchwork of strawberry jam and lemon curd.

"About twenty, I should say, by the row they made."

"Who are they?"

"I 'aven't a notion," admitted Pye. "I didn't recognise any of their voices, an' when I tried to take a squint at 'em through the keyhole, they squirted soapy water into my eyes."

"Squirted soapy water," exclaimed Mr. Boswell excitedly. "A schoolboy's trick!"

"Well, now you come to mention it," said Pye, "their voices did sound like boys' voices."

"Of course they are boys," said Mr. Boswell. "The whole thing is as plain as a pikestaff. They are some of those young vermin from the Grammar School. My defeated rival has adopted this despicable method of wreaking his spite on me for having beaten him at the election. It is Dr. Stuart-Unwin who is at the bottom of this vile conspiracy, and the boys are merely his tools. But I'll teach the ruffian a lesson he won't soon forget. Go for the constable, and——"

"Tozer's gone for 'im," interrupted Pye.

"Good!" said Mr. Boswell. "Let us hasten, then, to the scene of the outrage."

By the time the three men reached the "scene of the outrage," the street in front of the institute was packed with an excited crowd of villagers, many of whom—especially those who had not been invited to the complimentary tea—appeared to be rather enjoying the proceedings than otherwise. By that time, too, the four Grammarians had each donned a black velvet mask, specially manufactured for the occasion. They had opened the four windows of the upper room, which overlooked the street, and were shying tarts and buns for the crowd to scramble for.

"Pip, pip! Here comes the pill-merchant!" yelled Arnold, when Mr. Boswell and his two companions made their appearance. "Salute him, my merry men! Salute him!"

Arnold was at one window, Crosby at another, Fleming at the third, and Tattersall at the fourth. As the word "salute" each boy raised his hand, and four jam-tarts went soaring through the air in the direction of Mr. Boswell. Two of them missed him, but one hit him in the mouth, and another knocked his silk hat into the gutter.

"You young villains!" thundered Sergeant Quiggin, as the crowd burst into a roar of unfeeling laughter. "We know who you are, so you'd better——"

The sentence was never completed, for at that moment Crosby let fly with a juicy pork pie, which broke into fragments on the sergeant's chin, and distributed its succulent contents over his manly chest.

"This is infamous, outrageous, intolerable!" howled Mr. Boswell. "Is this a law-abiding country, or is it not? Where are the police? Where are——Ah! Here you are at last!"

Peter Wragg, the village constable, came hurrying down the street, with Tozer panting at his heels.

"Arrest those scoundrels at once!" cried Mr. Boswell, pointing to the four masked figures at the windows. "At once—do you hear?"

"Suttingly, sir," said Wragg. "I'll soon——Ere! Oo! Help! Ow!"

A perfect blizzard of tarts and cheesecakes rattled about the constable's head, and when at last the blizzard ceased, his helmet, face, and uniform were a picturesque patchwork of strawberry jam and lemon curd.

"Did—did ever hever see such a thing in yer life?" gasped the indignant constable.

"I never did!" said Mr. Boswell, staring at him in disgust. "And I trust I shall never see such a thing again. In the meantime, what steps do you propose to take to assert the majesty of the law?"

"We must break down the door," said the constable.

"You can't!" said Wilshaw, the butcher, who was one of those who had been invited to the tea. "We've tried. They've barricaded it with forms an' things."

"Then we must get in through one of the windors," said Wragg. "Who'll come with me to Dudley Milton's and borrer a ladder?"

"I will," said the butcher.

The two men accordingly hurried off to the village mason's, and presently returned with a ladder. Having reared it up against the outside of the building, under the window at which Arnold stood, the constable proceeded to mount it, while the crowd held their breath in expectant suspense.

The moment the constable planted his foot on the lowermost rung of the ladder, Arnold disappeared.

"Ha!" said Peter Wragg triumphantly. "They know as 'ow they're beaten now!"

The words had scarcely crossed his lips ere Arnold reappeared at the window with a huge can of milk in his hands.

"Look up!" shrieked Sergeant Quiggin.

The constable looked up, and even as he did so, the contents of the milk-can descended in a snowy cascade on his upturned face, and deluged him from head to foot.

Pausing for a moment to recover his breath, and to wipe the milky fluid from his eyes, the constable resumed his ascent. No sooner had he done so, than Arnold, who had meanwhile disappeared a second time, reappeared with a ham in one hand, and a sirloin of beef in the other.

"Do if yer dare!" roared the constable.

"I'm going to!" grinned Arnold.

As he uttered these words he dropped the ham on the constable's head, forcing his helmet over his eyes. Goaded by the laughter of the crowd, the constable valiantly mounted another rung of the ladder. Then the sirloin of beef crashed down on the top of him, and the next instant, with an ear-splitting yell, he lost his foothold on the ladder, and fell sprawling on his back in the gutter.

At this moment Nipper and Dick arrived. Mr. Boswell having invited them to the tea as a reward for their memorable services on the polling day.

Half a dozen questions, addressed to the nearest spectators, elicited what had happened. Then Nipper glanced at Dick, and Dick glanced at Nipper.

"Grammarians!" whispered Nipper.

"A thousand to one!" said Dick, in the same low voice. "And if you guessed Arnold, Fleming, Crosby, and Tattersall, you might go further and guess worse."

"Of course, we can't be such sneaks as to betray 'em," said Nipper, "but, at the same time, we owe it to Boswell to put a stop to this little game at his expense. He's been jolly decent to us, and although we're at peace with the Grammarians now, we can't let 'em score off old Boswell like this."

"But we can't stop 'em!" said Dick. "They've barricaded the door, you hear, and it's no use trying to get in through any of those windows. So what can we do?"

"Come with me, and I'll show you what we can do!" said Nipper.

He led Dick down a side street, through a pair of big wooden gates, and into a deserted yard. It was the yard of Grimshaw's shop.

"See that window?" he said, pointing to the boarded opening in the back wall of the institute, a few feet above the lean-to roof of the shop. "If we climb on this roof, which we can easily do, we can break in through that window."

"Where does it lead to?" asked Dick.

"Under the slates of the institute," said Nipper, "and over the big meeting-room. And there's a trapdoor in the ceiling of the room!"

Dick grinned and nodded his head.

"It'd be a giddy spoof for Arnold and his pals!" he said. "They'll never think it's possible to get into the room that way!"

"You bet they know all about it!" said Nipper. "They'd never have dared to play this game unless they knew of a way by which they could escape. What do you say—shall we parley with 'em, and offer to let 'em march out with all the honours of war, on condition that they capitulate?"

Dick approved of this suggestion, and without any further loss of time the two boys swarmed up the roof of the joiner's shop, broke open the door in the back wall of the institute, and vanished through the opening.

In the meantime Arnold was whiling away the time by pelting the crowd with biscuits.

"Good shot!" he exclaimed, as one of the biscuits struck the infuriated chemist on the end of the nose. "Pass up some more ammunition, Tattersall, and I'll have a shy at Quiggin next."

"Can't!" said Tattersall briefly. "Tin's empty."

Crosby picked up a plate of buns and was about to hand them to Arnold, when the trapdoor in the ceiling was suddenly flung open, and Nipper's voice rang through the room.

"Surrender, or die!"

The four Grammarians spun round and looked up with simultaneous gasps of alarm.

"Gee-whizz! It's Hamilton!" cried Tattersall.

"And Starling!" added Crosby, catching sight of Dick's face peering over Nipper's shoulder.

"Is there anybody with you?" asked Arnold anxiously.

"Not yet!" said Nipper. "Up to now, nobody but Dick and I have thought of this way of getting at you; but we've only got to say the word, and there'll be twenty chaps up here in half a jiffey."

"But you won't betray us, will you?" asked Fleming. "We're allies now, you know."

"We aren't allies when it comes to rotting Boswell!" said Nipper, shaking his head. "That wasn't in the contract. You can't expect us to help you against Boswell, any more than we should expect you to help us against Steward Osmond. All the same, we don't want to get you into any trouble, but we're bound to stick up for Boswell; and unless you accept our conditions, I swear I'll sit on this trapdoor and prevent you getting away, while Dick goes back into the street and fetches reinforcements."

"And what are your conditions, as you call 'em?" asked Arnold gloomily.

"We'll give you five minutes to shift those forms and tables that you've piled against the door," said Nipper. "And we'll give you another five minutes to unlock the door, climb up here, and make your escape. You needn't be afraid of unlocking the door, for there's nobody on the landing. Everybody is in the street."

"If you accept these conditions," he concluded, "we won't let on that we know who you are. If you refuse—but you won't be such goats as to refuse!"

He was right! The Grammarians didn't refuse; and ten minutes later the room was deserted and the door unlocked.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)



ON FORBIDDEN GROUND

A Fine Long, Complete Tale of Adventure.

By Popular

A. S. HARDY.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Off for a Holiday—The Camping Ground.

"WELL, there you are, you chaps. If you like to avail yourselves of the colonel's offer you can. You'll have a mighty good time up the Thames, I can tell you. I don't know a better spot to camp out in than Eel Island, near Shepperton. You can get your boat at Windsor, a nice comfortable randan, pack your stuff fore and aft, and row up. You can make a start on Saturday morning, and rig up your tent in the evening, and have the most glorious time of your lives."

And Hugh Lyall looked as if he were making a mighty concession to the three junior clerks employed by the Colonial Imports Agency, Limited.

The three clerks were named Sidney Aymes, Charles Hewitt, and Bruce Jedborough. They were all rattling good chaps, and ever since they had joined the staff of the agency they had been on bad terms with Hugh Lyall, who was their senior, and a self-sufficient, arrogant, conceited sort of fellow, who tried, but with ill success it must be admitted, to ride the high horse over them.

Quarrels between them had been frequent enough, and Hugh Lyall's manner was usually so insolent and uncouth that there was no bearing with him.

Judge then the astonishment of the three chums when Lyall had come to them on the afternoon of the previous Monday, when the tea, made by Miss Chester, the shorthand and typewriting clerk, was handed round, suggesting that, as he had heard they intended camping out somewhere up the Thames over August Bank Holiday, that they should make use of Colonel Lyall's island near Shepperton for their camping ground.

Colonel Lyall was Hugh Lyall's uncle. The youngster boasted that he was on very familiar and friendly terms with the retired Army officer, though whenever the colonel, who was managing director of the company, came to the offices, neither of the three junior clerks had ever seen him address a word to his nephew, and he implied that he could very easily obtain permission for them to make use of the island, particularly as he was going to stay at the Mead—Colonel Lyall's estate on the Thames—over the holiday himself.

The three chums had thought Lyall was joking.

"You get us the permission in writing," Jedborough had said, "and we will make use of the camping ground right enough. Only I'm afraid you won't get it."

But Hugh Lyall had. That was the amazing part of it; and now, when Lyall had left the office, the three crowded together to read the letter, which Aymes held open in his hands.

At the head of a sheet of superfine note-paper was the stamped address in relief, "The Mead, Shepperton," and the Lyall family crest. The handwriting was very legible, and well-written.

"My dear Hugh."—the words ran—"By all means tell your three friends that they may make use of my island for camping-out purposes. I do not permit any boating party to land as a rule, and there is a notice to that effect on the island. But in this case it is different. They are personal friends of yours, and employees of the company, and I should like to do all I can to make them feel welcome. Your aunt is eagerly looking forward to your own visit, and as we shall not be a large party here we shall be very glad of your company.

"With kindest regards.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"HERBERT ANDREW LYALL."

Aymes read the letter aloud, and when he had done the three chums looked at one another with faces beaming with delight.

"By jingo!" cried Charles Hewitt. "That is better than ripping. I never should have thought that the irascible old colonel was such a good sort. He looks a perfect terror, and the way he scowls at us whenever he comes here makes me quite afraid of him. But it's only his manner, you see. I dare say if we'd gone through as much trouble as he has we should be just the same. Hurrah for the river, boys, and a jolly good time!"

"And I tell you what," said Jedborough. "I haven't much 'brass.' My pater gives me no pocket money. He says I ought to live well enough on what I earn here, clothe and keep myself, and save sufficient for my holidays as well. I'm hanged if I can do it, and I shan't have more than two pounds to go away with. I dare say you chaps are in the same boat. We shall be saving the camping-out fee. That will leave all the more to spend on luxuries."

"Miles, the boatbuilder, who is a friend of mine, will let us have the randan cheap," put in Sidney Aymes. "I've written and arranged for all that. Hewitt is going to supply us with the tent, which is one his elder brother bought two years ago, and it's as good as new. We're going to have a high old time."

"And fancy Lyall doing us this good turn," said Hewitt. "Upon my word, I feel quite ashamed of all the nasty things I've said to him. We must make amends in the future, boys."

"That we shall have to do," said Jedborough.

"Now to work, boys. Let's get everything cleared up, so that we can start away on Saturday with a light heart."

They turned to their books and their letter filing, and the half a dozen other odd jobs which had to be done, and with the assistance of Miss Chester, the shorthand clerk, they had everything cleared up by seven o'clock, which was an hour after the usual time the office closed, and then, well pleased with themselves, they hurried off home to make the final arrangements for the trip.

"Now, don't forget," said Sidney Aymes, as they closed up at parting, "at Paddington, under the clock, at 9 o'clock in the morning, to catch the 9.15 for Windsor. Bring plenty of good spirits with you, and don't forget the rugs, for we may want them. You look after the hamper, Jedborough, and you bring all the table linen your sister promised to put out for you, Hewitt. By Jove, we are going to have a jolly time, especially as the weather prophet has declared for a fine holiday!"

They parted, and eagerly went their ways, each of them thinking what a good sort old Lyall was, and how very much they had been mistaken in the colonel.

Nine o'clock the following morning found them all assembled under the clock at Paddington Station, with just enough luggage to travel with comfort, and not a thing overlooked or forgotten.

The luggage was put away in the luggage van, the guard tipped to look after it, and punctually to time the train started away.

The smoke of London was quickly left behind, and soon they were travelling through the country, which looked its very best, the heavy rains of more than too bright a summer having kept the vivid greens almost as fresh as in the spring.

The journey to Windsor seemed to pass in no time, and on arrival there they found a horse and cart awaiting them, which Miles, the boatbuilder, had thoughtfully sent to meet them. They saw the luggage and the folded tent, with its pegs and lines, safely stowed in the body of the vehicle, and sent upon its way, and then commenced their walk into Windsor town amidst a crowd of other merrymakers who had decided to spend their precious holiday upon the river.

"Though I say it myself," said Jedborough, looking at his companions in pride, "we are a credit to the Colonial Imports Agency, and no mistake. We'd compare with any other three coming into Windsor to-day. That a new suit, Aymes?"

"Yes," said the good-looking youngster, blushing a bit; "my pater made me a present of it especially for this trip. He knew I shouldn't be able to afford one myself, bless him."

"And Hewitt's togs look as good as new. He's had 'em washed. And that's a new shirt, isn't it, Aymes?"

"Yes," assented the broad-shouldered, phlegmatic Aymes. "And the boots are new, too. So is the hat. Is there anything else you would like to know about my bodily covering, Jedborough?"

"Jedborough is the only one amongst us who isn't sporting anything new," said Hewitt.

"That's rather rough on you, Jedborough."

"Well, you see, you chaps," said Jedborough, sobering down for a moment, "my people aren't so well off as yours. I've got a lot of brothers and sisters, you know, and most of them are still at school. That makes a difference, and with so many girls in the family a lad like me is liable to be overlooked. However, I've got a new pipe. But I haven't smoked it yet, because I'm not much of a smoker, and it might make me ill. I'll reserve that treat till after supper."

"Bosh!" muttered Aymes, and in the greatest good humour they reached Miles's boathouse, and saw the randan prepared for them, a bran new boat, with new carpet and cushions, her sides picked out in gold and blue, as pretty a craft as the river had to boast. A boatman was greasing the rowlocks, and when he had done he put the pot of grease in the locker for their future use.

"Afternoon, gents!" he said. "Mr. Miles told me to tell you that you'll find the boat run easy enough. She's built long so that she may travel easy. He sends his respects, and wishes you luck."

The luggage was quickly piled into the boat, and with a few words of adieu, and a silver tip, which the boatman acknowledged by touching his forehead, the adventurous three got aboard, and with Aymes and Hewitt sculling, and Jedborough steering, they set off, thinking Miles the most courteous of gentlemen; for they were paying under rate for their boat, and it isn't many boatmen would have taken the trouble to be particularly civil to three boys, on a holiday especially.

The sun was shining brilliantly. The surface of the Thames had not a ripple on it save when a fly swept down and touched it. The rushes and the reeds were of the most glorious green imaginable. The woods seemed to breathe of poetry and romance, and they felt that it was going to be the most enjoyable time of their lives.

Pulling lustily, they made the banks fly swiftly past, and with a long halt for lunch, and a laze by the bank under a tree for tea, at last Eel Island was reached.

It was a small island, as green as an island could be. There were two trees upon it, and several shrubs. It was an ideal place for camping out, for the tent could be placed in such a position that it was almost concealed from the view of passengers aboard passing craft.

They ran the boat into the bank, and Jedborough held on with the paddle hitcher, whilst Aymes, ignoring the bold and staring notice, "Trespassers will be prosecuted," leapt ashore and fastened the painter to a root of a tree. Then the tent was got out, and their luggage, and they set to work with a will to fix their quarters for the night.

They had practised tent-setting before, and it was raised with the speed and skill of old hands. The cooking-stove and sleeping-things were hoisted out and put in place. A lamp was hung to the tent-pole, and they carefully arranged the interior to make it look as much like home as possible. Then when all was done, and the sun began to set, they lazily stretched themselves upon the grass and indulged in dreams. Jedborough worked away at his new pipe, and presently Aymes opened some bottled ginger-beer. They felt tired, lazy, happy.

"By Jove, Hugh Lyall is a good sort!" sighed Hewitt. "This is comfort!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
A Surprise—The Fight for Possession—Hugh Lyall's Treachery.

VERY early on Sunday morning Aymes was awake. He looked around the tent, upon the canvas of which the morning sun shone, and saw his two companions locked in the arms of slumber. He lifted the flap of the tent and sniffed in the glorious fresh air. Then, throwing off his pyjamas, he plunged over the side of the island, and, puffing and blowing like a grampus, swam about in the coolest of cool water, feeling in very truth like a king.

Aymes had not a single care in the world. His people were prosperous and happy, and it seemed to him, mooring with universal kindness as he did—perhaps because he was good-natured as well as good-looking, and because he was young—that the world was the best of all possible places to live in.

Right round the island he swam, and he was just about to land when he saw Jedborough looking down at him from the bank.

"I say, Aymes," said his fellow-clerk, "some of your jokes you know. What have you done with the boat?"

"The boat," said Aymes, pausing in his swimming, and treading water as he looked up. "Why, what do you mean? It's moored where it was tied last night, isn't it?"

"No, I'm dashed if it is!" said Jedborough. "You swim round there and see."

Aymes obeyed, and sure enough, when he got to the tree to the roots of which the boat had been moored, there was no randan to be seen.

Aymes felt that he had had enough of the river, so he got out, and proceeded to towel himself down.

"You seem to take it very coolly," said Jedborough, irritated by Aymes's sang-froid.

"What's the use of taking it otherwise?" answered Aymes. "If the boat's gone, it's gone, and it's not much use worrying about it. Worrying won't bring it back again. It might have got adrift, though I don't see how it could have got adrift with this mild stream running. They don't steal boats up here. I can't make it out. It may be possible that Lyall, who is staying at the Mead, about a quarter of a mile away, has come down here while we were asleep, and taken the boat away just to score us. Let's get breakfast, and then, when we've eaten, we can discuss the situation."

"What's the matter?" asked Hewitt, putting his head out of the tent.

"Boat's gone," said Jedborough, looking blank. "And Aymes says he knows nothing about it."

"The deuce! You don't say!" said Hewitt. "Well, I'm jolly hungry. Let's fry the eggs and bacon and get the tea made. You see

(Continued on the next page.)



This last act of injustice maddened Jedborough and Hewitt. They rushed forward, seized the burly form of the gardener, and hurrying him by main force to the river-side, shot him over the edge of the bank into the water.

after the plates and cut the bread-and-butter, Aymes."

It was the only thing to be done, and, taking it philosophically, they prepared the breakfast, and despatched it as only three growing lads could.

Then they heard the sound of a boat approaching, but took no notice. Nor did they see the half-dozen men who were in it land as soon as it was run into the bank, and tethered to the very tree-trunk to which their own randan had been tied overnight. It was while in the act of concocting a piece of bread-and-butter piled up with jam to his mouth, that Jedborough looked up and saw a grim-visaged, broad-shouldered, red-faced man staring at them with folded arms.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said the man.

"Who the deuce are you?" asked Jedborough. "You're not very good-looking, whoever you are."

"My name's Sams," said the man, frowning. "And I'm head gardener to Colonel Lyall. I've got orders to put anyone as trespasses on this island off it. So out you goes, quick."

The three chums looked blankly at one another.

Then, as the other five men, big, stalwart chaps all of them, came along and ranged up in front of them, they began to perceive that the situation was a serious one.

"Now, look here," said Aymes, "we don't want any misunderstanding. We are here by Colonel Lyall's permission, so you'd better be civil. Was it you who cut away our boat?"

"It was," answered the man Sams. "I was coming down the river last night just after dark, when I saw the light in your tent, and saw the boat. I just cut it away, and took it along with me, so as to make sure of finding you all here this morning."

"And now you have found us, what then?" asked Charlie Hewitt.

"Off you goes," said the head gardener.

"But I tell you we have Colonel Lyall's permission to camp here," protested Aymes.

The man burst into a roar of laughter.

"Not the colonel's permission!" he roared. "Got the colonel's permission! That's a good 'un, that is! Come now, boys, down with that there tent!"

In an instant the five men sprang forward, and in a twinkling the tent-pegs were uprooted, and down came the precious tent with a run, burying all the chums' belongings beneath its canvas folds.

"Now chuck 'un in the river," ordered the head gardener.

Aymes, Jedborough, and Hewitt were on their feet now, and angrily faced their persecutors.

"You throw that tent in the river if you dare!" cried Aymes, clenching his fists and looking fierce. "It will be the worse for you!"

The men had gathered it up, and were already on the move with it.

"Chuck 'un in!" roared the man Sams.

The next moment there was a sickening splash as the tent plunged into the waters of the Thames, and then the enraged Aymes, catching Sams a mighty smack on the jaw, knocked him clean off his feet. Colonel Lyall's head gardener was a heavy man, and he fell heavily, lying where he fell with his face upturned and his eyes blinking at the sky.

The men were busy heaving the rest of the boys' belongings into the water. Clothes, hampers, knives, plates, boots, bags, rugs, blankets, sleeping things, all were seized, and relentlessly borne to the river-side.

Some of them were actually thrown in, and it was whilst attempting to rescue some of these that the fight began.

The men were big, burly fellows, not actually ill-natured, but they had received definite instructions, which it was their duty to obey; and they did their best to obey them. The three chums were young, athletic youths, ready for battle for their own. Their muscles were in fine trim, and they were suffering under a sense of wrong and injury. They dashed at their enemies, hitting out right and left, knocking some of them off their feet in fine style, and presently, as the men closed with them, they struggled from one part of the little island to another, until numbers told, and with Jedborough and Hewitt beaten off, Aymes was seized and firmly held.

Sams, the gardener, had by this time risen to his feet, and was holding his aching jaw.

"Chuck the things in the river!" he shouted. "In with 'un!"

"What shall we do with the lad?" asked one of the men who held Aymes.

"In with 'un, too!"

Splash! With a haul and a heave the two men slung Aymes out into the water, partly dressed as he was, and he plunged out of sight. This last act of injustice maddened Jedborough and Hewitt. They rushed forward, seized the burly form of the gardener, and, hurrying him by main force to the river-side, they shot him over the edge of the bank into the water, too.

"In with 'un!" they mimicked. And then one of the men rushed forward with a yell of terror.

"You young villains!" he cried. "You've murdered him! He can't swim!"

Jedborough's face blanched; then, taking in the situation as Sams rose struggling to the surface, he plunged in, and held him.

"Help me, Hewitt!" he shouted, for the drowning man had clasped him fiercely, and they were both likely to lose their lives. But Aymes, who was swimming near by, came to the rescue, and with Hewitt helping from the bank, they soon had the terrified gardener out.

The incident sobered them. They looked around the island in gloomy dejection.

"And this," said Jedborough, "is to be the end of our jolly time. We might have known if Hugh Lyall had a hand in anything it was bound to be a failure. I wish we hadn't come."

"But who was to know it would turn out like this?" said Hewitt.

"How are you, old man?" asked Aymes to the white and frightened Sams. "Better, aren't you?"

"You young villains! You young varmints!" groaned the gardener. "You might have drowned me!"

"Your men might have drowned me," retorted Aymes. "You didn't pause to ask whether I could swim!"

This put the case to Sams, the gardener, from a different point of view. He became at once more civil and polite.

"Why didn't you had the colonel's permission to camp out here?" he said. "What am I to make out of that?"

"Just whatever you like," said Aymes fiercely. "Show him the letter, Hewitt."

Hewitt had the letter in the pocket of his coat, and solemnly produced it, and handed it to the astonished Sams. The rest of the men gathered round.

"There's the address right enough," said Sams, in amazement. "That's his notepaper, and there's his crest."

He read the letter through to the end. Then he gave it back.

"I don't know who's been playing tricks on you young gentlemen," he said, "but that's not the colonel's writing, and it's not his signature, though it's his notepaper right enough. If I had seen that letter, I shouldn't have been so rough with you; but the colonel, when I told him you was camping out here, he says: 'Sams —Sams,' says he, 'in the morning, take five or six of your strongest men—men that you can rely on—and pitch the whole lot into the river. Either that, or I'll gaol the lot for trespass. He was in a tearing rage; I had to do my duty. It was as much as my place was worth to disobey him, and he's a good master. My men here would have been sacked, too, if they hadn't helped, and that's the truth."

Aymes, Jedborough, and Hewitt looked at one another. Their glances spoke whole volumes.

"I've only had that card Hugh Lyall here!" cried Aymes. "By gad, I'd flay the beggar alive!"

"He forgets he's got to work in the same office with us. We shall meet again!" said Jedborough.

"And then——"

The tone of his voice suggested what was to happen then, and Hugh Lyall might not have felt at ease if he had heard it.

"Well," said Hewitt, "it's no use us staying here any longer. We've got to make a move. It's a rare nuisance, and we wrote that letter of thanks to the colonel, Aymes. You would have thought the old brute would have softened his heart after reading that."

"My men will row you ashore, gentlemen," said Sams, whose manner had changed since his duckings and the return from the water. "I'm sorry your things have been pitched into the water. My men will try and get them all out for you, and they shall be landed with you."

"Let them do that, and you'll earn our thanks," said Aymes. "You had to obey orders, of course. Then, give us our boat back, and we'll get away as soon as we can."

"Well, I don't know as to that, gentlemen," said Sams, the gardener, wagging his wise old head. "The colonel's got the randan safely housed in his boathouse, and it can't be removed without his permission. I'll ask it, if you like, though I can't hope for much success. You see, he's so down on folks as camp out or land on Eel Island."

"And Hugh Lyall knew it, and yet he landed us in for this!" cried Jedborough fiercely.

In a quarter of an hour they had been landed, and much of their recovered baggage was landed with them, together with the soaked and now useless tent, and there on the towing-path they were left, with a field stretching out to one side with a farmhouse and some barns away in the distance, and the river on the other, in as deplorable a plight as ever holiday-makers got in.

They conveyed their things into the field, where the protecting hedge hid them from the view of users of the river and the towing-path, and set themselves to make the best of a bad job, whilst hoping for and awaiting the return of Sams, the gardener, or one of his men with the boat.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

Arrested—Colonel Lyall Appears—How the Practical Joke Recoiled on the Joker's Head.

THE evening sun was setting fast, and still Jedborough, Aymes, and Hewitt remained tenants of the field. Sams, the gardener, had not returned with their randan, and it looked as if they were going to have an uncomfortable night of it. They began to chafe against the ill-luck of their venture. Jedborough said they were wrong to have waited so long; they ought to have gone on to the nearest village or town at once, and have hired rooms in an inn, and had their luggage conveyed there.

Aymes said very little, his philosophical calm helping him no end to bear the trials and troubles of the day with a certain amount of equanimity.

"We can't get the blessed boat!" said Jedborough, rising, after partaking of a somewhat comforting cup of tea. "What the deuce are we to do now?"

At that moment a man appeared as if by magic on the scene. He was clad in the usual garb of a farm worker, and had a cornstalk thrust between his teeth. He looked sourly at them.

"Do you young gents know you've no business in this field?" he asked.

"We do," said Aymes; "but we've already been shifted from Eel Island, where we thought we had a right, and are pretty sick, because our tent has been put out of order, and we've nothing to shelter us to-night."

The man nodded.

"I've heard something of what happened from the bank this morning," he said. "You nearly drownded old man Sams; and a jolly good thing if you had! Well, look 'ee here. I belong up at Farmer Goodheart's farm. He won't mind if I let you turn in in one of them barns. They are clean and dry, and, with your blankets to wrap round you, you'll be better off than you would in your tent. Then you can make up your minds what you're going to do in the morning, you know. It's Bank Holiday, you know, and all the inns will be full up."

"And what are we to pay for the privilege?" asked Jedborough.

"There's three on yer," said the man, considering. "Well, supposing you make it half-a-sovereign?"

"What do you say, boys?" asked Hewitt.

"Right," said Jedborough; "and we can go in a body to the colonel in the morning, get our boat, and tell him what we think of his nephew, Hugh Lyall."

"All right," said Aymes; "we'll give you the money. Here you are."

And he handed the man the half-sovereign.

The fellow helped them carry their things up to the barn, then he bade them a surly good-night and vanished.

The interior was dry, and some hay and straw was stacked in one corner, farm implements taking up most of the rest of the room.

Aymes fixed the stove, poured some paraffin into it, and lit the wick.

"We'll make some hot coffee," he said, "have a bit of something to eat, and go to sleep as quickly as possible. Then we'll be up first thing in the morning, beg the colonel to let us have the boat, and get back to Windsor. I think I've had enough of this outing."

Their food and the hot liquid cheered them up somewhat, and they began to make light of their troubles.

"We've had a rotten day, but it has been an experience," said Aymes. "Just, thank goodness, the worst is over. Hallo! What's that?"

They paused, dropped their conversation, and listened, and could distinctly make out the sound of men whispering outside.

"I'm going to have a look," said Hewitt.

But he could reach the door of the barn, it was thrown open, and half a dozen farm-servants entered, whilst behind them marched the pompous figure of a police-constable.

"Ah, caught 'em red-handed!" roared a red-faced, stout man with side-whiskers, who was wearing riding-breeches and gaiters. "Constable, you are a witness of the trespass. I've suffered enough from theft of tramps and vagabonds. Arrest the whole lot in charge!"

Hewitt stared at the farmer in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Why, what on earth do you mean?" he cried. "We are here by your own sanction. We met a man in the field down by the river, and he told us we might make use of this barn until we could get our boat from Colonel Lyall's in the morning. We paid the man ten shillings for the privilege."

The farmer, noticing how well-dressed the campers were, and feeling assured that they were gentlemen, moderated his tone somewhat.

"Oh, you paid for the right to make use of the barn, did you?" he said. "Might I ask who you paid?"

"Oh, a surly, bad-tempered-looking man, with a sun-tanned face. He was wearing a brown suit much worn, and a pair of brown leather gaiters. His hair was just turning grey. I should think he was a man of about thirty-six or seven."

The farmer turned to one of his hands, who stood behind him.

"Ben," he said, "that sounds like the description of the man who came and told us that there were trespassers in my barn. Where's the villain got to?"

"He walked away as soon as you gave him the half-a-crown for the information, sir," answered the farm hand.

"Well, whether you paid, or whether you didn't," said the farmer, his temper rising again at the thought that he had been robbed of half-a-crown by a vagabond, "I'm going to prosecute the lot of you for trespass. You've no business here. And you say your boat is at Colonel Lyall's—eh? Well, it happens that the colonel has been staying with me this afternoon, and I expect him along every moment. We'll soon see whether the colonel has your boat or not."

"What's that you're saying about me, Goodboat?"

The words were spoken in loud, commanding tones, and a tall, well-dressed military-looking gentleman entered the barn, looking curiously from the farmer to the three chums. He stroked his grey moustache as he surveyed them from head to foot, and there was a curious twinkle in his eyes.

"Are you the three young gentlemen from the Colonial Imports Agency?" he asked. "It seems to me your faces are familiar."

"We are, colonel," answered Jedborough stiffly; "and we'll be obliged if you'll give us back the boat you stole from us!"

"Stole!" cried the colonel hotly.

"I said stole, sir!" answered Jedborough, clenching his fists and looking defiant. "You take away our boat, and send a parcel of blackguards to turn us off your island and destroy our property. You didn't even ask us to go. I have my own opinion of your conduct, sir! You may own Eel Island, but that doesn't give you the right to assault people and ruin their things."

"Ruin your things?" said the colonel, reddening.

"Yes, ruin," said Aymes, chiming in, and facing the colonel with flashing eyes. "Most of our property—and some of it is of value—is lying in the mud of the Thames, where your men threw it. They cut our tent down, and pitched that into the river, and your gardener, Mr. Sams, had me thrown into the river, too. We retaliated, and if we hadn't been smart the man might have been drowned. And you must remember you gave us permission to use your island, sir."

"I gave you permission?" repeated the colonel, almost speechless from astonishment and rage.

"There is your letter; read it."

Colonel Lyall read the letter through. His face grew purple.

"I never wrote that letter, or caused it to be written," he said. "The notepaper has been stolen and used without my authorisation. Tell me, you boys, was it you who wrote me that letter thanking me for permitting you to make use of my island?"

"It was, sir," said Charles Hewitt, speaking for the party.

"I didn't get it until this afternoon, as it had been laid aside; and then Sams came to me and told me that the mischief had been done. Now, I will you have the goodness to tell me how you came to get hold of that letter granting you the privilege of making use of Eel Island?"

"Certainly, colonel," said Jedborough.

And with precise detail he told him how Hugh Lyall had suggested he should get permission from the colonel for them to use Eel Island as a camping-out ground, and the result.

The colonel heard him through, and his lips set grimly, and his eyebrows contracted in an ominous frown.

"H'm! So this was a practical joke, was it?" he murmured. "Well, we will see that it is set right. What are your names, boys?"

"Aymes."

"Jedborough."

"Hewitt."

"Well, then, Aymes, Jedborough, and Hewitt, I don't think you are at all to blame for what has happened, and I apologise most humbly for treating you so shabbily. But you'll own that I was scarcely to blame. You will now be honouring me by staying at the Mead until you have to go back to your work in the office."

"But——" began Aymes.

"There are no buts about it! Goodheart, I'm going to take these young rascals back to the Mead in my motor. Will you send their traps and all they have on board? They may have after them in one of your carts?"

"With pleasure, colonel," said the farmer.

"Very well, then, come along, you boys! It's getting late, and Mrs. Lyall will be wondering where I have got to."

The three chums realised that it would be churlish to refuse, and, lost in wonderment, they followed the colonel to the farmyard, where the high-powered motor-car was waiting for them.

In a quarter of an hour they were at the door of the colonel's fine house. The colonel leapt out and entered the hall, where a comely, stout, homely-looking woman met him.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur!" she cried, "I have brought you three more guests—the young vagabonds who nearly killed our poor Sams. Can you make room for them?"

"Yes, dear," answered the colonel's wife; "and the more easily, because our nephew Hugh suddenly remembered a very important engagement, and, asking me to apologise to you for him, left for London by the five o'clock train."

"H'm! So he's gone—eh?" said the colonel grimly. "Well, so much the better! I should have put my name across his back if he were still in the house! Come in, you young scoundrels, and let us see if we can find you a bit of supper!"

In ten minutes' time they were doing ample justice to the finest cold salmon and cucumber and the best roast chicken they had ever eaten, or, so it seemed; whilst the colonel eagerly plied them with questions, speedily removing all their constraint and reserve about him.

They did not go back to the office until the following Wednesday morning, and spent the Monday and Tuesday on the island, where their tent had been set up again.

And when they got to the office on Wednesday they heard that Hugh Lyall would not be there that day, and before the week was out it was reported that he had resigned.

That resignation had been forced by Colonel Lyall, the managing-director—at least, so Miss Chester said; and the Colonial Imports Agency saw him no more.

As for Aymes, Jedborough, and Hewitt, they were forced to admit when it was all over that their holiday at Eel Island had been the happiest they had ever spent; and as Colonel Lyall had given them free permission to make use of the island at any time in the future, it is one of the island at any time in the future, it is

THE END.

CYCLING:

Mr. A. E. WILLS, the holder of a world's record for cycling, tells readers how to excel at this magnificent sport.

THE effect of a systematic course of road riding as a preliminary preparation, will be that the young aspirant to speedy riding will enter upon the more serious work in that fitness of condition so essential to improvement in any form of athletics. Moreover, the long grinds over the roads will have brought him to that state when it may readily be ascertained whether he has any aptitude for cycle racing or should confine himself to the minor delights of ordinary club cycling.

In any case, the next step is to join a club, as the advantages of doing so are many. Club runs and club handicaps serve to show the novice whether he has pace or not. Also, in the majority of instances, friendly advice and hints, as well as companionship in training, may be obtained from fellow-members who are either road or track racing cyclists themselves, and who know the many little pitfalls which beset

the unwary amateur

at the commencement of his career. The novice should confide his ambition to such fellow-members, or to the captain of his club. Men of experience can readily detect minor faults which retard improvement in speed.

Not only was I fortunate in having such friendly assistance at the outset of my career, but I was also favoured by attracting the attention of the professional trainer and coach attached to the club and to the ground where I commenced to train. Club officials of to-day are, however, only too anxious to secure promising talent, and the riding of new members is keenly watched in order to spot a budding champion. If the material is there, many willing hands will help to mould it into shape.

Riders differ so much individually, that it is difficult to give expert advice to cover every little peculiarity, hence most racing cyclists seek experienced coaching from one who understands their needs. The hints given in these articles must be adapted to fit the circumstances, both in regard to track and rider.

Suitably warm clothing must always be worn in training. Do not get the idea that anything will do. Special colours are adopted by each club. The costume for track riding consists of a sweater with long sleeves, short knickers, fitting closely to the leg, made of the same material, and

a cap to match.

Complete costumes may be obtained through the secretary of the club at a reduced price. The shoes should be light and comfortable.

The error into which most young riders fall is indulging in not too much, but too fast work. Plenty of young amateurs when making their first essays on the path ride themselves out night after night in training, wasting the strength so necessary to improvement. Safety riding should be the order in the first instance. This gives opportunity for studying the various points of position on the machine, the ankle-work, steering, etc. To develop into a first-class rider, whether on track or road, a good style must first of all be cultivated.

Too fast work on the track in the initial stages of training tends to destroy good form. To endeavour to get speed too quickly is as rash as trying to get rich too quickly. The rider who hustles for pace may drop into the correct style just as the gambler may prove lucky; but it is long odds against either of them. Many riders have repented the early indiscretions which tempted them to sacrifice good style in their anxiety to too quickly acquire speed and racing ability.

Perfection of style brings speed in its train, and leaves scope for continued improvement. Not one of our crack riders is

an ungainly pedaller.

Moreover, the steady practice on the track in the first stages enables the young cyclist to perfect himself in the all-important art of steering. Whether maintaining position amidst a bunch of riders, jockeying or manœuvring for position for a "jump" in the last lap, passing other competitors, or getting a clear run in during the sprint down the final straight, good steering is essential.

So expert do some racing cyclists become in handling their machines that many of them develop into trick riders quite capable of giving a clever exhibition on the stage or in the arena. I myself was recently touring in a sensational act on a miniature track which could be placed on any stage.

Paced by a motor-cycle going at forty miles an hour, I rode round this tiny track time after time, with the knowledge that the slightest slip in steering would bring about a catastrophe, yet when I commenced cycle racing I had no pretensions to sensational trick riding. Mastery of a machine came to me gradually during training and racing, when I was careful to study every point which led to fast riding with safety. Let me, then, adjure the young rider, when first commencing active training for track or road racing, to curb the desire to rush into speed. Let speed come to him more as the outcome of correct position on the machine, perfect action in pedalling, judgment in steering, and care in nursing his strength towards the healthy development of physique and stamina.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

LIFE SAVING:

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

THE reader having practised the various methods of rescue, and being thus able to carry a drowned person to land, he will naturally want to know how best to bring him to life, or help to retain a spark of life in the body until such time as a medical man arrives and takes the patient in hand. Therefore, when a person is taken out of the water insensible, or partially so, medical aid should be sent for as soon as possible; but the patient should not be left, as every moment is of the greatest importance. Every means of inducing respiration, and preventing further ose of vital heat, should be immediately adopted.

The methods of resuscitation recommended by the Royal Life-Saving Society should be diligently employed for long periods, sometimes from one to four hours before the case is given up as hopeless.

It is a common and a dangerous mistake to suppose that, because one's efforts to restore a person to life do not seem successful at first, the patient must be beyond recovery. There are instances on record of persons having been taken out of the water, in whom no symptoms of returning animation were obvious until after four hours' unremitting efforts

to promote breathing

by artificial methods. The case I refer to is that of a girl now residing at one of the locks on the River Thames. She fell into the water from the lock gates, and someone passing saw the child at the bottom, gave the alarm, and she was brought out by the aid



Another striking portrait of Mr. A. E. Wills, the famous wheelman, taken whilst riding in an important contest.

of a boathook. A doctor being at hand, he at once proceeded to restore life, and after working for four hours the child began to breathe.

I have also had occasion to restore the drowning, but the longest time before my patient breathed again was half an hour, and several others were made to breathe again in five to ten minutes.

It is a prevailing idea among most waterside people that immediately a person has been lifted out of the water, he must be stood upon his head, in order that water may run out of him. They seem to regard a person as a sort of gas-pipe, which, when upended, would part with any liquid that may be in it by gravitation. They forget that one may drink much, and yet stand on one's head without much inconvenience, which any of my readers may try for themselves, and let me know whether I am wrong.

I know that boatmen and others ignorant of the proper treatment that should be adopted, often insist that the only right method of treating an apparently drowned person is to hold him up by his legs. I once tried to convince one of these that he was wrong, and gave him several glasses of a liquid he liked, took him on the sands at the seaside, and attempted to stand him on his head in the same way as he would have tried to stand the half-drowned man upon his.

After I had struggled with him for some time, he objected to continue the experiment, and in the end there was a little bother. He blamed me for twisting his neck, and

wanted compensation

but the liquid he had previously swallowed did not run out. At any rate, it was a useful, and perhaps a practical, demonstration, of what would happen, and I think that it was convincing, as the other boatmen were willing to take my word for it, and so avoid further practical tests being applied to them.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

CRICKET:

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

A GOOD medium-pace bowler must learn accuracy, how to bowl a ball straight, how to acquire length and variation of pace. But the most important thing will be his length of run. Walter Mead is very strong indeed upon this point. No exact rule can be given about the matter, but if you want to study a couple of models for your delivery, then Walter Mead or J. N. Crawford are the best to watch, and may be described, with Haigh, as the pick of our English medium-pace bowlers.

Junior cricketers will always find that by watching the play of some of our most famous professionals, they will learn many useful tips, which will greatly help them.

Beware of an Uncertain Style.

What the amount of run will be I cannot tell, but it certainly will not be more than half the distance of the wicket. The importance of finding out exactly what it is, and observing exactly the same distance in practice as in matches, is shown by the fact that you will get an uncertain style unless you are particular about starting from the same mark every time.

Generally speaking, on a good, fast, dry wicket, you will have eight of your men on the off-side, and only mid-on and a man deep on the on-side; while on a slow, easy wicket, a sticky wicket, or a crumbling one, the field will be placed very differently indeed, and the slips, third man, point, cover, and mid-off will be close on the off-side of the wicket; while on the leg-side will be mid-on, short-leg, and long-on.

The sticky wicket, by which I mean one that has suffered as a result of a heavy night's rain, followed by a scorching sun, gives medium bowlers rich opportunities, and it is under such conditions some of the best bowling performances are done.

Even Walter Mead will tell you that at such a time he has not the slightest notion of what is going to happen. The ball may rise with a huge break over a batsman's head, it may shoot or keep uncommonly low, or it may break from leg after having an off spin from the bowler's hand; in fact, such a wicket will bring about a collapse of the most powerful side.

A Regular Teaser.

If you go to Leyton you will notice that Mead is very accurate in length, apt to deceive in flight, and able to make a ball break both ways. He delivers the ball with a high arm and round swing, and can be a regular teaser if the wicket helps him. His off-break is very quick, and his leg-break comes off the ground with a curious upward curl. In order to get a grip for his off-break the ball rests in a kind of cup made with the thumb and the second finger, whilst the first finger is curled round the top of the ball, and takes a purchase on the swing.

Hugh Trumble, of Victoria, was a giant in stature, and he bowled well. The ball, bumping down from his great height, rose awkwardly from the pitch. His splendid length always commanded respect, and English wickets suited him far, far better than Australian ones. No man in the world has used his head as did this great student, unless it was George Giffen; and batsmen soon found out that if there was a flaw in their defence he was quick to take advantage of it, and in trying to bowl a man would watch what his favourite stroke was, and then send down a tempting ball, which pitched a little short or a little wide, the batsman getting out through his best scoring strokes.

(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.

Here is a copy of Form D, which I promised to give my readers last week.

Form D.

1. Name of proposed competition.
2. Year of formation.
3. Name and address of secretary.
4. List of clubs forming the competition.

Note.—The clubs must be arranged in alphabetical order.

Name of Club.	Name of Secretary.	Address of Secretary.	Name of County or District Association in which the Club belongs.	Names of Competitions in which the Club played last season.	Names of other Competitions the Club proposes to compete next season.

Now that formal application has been made to the County Association for official sanction to the league, there is nothing to do but wait until such sanction is given, as according to a bye-law of the Football Association (Bye-law 7, to wit), "Leagues or competitions shall not allow matches to be played until their clubs and rules have been approved." Should the County Association refuse sanction, the league has the privilege to appeal to

the Football Association;

but such a thing as a refusal is a very, very rare occurrence. In the present instance we will take that formal sanction is given without further ado. Formal sanction having been given, the next step is for the secretary of the league to call a meeting of club secretaries for the purpose of arranging fixtures. A meeting of club secretaries for fixing up their matches is always good fun for anyone who happens to be present and who has not a great interest in any one particular club. Each club will be trying its best to "fix up" the best, or what it considers the best, clubs for the holiday matches, and will be trying to have matches at home, say, at Christmas or Eastertide, having no doubt a good "gate" in view. Everything will be taken in good part, each secretary being jealous of his own club; but, as in many other things, it is a case of the survival of the fittest, or the one who has his wits about, or, as some are apt to put it, the most cheek. By some who decry

League Football,

these remarks will be voiced as instances of the harm leagues do; but I contend that he is a poor secretary who won't do his best for his own club.

It will be found advisable not to commence league matches until the last Saturday in September or the first in October.

The rules of the league should be printed, together with the whole of the fixtures, and each club constituting the league should be furnished with at least two copies, one for the captain of the club, and the other for the secretary. Nearly all County Associations publish a handbook or guide, and if possible get the league's fixtures printed in this book. Do not forget to furnish the local Press with a list of the fixtures by forwarding the fixtures to the newspapers, who will be only too glad to publish

a list of the matches

week by week. Thus the league will receive a free advertisement. And there is no gainsaying the fact that it is advertisement and an enterprising and "pushful" management that a league wants to make it a success.

Well-known gentlemen in the district should be written to, and asked for a subscription, as it will be found hard work to keep the league out of debt on entrance-fees alone.

If possible, try to arrange a concert—not a smoking-concert—or something similar, so that the funds of the league may be augmented.

I feel sure if the few hints I have given are carried out, and the clubs affiliated adhere both in letter and spirit to the rules which have already appeared, the league cannot help but be a successful one, and be a means of cementing good-fellowship, and producing better and keener football than in friendly matches.

THE END

THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

First Announcement Concerning our STARTLING NEW PROGRAMME for 1907-8.

SOLID SILVER CUPS, SILVER MEDALS, AND HUNDREDS OF MATCH FOOTBALLS TO BE GIVEN AWAY!

Your Editor is prepared to present a Large Number of Solid Silver Challenge Cups to Certain Bona-fide Football Leagues throughout the country. Secretaries of Leagues desirous to possess one of these handsome Trophies should make application now. Form of application will be found below.

The following are the Conditions under which the Cups will be given:

I. The Leagues must play the game according to the Rules laid down by the Football Association.

II. Each League must be a properly constituted League in which the clubs engage in a genuine competition.

III. Each form of entry must be accompanied by full particulars of the competition, which must be of one season's standing, or if formed this season must be accompanied by proof that it is a genuine competition.

LEAGUE RESULTS.

In connection with these great League Competitions for THE BOYS' REALM Challenge Cups we intend to publish records of the positions of the clubs in the various Leagues as the season progresses, and to award weekly prizes of footballs for good performances.

Football Club Secretaries are requested to draw the attention of their League Secretaries to this announcement of Your Editor's splendid offer.

THIS FORM FOR FOOTBALL LEAGUES ONLY.

Name of League .....

Year of Formation .....

Number of Clubs in League .....

Secretary's Name and Address .....

.....

.....

This form, together with full particulars of the League, to be addressed to the Secretary, THE BOYS' REALM League, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

The following Leagues are being formed for the benefit of Unattached Clubs throughout the country—

Section 1. "THE BOYS' REALM" LONDON LEAGUE.

TWO HANDSOME SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

DIVISION ONE—NORTH. DIVISION TWO—SOUTH.

Finalists (Senior and Junior) in each Division to play each other at Close of Season for the Cups. The losing Teams in the Finals to receive Solid Silver Medals.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed fifteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed eighteen.

Section 2. "THE BOYS' REALM" SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

Open to any football club in the South of England, excluding Greater London.

TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed fifteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed eighteen.

Section 3. "THE BOYS' REALM" NORTHERN LEAGUE.

Open to any football club in the North of England.

TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER CUPS (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed fifteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed eighteen.

Section 4. "THE BOYS' REALM" SCOTS LEAGUE.

Open to any football club in Scotland.

TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed fifteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed eighteen.

Section 5. "THE BOYS' REALM" IRISH LEAGUE.

Open to any football club in Ireland.

TWO HANDSOME SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed fifteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed eighteen.

N.B.—These Trophies are only to be put up for competition on condition that a certain number of clubs make application to compete for them, such number to be decided by Your Editor at an early date.

RULES AND CONDITIONS.

(a) Only clubs which have been established at least one season (exclusive of 1907-8) are eligible for entry, and the respectability and standing of each club must be vouched for by some responsible person.

(b) Clubs desirous of entering one of the above contests must fill in the form below, and send it, together with a list of their engagements, with the average age of members of the opposing clubs, and a letter from the president of the club, to the Secretary, BOYS' REALM Football League, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C., as soon as possible.

(c) The cups will be presented at the end of the football season to the clubs in each section which Your Editor, the Secretary, and another referee, consider to hold the best records in the first twenty-four matches actually played. It does not matter on what date the first match is played. Wednesday and Thursday clubs may compete. Points to be awarded as follows: Two for a win, one for a draw; the points to be counted as in the First and Second Divisions of the Football League. If two or more clubs finish with an equal number of points, the goal average shall decide the winners. The decision of the referees (Your Editor, the Secretary, and another) on any question of dispute in this competition shall be final.

(d) After the contest has started we shall, from time to time, publish tables showing the positions of the clubs at the time of going to press. Secretaries must, therefore, send in each week the full result of their matches. Each result must also be accompanied by a notification from the Captain of the opposing team signifying that the report is quite correct. These results must reach the Secretary of THE BOYS' REALM League at the above address not later than the Tuesday morning following the match.

(e) Strict investigations will be made by the controllers of the League into the bona-fides of the entering clubs and their fixtures.

(f) All matches to be played under the Rules of the Football Association.

(g) The Cups to be won outright. No club which has previously won a Cup will be allowed to compete again for a period of three years, although they may send in their reports in order to participate in our weekly award of Prize Footballs.

(h) Opposing teams must, in every case, be of the same average age.

THIS FORM FOR SINGLE UNATTACHED CLUBS ONLY.

Date..... Club.....

Playing Ground .....

Average Age of Members .....

Colours .....

The above club is desirous of entering THE BOYS' REALM League (Section ....), and the members agree to conform to the conditions governing the contest, and to abide by the decision of Your Editor, the Secretary, and a referee in any case of dispute.

Secretary's Name .....

Address .....

THE SCHOOL ON THE CLIFF.

A Magnificent New Story of Stirring Adventure.

By E. HARCOURT BURRAGE.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS FINE NEW STORY.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Jaunty and his chums play a joke on Peter Pinnick, who swears revenge. Jack makes friends with some new arrivals at Sterncraig, a Mr. Belton and his two daughters.

Later, Mr. Belton'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.

Later, Peter Pinnick is discovered half dead, having been struck on the head with some blunt instrument. Suspicion falls upon Mr. Belton. Some excursionists arrive at Sterncraig, accompanied by a brass band. The drummer of the latter falls down the cleft, a deep hole in the cliffs. Jack Jaunty descends to rescue him, and at the bottom discovers a stout club clotted with blood, which he recognises as being the property of Bob Baxter's son Jim. The mystery surrounding the attack on Peter Pinnick is now made clear to him, and he is overcome with horror at his discovery.

Jack falls out with Mr. Belton for refusing to establish his innocence. Jack's reasons for so doing are obvious, it being for Bob Baxter's sake. Mark Ricketts is a very mysterious character, and Jack is certain that he has a special object in coming to the School on the Cliff. He taxes Mark with this, but the lad will not admit such to be the case.

(You read this week's instalment.)

Mr. Ferrula in difficulties.

"PERHAPS he would be a friend to me," muttered Mark. "But how can I tell father? He would kill me!"

Jack, with no more definite purpose than he had when starting into the country, now hastened to the sea. By taking advantage of a lane that ran westward, he was able to avoid the boys at play upon the cliff, and choosing one of the more dangerous down-paths, he descended to the beach. There, to his surprise, he ran against Nickey, who was mooning about.

"Hallo, Jack!" he said.

"Why, Nickey," returned Jack, "what are you doing here?"

"Nothing—nothing!" replied Nickey. "I was just wondering what the girls were doing yonder."

Jack followed the direction of Nickey's eyes, and saw the familiar forms of Ivonne, Laura, and Miss Harrison.

They were seated on the rocks reading—facing his way, but not looking towards him.

"Hang it!" muttered Jack. "It looks as if I had come after them, which I haven't done. Ivonne's got to speak first.

"Let's get away in the other direction," he added, aloud.

"Why?" asked Nickey.

"I don't want to talk to the girls to-day."

"But I do," muttered Nickey, under his breath.

However, he followed Jack up the beach for a score of yards or so until they came to a cluster of rocks. There they paused, and both looked moodily about them.

The boys' meditations were broken in upon by a voice—low, expressive, and awe-inspiring:

"Hith, there, Jaunty!"

It came from behind them, and wheeling round, Jack saw the head and shoulders of Mr. Ferrula rising above the rocks.

As no clothes were visible, Jack assumed that he had been bathing.

"Jaunty, for mercy's sake, get those ladies to go away, and fetch me some sort of clothes to get home in!"

"Have you lost your things?" asked Jack.

"Yes; some tramp has robbed me of them as I bathed."

"But who can have done such a thing?" asked Jack.

"I don't know!" groaned Mr. Ferrula. "And what possessed those ladies to come here at this hour I don't know. I wish you would ask them to go away. They've shifted two or three times nearer and nearer to me. If they should see me clad only in a bathing costume the shock would kill me."

"Well, you would give them a scare. Hallo! What's the matter?" asked Jack.

Mr. Ferrula had suddenly dropped down behind the rock.

"The ladies!" he gasped. "They are looking this way. They saw me, I am sure!"

"I suppose I had better ask them to go away," said Jack, "but as we are not now on speaking terms, I am not at all sure they will heed me. What shall I do then?"

"Tell them a dead man has been washed ashore—anything!" gasped the tutor. "Only be quick and get me some clothes. Bring an ulster; there is one of mine hanging in the hall!"

"All right," said Jack. "Lie close—I'll soon be back."

"I—I—I am getting awfully c-o-old!" gasped Ferrula.

Jack bade Nickey remain there, and walked away in the direction of the ladies, who saw him coming.

When he was near them, Ivonne dropped her eyes upon her book and ignored him. Laura bowed politely, Miss Harrison smiled.

"Ladies," said Jack, raising his cap, "I advise you to get away from here at once."

"Why?" asked Miss Harrison. "We are safe for hours. The tide is not yet fully out."

"It is not on account of the tide," said Jack, "but just behind those rocks there is a horrible monster who would not care to look upon. Pray go away!"

He looked at Ivonne, who persistently ignored him.

Angered by her assumed indifference, he allowed his temper to get the better of him, and without any further explanation about the sea-monster, he raised his cap and walked quickly on.

"What an absurd story!" said Miss Harrison. "Got up as an excuse to speak to us," said Ivonne; "but I won't have anything to do with sneaks."

"Jack is no sneak," replied Laura.

"He is!"

"He isn't!"

"And pray, what is it to you what he is and what he is not?" demanded Ivonne.

"As much as it is to you, now," replied Laura, "and perhaps a little more."

There was a provoking smile on Laura's face as she spoke, which had an embittering effect on Ivonne. Her eyes flashed, and some very angry words were rising to her lips when Miss Harrison intervened.

"Come, girls, quarrelling," she said. "Suppose we try to find this monster cast out by the sea?"

"I don't want to go anywhere," replied Ivonne. "I hate you both!"

"Ivonne!"

"I do, whatever happens, I don't care. I hate you!"

And Ivonne looked for a moment as earnest as ever she had in her life. Then her mood suddenly changed, and she burst into tears.

"Come, Ivonne," said Miss Harrison, "this won't do! You are low and hysterical. We must get the doctor to see you."

"If he comes bothering me," said Ivonne, "I will scratch him! Let's go and see this monster Jack Jaunty has been fibbing about."

It was useless to argue with one in such a contradictory mood, and probably Miss Harrison had a fair idea of the cause of it, so they went with her to see the strange object Jack Jaunty had spoken of.

The "monster," staring between two rocks, saw them coming, and in muttered, broken tones it prayed that the earth might open and swallow him. Nickey stood his ground, and got himself ready to make the most of his opportunity. He hoped the ladies would stop and speak to him, but they did not. They only bowed, and passed on.

On coming to the rocks behind which the "quaking monster" lay, Miss Harrison signalled for the girls to stop while she surveyed the hidden wonder. One peep over the rocks sufficed.

She saw a human form, presumably that of a man, grovelling in the sand like a lob-worm, in a hurry to get out of sight, and drew hurriedly back.

"Come away, girls!" she said hastily.

"Is it so very terrible?" asked Ivonne.

"It is hideous," said Miss Harrison—"appalling! Don't stop a moment, or you will repent of it. I implore you to come away!"

The girls knew not what to make of it; but the agitated manner of Miss Harrison sufficed to let them know that they ought not to stay, and, following her quickly, they hurried off, without so much as looking at Nickey, who was squatting on the sands, gloomy and burning with anger.

"A stuck-up wench!" he said, glancing after Laura.

Where the Clothes Were—A Serious Blow.

AFTER several futile attempts to bury himself, Mr. Ferrula gave up the job, and, curling himself up periwinkle fashion, prepared to die with shame. He expected every moment to hear Miss Harrison calling him a brute and a beast and a hundred hard things; but the first person who addressed him was Nickey.

"Mr. Ferrula," he said, climbing up the rock and peeping over, "it's all right. Those precious girls are gone."

"Who is that?" asked Mr. Ferrula faintly.

"Nickey Hopkins."

"Oh, yes, I see—Hopkins. Where's Jaunty?"

"Come to get you some togs—clothes."

"It's kind of him," sighed Mr. Ferrula, as he took up a sitting position against the rock; "but he will bring them too late. They've seen me."

"Only the old 'un, Miss Harrison," said Nickey irreverently. "The other girls didn't. I don't see anything to howl about."

"Hopkins," said Mr. Ferrula, with a faint attempt to be dignified, "your language is flippant. It isn't at all becoming!"

"Here's some of them coming!" cried Nickey suddenly. "It looks like Jack, and I think there is Bob Baxter with him."

It was Jack and Bob, and they had brought with them Bob's Sunday suit for Mr. Ferrula to go home in. It was not exactly Bond Street apparel, but under the circumstances it was very welcome, and Mr. Ferrula, with a grateful heart, arrayed himself therein.

"That's over and above comfortable for you, sir," said Bob. "A bit stiffish, eh?"

"Yes," said Mr. Ferrula; "and they chafe here and there, but I assure you, though, they come as a blessing and a boon."

Attired in the heavy clothes, too big for him in every way, the tutor was an object of pity; but to keep from laughing was impossible. Jack had not enjoyed such a hearty laugh since his misunderstanding with the Beltons as he now indulged in.

As for Nickey, he perpetrated all sorts of movements behind the back of Mr. Ferrula, each and all expressive of the keenest mirth; and the tutor, conscious of being very ridiculous, stalked on with as much dignity as he could muster for the occasion. He had, he believed, a pretty good idea who the offender was.

His clothes could not possibly have been carried away by the tide, and it was, therefore, the work of a human being.

Who was that human being or fiend? Redditch, of course.

How his brother tutor had accomplished the feat of stealing down to the beach, purloining his clothes, and departing unseen was a mystery Mr. Ferrula did not attempt to solve.

Before getting to the schoolhouse he encountered about two thirds of the boys hanging or playing about in small groups, and it is needless to say that his get-up had a galvanising effect upon them. Nickey, lingering behind, explained matters as far as he could, and thereby added to their mirth.

Mr. Ferrula changed his clothes, and sought his brother tutor, whom he found in the garden at the back of the house reading a book.

The charge of purloining the garments was made, and indignantly denied. High words ensued so high that they reached the ears of Mr. Bonnington and his wife, who came out to ascertain what was the matter.

Mr. Ferrula repeated his charge, and was about, in the heat of the moment, to declare that he saw Redditch stealing away with his apparel, when the silent-footed, grim Gruelton appeared on the scene.

His presence always had a chilling effect upon the old and young in the school, and the hot-worded debate instantly subsided.

"What is it, Gruelton?" asked Mrs. Bonnington.

"The man—Baxter, ma'am!" replied Gruelton. "He's found Mr. Ferrula's clothes higher up the beach. He says that the gentleman must have mistaken where he left them. I've put them in your room, sir."

The last words were addressed to Mr. Ferrula with a quiet suavity that ought to have dispelled all idea of mirthful malignity, and yet the tutor felt that Gruelton was enjoying a secret laugh at his expense.

"Thank you, Gruelton!" was all he could faintly say.

Gruelton departed as quietly as he came, and a silence of a few moments followed his departure. It was broken by Mr. Bonnington.

"Ferrula," he said, "it is clear that you have made an—an"—he was going to say, "an ass of yourself," but remembering the presence of Mrs. Bonnington in time, he concluded with—"a great mistake—a very great mistake!"

"At the expense of the dignity of the school!" said Mrs. Bonnington, with a withering look.

"I certainly thought I landed at the same spot where I went in," said Mr. Ferrula dismally; "but missing my clothes, and seeing the ladies, I got confused——"

Mrs. Bonnington walked away, and her example was followed by her husband. Mr. Redditch, with a sarcastic smile, resumed his book.

"I say, old fellow," said Mr. Ferrula, "we all make mistakes, and if, in the heat of——"

"Go and get your head shaved!" said Mr. Redditch politely. "Possibly then you will be a bit cooler."

This to a man with a head as bald as an egg was a very telling hit, and Mr. Ferrula collapsed. Unable to retort with any force, he beat a retreat, and was seen no more that day.

When he resumed his duties on the morrow there was a cowed look upon his face, and he went through the ordinary work of the school like one on the point of breaking down with fatigue. Nickey and Will had a high old time of it, blundering as usual through their lessons, giving answers much at variance with the questions, but escaping the mildest form of reproof.

The next day it was whispered about that Mr. Ferrula had resigned his post, and in a few hours it was verified. He had not only resigned, but wished to go at once, and on the evening of the second day he departed.

Somehow the boys, although they never liked him very much, were sorry he was gone, especially through such a cause; but, as another day came, they ceased to talk about him, and began to wonder about his successor.

"I hope we shall get a free-and-easy fellow," said Nickey; "somebody fond of cricket and all sorts of games, and who hates such rubbish as books."

Nickey was supposed to be getting up his lessons for the morrow as he expressed his fervent desire, and he finished off with a malevolent glance at "The History of Rome," which was lying open before him.

"I should like a fellow who drinks and smokes a bit," said Dan Callis. "We had a tutor in a school where I was a few years ago who used to smuggle beer and tobacco into his bed-room, and sometimes he would get one of the older boys to join him. I never went, of course, as I was too young."

"But you wanted to," said Will Raddle. "A tap-room attached to a school would just suit you."

"I'll twist your nose if you don't mind what you are saying," growled Dan.

"But I do mind what I say," returned Will, "and I want you and the others to mind it, too. You've been to the tap-room of the Mermaid before to-day."

The face of Dan flushed to a deep crimson, and he got up with a threatening air.

"You can't prove it!" he hissed.

"Oh, yes, I can!" said Will coolly. "You left your handkerchief there yesterday, and the landlord asked me to give it to you. Here it is."

Will drew the handkerchief out of his pocket and tossed it towards Callis, who sullenly put it away.

"Suppose I did just look in," he said—"what then."

"Oh, nothing to me," said Will carelessly; "but if Bonnington knew it, you would be expelled pronto."

"Raddle," said Jack, "it isn't fair of you to blurt this thing out before everybody. Of course, I don't for a moment suppose that anyone here would peach; but it is as well to be on the safe side."

Mark Ricketts, who was standing by Dan Callis, stared at Jack in astonishment. He could hardly believe that such a sentiment from him towards one he had good cause to hate could be honestly expressed. And Dan received it with a sneer.

"Thank you!" he said. "You've neatly prepared the way for splitting on me."

The attention of the boys was now concentrated on this group at the top end of one of the desks; all studies were suspended for the time.

"Callis," said Jack, "you are one of those curs who cannot be touched by kindness or improved by boating. For all that, if you insinuate again that I am a sneak, I will thrash you!"

"I only judge you as I judge others and others judge me," muttered Callis.

"You've got to withdraw that insinuation!" said Jack.

"Withdraw it, have I?" said Dan, with a gulping action of the throat.

"Yes, and at once!"

"And if I say no?"

"I will thrash you here, at once," said Jack.

Mark Ricketts had his eyes now fixed upon the face of Callis, watching its workings, which showed the bitterness of the spirit within him. He was not by any means brave, but he was not exactly an abject coward, and there was too much at stake for him to yield at once.

"You ask for too much, Jaunty," he said.

"I ask for no more than you have a right to give," replied Jack. "Please to remember that the insinuation was a voluntary and false one."

"I won't withdraw it," said Callis, with an effort; "for I believe what I said is true."

Jack sprang at him, and Dan, rushing to Mr. Bonnington's desk, seized a heavy ruler that was lying on the top. It was nearly as heavy, and quite as hard as a policeman's truncheon.

"Keep off!" he cried, adopting a defensive attitude.

Jack rushed in and received a heavy blow fairly on the forehead. It set a thousand fires dancing before his eyes, and he felt the blood from a serious wound flow over his face and into his eyes, half blinding him. But still he rushed on, and bore Callis to the ground, upsetting a form with a crash.

Seizing the ruler, he dragged it from the hand of his enemy and cast it aside. But he was now quite blind and overcome with the loss of blood and excitement; he rolled aside and lay extended on the floor at full length, quite still.

Dull and sick with horror, the witnesses of this scene remained staring at the ghastly picture Jack presented. Dan Callis got slowly upon his feet. On his face and shirt-front



Jack dived under the man's arm, and dashed for the cliff. "Stop him!" cried Pinnick.

some of the blood had fallen, and he was not exactly pleasant to look upon.

Quaking with fear, he stooped down and looked at Jack. The boy lay as one dead. Gerard Inglis stepped up from the back of the school, and knelt down beside his friend.

"You've done it this time, you brute!" he said to Dan. "You've killed him!"

"I only defended myself," said Dan, looking wildly about him; "any of you would have done the same. But he can't be dead."

"He's near it, anyway," replied Gerard. "Poor old Jack! One of you fetch some water, and tell Mrs. Bonnington that she's wanted; and, mind this, you are not to know who did it. I am sure Jack would never wish you to peach about this dastardly business. Callis, you are a cowardly cur!"

Ivonne Pays a Debt.

DAN CALLIS offered no reply. After one more hasty glance at Jack, he stole from the room, and with him the evidence that would have convicted him. Mrs. Bonnington was summoned, and she came in with the quiet air of a woman used to mishaps among the boys. Whenever anything went wrong with them, it was her cool head and hand that put it right.

She glanced at Jack, and some of the colour fled from her cheeks; but she spoke quite calmly.

"A sponge, some warm water, and ask Mary to bring me the vaseline and some pieces of clean, white linen rag. Do not say anything at present to Mr. Bonnington if you should see him. Stand back, boys! Let him have all the air he can."

She stooped down, and, raising Jack's head upon her arm, listened to his breathing. It was faint but regular.

"Was this an accident?" she asked suddenly, looking up at the group of boys around her.

There was a little uneasy shifting of feet, but nothing else by way of an answer.

"Who did it?" was her next question. "It was not a fair blow such as one boy might give another. Who did it?"

There came no answer. The water and other things at that moment was brought in, and Mrs. Bonnington proceeded with a tender hand to wash the wound. It was nearly three inches long, and the scalp was laid bare.

"Cruel—cruel!" murmured Mrs. Bonnington, as she placed a rag covered with vaseline over the wound. "It is a marvel he was not killed outright. Boys, you've got to tell me who did this."

"If Jack will permit us," replied Gerard, "we will say who it is."

As he spoke, Jack opened his eyes slowly, and looked about him like one imperfectly aroused from sleep. By degrees he realised his position, and the memory of recent events came back to him. Placing a hand upon his bandaged head, he said:

"Thank you, Mrs. Bonnington; you are very kind! I am not hurt much, and you need not trouble any more."

"But you are seriously hurt," replied Mrs. Bonnington, "and I want you to tell me who did it."

"I cannot do that," Jack replied.

"You mean you won't."

"I would rather not."

Jack made an effort to rise, and then Mrs. Bonnington and Gerard Inglis assisted him to his feet; but it was plain that he could not stand without assistance.

"If I may lie down for an hour," he said, "I shall be all right."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Bonnington, "you had better go to the invalids' room and retire to rest. I will send you up something warm to drink, and Mr. Bonnington will see you before he goes to bed."

The invalids' room was an isolated chamber rarely used, and the mere fact of Mrs. Bonnington desiring Jack to go there indicated that she considered his wound serious.

Jack was inclined also to think that Dan had given him a nasty crack, for he had never had his knowledge felt so weak before. His thoughts were confused also, and his brain burned, so he did not demur to the proposition, but allowed himself to be led upstairs by Gerard and Nickey, who helped him to undress and get into bed. Half an hour afterwards Mrs. Bonnington came into the room and found him talking idle nonsense. At midnight Jack was raving under the influence of fever. It was a quiet day that followed, for it was known to all the boys that Jack was very seriously ill. Bonnington said that he would die.

Nothing more was said about the culprit by Mr. and Mrs. Bonnington, and no inquiries were made. Nevertheless, Dan Callis was in a state of abject terror. Said Gerard Inglis to him:

"If Jack gets well he can do as he likes about exposing you; but if he dies we are bound to do it."

"I didn't know what I was doing," muttered Callis.

"Bosh!" said Gerard. "You were always a brute!"

With so many boys in the secret it was certainly wonderful that none of them peached. But they all held their peace. Respect for Jack was at the bottom of their reticence. They were one and all assured that he would not approve of anything being said.

Strange to say, Dan Callis stood mostly in terror of one who professed to be his chum. In Mark Ricketts he saw one who might in sheer malice turn against him. So he took an early opportunity to inform him that if he said a word he would exact terrible vengeance. A vague form of threat which covered many possibilities.

The day wore on, and the doctor called three times since Jack's return. He should say that, apart from his injuries, he has some trouble on his mind.

"He is not a boy to yield to a minor sorrow," replied Mr. Bonnington, "and I am sure I don't know what great grief he can have."

"Nevertheless," said the doctor, "he has one."

Box Baxter, hearing the news, came up to the school and asked permission to communicate with the Stranger on the Bowl.

It was given, and Bob went off on his errand. In a few hours he returned in a state of perplexity.

"The Stranger's gone," he said. "He told his housekeeper not to be anxious about him, and went off on Bob's word three days ago, and he haven't been seen since."

This was startling news, but it was useless surmising anything about the Stranger's movements. Nobody knew whence he came or whither he was likely to go.

"It is a thousand pities he is not here," said Mr. Bonnington. "If this poor boy should die while he is away he will go distracted."

"We mustn't think of that, sir," said Bob, with set lips. "I durstn't do it. I've been happier lately, for my boy is getting well, and he's a good boy now. I can't abear to think of anything wrong with Master Jack."

Bob went away gloomy enough, and all through the village there was a general expression of regret, and some talk as to the author of his injuries.

The School on the Cliff.

(Continued from the previous page.)

As nothing was said about it the general assumption was that it was an accident.

Meanwhile, Mr. Terrapin was staying at the Mermaid.

He had taken up his residence there for an indefinite period. He ate and drank of the best, paid his bill punctually, and gave very little trouble. Therefore he was a welcome guest to the landlord.

And the frequenters were beginning to like him. Sometimes he would join them in the evening, chat freely, and occasionally go so far as to sing a song. He had a good voice, and acquitted himself in that direction in a creditable manner.

. . . . . .

Peter Pinnick had taken a sudden turn for the better. The doctor said he must have an amazing constitution to be able to gain strength at the pace he did. The news of Jack Jaunty's illness gave him entire satisfaction.

"Boys like him are reg'lar pests!" he said. "They interfere with honest men and stand in the way of their rights."

How Jack did so he did not attempt to express, but, as we know, he had very peculiar notions about what was due to him, and the nature of the "rights" may be easily guessed.

On the third day the feverish symptoms in Jack began to abate, and the doctor took a more hopeful view of his case.

"If nothing distracts him," he said, "he will soon get well. The boy has a sound constitution, and if his mind is right, his body will stand a great strain."

"I don't know of anything to put his mind wrong," said Mr. Bonnington.

From this time Jack mastered his illness. On the fourth day the fever was gone, and he was able to tell events, and converse a little with those who attended upon him.

Only Gerard Inglis of the boys was permitted to see him, because he was quiet and sensible, and would not talk too much. Jack asked him if anybody had said anything to the schoolmaster about the affair.

"No," replied Gerard. "It was understood you would not like it."

"Of course I shouldn't," said Jack; "and I am glad nobody poached. I can settle my own affairs."

As Jack grew better, the school gradually resumed its cheerful tone, and Dan Callis, relieved from a terrible fear, became his insolent self again. Taking advantage of Jack's absence, he tried the old bullying game with the smaller boys; but there he made another mistake. Nickey Hopkins gathered half a dozen into a band, elected himself as chief, and defied the bully.

"If you dare to touch one of us," he said, "we will all come at you. If we can't lick you with fists we will try sticks."

Dan thought he had better let them alone, and, swallowing the pill of humiliation, sought consolation in another direction.

Now he was fully aware of the coolness existing between Jack and Ivonne, and he thought it would be a fine opportunity to ingratiate himself with her. Of course, she would be very glad that Jack had been "licked," as he was pleased to call it, and as Dan was the victor he would be rewarded with sweet smiles.

Dan had a very meagre idea of both male and female humanity, as he judged them from his own standard.

It was two or three days before he could get an opportunity to speak with Ivonne alone. He had been twice at the Folly, and on each occasion the ordinary inquiries about Jack had been made, and he had given the usual answers. On the third occasion when he called he found Ivonne alone in the garden. She did not ask after Jack, so Dan took upon himself to acquaint her with his condition.

"Jaunty's much better," he said.

"What has been the matter with him?" she said curtly.

"Got into a school fight and was licked," said Dan.

"Not in fair fight," said Ivonne decidedly.

"Anything is fair when you get hold of a fellow so he's much for you," said Dan.

"I thought otherwise," replied Ivonne. "Was he not knocked down with a stick or something?"

"A ruler," said Dan.

"And you did it," said Ivonne.

"Yes. I did it," said Dan, "and it served him right."

"What a coward you must be!" said Ivonne, with a curled lip.

"A coward?"

"Yes, to use a weapon. He is not so big as you."

"He is as tall."

Dan was getting dismayed. He now began to wish he had left the matter alone.

"I am sure Jack would not have done it," said Ivonne, "if you had been twice his size. I call it mean, contemptible, cowardly."

Completely floored in a moral sense, Dan stood still for a few minutes, with his eyes bent upon the ground.

"I am sorry, Miss Belton," he said at last, "if I have offended you."

"It is no concern of mine," returned Ivonne; "I only speak as anyone else would on a public matter. I don't know much about boys, but I have always understood that when they fight at all they ought to fight fairly."

She turned away from him and walked up the garden. He did not attempt to follow her. He felt that his endeavour to curry favour had resulted in his hopelessly losing caste with her. After twiddling with the buttons of his waistcoat for a while, he cast a malevolent glance at her, turned on his heel, and abruptly walked away.

"I wonder," he muttered, "if she would have held such high notions if he had half murdered me?"

He was satisfied that she would not have done so if he was proportionately angry with her. It was galling to him in a manner he could find no words to express.

She let him go, and as the gate swung to there was a satisfied smile upon her lips, as if she had become a grudge against somebody, and was pleased with the opportunity of settling the debt at last.

(To be continued in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

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CLUB NOTICES.

Notices and Challenges from Readers' Own Clubs. These are Inserted Free of Charge.

ST. ANDREW'S F.C. (average age, 14; weak) want matches for the coming season. Several dates open.—Apply, E. G. C., 58, Anstey Road, Peckham Rye, S.E.

ALBANY JUNIORS F.C. (average age, 14; medium) require home or away matches in or around Bristol for coming season.—Apply, P. W. G. Thomas, 37, Shaftesbury Avenue, Montpelier, Bristol.

ARMLEY HALL A.F.C. (average age, 18) want dates with first-class teams in Leeds and district. Dressing-room required.—Apply, F. H. Whittell, Secretary, 10, Stapleton Place, New Wortley, Leeds.

CROMER STAR F.C. (average age, 16) wishes to join a league (W.C. district preferred) which is entering for a "B.R." cup; are willing to pay a reasonable sum. The above club also wish to fill the following dates: Oct. 12th, away; Jan. 11th, away; Feb. 15th, home; Feb. 29th, home; March 7th, away. Ground: Parliament Hill.—Apply, J. Pinchard, Secretary, 101, Lymington Avenue, Noel Park, N.

ST. GEORGE'S F.C. requires matches home and away; nearly all dates open.—Apply, W. Mason, Hon. Sec., 30, Cloudesley Street, Liverpool Road, Islington.

ST. BARNABAS F.C. (15; medium) require matches for the following dates with respectable clubs, for the coming season, 1907-8. Home—21st Sept., 12th Oct., 9th Nov., 4th Jan., 25th Jan., 8th Feb., 22nd Feb., 7th March. Away—7th Sept., 28th Sept., 19th Oct., 14th Dec., 28th Dec., 18th Jan., 1st Feb., 15th Feb., 29th Feb., 14th March, 28th March. Also few players required (sub. 15.).—Apply, V. Taylor, Hon. Sec., Glenmore, 57, Elsenham Street, Southfields, S.W.

LUTSOME JUNIORS A.F.C. (average age, 16; weak) would like fixtures for the following dates: Dec. 28th, home; Feb. 8th, away; March 21st, home; March 28th, away. Only clubs within 5 miles radius of Lutheridge need apply to J. Wiggins, 2, Queen's Road, Lutsome, Gloucestershire.

FRANKLIN RESERVES F.C. (genuine average, 15) require matches for coming season; away matches preferred, within a radius of 5 miles from Parliament Hill.—Apply, F. C. Knight, 46, Spencer Road, Dartmouth Road, London, N.W.

WOLVERTON VICTORIA A.F.C. (average age, 18) require matches for coming season. All dates open. Radius of 10 miles.—Apply, R. Henson, Secretary, 27, Windsor Street, Wolverton, Bucks.

A BOY (age, 15 years 9 months) is desirous of joining a F.C. in or around Wolverhampton. Can play any position. Willing to pay any reasonable sub.—Apply, A. Harvey, 39, Exchange Street, Wolverhampton.

WANTED (under 18) on September 1st, a fast back to play through next season in that position; must be well built, and pay 2d. per week.—Apply, A. Farmery, 5, Cheapside, Halifax, Yorks.

NEWSHAM PARK AND DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE (2 divisions; average ages, 16 and 17). Vacancies in the above league.—Apply 11, Measburn Street, Low Hill.

BRECKFIELD JUNIORS A.F.C. (average age, 16 to 18) want players for all positions; must have played in league matches before.—Apply, C. Baggaley, Secretary, 61, Shakespeare Street, Everton, Liverpool.

THE CAMBERWELL AND PECKHAM DISTRICT FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

Notice is hereby given to football clubs, in and near Camberwell and Peckham, of the formation of the above League. All clubs wishing to join this league should at once make application to the undersigned: W. A. Hay, 51, Pitt Street, Peckham, S.E.

NOTICE TO NORTHERN IRISH READERS.

Association Football Clubs, whose average age is from 17 to 18½, within sixteen miles radius of Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, Ireland, wishing to enter Junior League (which is now being formed) should communicate at once with F. Kelly, Secretary, "Dungannon United F.C.," Market Square, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, Ireland.

BIRSTALL ST. PATRICK'S R.C., A.F.C. (average age, 17) require dates for coming football season, 1907-8; will play any clubs within a radius of 7 miles of Birstall.—Apply, Martin Lyons, 7, Chandler Hill, off Church Street, Birstall, nr. Leeds.

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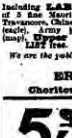
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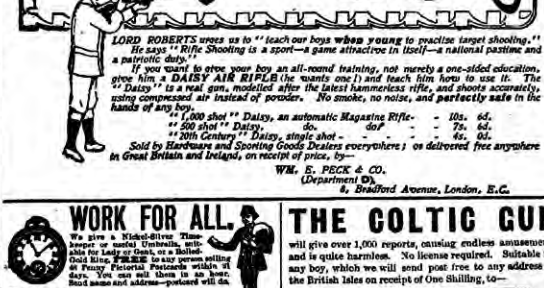


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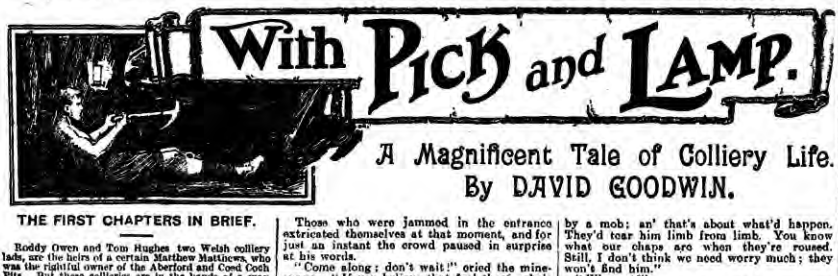
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A Magnificent Tale of Colliery Life.

By DAVID GOODWIN.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

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

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

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

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

One evening, as Roddy and Tom ascend in the cage to the pit mouth, the engine overwinds, and the cage flies to the top and crashes against the staging. The occupants have a narrow escape from death, and the pitmen, believing it to be Kenyon Price's work, break out in riot. After wrecking the works offices, they start out in a body for the mine-owner's mansion at Plas Rhyll. Kenyon Price manages by bluff to give the pitmen the impression that he has had no hand in the overwinding affair, and, as Gladstone any knowledge of Sully, his overseer's whereabouts, when suddenly Terry Lloyd shouts out:

"We've been fooled! Sully's here in the house! I just saw his face at that top window!"

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Free at Last.

RODDY and Tom, as startled as everybody else, looked up hurriedly at the window to which Terry Lloyd pointed. There was undoubtedly somebody there. They caught a vision of a head and shoulders hastily drawing back from the lightened pane, and disappearing. But they were too late to see with any certainty who it was.

Terry's announcement fell on the crowd like a thunderbolt. They stared up at the window, and for a few moments could hardly realise what it meant. But when the idea fairly reached them, their rage boiled up again with redoubled force. Kenyon Price was cheating them. He was acting a double-faced part, pretending to be their friend, while all the time the would-be murderer was hiding in his house.

"Come on, mates! Search the place an' catch him!" shouted fifty voices, as the crowd turned and rushed back again.

"Kill that smooth-faced liar there! Down with him, an' get hold o' Sully!"

Roddy and Tom, who had thought the trouble to be over, were fairly taken aback as they saw the crowd of pitmen, more dangerous than ever, make a mad rush at the house.

So infuriated were they that they got in each other's way, and there were a dozen jammed together in the wide porch, and struggling to free themselves, while the rest pressed from behind, and made matters worse. Above the tumult Kenyon Price's high voice rang out like a bugle.

"Come in and search, then?" he cried. "Come on, you idiots! You're all welcome!"

He flung the doors as wide open as they would go, and stood to let the mob pass.

Those who were jammed in the entrance extricated themselves at that moment, and for just an instant the crowd paused in surprise at his words.

"Come along; don't wait!" cried the mine-owner. "If you believe that fool there, who's probably had too much to drink, come in and search! Sully's no more in this house than the King of Siam is. But don't take my word for it; come and ransack the house!"

"Take him at his word, mates! What are you stoppin' for?" cried the deep voice from the back of the crowd.

"You think you're goin' to bluff us," called Pat Lloyd fiercely; "but it won't work."

"I think nothing of the kind. I am willing for the whole of you to satisfy yourselves," returned Kenyon Price scornfully; "or if you prefer it, choose a dozen from among you for a search-party, and rummage the house from roof to cellars. You shall go by yourselves, and please yourselves. If there's a locked door in the house, too, I'll have it unlocked for you. Don't overlook a nook or a cranny. Come and prove yourselves wrong."

"Ay, that's right enough; we'll do it!" said Luke Jones.

"Let them as was in the cage make the search!" cried another.

There were some protests from the crowd, many of whom wanted to go themselves. But most of the pitmen took to the idea, knowing there was more chance for a dozen picked searchers than for a whole army of men were careering through the place anyhow. Besides, Kenyon Price's offer, and his manner of making it, had already convinced many of them.

"Be quick and begin," said the colliery-owner; "I'm tired of all this folly!"

"Come on, mates!" said Luke Jones. "Where's those two young 'uns?"

But Roddy and Tom had no intention of going with the searchers. They kept themselves out of sight in the background; and as nobody was inclined to wait, a couple of others were taken instead of them. Together with those who had been in the wrecked cage, twelve were soon in all, and they strode into the house with Luke Jones.

"You see," said Kenyon Price from the porch, "I trust you, though you don't trust me."

The assembled pitmen said nothing, though some of them looked a little abashed. The search-party had disappeared into the hall, and Price let them go wherever they liked and do as they pleased, not even troubling to accompany them. Everybody knew the house was full of rich things and objects, easily removable, worth large sums of money.

The crowd made no further demonstration, but waited quietly, talking among themselves. Now and then the cry of the search-party could be seen passing the lighted upstairs windows. The two boys, right at the back, threw themselves under the trees and watched.

"Don't you rather wish we'd gone with 'em?" said Tom.

"No," replied Roddy; "better here, I reckon."

"What d'you think of it?"

"I think Terry's quite right," said Roddy slowly, "and that Sully's in the house."

"By George, do you! If they find him they'll make short work both o' him an' Sully, considerin' the temper they're in now."

"Just so; an' that's why I don't want to have my hand in it. Sully as the brute's treated us, I don't want to see him murdered by a mob; an' that's about what'd happen. They'd tear him limb from limb. You know what our chaps are when they're roused. Still, I don't think we need worry much; they won't find him."

"Why not?"

"You can bet your life he's got a hidin'-place that they'll never chance on," said Roddy confidently, "if they look for a week."

"K. P. looks like comin' out on top, then."

Rodwell's eyes gleamed, and he shut his lips. He disliked the mob riot, but when he thought of Kenyon Price's probable triumph, he felt very like throwing in his lot with the pitmen. He held himself in.

The search took a long time—nearly half an hour. Luke Jones and his companions made a very thorough one, and all the time Price remained in the porch, smoking a cigar, as cool as ever. Finally the searchers returned, looking rather crestfallen.

"I was baf to admit," said Luke loudly, "that we cannot find Sully in ter house, though we haf looked everywhere. And I do not belief he iss there."

The others agreed; even Terry himself would not deny it. The waiting crowd hardly knew what to say.

"Let them as was in the cage make the search!" cried another.

There were some protests from the crowd, many of whom wanted to go themselves. But most of the pitmen took to the idea, knowing there was more chance for a dozen picked searchers than for a whole army of men were careering through the place anyhow. Besides, Kenyon Price's offer, and his manner of making it, had already convinced many of them.

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"Just so; an' that's why I don't want to have my hand in it. Sully as the brute's treated us, I don't want to see him murdered quite capable of hoisting Kenyon Price into the cage, and sending both it and him down the 600-foot drop, and he knew it. But he stepped on to an upturned case, and faced them.

"Men," he said, "you have broken out in an outrageous way, and done great damage here. But I don't wonder at it! I own it freely. I might have done the same in your place."

Tom stuck his tongue in his cheek. He saw Price meant to smooth things over at any cost.

"I have never inspected the result of this accident to the cage, and I say it is a scandal and a shame! Such a thing has never, thank goodness, happened in my colliery before, and I consider it a deep disgrace."

A growl of assent went round among the miners.

"There is one thing you are mistaken about—it cannot have been done on purpose. That idea is absurd. I am an old colliery engineer and expert, and I know! But I do say it shows gross carelessness and neglect! I am only too thankful that no loss of life has occurred, and everybody connected with the accident is hereby dismissed, and banished out of my colliery."

"Sully?" roared the crowd.

"Yes; Mr. Sully, the winding-engine men, and all concerned! Not one of them shall ever set foot in the Coed Coch again! And as for the unfortunate lad Fluellen, whose arm is broken, I shall give him £200 compensation, and pay all his expenses."

"And a cheap get-off at the price, considerin' they nearly burned Plas Rhyll," murmured Tom.

The crowd, however, took the news enthusiastically, and gave a shout of agreement.

"As to the damage you have done here, I will say no more about that. It is forgiven. And now, men, haven't I done you justice, and treated you fairly?"

"Ay!" shouted the crowd. "A cheer for the boss, mates! He's done the fair thing!"

"Then let us wipe all this off the slate," cried the colliery-owner, "and start afresh! You are well-treated here. No master pays better wages than I. Pull together with me for the good of the Coed Coch, and let us be friends!"

The pitmen gave a roar of approval. The tide was turned, and Kenyon Price had not only saved himself, but won back his old mastery over them. He stepped down, and walked towards his own office, as though to see if all was safe in there.

There was something about the speech, and Kenyon Price's triumph, that stuck in Roddy's throat like a fish-bone. White, with suppressed wrath, he walked up to the colliery-owner, and shouted to him as the men dispersed.

"You hypocrite!" said Roddy, in a low voice. "Don't stay here any longer, but clear out! It makes me ill to see you, and hear you talk!"

Kenyon Price glared at the boy as if he thought Roddy had gone mad.

"You dare to speak to me like that!" he said.

"Dare!" echoed Roddy scornfully. "Haven't we dared more than that? But we're shut of the Coed Coch for good and all, Tom an' me! This is the last time we set foot here—till the place is our own!"

Kenyon Price changed colour.

"Haven't you lost your senses?" he said.

"Don't talk any more, but go!" replied Roddy passionately. "You know very well that twenty words from me'd bring the pitmen back to make short work of you! You know what you've just escaped, thanks to your lying tongue! I'm sick with myself for keeping quiet this long, and except that I've no wish to be a party to a lynching! But now go, an' let's have no more of your hypocrisy, or I will speak!"

Kenyon Price's breath came short, and the veins swelled on his neck with anger. But he dared not challenge the boy to do his worst.

"You are off your head, I think!" he muttered, "but I was going in any case."

He turned, and strode out of the yard by the side gate, where the chauffeur was tinkering with his motor-car. Kenyon Price was defeated.

(Continued on the next page.)

THE LEAGUE OF YOUNG ATHLETES.

A Great New Organisation affiliated to "The Boys' Realm," banding together Junior Athletes who have shown Marked Ability in given Sports by performing certain Feats set by the President.

SECTION 1.—SWIMMING.

To any reader up to the age of 16 who can swim 100 yards will be awarded a handsome Diploma stating this fact and making him a member of the League of Young Athletes. In addition, a BOYS' REALM Third Class Standard Medal will be awarded to any reader who can perform one of the following tests up to and including 100 yards, a Second Class Medal for 200 yards, and a First Class Medal for 440 yards, in accordance with the conditions stated at foot.

Age 12-15. APPLICANTS MUST SWIM—	Age 16-18. APPLICANTS MUST SWIM—
40 yards in - - - 35 secs.	40 yards in - - - 30 secs.
100 " " - 1 m. 55 secs.	100 " " - 1 m. 30 secs.
220 " " - 4 m. 0 secs.	220 " " - 3 m. 40 secs.
440 " " - 8 m. 30 secs.	440 " " - 8 m. 0 secs.

SECTION 2.—RUNNING.

Age 12-15. APPLICANTS MUST RUN—	Age 16-18. APPLICANTS MUST RUN—
100 yards in - - - 14 secs.	100 yards in - - - 12 secs.
300 " " - - - 44 secs.	300 " " - - - 38 secs.
440 " " - - - 60 secs.	440 " " - - - 57 secs.
880 " " - 2 m. 35 secs.	880 " " - 2 m. 15 secs.
One mile " - 5 m. 30 secs.	One mile " - 5 m. 10 secs.

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

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I (Name).....

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desire to become a member of this Institution. Enclosed I send particulars of my performance.

To obtain a BOYS' REALM standard Medal, in addition to the handsome Diploma awarded gratis, applicants should send Six of the above Forms cut from one issue of this paper. The necessary copies may be bought or obtained from friends.

Register Your Football Club To-day! (See page 168.)

WITH PICK & LAMP.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Come," said Roddy, putting his arm through Tom's, "we'll have what's due to us before we go."

They walked up to the cashier's offices. The clerks and paymaster, now that the riot was over, had already hastened to their posts to see that all was right there, fearing the displeasure of their employer. The pay-offices—the only ones left intact—were open, and Roddy walked straight in, and accosted the head-cashier.

"Tom Hughes an' I will take our earnings, please," he said, "according to the tally."

"Your what?" gasped the cashier.

"Our money!"

"Are you mad?" said the man angrily. "Is this a time for playing the fool? You'll get your money, if any, on Saturday!"

"Look here," said Roddy, leaning on the desk, "we're quit of the Coed Coch, and we'll have our money now. You see the boss, out there by his car. If you doubt me, go an' ask him if we're to be paid. If he says no, I'll bring the pitmen back, an' in half an hour there'll be no Coed Coch yard, an' no owner of it, either. Go an' tell him that. He'll understand."

The cashier stared, doubting his senses. But he looked frightened, considering what damage had already been done.

"Be quick," said Roddy; "if you don't, I'll bring the men back without waitin'!"

The cashier thought it best to hurry out and see Kenyon Price. He had an inkling of the boys' influence in the colliery. Roddy and Tom waited for him.

In a couple of minutes the cashier returned, looking rather pale and sullen. He opened a cash-drawer, and threw down on the desk what was due to the boys.

Rodwell and Tom pocketed the coins quietly. Then, walking out of the office, they shook the dust of the Coed Coch from their feet, and turned their faces towards Bryn y Garth.

The Gentleman in Black.

"FREE at last!" said Tom with a joyous whoop, as the cottage came in sight over the dark moor, and Aberford was left far behind them. "No more stabs in the dark, no more beastly treachery!"

"We're our own masters on our own little property, thank Heaven!" said Roddy, with no less zest. "We've won our capital out of Kenyon Price at the risk of our lives, an' now we'll make Bryn y Garth what it ought to be—the tightest little colliery in Wales!"

"An' the claim on Coed Coch."

"We'll tackle that, too, an' I believe I've a clue to it already. Better days are coming, old cock! In the meantime, I'm blessed hungry, an' I hope Dafydd's ready for us."

The red-headed hero of Starve-Crow Farm, met them at the cottage door, whose windows were lighted, and at once saw something was up.

"You haf had another close shave this time," he said, looking at them keenly. "And worse than before, eh?"

"The last of 'em, my buck!" said Roddy, clapping him on the shoulder. "We've shut of the devil an' all his works—I mean Kenyon Price and the Aberford Pit—for ever!"

Dafydd, as soon as he was assured it was so, gave a wild mountain yell, and danced frantically on the greensward with sheer delight. He shook hands with the boys three times over, and punched each of them violently in the chest.

"Now begins the real fight!" he said.

"Here, steady, old chap," said Tom. "What we want now, is peace an' industry—an' money."

"Ah, but ter fight will be in ter open now, better than cler; but not with hired rascals trying to plow you up underground!" cried Dafydd. "You do not suppose Kenyon Price will sit down and let you triumph, eh? He will tackle us now upon our own ground. But, nefer mind, let us celebrate ter occasion with a real big feast!"

"Exactly what was in my mind," said Tom. "We've brought up a few extra luxuries from Aberford on purpose. Let's get to work on 'em."

The trio did themselves very well indeed that night, and the great occasion was marked by a real good supper. The "extras" from Aberford joined to a very savoury dish, which Dafydd had ready, went down particularly well. Finally, it being a gloriously warm night, and everybody feeling in excellent spirits, they went down and curled themselves up on the dry bracken, near the mouth of the shaft, with Cripe as guard, preferring to sleep under the open sky.

Next morning even Dafydd did not hold the record for early rising. Tom and Roddy were up before him for once, earlier than they ever rose to go to the Aberford. They set off for that town, however, but did not, of course, go to the Coed Coch, and Dafydd wondered what their errand was.

The afternoon was well advanced when he saw them returning, with a large horse and cart in which was a mysterious iron structure. It proved to be a derrick or hand crane, and was quite in good condition. Roddy wanted it placed down beside the shaft, and it took all three of them to lever it out of the cart, which then returned to Aberford in charge of a small boy.

"What d'you think of that?" said Roddy with pride, surveying the crane. "Picked it up dirt cheap, secondhand, basket, chain, an' all. Had my eye on it for weeks."

"I was not care much for old iron," said Dafydd. "What is ter use of it?"

"Why, to set up beside the shaft, an' wind a basket up and down—can't you see? It's got to take the place of a windin'-engine an' cage, till we can afford the real thing."

It took three whole days to get the crane up, and a long, arduous job it was. Roddy had brought all the necessary tools, however, and with Tom's help he stiffed its supports deep in the ground and bolted its plates to the limestone rock, close to the shaft's edge.

It was quite a small crane, about eight feet high, and when swung outwards its top wheel overhung the shaft. A chain, to which a big, deep basket was attached, passed over this wheel, and another which acted as guide, and so to the big double windlass at the crane's foot. The crane could thus wind the basket up and down the shaft as a windlass winds a bucket up from a well.

"We have to use the chain till we need tackle extra heavy weights," said Roddy; "we'll use rope instead—it's easier to wind."

On the third day Roddy made the first descent in the basket, the other two winding him down and up again. The thing worked excellently, and they were all very pleased, even Dafydd, the sceptic of coal-mines.

"That basket'll handle a good few tons an hour," said Roddy; "but before we start getting coal we've got to prop those old workings an' make the shaft-pillar secure. It ain't safe to drive any roads in the seam till that's done."

Tom found the delay a nuisance. He wanted to start getting coal and making profits, but his advice was quite right. The lining-in of the dangerous workings was a job that threatened to be too much for them. It was a little piece of engineering that Roddy's book-knowledge and natural skill had to tackle, and were only just equal to.

Dafydd, as the matter was urgent, was induced to do some work underground, and after many days' toil the most important of the work was done, enough to last temporarily.

Next, Roddy brought up several loads of timber and struts from Aberford, and they set to work to prop the rest of the old workings in a decent fashion. It was on the tenth day that Roddy announced the preparations nearly complete, as they stood by the shaft's top after a long bout of work. Dafydd and Cripe were away at the cottage, the former preparing the evening meal.

"We can very soon drive one proper road, anyhow," said Roddy, "an' start getting coal out. It's time we made some money to keep things goin'—we don't want to spend our capital. I'm strikin' a bargain with old Moss at Aberford to buy the first coal on a contract—only forty tons to start with. But you should ha' seen his eyes bulge out when I told him about it, an' showed him a sample."

"Good, egg!" said Tom. "My fingers are itchin' to start on the make, an' if we can only—hallo!"

He broke off and turned sharply round.

Both the boys had been too engrossed in their talk to notice the stranger who, puffing and blowing from the steep ascent, had been walking up the hillside towards them.

"Who the dickens is this?" said Tom.

The stranger was a middle-aged, skinny-looking person, with keen, bird-like brown eyes, and dressed in rather rusty black. He wore spats over his boots, and a silk hat, and looked strangely out of place on the open moor. He walked up to the boys as if Starve-Crow Farm belonged to him.

"Can you tell me where I shall find Mr. Rodwell Owen or Mr. Thomas Hughes?" he said.

"I'm Owen," said Roddy briefly, "and this is Hughes."

"Oh, indeed," said the stranger in some surprise, looking at the boys. "Perhaps then I had better go to your trustees? You are the owners of—er—Bryn y Garth?"

"We are," said Tom.



Mr. Adams gave a loud shriek as he found himself dangling over an apparently bottomless pit.

"On second thoughts," said the stranger, "I will serve the—or—notice on you personally. This"—he drew a paper from his breast-pocket and handed it with a flourish to Roddy—"is the warning of the foreclosure."

"The which?" said Roddy, puzzled.

"The immediate foreclosure of the mortgage on the estate of Bryn y Garth."

A thunderclap could not have astonished the boys more. They looked at each other in dismay.

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Tom.

"It is quite plain, is it not?" said the silk-hatted stranger. "There is a mortgage on this estate of yours—that is to say, a former owner borrowed money on it—£500. The mortgagee, who lent the money, wishes to foreclose, and receive his £500 back. You must either pay it, or he claims the estate as his own by law."

"Five hundred pounds!" gasped Tom. "We haven't got a tenth of it!"

"It's false!" cried Roddy. "I don't believe a word of it!"

"Unless you pay the money," said the stranger in a throaty voice, looking at Roddy superciliously, "you will find to your cost how true it is. Which will you do—pay—or shall we take over the estate? I should think you will be wisest to let it go," he said, looking round, with a shrug.

"Who holds this mortgage?" cried Roddy, taking no notice of the last remark. "Who's the mortgagee, or whatever you call him, who's got the claim on us?"

He expected to hear the name Kenyon Price at once in reply. It was a surprise when the stranger answered:

"Mr. John Vaughan, of Cardiff."

"Who is he? I never heard of him!" said Roddy.

"A blessed dummy. I'll bet my boots K. P. is as the bottom of it!" put in Tom, with a snort. "John Vaughan, be blowed!"

"Really, this language is not to be borne!" said the stranger, taken aback.

"It's nothin' to what you'll have to hear if you don't go away," muttered Tom under his breath. But Roddy warned him with a look to do nothing. The younger partner, nevertheless, was getting very restless.

"And who the dickens are you?" said Roddy to the stranger.

"My name is Mr. Adams, and I am a solicitor."

"Ha, a law shark!" murmured Tom, forgetting that their good friend Wynne Williams was of the same profession. "I thought he looked a wrong 'un."

"I am also a partner of Mr. John Vaughan in this matter, and I am acting for him," added the lawyer, rubbing his thin hands together with an unctuous smile; "his interests are mine. I——"

"We don't care fuppence about your interests!" broke in Roddy angrily. "This place is ours. We've stuck to it in the teeth of much better men than you an' your John Vaughan, an' we'll stick to it yet!"

"Certainly, if you pay us £500," said the lawyer dryly.

Roddy thought of the trouble and peril Tom and he had gone through to make even £50, let alone £500. He liked the look of the man in the top-hat less and less.

"We can't do that," he said. "It seems to me the best person to deal with you is our lawyer, Mr. Wynne Williams, of Aberford. He'll soon settle it."

"Your lawyer? Oh, most certainly!" said Mr. Adams. "We shall deal with him in any case. Our claim is perfectly legal, registered, and beyond dispute."

"Then I can't understand why this is the first we've heard of it," cried Roddy. "The will was proved, and the estate handed over to us, an' nothing was heard of a mortgage!"

"That is easily explained. Your lawyer, Mr. Williams, will explain it to you. The question is, do you propose to pay this £500 at once, or shall we take this estate of yours? It has a hole in it, I see," he added, looking at the pit-shaft.

"Look here," said Roddy desperately, "how do we know you've got any claim at all? What proof have we?"

"No difficulty about that," said the lawyer. "I have the deeds of the mortgage itself with me."

He took a folded paper from his pocket, tied with pink tape, and opened it to show its interior. Roddy caught sight of the words "Bryn y Garth," with much legal writing. Tom's eyes glistened at the sight of the paper; his face lightened, and he began winking at Roddy over Mr. Adams' shoulder.

Roddy was too perturbed, however, to take any notice of him. As in a vision, he saw all his plans dashed to the ground, and the hopes of victory snatched from the young partners. Roddy felt certain there was some rascality in the business, and yet the black-coated gentleman's claim seemed to be clear enough.

"Look here——" he began. But at that moment a remarkable incident broke up the conversation.

The crane, with its rope and basket, was swung inwards from the shaft, a little way behind the lawyer. A sudden thought came into Tom's mind that the interview had lasted long enough. He took the big basket, which was resting on the ground with the rope slack, and stepped forward with it as if he were going to walk straight through Mr. Adams from behind.

"By your leave!" he said.

The edge of the wickerwork took the lawyer just at the back of the knees, and he sat down heavily in the basket with a loud gasp.

Tom sprang to the windlass in a moment, gave it a couple of turns, hoisting the basket and the lawyer two feet off the ground, and stopped the windlass with the check-ratchet. Then, with a strong heave, he swung the crane outwards.

Mr. Adams gave a loud shriek. He found himself dangling over an apparently bottomless pit, his head and shoulders and his feet sticking out of the basket that held him, the former adorned by a dusty top-hat.

Roddy stared for a moment in amazement, nearly as much taken aback as the lawyer. Then he sat down on the limestone rock and laughed till his sides ached. Tom alone preserved a perfectly solemn face.

"Now, you beauty," he said to the victim, "we can talk a lot better like this. Let's have a look at that paper you've got in your manly bosom. Out with it!"

(Another splendid long instalment of this entralling yarn will appear in next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM. Please remember that a grand new serial tale of Slapton School, and all the popular characters connected with it, will shortly commence in THE BOYS' REALM. See "Your Editor's Chat.")

ANSWERS
ONE PENNY.
Every Tuesday.

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