NEW SCHOOL TALE STARTS TO-DAY.

The Boys' Realm

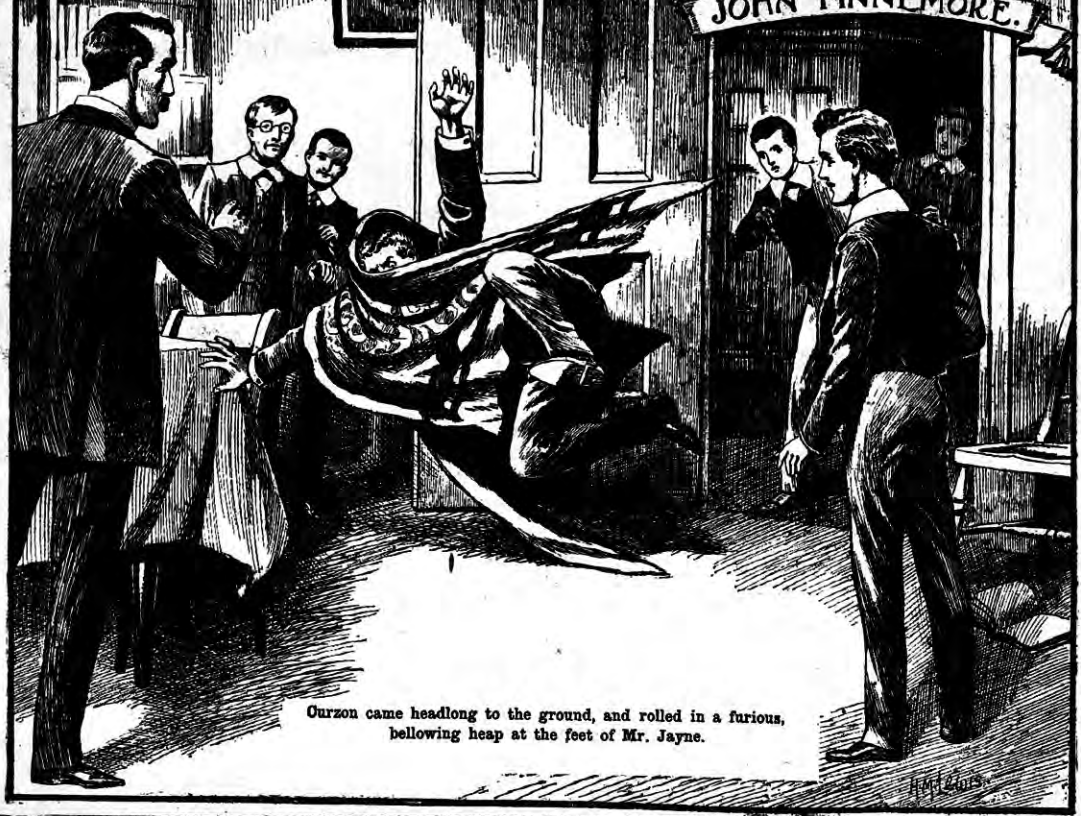
of Sport & Adventure.

1d

TEDDY LESTER'S CHUMS.

A TALE OF SLAPTON SCHOOL.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.



Curzon came headlong to the ground, and rolled in a furious, bellowing heap at the feet of Mr. Jayne.

TEDDY LESTER'S CHUMS.

A Rattling New Tale of Slapton School.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Back to Slapton.

WITH a hiss and a roar the London train ran into Slapton Station. It was the first day of a new term, and boys swept out the carriages in crowds. Among them was Ito Nagao. The little Jap stepped quietly to the platform, and looked round with a smile on his brown face, as if pleased to find himself once more at the place which was already dear and familiar to him, for he had learned to love the grey old school.

Above all, was Teddy Lester, his chum, staunchest and truest of chums. He stopped a porter and put a question.

"Train from Bayford Junction, sir?" replied the man. "Ain't in yet. Half-hour late already."

Ito nodded. He had expected to find Teddy waiting for him on the platform, but Teddy's train was late. The throng of boys which had poured from the London train thinned rapidly. They went off to the school in twos, threes, fours, some walking, some driving in flies and the station 'buses.

Ito waited; he did not intend to stir towards the school without Teddy. Ten minutes passed. Then Ito's quick eyes caught sight of a head it came, every window packed with heads.

There was a tremendous yell from the first carriage. It was in Teddy's voice, and he roared:

"Ito, old chap!"

"Teddy, old boy!" cried the little Jap. And at the next moment the chums met.

"Well, here we are again!" said Teddy, with his cheerful grin. "And how goes it, old man? You haven't scooted ahead to get first glimpse of our study."

"No," smiled Ito; "we'll go together."

Both Teddy and Ito were very keen on getting to their house, Jayne's House at Slapton. This term they were to have a study of their own between them, and they burned to take possession of their new domain. What jolly times they meant to have in it! What rattling teas after an afternoon spent at the nets, or in a big match.

Now, Ito's quiet, dark eyes never missed anything, and over Teddy's shoulder he had been taking stock of a boy who had followed Teddy out of the carriage. He would have drawn the attention of the little Jap, even if the boy had not seemed to be waiting for Ito's chum, Teddy Lester.

"A new fellow," thought Ito. "I have never seen him before."

The new-comer was a little taller than Teddy Lester, but very thin and bony. He had long arms, which swung at his side in an odd fashion; but his face was the strangest part about him. It was large and flat and pallid. He wore huge, round spectacles, behind which rolled a pair of eyes which squinted frightfully. His mouth hung half open, and he looked around him as if he scarcely knew where he was, or what was going on in his neighbourhood.

"I say, Teddy, who's your friend?" murmured Ito, very softly.

Teddy glanced over his shoulder and chuckled.

"A new chap," he replied, in low tones; "name of Jimmy West. He lives near me at home. He went to the same private school when we were kids. He's been at home with a tutor, but he's been awfully keen on coming to Slapton, and at last he's got his folks to let him come. Rum 'un to look at, ain't he?"

Ito nodded. Mr. Jimmy West was certainly a very rum 'un to look at. He was now gaping in vacant and aimless fashion up and down the train, staring from window to window with his rolling, squinting eyes. He was paying no attention to Ito and Teddy, and the latter went on.

"When he runs he flaps those long arms of his like a bat's wings. We used to call him the Bat; but I can tell you one thing, old chap, the old Bat ain't half such a bat as he looks."

At this moment a voice hailed the Bat from a carriage near at hand. The voice belonged to a big, duck-eet, dark-faced boy, who had been slow in getting his traps out, and was hauling things from the rack in the carriage. He now held in his arms a cricket-bag, and he wished for someone to take it from him while he pitched another baggage out. His name was Curzon.

"Here, I say, Cock-eye," shouted Curzon, "just lay hold of this bag, will you?"

The Bat rolled his squinting gaze on to Curzon, and smiled amiably.

"D-d-do you ad-ad address yourself to m-me?" he said, in a slow, stuttering voice.

"Of course I do," bellowed Curzon, who, on the strength of getting his colours in the second eleven, thought himself a very great man at Slapton, and in Jayne's House in particular. "Lay hold of it, will you? Don't you hear the whistle? The train's just going to start."

The Bat stepped forward and held out his long arms. Curzon thrust the bag into them, and grabbed a handbag from the seat, ready to jump from the train, which was just on the point of moving. The Bat was swinging the cricket-bag down so slowly that Curzon nearly tumbled over it.

"Clear it out of the way, will you?" roared Curzon, and gave the end of the bag an angry push. The other end of the long bag caught the Bat in the chest, and sent him staggering. There was a loud laugh from Curzon and two or three of his friends who stood by. But Curzon's laughter did not last long. The Bat stumbled and tumbled, and the bag slid from his hands and over the edge of the platform. The footboard of a carriage caught it, and whirled it on to the line. Crash! Crish! Smash! The heavy iron wheels went grinding over Curzon's bats, pads, tennis-rackets, his whole sporting outfit.

No one laughed now but Teddy Lester. Curzon and his friends gazed in horrified dismay at the ruin as the wheels went one after the other over the bag, ripping it open and strewing shreds of flannel, pieces of willow and cane, and scraps of gut between the metals.

"You clumsy idiot!" screamed Curzon. "See what you've done now?"

"Y-you sh-sh-shouldn't have sh-sh-shoved me," said the Bat meekly. "It's y-y-your own f-f-fault!"

Teddy made no attempt to hide his joy. He laughed loud and long, and Ito smiled his quiet smile. Curzon was furious. He clenched his fists as if about to spring on the pallid, and, to all appearance, trembling youth, but at this moment the stationmaster and a couple of porters came up and wanted to know what was the matter.

"Isn't that old Bat a corker?" chuckled Teddy in Ito's ear. "I know Curzon wasn't going to call him 'Cock-eye,' and practise his little games on him for nothing." Then he called aloud: "I say, Jimmy, come along. We must be getting up to the school. This is Ito Nagao. I've told you all about him."

"R-r-rather!" said Jimmy West, coming forward and shaking hands with the little Jap. "Aw-aw-awfully glad to know y-y-you, Nagao! W-what about th-this chap and his b-b-bag, Teddy? D-d-do I have to st-stay and s-s-see this go?"

"Not a bit of it," said Teddy. "Let him settle it for himself. Come along!"

As the three boys went up towards the school, Teddy turned to Bat with a grin.

"Jimmy," he said, "you chucked that cricket-bag on the line on purpose."

"Rer-rather!" stuttered Jimmy. "I know I'm c-c-cock-eyed, but I ain't g-g-going to let anybody c-c-call me so!"

"Right, Jimmy, old man," said Teddy; "I'll see you look out for yourself a bit in this wicked world!"

"It served Curzon right," said Ito. "He's always been a bit of a bully, and since he got his second-eleven colours, he's been suffering very much from swelled head."

At this moment the boys turned a corner, and came in full sight of Slapton on its little hill.

"There you are, Jimmy," cried Teddy. "There's the glorious old place! There's the big hall and that high roof is the gym., and the playing-fields are down under it."

"Oh, j-j-jolly!" said the Bat. "I've a-a-always wanted to c-c-come to Slapton, and here I—I—I am!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
In a Study.

AN hour later the common-room of Jayne's House was filled by a laughing, chattering crowd. Chums were exchanging experiences of the holidays, old friends were meeting once more, and no one was silent save the new boys, who stood about in corners, and at present had nothing to say, because they know nobody there.

Among these silent new boys was the Bat. Teddy and Ito had been called away, and he was waiting till they came back, when he was to be taken to the new study, of which he had been made free.

Almost opposite to him, as he stood gaping at the scene through his big, round spectacles, was a group of boys who were before the empty fireplace, and chatted among each other with an air of great superiority The Bat observed them, and he observed also that the smaller boys in the room kept clear of this group of big fellows, as if they were more than a little feared.

Suddenly one of them turned and saw the Bat. He was a tall, thin boy, with a very sly, malicious face. His name was Gibson.

"Oh, thunder!" he murmured. "Look at that squinny-eyed thing. I should think he's hooked it out of a freak show!"

The group turned and surveyed Jimmy West. One of them, named Palmer, had seen him before.

"I saw that chap down at the station," said Palmer; "and Curzon means to give him the basting of a lifetime when he lays hold of him."

And the speaker described the scene of the destruction of the cricket bag and its contents.

"By Jingo, won't Curzon just about lam him for that!" remarked Gibson. "He'll flay him alive, and serve the clumsy beast right!"

His companions nodded, for Curzon was their leader, and Gibson was the special toady of the big fellow.

At this moment the Bat looked at his watch, and then began to glance about him. The time had passed at which Teddy had promised to return for him.

"They've forgotten me," thought the Bat to himself. "I wonder if any of these chaps could direct me to their new diggings?" He strolled across to the group and addressed Gibson directly. "I s-s-say," he murmured, "d-d-do you know a ch-ch-chap named Teddy Lester?"

When this queer-looking fellow turned out to have a queer fashion of stuttering it seemed the climax, and the whole group burst into very rude laughter, save the smooth and wily Gibson. He kept a calm face, and answered at once.

"Oh, yes, we all have the pleasure of Lester's acquaintance."

"C-c-can you t-t-tell me where his study is?"

"Didn't know Lester had got a study," said Palmer, "It's a mistake, isn't it?"

"No; it's all right," said Gibson. "Lester and Nagao have a study this term."

"Lucky chaps!" returned Palmer. "I jolly well wish I was in one. I'm about sick of this cackling day-room!"

"B-b-but I want to know w-w-where it is!" murmured the Bat once more.

A malicious gleam shot into Gibson's eye. A splendid idea had flown into his head. He would play a joke on this new fellow—a joke which would make everybody scream with laughter.

"I shall have great pleasure in showing you the way myself," he said.

The rest of the group eyed Gibson in surprise. It was not often that he went out of his way to do anyone a kindness, and they were puzzled. Then Gibson turned on them and gave a sly wink, and they knew that some joke was in the wind.

"It's aw-aw-awfully good of you," said Jimmy West.

And he followed Gibson out of the room, apparently without having the least idea of the nods and grins going on behind his back.

Gibson went along two or three passages until he came to Mr. Jayne's door. It led to Mr. Jayne's own study; but Gibson knew that the housemaster was engaged elsewhere, and he had resolved upon the daring joke of turning this queer new boy loose in the master's study.

When inquiry would come his way he meant to tie his wire out of the fix by swearing that West asked to be shown to Mr. Jayne's room.

"Here we are," said Gibson. He tapped at the door, but there was no answer. "They are not here, I said he. "You'd better go in and sit down till they come back."

He turned the handle and walked in, and the Bat followed. The latter stood still in surprise, and blinked round the handsome room from wall to wall.

"I s-s-say," he murmured at last, "this is a j-j-jolly fine study!"

"Oh, yes!" said Gibson carelessly. "We do the thing pretty well at Slapton, you know. It is, perhaps, rather better furnished than the usual run of rooms; but, then, I believe that Nagao's people have heaps of tin, and spend it pretty freely on him."

The Bat said no more, but looked and looked on every hand.

"They've got some jolly snug chairs," said Gibson, dropping into a well-padded elbow-chair beside the window. "I must say that Lester and Nagao are doing the thing uncommonly well. They'll have heaps of fellows to see their new place."

"E-e-e-electric l-l-light, too!" stuttered the Bat.

"Oh, of course!" yawned Gibson. "That's every where. Electric bells as well. Touch that button beside the fireplace, and the man is up at once to see what you want."

"I s-s-say," murmured the Bat, "Slapton's a l-l-lot ahead of w-w-what I though it w-w-was w-w-was."

"I don't suppose—I really don't suppose there's a more go-ahead place in England," replied Gibson. "All the latest improvements are put in as soon as they come out."

"S-s-so it s-s-seems," replied the Bat.

Now, when Teddy said that the Bat was not half such a fool as he looked Teddy was rather inside the mark than outside it. Mr. Jimmy West was well aware from the first moment that Gibson had something up his sleeve. His squinting eyes behind the big, round glasses had caught the nods and grins among Gibson's circle. He had smelt a rat as soon as he was introduced into this handsome room, and, with his mouth half open and a vacant look on his face, he was putting two and two together, as he more quickly than the wily Gibson ever dreamed.

He edged his way round to the desk, and now his suspicions became certainties. There lay an envelope addressed to "Henry Jayne, Esq."

The Bat now knew where he was. This was the housemaster's study, and Gibson's little game was perfectly clear.

"I s-s-say," he stuttered, "it's aw-aw-awfully good of y-y-you to take the t-t-trouble to show me here. I d-d-don't know your name, s-s-sir."

"My name's Jeremy Titus," replied Gibson.

"Aw-aw-awfully good of you, T-T-Titus," said the Bat. "I c-c-can wait here quite c-c-comfortably till they come b-b-back."

"Of course you can," agreed Gibson. "You'll be all right here. If you wish to write a letter bone you can sit down at the desk. There's plenty of notepaper in the rack."

"C-g-good idea," said the Bat. "I'll write and t-t-tell them how s-s-smug the s-s-studies are at Slapton."

"Exactly," said Gibson. "Well, I'll leave you to wait for your friends."

But—alas for Gibson and his merry little joke!—the Bat had edged across the room, as if he was doing nothing but admire the engravings on the wall. He was within a single stride of the door. Suddenly he made a leap. With a swiftness wonderful in one of his ungainly figure, he seized the lock, whipped out the key, which Mr. Jayne had left on the inner side, and shot through the door. Slam went the heavy door; click went the key in the lock on the other side.

"B-b-bagged him!" said the Bat aloud.

He was still in the midst of his stutter when the handle was seized from within and violently rattled. In vain. The well-oiled lock had turned smoothly and swiftly, and Gibson was a prisoner The practical joker was caught in his own trap.

"I say, you new fellow," shouted the unhappy Gibson, thumping on the panels, "what fool trick is this? Unlock the door at once, or it will be a jolly sight the worse for you."

"Th-that's all right," replied the Bat. "I know T-T-Teddy. He'll l-let y-y-you stop in his study as l-l-long as you l-like."

"Open the door, confound you!" roared Gibson wildly. "If you don't I'll break every bone in your miserable carcase, as soon as I'm out!"

"S-s-seems to me you have v-v-very p-p-passionate, p-passions," murmured the Bat. "I think it's b-b-best to keep the d-d-door between us."

"I say now, you new fellow," wailed Gibson, trying entreaty as threats seemed to be of no use, "a joke's a joke, I know. I'm as fond of one as anybody, but this has gone far enough. Let me out, there's a good chap."

"N-n-not me," stuttered Jimmy. "I'm g-g-going to l-l-leave you for a b-b-bit in Teddy's s-s-study. Sit d-d-down at the d-d-desk and w-w-write bone well 'em now s-s-snug you are. It's a n-n-nice study. You'll b-b-be in c-c-clover."

And with that the relentless Jimmy West turned and went. Ito intended to teach this smart joker a lesson. He found his way back to the day-room, and strolled in. The first persons he saw were Teddy and Ito.

"Hallo, Jim!" said Teddy. "Where've you been? We were wondering where you'd got to."

"Been a l-l-little ramble round w-w-with a chap," said the Bat gently.

"Who was it?" asked Teddy, suspicious at once that someone was trying a trick on the innocent-looking Bat.

"I d-d-don't know him v-v-very well," replied Jimmy West.

"Hardly likely, considering you've just new 'do the Place,'" said Teddy. "What's his name? And what was he like?"

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by Palmer. Gibson's friends were full of wonder at seeing the Bat return alone. What had become of Gibson? No one knew, or had the slightest idea, for Gibson had not given any hint of his plan. He intended to come back and set the day-room in a roar when he had safely boxed up the Bat. Now he was boxed up himself, and only his intended victim knew where.

"I say, you new fellow," cried Palmer, "where's Gibson?"

"Who's Gibson?" asked the Bat, in his most vacant fashion.

"Why, the chap who went out with you."

But the Bat shook his head slowly.

"Oh, no," he murmured, "that f-f-fellow isn't of the n-n-name of G-G-Gibson."

"Isn't he?" replied Palmer. "How do you know that? What, under the sun, do you reckon his name is?"

"I know his n-n-name," returned the Bat. "He t-t-told it m-m-me himself. His name is J-J-Jeremy T-T-Titus."

There was a general roar of laughter, but the Bat did not join in it. His large white face was as solemn as a tombstone, and his eyes blinked through his big spectacles with the gravity of an owl.

"Jeremy Titus," spluttered Teddy. "What game is this, Jimmy? What have you been up to?"

"Well, where is he?" demanded Palmer again.

"You can f-find out for y-yourself," said the Bat. "Come on, T-Teddy, I w-want to t-talk to y-y-you."

The Bat, Ito, and Teddy went out of the day-room, leaving a very puzzled group to debate over the mysterious disappearance of Gibson.

When Teddy and Ito heard of the fate of the artful Jeremy Titus, they howled with laughter. The idea of Gibson, the wily Gibson, who was always full of tricks to take a rise out of other people, shut up in the study and waiting miserably for Mr. Jayne to find him there, was too delightful.

Ito glanced through a window in the corridor where they were standing. The window looked out to the quad.

"Look there, you fellows," said the little Jap, pointing. "Who's that crossing the quad.? It's Mr. Jayne himself. He's coming back."

"So it is," chuckled Teddy. "Let's go and see the fun. Come on. I know every corner there. I'll stow you away where we can hear everything."

Piloted by Teddy, all three slipped away down the long, dusky passage which led to Mr. Jayne's study. Near the door a large curtain hung across the corridor to keep the room

private from the sounds of the house. A fold of this curtain covered a small recess, and here Teddy, Ito, and the Bat packed themselves away.

"There he is, there's Jeremy Titus," whispered Teddy.

A thundering on the panels of Mr. Jayne's door rolled down the passage. It was the unlucky Gibson trying to call the attention of some boy of the house, who might be passing the end of the corridor. No one would only come to the door to see what the row meant, he would bog him to turn the key and free him before the master came. But there was no one at hand, save the three boys bursting with laughter, and Gibson waited in vain.

The captive dared not ring the bell and fetch the servant up. That meant that the affair would come to Mr. Jayne's ears at once, and Gibson hoped to make a clean flit. He went to the window, opened it, and looked out. No chance there. The house was built on a slope, and the wall fell away twenty feet sheer to a paved footwalk.

Then to his horror he heard heavy footsteps coming down the passage outside. Mr. Jayne was returning. No hope of escape now. He was caught like a rat in a trap. He was in the middle of the room when the sounds came to his ears. He stood rooted to the spot, gazing with white face at the door. The three boys hidden outside were staring with all their eyes and listening with all their ears as Mr. Jayne came along the passage. They were peering from behind a fold of the curtain, and they saw him pause in surprise when he seized the handle to open the door of the room.

"What's this?" they heard Mr. Jayne remark aloud to himself. "I did not lock this door. Why, the key's outside here!"

He turned it, and now the door opened easily. But the master paused again in utter surprise on the threshold. There, in the centre of the room, standing as if he was nailed to the spot, was one of the boys of his house.

Mr. Jayne's dark face flushed with anger.

"What are you doing here, Gibson?" he demanded.

Gibson gasped and swallowed. In his eagerness to escape he had spent no time in preparing a tale to account for his appearance there. He tried to get something out now.

"I came here to see you, sir," he said, at last.

"Well, what did you want to see me about?"

"I wanted to speak to you, sir."

"Well, what did you wish to speak about?"

But Gibson had come to the end of his tether. For the life of him he could not make up a reply to this.

"You are locked in here," said Mr. Jayne. "How did that happen? Who turned the key on you?"

"Well, sir," said Gibson, "it was really like this. A new boy wished to speak to you, and asked me to show him to your study. He is a very strange boy, sir. No sooner had I shown him in here, than he ran out at the door and locked it, leaving me here."

"Oh," said Mr. Jayne drily, "what is his name?"

"I don't know his name, sir. He's a very odd-looking boy, with spectacles, and a bad stutter."

"Ah, and the boy played a trick on you, did he, Gibson?"

"Yes, sir, that was just it!" cried Gibson.

"Hm!" said the housemaster, who knew Gibson very well. "I'm afraid your story won't do this time, Gibson. It seems to me a great deal more likely that you have been trying a trick on a new-comer, and, in some way, you have been caught yourself."

"Oh, no, sir; no! I wouldn't dream of such a thing!" cried Gibson earnestly.

"Silence!" said Mr. Jayne sourly. "I do not want any of your protestations. You will go to the detention-room for the first three half-holidays of the term, in each day you will write me five hundred lines. Now go, and do not let me hear a single word from you."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Gibson Seeks Revenge.

THE discomfited Gibson slunk from the room and down the passage. Teddy, Ito, and the Bat had heard from their hiding-place every word that passed, and had enjoyed themselves immensely. They crept softly after Gibson, and grinned among themselves as they heard him break into growls of anger and vexation when he was once out of earshot of Mr. Jayne.

"Well, old—said Teddy to his friend, "you're making a pretty lively start of it at Slapton. First you smash Curzon's outfit, and next you put Gibson up a tree. You'd better look out for those chaps, my son. They're bad eggs, the pair of 'em, and they belong to a bad crew."

"I'll bet y-y-you're r-r right, Teddy, old m-m-man," said the Bat gruffly. "But I'll d-d-do my best to keep my end of the w-w-wicket up."

"Rather, old boy!" said Teddy. "And we'll lend you a hand—won't we, Ito?"

"We will, most certainly," said Ito, with his unfailing smile.

He had been sizing up this very queer new fellow who was an acquaintance of his chum's, and, on the whole, Ito felt sure that the queerness only extended to his looks. It was clear that the Bat had both coolness and pluck, and these qualities went a long way towards endearing him to the little Jap's heart.

At this moment a small boy ran up to Teddy.

"I say, Lester," he said, "I've just seen Sandys, and he's asking after you. He and Digby are up in No. 10."

"Good old No. 10!" said Teddy. "Ito, we'll cut up there at once, and see Tom and Arthur. Look here, Jimmy, you go and take a stroll round the quad, till we come back. Don't go 'on the common-room, or you'll get flayed alive."

"I d-d-d-don't care a hang f-f-for 'em," remarked the Bat.

"I know you don't," chuckled Teddy; "but there are five or six of 'em there, and they'd be a handful too many for you, and you'd better wait till Ito and I come back."

"All r-right," said the Bat. "I sh-should like a l-look round the q-quad."

Teddy showed him which direction to take, and then he and Ito rushed off to greet their old friends in No. 10.

The Bat rambled out to the quad., and blinked and stared through his big spectacles at the grey old walls, and the bell-tower with its great clock and its golden vane glittering in the sunshine. He thought it was the jolliest place he had ever seen, and he was more and more satisfied with himself for having won admission to accompany Teddy Lester to Slapton School.

He had been strolling about some time, and was staring up at the school chapel, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, when a bitter enemy turned a corner and came in sight of him. It was Gibson who, with Palmer and a couple of cronies, came round the chapel and ran full upon their prey, for they were seeking the Bat. Gibson felt ready to slay him, and the others were coming to see the fun.

"There he is," said Palmer, in a low, quick voice. "There he is, Gibson."

"So he is!" said Gibson, in a tone of savage enjoyment. "Now you just see me knock the white-faced, squinting beast into the middle of next week."

"You've just got him proper," said Palmer. "I met Lester and Nagao going up to No. 10. Now pitch in and give him beans, Gibson."

"Won't I!" said Gibson, and licked his lips.

"Now, you fellows, you keep back. He doesn't see us, and I don't want to put him on his attention. He's gaping up at the chapel windows like a dying duck in a thunderstorm."

"What are you going to do, Gibson?" whispered Palmer.

"I've got my tennis-shoes on," said Gibson, "and I'm going up to him without making a sound, and I'm going to land the cock-eyed beast one on the side of the jaw which will knock him silly. He's standing there as if he was in a dream. I'll wake him out of his dream with a vengeance."

The mean, sneaking piece of work which Gibson proposed was immensely to the taste of his friends, and they grinned as they saw the wily Gibson stealing up to the apparently unconscious Bat.

But, alas, for the wily Gibson. Once more his plans went wrong. He reckoned without the Bat's sight. It was even more remarkable than he thought. He supposed the Bat to be staring up at the chapel windows. He wasn't. He was watching his enemies from the second they appeared in sight.

On crept Gibson. Yard by yard he drew nearer to his prey. His fist was clenched; and his arm was drawn back ready to deliver a tremendous blow at the figure which stood in dreamy stillness, its eyes, to all appearance, fixed on the chapel, its mouth open in a wondering gaze.

Then, when the stealthy assailant had crept without a sound to within six feet of his victim, a startling thing happened. The dreaming victim made a leap like a panther, his hard, bony fist shot out at the end of a long, bony arm, and the fist was landed with wonderful swiftness and dexterity full on Gibson's nose.

Over went Gibson like lightning, and the back of his head came with a lively crack against the flagstones in front of the chapel. At this moment Teddy and Ito ran into the quad. They saw Gibson fall, and shot across the turf.

"It's J-J-Jeremy T-T-Titus again," murmured the Bat. "He's r-r-run against my f-f-fist and d-d done a turnover."

Teddy and Ito burst into a shout of laughter. Palmer ran up and raised Gibson to his feet. The blood was flowing freely from the latter's nose, and he was slightly dazed from his collision with the flagstones. Then his senses and his fury returned to him.

"I'll kill that beast!" he roared. "I'll kill him! I'll smash him into a hundred pieces!"

"Steady, Jeremy Titus!" chuckled Teddy. "Go slow, my lively bird! Why this burst of rage?"

"None of your cheek, Lester!" howled the infuriated Gibson. "You won't save the squinting beast!"

"Tell him to h-h-be c-c-careful, Teddy," stuttered the Bat, in his meek voice. "I'm a b-b-bad man when I g-get going."

"Settle it with a dust-up," suggested Palmer. "The little corner behind the chapel's quite handy."

"What's th-th-that?" inquired Jimmy West.

"The place where the fights come off," replied Teddy. "But I don't know about that, Bat, old man. Gibson's a lot over your weight and size, and he's a trifle more than handy with his fists. He won the middle-weight of the Lower School last term."

"Th-th-that's all r-r-right," returned the Bat cheerfully. "Let him s-s-sail in. I've c-c-come on a l-l-lot since we used to s-s-spar at old Raynham's."

Raynham's was the private school where the Bat and Teddy had been together.

"None of your sneaking out of it!" cried Palmer, who thought that Teddy was trying to get his man away from the punishment which Gibson intended to deal out.

"Oh, all right!" said Teddy quietly. "This way, Jimmy."

The group retired behind the chapel, and the Bat took off his spectacles, put them carefully in a case, and handed the case over to Teddy.

"At short r-r-range I c-c-can do very w-w-well without th-them," he remarked.

In less than five minutes the Bat made his words good. He could do very well without them, and he polished off Gibson in a very neat and scientific fashion. His frightful squint was once more of enormous assistance. The unhappy Gibson had no idea at what spot the Bat was aiming until the bony fist was landed with terrific force on the mark.

The Bat's long arms were also of great value to him as a boxer. Gibson was a taller boy and a much heavier boy, but his reach was shorter, and the Bat got home again and again before Gibson could touch him.

At last Gibson went down and stayed down. That is to say, he sat up and mopped his nose carefully, for it had suffered still further damage, but he did not attempt to get to his feet.

"That's all right, Jimmy," chuckled Teddy. "He's got all he wants, and a little bit over. Come along; it's getting on for tea-time."

The Bat slipped into his jacket, and resumed his spectacles.

"This way for the tuck-shop!" cried Teddy.

And away ran the three, leaving Gibson and his friends to think over this very unexpected defeat.

"I'll be level with him yet!" snarled Gibson, getting up when his long-armed enemy had disappeared. "I'll take it out of his hide before I've done with him!"

"Count me in, Gibson, out for him, too," said Palmer. "I wonder if Curzon knows he's in our house."

"Ah," said Gibson, "I wonder if he does! We'll go up to Curzon's diggings, and see him."

They got up to Curzon's lair, and went to Curzon's study. Palmer tapped at the door.

"Come in!" growled a savage voice; and in they went.

No wonder that Curzon's voice was savage. He was gloomily surveying the contents of his wrecked bag.

"Look here, you chaps," said the big fellow; "there's a confounded smash for you! Look at that bat, for one. The best bat I ever had; two-and-twenty bob it cost me, and now it's smashed to matchwood. And look at my pads and gloves and boots all cut to pieces! I'm going to look out for that clumsy, cock-eyed brute, and break a wicket across his confounded back!"

"Do you know where he is, Curzon?" called out Palmer.

"No," replied Curzon, "and I don't care. I'll lay hold of him, whatever house he belongs to, and whop the beast within an inch of his life."

"He's in Jayne's!" cried Gibson.

"What!" cried Curzon, rubbing his hands together in savage satisfaction. "He's in Jaynes, is he? Then I've got him! I'll just about make his miserable life unhappy! I'll let him know what it means to get on the wrong side of me! Hallo, Gibson, what's the matter with your eyes?"

Curzon now observed that Gibson could only regard him with one eye. The other was purple and closed up.

Gibson's just had a scrap with the very fellow we're speaking of," observed Palmer, "and by sheer luck he got one in on Gibson's eye."

"Yes, that's it," cried the sufferer. "It was a pure piece of luck! He's got such beastly long arms, and I forgot to counter soon enough."

"Never mind!" growled Curzon. "I'll pay him back for the lot. The damage he's done to me wouldn't be covered by a five-pound note, to say nothing of cheeks. I'll take it out of him!"

"He's with Lester and Nagao," remarked Palmer. "They seem to be backing him up."

"I don't care who's backing him up!" snarled the big fellow. "I'll give him beans when I get him! I've got to go over to Grey's House to see a fellow now. When I come back, we'll look him up and baste him till he howls for mercy."

THE 4th CHAPTER.
In No. 28.

AT the tuck-shop Teddy, Ito, and the Bat loaded themselves up with the materials for a glorious feed.

"First tea in No. 28," cried Teddy, "we're bound to celebrate it!"

They were all flush of cash, and they bought lavishly, and returned to Jayne's with their arms full of paper bags. Teddy went ahead, and led the way proudly up the passage which led to the studies.

"Here we are!" he cried, and pushed a door back, and all three went in.

"I say, Teddy, th-this is all r-right!" murmured the Bat. "Is this s-snug little sh-sh-shop all your o-o-own?"

"All our own!" cried Teddy. "Ito and I run the show here, and no one dare interfere with us, except the beaks, of course."

No. 28 was a very pleasant little room, with a window looking into the quad. It had a table, three chairs, a cupboard, and a recess, where stood the boxes of its owners. The parcels were laid on the table and the door was shut. There was a small fire burning in the grate, and all hands turned to and made a jolly tea ready.

They were in the very middle of their feast when the door was opened and a head was poked in.

"Hallo, Foulkes, old man!" cried Teddy. "Tumble in, old chap, and take a bite!"

"Not now, Teddy, my son," replied Foulkes. "I've got a feed of my own on, and I've only slipped along to pass a friendly word, and it's this. Just spur your oak, for I've had the tip that Curzon & Co. have got a down on you, and mean to pop in here to upset your show."

"Awfully good of you, old chap!" replied Teddy. "We know that set of hounders feels a bit unfriendly, but we're a long way off worrying about it."

"All right, but keep your weather eye open," said the friendly Foulkes, and vanished.

"I say, you fellows, you l-l-fellows," said the Bat, "it's n-n-no use y-y-you to back me up, but I d-d-don't want to g-g-get you into a r-r-row with these c-c-chaps."

"That's all right, West," said Ito quietly. "We'll see you through. They're a nasty crew, and we're not going to let them do as they please."

"B-b-but——" began the Bat again, when Teddy checked him.

"Dry up, Bat, my boy," said Teddy. "My partner has spoken, and you heard what he said. He doesn't say much, but he always means it. You're under our wing now, and there's an end of it. Collar that last piece of tea-cake, and then we'll start on the muffins and jam, for I'm sure that early lot will let us finish our merry little feed."

Ito crossed the room and turned the key in the door.

"Good!" grunted Teddy. "No chance to take us with a rush."

In less than five minutes the rush came. The handle was seized and violently rattled. Someone had crept up to the door without making the slightest sound, and had hoped to burst into the room.

"Foiled!" said Teddy, in as deep a voice as he could manage.

Then there came a heavy rap on the door.

"Hallo!" cried Teddy. "Who's there?"

"Open the door at once, Lester!" came the reply. "It is I—Curzon. I wish to speak to you."

"Speak away!" replied Teddy. "Raise your cheerful voice, and chat as much as you like."

"Open the door!" cried Curzon again.

"Open it yourself!" cried Teddy in reply. "Why should I open for you? Have you been appointed a prefect within the last ten minutes?"

"I'll open it fast enough, if you don't!" roared Curzon, his voice indicating that his anger was growing on finding himself thus balked. "I'm going to fetch out that cock-eyed idiot who smashed my things! I've got a wicket in my Bat, and I mean to ram him into a jelly!"

"That's rum," said Teddy. "Why, he's just been slinging a jelly into him. Finished it not two minutes ago. Won't that do instead?"

"No other jelly, you cocky young beast!" growled Curzon. "Open the door at once, or you'll get a taste of the same mixture!"

Two tablespoonfuls to a dose, to be repeated every three hours!" sang out Teddy, in a comical sing-song. "But we're not taking any! Try some other patients, Curzon!"

The reply to this was a crash upon the door which shook in its fastenings, and which made the partition between the rooms and the corridor creak and groan. Curzon had flung himself against the door with all his might.

Teddy went across the room in a couple of jumps, and put his shoulder against the assailed door.

"Chuck me that hockey-stick, Ito!" he said, in a quick, low voice. "This lock won't stand many charges like that. Curzon's a bit of a heavy-weight."

Ito darted across with the strong stick, and its head was wedged under a strong moulding on the door, and the stick was slanted to the floor.

Crash! Again Curzon hurled himself on the door; but now the stick took much of the strain, and the lock did not rattle so loosely.

"Let me in, or shove that beast out!" growled Curzon fiercely. "Do one or the other, or I'll break every bone in your body, Lester!"

But Teddy made no answer. He was climbing to a position from which he could survey the enemy. He had made a very thorough survey of No. 25, and had discovered that higher than the door, and a little to one side of it, there was a knot-hole in the stout wooden partition. He took a penknife from his pocket, and quickly and silently placed them in position. Then he swarmed up, and placed his eye to the hole, and looked over the ground.

Below him were five boys—Curzon, Gibson, Palmer, and two of their gang—who had gathered too powerful a crew for the occupants of the study to tackle. No one looked up towards him. All had their eyes on the door, and Curzon was now backing to take a running kick at the lock.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
The Repulse of the Enemy.

DOWN dropped Teddy, and darted across to his box.

The Bat and Ito watched Teddy in a little wonder. What was he going to fetch out of his box? Was it a weapon which would repulse the angry foe? They could not understand Teddy's little game, for the latter sprang up and showed them that he had a good-sized squirt in his hand.

"The water in the kettle is hot, isn't it?" muttered Teddy. "Good! I'll make those beggars howl like fury in two-twos. This is my little dodge. Hold the kettle, Ito!"

The little Jap whipped off the lid of the kettle of warm water, and Teddy thrust the nozzle of the squirt into the fluid. He took

(Continued on the next page.)

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—Wednesday.

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 Wednesday. THE BOYS' REALM will be sent post free to any part of the world on the following terms: 12 months, 7s.; 6 months, 3s. 6d.; 3 months, 1s. 9d.—payable in advance by British stamps. Postal Orders or Money Orders to be sent to the Publisher, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

Our Football Serial.

AT last I am able to make a definite announcement concerning our great new football story by Mr. A. S. Hardy, about which I have already spoken to my chums. The opening chapters of this wonderful new tale will appear in THE BOYS' REALM in a fortnight's time, and I counsel every reader of our paper to order his copy in advance, or he will certainly be disappointed. Mr. Hardy has gained for himself much fame as an author of athletic stories for boys, and he is never more at home than when writing a football story. All lovers of our national winter pastime are well aware of this, and there will therefore be a big rush on our paper when the opening chapters appear. So, my friends, if you don't want to be disappointed, order your copy to-day. I shall have more to say about this fine tale next week. In our next issue will appear two fine complete stories by popular authors, each of which will unethral my readers from the opening line to the end.

Our Football League.

MAY I urge all my friends to do their very utmost to let their chums know about our mammoth programme for the coming season? Please drop a word in the ear of any football club secretary you may happen to know, advising him to get a copy of THE REALM, and read the unprecedented announcement which appears each week of solid silver cups and medals, and hundreds of first-class footballs to be presented free. You will be doing him a good turn, and also helping the good old REALM along the upward path.

My readers must see that it means a tremendous outlay to provide so many silver trophies and other prizes for them. But I do not mind this if every one of my friends will, in return, tell all his chums about what I am doing. In this way we can help each other. The bigger circulation THE REALM obtains, the more facilities can I offer to my readers, the better stories and articles can I give them. So please let all your footballing chums know what THE REALM is prepared to do for them.

"Only a Girl."

MY friends will remember the charming letter I printed on this page some weeks back from a girl reader of THE BOYS' REALM who signed herself "Only a Girl." To this letter and my remarks upon it, there came a letter from "Swindonian," which contained some sound and very sensible advice, and now there has arrived another from a mother of one of my chums residing in Cape Town, South Africa, endorsing all that "Swindonian" said so well. I thank my chum's mother for her letter, and hope that it will bring about the good that she desires.

It runs as follows:

"Dear Sir,—I am writing to say how much I have appreciated a letter by 'Swindonian' which appears in your paper of June 15th, and to say how much some letters of that tone will be valued by mothers in South Africa, as the boys here deem it absolutely essential to the manliness of their sex to say disparaging things about 'only girls,' and hearing remarks from another source than mother's lectures may just do them all a world of good. My lads appreciate your papers, and think anything that appears in them must be right. With renewed thanks to 'Swindonian,' Faithfully yours,

"PROTEA."

Two Questions About Hair.

TWO of my chums are troubled about their hair. One is a lance-corporal in barracks at Colchester, and he tells me that though he is only eighteen, he has to shave every morning, because his chin looks so dark. He wants me to tell him of something that will stop his beard growing so quickly. I wish I could. There's a fortune waiting for the man who can invent something that will effectually destroy the root of the hair without little trouble or cost. At present there is only one process, that of removing each hair singly by electrolysis, and, besides being very costly, it is rather painful, and not altogether reliable.

No, my lance-corporal chum, I am afraid that you will have to continue doing what mankind has done since razors were invented—shave your chin. Shaving really is a nuisance, but one soon becomes accustomed to it. If, as you tell me, a dark chin makes you look older than you are, lance-corporal, certainly a beard, if you allowed it to grow, would make you look older still. Thanks for your kind remarks concerning THE BOYS' REALM and "The Boys' Herald."

The trouble about which my other chum has written to me is not that his hair grows too thickly, but that it won't grow thickly enough to please him.

W. J. D., of Lurgan, tells me that his hair has got extremely dry, and comes out when he combs it. Now, in this case, I can help my chum. The dryness of his hair is either through the little fat cells at the roots having dried up, or through their being enclosed in such thick walls that the oil is unable to penetrate outside. Therefore, all W. J. D. has to do is to supply nature's deficiency. That is to say, he must rub a little oil occasionally in his scalp.

A little vaseline is a good thing, if my chum does not mind his hair being darkened. Brilliantine and toilet paraffin are also good, while, if W. J. D. does not like sticky things on his hair, he might try rubbing in some bay rum. A chemist or a hairdresser would supply him with these preparations.

My chum also tells me in his letter that he has a friend who suffers with a pain in his side and also in the stomach. If this pain is only occasional, I should be inclined to say that it was caused through indigestion or flatulence, and a chemist, for a few pence, would give W. J. D.'s chum a draught that would soon cure him whenever the pain seized him. If, on the other hand, the pain is always present in more or less degree, he had better consult a doctor about it.

NOW BEING PRINTED!

No. 25—
THE STOLEN SUBMARINE.
A Thrilling Tale of Nelson Lee, Detective, and the Great Unknown.
.....By MAXWELL SCOTT.....

&

No. 26—
PETE, DETECTIVE,
A New, Original, and Laughable Tale of JACK, SAM, AND PETE.
.....By S. CLARKE HOOK.....

THE BOYS' FRIEND 3d. LIBRARY.

He Wants to Gain Half an Inch to Join the Army.

A VERY short but quite pathetic note has reached me from one of my Birmingham chums, L. C. D. M. He is out of work; has tried to join the Army; but, though he is in every other respect suitable, he has been refused because he is half an inch short of the necessary chest measurement.

This is not the place here to criticise the methods of those responsible for recruiting the ranks of our Army, but I feel as if I could say something bitter about them. Why on earth they should refuse a lad with a good record, with good physique, suitable in every respect save that he is half an inch short of the requisite chest measurement, completely puzzles me. Would my Birmingham chum fight any the less valiantly than his comrade whose chest was half an inch bigger than his own? It is perfectly ridiculous.

L. C. M. D., you have my sincere sympathy in your trouble. It is hard lines to be out of work, and harder still to be refused as a defender of our great Empire by some silly red-tape rule of our War Office. But take heart; you should have little difficulty in gaining that half an inch that is standing between you and your future career.

Directly you rise in the morning stand before your bed-room window, opened to its fullest extent, and take in slowly a long, deep breath. As you do so rise gradually upon the toes, and at the same time stretch out the arms as far as they will go. Do this a dozen or so times, and repeat the exercise at night before going to bed. See that you wear no braces, or anything to restrict the expansion of the chest while you perform the exercise. Another good exercise is to sweep the hands from the front to the sides, as in the breast stroke in swimming, for about twenty times twice or thrice a day.

My Brief Reply Corner.

TO HARRIERS LIVING IN WALLSEND.

Horatio N. Wickens, 12, Grey Street, Wallsend, has written to me expressing his desire to form a harriers club for lads between 16 and 20 living within three miles' radius of Wallsend. I certainly hope that the necessary number of lads will join my chum in forming this club, which I wish every success.

"PRINTERS' POCKET GUIDE."

In answer to J. Hale, I may tell my chum that this handy little book costs a penny or twopence, I am not sure which, and if the London Society of Compositors, St. Bride Street, London, do not keep it, they will tell my chum where he will be able to purchase it if he sends them a postcard.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

DAILY MAIL.

Teddy Lester's Chums.

(Continued from the previous page.)

this cap in his hand to hold the squirt, for the metal barrel would at once become too hot for comfort.

Teddy drew the handle back, and the squirt was filled instantly with warm water.

"I'll christen 'em," said Teddy. "You wait and hear 'em howl."

He skipped nimbly up to his watch-tower and peeped out. Curzon had been holding a short parley with his friends, but now he was launching himself against the door.

Teddy drew back his head, and laid the nozzle of the squirt in the knot-hole. Crash! A tremendous kick was landed on the door, and at that instant Teddy pressed the handle of the squirt, and sent a shower of hot water on the group below.

As he poured the fluid down, Teddy turned the nozzle of the squirt from one side to the other, and by this means he managed to distribute his load pretty equally. If anyone had more than another it was Curzon, who was directly below the knot-hole.

A frightful howl of pain and anger arose from the assailants. This was turning the tables with a vengeance. The besieged had made a most painful and effective counter-attack.

"Ow, ow!" yelled Gibson. "It's hot water! It's gone down my neck. I'm scalded!"

"Oh, oh!" wailed Palmer. "My car's full! My face is burnt!"

The others screamed and shouted and dashed the water from them as well as they could. Warm water was more than they had bargained for.

"Cold water!" cried one. "I'm off to the lavatory. That'll ease the pain."

He darted away, and the rest followed. Curzon roaring like a bull in his wrath, and promising the most terrible vengeance for the torture he was suffering.

Inside No. 25, Teddy grinned down at his friends.

"I thought I could start 'em on the jump," he remarked. "Good old door! It's stood 'em off well. Now we'll finish our tea."

But the party scarcely sat down to the table when the handle was seized and shaken as if someone was again trying to come in.

"Clear off," sang out Teddy, "or you'll get another dose of ditto!"

"Why is this door locked, Lester?" demanded a voice, at the sound of which Teddy jumped. "Open it at once!"

Teddy fled to obey, and the door was opened to disclose the tall form of Mr. Jayne on the threshold.

The master's study door had been ajar, and he had heard from the distance the yells and howls of the scalded and defeated band. He had come down to see what was wrong, but had found the studies corridor empty and silent, for Curzon & Co. had fled to cool their scalded skins. Then his eye caught sight of the water on the floor outside No. 25, and he wanted to know what it meant.

As soon as Teddy opened the door, Mr. Jayne walked in. The door of No. 25 was not very well hung, and always swung to of itself. It swung to now, and was closed as before.

"What is the meaning, Lester, of these wet patches outside your study door?" demanded Mr. Jayne severely.

"Better make a clean breast of it," thought Teddy. "It's no good trying to dodge old Jayne." Then he spoke aloud. "The truth is, sir, some fellows came here to rag us—to play tricks on us, sir—and I threw some water on them."

"Oh, that is it, is it?" said Mr. Jayne; and then he began a lecture on the sinfulness of a boy taking matters into his own hands, instead of appealing to his master for protection against evil-doers.

"Good!" breathed Teddy to himself. "Old Jayne's only going to jaw us a bit. After all, it's first day. He ain't going to be hard on what happens first day."

So he listened with a most humble and penitent look on his face, and made remarks here and there to show that he fully agreed with Mr. Jayne's opinions. The latter did not ask who the assailants were. He knew Teddy, and felt pretty sure that Lester would not tell. Teddy liked to carry out matters on his own.

Now, while this lecture was going on, Curzon and his friends were very busy in the lavatory down below. They soused their faces and heads with cold water, and cooled their burning skins.

All went about their work with moans and groans save Curzon. His dark face was black with rage, and he was savage and silent as he attended to his burns.

"We've got to give 'em beans for this!" snarled Palmer.

"Yes," cried Gibson, "this is Lester's doing! I'll bet all I've got on that. It's just one of his games, dousing us with hot water. My neck will be sore for a week. What are you going to do, Curzon?"

"I'll be among 'em with this wicket in two minutes!" growled Curzon, gripping once more the wicket with which he intended to smite his victims. "I can fetch that door loose with another kick."

"And get a fresh dose of hot water!" remarked Gibson.

"I'll take care about that," said the big fellow.

He crossed to a corner of the lavatory where a large rug lay on the floor. He picked it up and flung it over his head and shoulders.

"That'll take the water all right," he said; and his followers applauded the device.

"Now, don't make a row to warn 'em!" commanded Curzon fiercely.

And the party crept up the steps again.

Next, Curzon muffled himself well in the big thick rug, leaving only a corner open to peep through, and, clutching his wicket tighter, prepared for a last tremendous rush. Little did he dream how easy it would be to burst through the door this time, and into whose presence he would hurl himself.

With a charge like a mad bull Curzon launched himself at the door. Crash he went into it, and it flew widely back, for it was not even latched, it had only swung to.

Meeting thus with no resistance to his mad onset, Curzon went whirling into the room, enveloped in his long and trailing rug. He trod on a corner of the latter, tangled himself up in it, came headlong to the ground, and rolled in a furious, bellowing heap at the feet of Mr. Jayne.

(This rollicking new school tale will be continued on Saturday next.)

Powerful New Football Story by A. S. Hardy Starts in a Fortnight's Time.

A SPEED TEST

A STORY OF THE BROOKLANDS RACING TRACK BY A. S. HARDY

Onward the car ran until it reached the end of the embankment, then over it toppled into the sand at the bottom, finishing the run upside down.

THE 1st CHAPTER

At Brooklands—The Brothers—Concerning a Bridge Debt—A Match Made, and a Fortune at Stake.

IN the paddock at Brooklands Henry Fordyce, a handsome youth, who had left Oxford but twelve months ago, but who had seen much trouble since then, owing to the death of his mother and father and the loss of most of his fortune, stood watching his mechanician, Bruce, as the latter carefully surveyed the newly-constructed, 30-h.p. Cyprus racing motor that had just been run down from the Cyprus Motor Works at Acton, the first car the company, which was financed in the main by Henry Fordyce, had built.

The Brooklands track was deserted. The evening was cool. It was an excellent opportunity for trying the car. If they had waited weeks they could not have found more ideal conditions.

"Well, is everything right, Bruce?" asked Henry Fordyce presently.

"I think so, sir," replied the mechanician.

"Very well, then. We had better make a start."

He sprang to the starting-handle himself and gave it a turn. The motor responded instantly and throbbed merrily, shaking the chassis until it trembled. Henry Fordyce got into the driving seat, and was just about to throw in the clutch when there came a strident pup, pup, pup, pup, pup, pup! from some distance away, and the next moment a motor-bicycle came up with a rush, and a youngster, cleverly drawing it to a stand beside the racing car, leapt off. He was heated from his ride, and covered with dust.

"I thought you were never coming, Jack," said Henry Fordyce, giving the boy a quick, reproving glance. "You have a bad habit of always being late. You must break yourself of that. It doesn't matter so much in itself, only it is an index of carelessness and slackness in other things that I don't like to see in a brother of mine."

"I'm sorry, Harry," answered the lad, who looked pale and worried. "Only I was foolish last night. I sat up late playing bridge with Astbury and his crowd. I lost a lot of money, and I couldn't sleep when I did turn in. I felt too upset. But I had to come down here and tell you, because—"

He paused, and looked at Bruce, the mechanician, doubtfully.

"I'd like to have a talk with you on the quiet, Hal," he added nervously.

Henry Fordyce drew his younger brother away.

"Now," he said, when at length they were out of earshot, "tell me what the trouble is, Jack. How much did you lose? Come—out with it! There's no good to be gained by beating about the bush."

The boy hung his head, and a deep flush warmed his pale cheeks.

"I've lost £300," he murmured. "It's all the money I've got, and more besides. It was cruel of me, Hal, when we are both practically broke, and you've just put nearly all the money you've got into this motor business. I was mad. I must have been mad, or I wouldn't have done it. Now you can bully me as much as you please. Don't spare me. Say what you like to me. I shan't mind, for I deserve all I can get."

Henry Fordyce looked quickly at his brother and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Jack," he said, "you are headstrong, foolish. You will always go your own way and not listen to the advice of a staid old stager like me. You see, after mother and dad, I've had all the family troubles to bear. You had nothing else to do but go about wasting your time and enjoying yourself, Jack. I warned you against George Astbury and his set when you were at Oxford. They were no good to you. They fleeced and robbed you there. Astbury is little better than a sharp. Tell me that your debts are paid this time, though it will cost me an effort to manage it, but it will be the last time, Jack. Cut Astbury's acquaintance now, and promise me that you will go straight for the future."

Jack Fordyce seized his brother's hand and clasped it affectionately.

"I will, Hal!" he cried. "I meant to give up all that sort of thing long ago, but something always interfered. I hate the whole gang of them. You'll have no cause to worry about me after this, I promise you."

"That's right, Jack," said Henry, smiling, though his heart was heavy; for, with a thousand and one responsibilities weighing upon him, he did not know where he was to get the money from to pay Astbury off. "Let's try and forget it."

He now started to return to the car, but ere he could reach it a grey racing car of lowrakish, powerful build dashed into the paddock, and the driver sprang from his seat, whipping the goggles from his face as he did so. Henry Fordyce instantly recognised George Astbury, the very man his younger brother had been speaking of.

The yellow car had been built for Astbury, who was a daring and unscrupulous motorist, by the firm of Western & Co. on the condition that he should put up some fine performances on it. They had also presented Astbury with a 30-h.p. private car for his own use, and he held in the motoring world a position akin to that of a "maker's amateur" of the cycling world.

To all intents and purposes George Astbury was a professional. He made a living by his wits. It was his general extravagance and prodigality that rendered his own allowance from his father of £500 a year insufficient for his needs, and forced him to have recourse to games of cards, bets at billiards and what not in order that he might fleece less experienced and more trusting natures than his own. He had toadies who acted as sharks for him, so that however skilfully an opponent might play at bridge he stood no chance to win, and Jack Fordyce's losses were easily understood by his brother.

Seeing the brothers together, George Astbury went up to them with a broad, good-humoured smile on his handsome though somewhat shifty face.

He did not think either of the Fordyces had much money, but they were honourable men, and would pay their debts. Besides, Henry had embarked upon this motor venture, and there might be something in the new Cyprus. The Western was a new venture, too, and if Henry Fordyce on his brand-new Cyprus should do anything sensational, it would cut the ground from under Astbury's feet, as it were. The buying public would probably only remember the car that made the sensation. Therefore Astbury was anxious to know whether the Cyprus was any good or not. He thought he could best obtain the information from Fordyce himself.

"How d'ye do, Fordyce?" he said, holding out his hand.

Henry ignored the outstretched palm. He looked Astbury straight in the eyes. The broad-shouldered, big-built man coloured.

"My brother has just told me," Henry said, "that you robbed him of £300 last night."

"Robbed!" cried Astbury fiercely.

"Yes, robbed. What else do you call it when you and some of your skilled sharpers got hold of a generous boy who believes that everything in the world is straightforward and honest, and rob him, fleece him as you choose?"

"He need not have continued playing," said Astbury hotly. "I told him he had better leave off."

"Knowing full well that his pride and his courage would force him to continue. I know you, George Astbury. You told him he had better leave off. It was in your own flat. Did you make him leave off by stopping the game? Who set the high stakes? You, of course. Why? Because you make your living by gambling. You are an outsider and a blackguard, Astbury."

The man flushed crimson to the roots of his hair. His hands clenched, the veins of his neck stood out in thick cords. He would have struck Fordyce if he had dared, but he knew better. He realised that he would have no chance with that calm, determined, resourceful youth. He burst into a laugh.

"I'll make you pay for that, one of these days, Fordyce," he said. "Meanwhile, I shall expect to be paid, or I'll blacken your brother's name in every club in London."

"I shall have some difficulty in paying you," Fordyce went on; "I have little ready money now, and my brother's banking-account is almost down to zero. You see, I am frank with you. Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll match the Cyprus car here against your Western, £600 to £300—double or quits—the race to take place on Saturday fortnight. What do you say to that?"

Astbury sneered.

"You've got no money, you say," he said. "Well, what security have I that you will be able to pay me the £600 if you lose?"

"You have the goodwill of the Cyprus Works—plants, material, buildings, motors and all."

"You'll put that in writing?" said Astbury, giving Henry Fordyce a quick glance whilst he began to rapidly review the situation.

"Certainly!"

It would be a good thing for Astbury, the latter thought. When he had beaten the Cyprus—and he had no thought of losing—he would have done something tangible to please the Western people, and he would be able to bleed them for a bit. He would also get a hold on Henry Fordyce, whom he had always hated and feared. He would put on the screw then. He would ruin him—ruin him! Yes. He would win the match with the Cyprus. He took a quick glance at Bruce, the mechanician, and knew instinctively that the weak-looking youth would be readily bought by a bribe, if the bribe were big enough. If the Cyprus motor were good enough to beat the Western, he would see that it was tampered with so that it should not give of its best in the match. He would kill the Cyprus from the very start.

"Well, I don't know," he said, appearing to hesitate. "It seems to me that that arrangement is all to your advantage. But I'll tell you what I will do, Fordyce. I'll overlook your insolence and make the match if you'll also have a side bet on for cash, for, say, £50. But you must give me a loan on that property, mind."

"Very good," answered Henry Fordyce; "it shall be done. Come to my solicitor's office in Chancery Lane—Philip Mortimer & Co.—tomorrow, and we'll arrange everything."

"I'll be there. What time—eleven o'clock?"

"Eleven o'clock will suit me precisely."

With that Henry Fordyce turned away. His brother Jack went to him as he got into the car.

"What have you done, Hal?" he cried.

"Saved you, and made the Cyprus, I hope," answered the elder brother, setting his teeth sharply. "If not—well, we must start all over again—that's all, Jack."

And he drove the car out of the paddock on to the track. Jack stood waiting in a fever of impatience for the car to come round, and when he saw it flash into sight, and fly wildly away along the inside of the basin, to disappear in a cloud of blue smoke and dust amidst the thunderous roar of the exhaust, his heart leapt high.

Why, the Cyprus motor was a mad success! He had never seen another car of the same power move round the track at Brooklands at such a pace. He glanced sideways at George Astbury, as the latter sat in his car watching the passing of the Cyprus racer, and he noticed that Astbury was pulling at his moustache thoughtfully.

"He doesn't like it," muttered Jack.

Indeed, George Astbury's thoughts were none of the pleasantest.

"If he can make that car shift like that," he muttered, "and the blessed thing isn't tuned up yet, I may lose my money after all. I must see that mechanician of his at the earliest possible opportunity. I dare not let Henry Fordyce win."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Treachery—The Surrey Stakes—The Cyprus Beaten.

THE Saturday after the trial of the Cyprus motor found that car entered for the Surrey stakes of 200 sovereigns, added to a sweepstake of 10 sovereigns each for starters only. Weight was restricted to 2,000 pounds, and the distance was to be a little over twenty-nine miles. Besides the Cyprus, the Western was running, driven by George Astbury, and also a Flyer, a Firefly, and a Desgorges; of these the lightest weight car was the Cyprus, the others totalling a few pounds extra.

Astbury was delighted. He wished to see what the Cyprus was worth, in view of the race match on the following Saturday week. He would be able to get a line through the Surrey stakes, he reckoned, and he did not mean to be beaten in that, either.

Astbury, who was of the type of men that never tire, after a late night spent in gambling, as usual put in an early appearance at Brooklands, where he found his car ready, tuned up to the moment, and in the finest trim. Should he start in the Surrey Stakes or not? That was the question he asked himself. Well, he would see Bruce Fordyce's mechanician first.

He wandered out into the paddock, and on the far side he saw the yellow car, with Bruce, wiping some of the parts over with an oil rag.

Neither Henry Fordyce or his brother Jack were to be seen. It was the opportunity Astbury wanted.

He strolled up to Bruce, and smiled at him.

"You're a fine, hard-working sort of lad," he said, knowing how much praise was valued by some people, and feeling his way to his man. "I should have thought you would be able to find a better job than with Mr. Fordyce."

"What's the matter with him? He's a good master," growled Bruce; but there was a downward droop of the lips as he spoke, which told the crafty Astbury that Bruce was open to temptation.

"Oh, yes," he answered lightly, "Fordyce is one of the best. We were at Oxford together. But you can't stand much of a show with this new company, Bruce. They are bound to go smash. I've got inside information, and I know that they haven't got the capital to tide over a bad time. Besides, after the race to-day, and the match, in which the Western is bound to win, what will the Cyprus Motor Company be worth?"

"They pay me pretty well for what I do," remarked Bruce, rubbing the parts more briskly, and listening with all his ears.

"That may be; but there are others can pay better. What would you say to joining me with a pound a week increase to your wages, and a lighter time and more important racing to do?"

"Thank you, sir," answered Bruce. "I'll bear your offer in mind when I leave Mr. Fordyce's service."

Astbury had won fifty pounds overnight, and felt in a gleeful mood. He took a ten-pound note out of his pocket.

"Here you are, Bruce," he said. "Take this for a bit of pocket-money."

The mechanician hesitated. It was a big sum for a man to give a lad as a mere tip.

"What have I got to do with it, sir?" he asked doubtfully.

"Well, I'll tell you what to do," answered Astbury. "You take the motor to pieces, give it an extra clean up right through. Do your best to get it to run well to-day. I like to play the game fair. I shall turn out in the Surrey Stakes against the Cyprus. It will only be exercising the form for next week. But just you do that, my lad. Let the best motor win. That's my motto."

Bruce looked at Astbury for a moment, hesitating.

"If I get the sack, sir," he said, "you'll keep your word about the job?"

"Certainly!" laughed George Astbury. "I'm a man of honour. You can trust to my word. You are dealing with a gentleman."

That Astbury was all that he claimed to be may be said to be gravely open to doubt, but, be that as it may, when he had walked away, whistling carelessly Bruce set to work to take the engine to pieces. He had out the exhaust and inlet valves. He put in new springs. He flushed out the cylinders of the motor. He had the carburetter to pieces. In fact, he did everything as Astbury had said to make the machine run well.

But as it is a doubtful point that taking a motor to pieces when it is doing well ever does it any good—the exception being, of course, when the whole engine is thoroughly in need of a clean, and the combustion imperfect—he may be said not to have done anything to improve the condition of the Cyprus motor.

Bruce had nearly completed his job, when Henry Fordyce appeared. The owner of the yellow car, noticing what the mechanician was up to, gave vent to an exclamation of annoyance.

"On whose authority have you been tinkering about with the motor, Bruce?" he asked.

"Nobody's, sir," answered the lad unblushingly. "Only I wanted the engine to do its best to-day, and so I took the parts to pieces, thoroughly cleaned and replaced them, with the result that the motor runs more perfectly than ever."

"Do you pay any attention at all to racing news? Do you study the running of cars in these races?" asked Henry Fordyce angrily.

"Yes, sir," answered his man, a little defiantly.

"Well, then, you must know that in nine cases out of ten where owners have had their

A SPEED TEST.

(Continued from the previous page.)

'motors to pieces, thinking to get extra power or compression and increased speed, the effort had ended in a complete fiasco. The engine was running as sweetly as ever it could run. Nothing in the world could make it run better. We have been tuning it up all the week, and this is the result. You, without orders, must take the motor to pieces. Bruce, I have no further use for you. You'll never touch another car of mine. I like people about me whom I can rely upon."

Bruce looked glum.

"Do you mean you're going to dismiss me, sir?" he asked, losing his temper.

"Yes. You can have a fortnight's wages, and clear out at once. I shan't even want your assistance this afternoon. I'll run the car in the Surrey Stakes without you."

Bruce tried to argue. But Henry Fordyce was one of those masterful men that you couldn't argue with, and so, an hour later, when George Astbury came back to Brooklands, he found the mechanician waiting for him with a long face, and his hands thrust deep into his breeches pockets, the very aspect of despair.

"Well, what is it, Bruce?" asked Astbury genially.

"The guv'nor's give me the sack for tinkering about with the motor," answered Bruce. "It was all through you, sir. What about that job you were talking about?"

"All right," said Astbury. "You leave that to me. If I can't give you a job myself, I'll get you taken on as a driver at the Western Works. You needn't be afraid, Bruce."

"When shall I see you merely a minute, sir?"

"Oh, come to the works on Monday at eleven. I'll be there, and will introduce you to the manager."

With this the mechanician had to rest satisfied, and, getting a sandwich or two from the refreshment-bar, he spent the afternoon watching the racing instead of taking part in it. He knew he had done wrong, but because of that very fact, perhaps, he felt a bitter resentment against his late master.

"I hope his brakes block his blessed neck," he muttered vindictively, as he saw the yellow car flash down the track towards the starting point for the Surrey Stakes.

This was the most important race of the day. George Astbury, smiling all over his face, drove the Sun-up, Western No. 1, to the starting-place, and so businesslike was the appearance of both driver and car, that the people gave him a reception as he went down.

Defeat was never in Astbury's mind. He had tested the car again and again, and he knew it was better class than anything else in the race, with the exception, perhaps, of the Cyprus, the merits of which he knew nothing about as the car had never been raced. But he knew enough about the Cyprus motor had meddled with it, the odds were against it doing well, and he smiled as he heard the bookmakers bet, laying two to one against his own car, and only three to one against Fordyce's.

That was because of the fact that the public, knowing well enough that the Western car would about win, and hearing that the match had been made, judged accordingly that the Cyprus must be somewhere about the same class, and there was a rush on the part of a host of people to get their money on.

When at length the starting gate was raised, and to the clang of the bell the cars set off at a tremendous speed, but not at a time, for some of the motors picked up quickly, while others seemed to lag behind very badly, the greatest interest and excitement prevailed. Opposite the guinea enclosure the Western car was leading by three lengths from the Firefly, with the Desgorges, the French car, next, the Flyer fourth, and the yellow Cyprus last. The Cyprus was a good way behind. At least three hundred yards separated her from the leader, for the Western had gone off with a rush, and, owing to a bit of misfiring and general misbehaviour, the Cyprus could not get up her speed. There were idiots faces belonging to those who had fancied the Cyprus, and a general laugh at the expense of poor Fordyce. But when three miles had been covered, and the car came whirling past the stand again, it was seen that the Cyprus had gained third place, and was no further behind the leading Western car than before, whilst the Firefly had lost fifty yards.

Onward they sped amidst a whirl and cloud of dust, with the Cyprus car gradually but surely lessening the gap. At last the Western car was caught and passed amidst cheers, and Astbury, who was at the wheel of the Western car, gritted his teeth as he hung on. He had an oxygen cylinder attached to the car, and he used some of this now, and the car, spurting in response, once more took the lead. Lap after lap was covered in the desperate race. The spectators grew frantic, and then on the last circuit, when it would have taken a clever man to have told the winner out of the Western and the Cyprus, the others being now long since tailed off, as the two racing motors flashed into view for the final run down the straight, it was seen that the Western was leading and must win. Win it did, and Astbury, at once making for the nearest exit from the track so that he might weigh in, turned his car about.

A shout of horror went up, for Fordyce, on the Cyprus, was right upon him. A collision seemed inevitable, but with great presence of mind Henry Fordyce put his brakes on hard. There was a grinding noise, a cry of terror from the crowd, and the gears jumped into the reverse, a brake-band broke, the car skidded round twice, and ran backwards down the slope of the banking of the track, the one brake that remained being insufficient to hold her.

The crowd shrieked. Onward the car ran until she reached the end of the embankment, then over she toppled into the sand at the bottom, finishing her run upside-down. Jack Fordyce, who had been acting as mechanician to his brother, sprang for it, but Henry was thrown out, and as people rushed to their assistance not a few thought that the driver had been killed. Jack was first up, picking himself from the sand, and merely bruised and shaken, and suffering a bit from shock; but Henry's leg was badly scraped, and he was so hurt that he had to be helped up.

"Hal, old man," cried Jack, horrified, "are you much hurt?"

"No, old boy," was the answer. "But I'm afraid it's all up. And, even if that can be put right—which will be a mercy—I shall have to rely on you to pull the Cyprus through on Saturday week. I'm certain I shall not be well enough to drive."

With a whirl and a rush the motor-ambulance came up, and on this Harry Fordyce was removed.

Meanwhile George Astbury—who had done the whole thing on purpose—smiled a smile of huge delight.

"Curse the beggar right!" he muttered. "I reckon the match is as good as a certainty for me now."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

The Day of the Match—An Exciting Contest—How the Cyprus Won.

HENRY FORDYCE'S prophecy about himself proved to be only too correct. Even a fortnight was not sufficient time to permit him to get well again. His wrist had been badly sprained, his arms and legs injured. He was still bandaged on the day of the big match. But the yellow car had been thoroughly overhauled, the brakes repaired, and during the fortnight that elapsed Jack Fordyce had been practising the Cyprus every day, tuning her up, testing her, and getting used to her, so that he knew how to manage the motor with perfect judgment.

And as he practised the conviction grew and grew upon Jack that his brother's car stood a mighty good chance of winning. Her running in the Surrey Stakes was not true. She was capable of doing much better things than that. As the use of oxygen had not been forbidden, a cylinder had been fitted to the Cyprus, so that she could compete on even terms with the Western.

The twelve-laps match was timed for one o'clock on the Saturday, and as it was really the big event of the day, the crowd turned up in great force. The public had got over the pantry which had followed the first race-meeting at Brooklands, and they now streamed down in their thousands to see the fun. Many improvements had been made, and racing was really interesting and amusing. There are many worse places to spend a half holiday than at Brooklands.

Weybridge was early full, and people still came streaming in.

At half-past twelve the cars were examined and weighed, both Henry Fordyce and George Astbury being present at the weighing, and the hundred-and-one stipulations according to the articles of agreement having been found to be strictly adhered to, the cars were passed.

Astbury looked anxious, and he gnawed the end of his moustaches as he stood by Henry Fordyce in the paddock prior to going on the track.

He knew well enough the Cyprus motor had not done its best a fortnight ago, but what its best was he could only guess at. Still, he thought the Western about good enough to win, for he had speed it higher, and, though it would be slower to pick up its running, once it did get going he reckoned it would be quite capable of doing an extra fifteen miles an hour, if not more, in pace. That ought to be good enough to hold and beat the Cyprus.

He cast an eye at Jack Fordyce, and saw that the lad was as pale as a sheet, and trembling from sheer nervousness. He himself was as calm as if nothing unusual were about to happen. He reckoned he would have a decided pull there. As a motorist he was utterly devoid of fear, and, apart from conceit, he knew he was about as good a driver as the world owned, not excluding the Italian crack Navarro. It had been a clever and judicious stroke of his, putting Henry Fordyce—who was greatly to be feared—out of the match.

Henry Fordyce now walked up to his brother and placed a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"Remember all there is at stake, Jack," he murmured, "and make up your mind to do or die. Honour, position, reputation, fortune will be held, won, or, lost by this race. Remember that, my dear boy, and keep cool."

"I'll do that, Hal," answered the boy, the tears starting to his eyes under the stress of his great emotion. "I got you into this mess, and I'll do my best to get you out of it. And if I fail, I'll never forgive myself—never!"

George Astbury's sharp ears caught the words. And he decided then and there that he would try and intimidate Jack. The more the lad had to discourage him before he went out on to the track the better would Astbury's chance of winning be.

"Are you quite satisfied with the wager as it stands, Fordyce?" he asked, as he sauntered up to Henry. "It's not much of a bet, you know. I'm certain of winning, and I'd like to have a bit more on."

"The wager shall stand as it is," answered Henry Fordyce coldly. "I am not a gambler, Astbury. I merely want to win back the money you cheated my brother of, and I shall be satisfied. I never bet, and I never will. This will be the first and last time in my life!"

"A fine sportsman!" sneered Astbury. Then, turning to Jack, he added: "What about you, Jack; you'll spring a bit, won't you?"

"No!" was the short, sharp answer. "I've got into enough trouble through my gambling, and I'll never bet again. I am on the rear, you'd better look after your car, Astbury, for it it lies within my power to beat you, I shall."

"You," sneered Astbury—"a babe in arms! Listen to the cry of the ring! Three to one on the Western! It looks as if you've got a chance, haven't I—a dog's chance? I'll ruin you both to-day!"

With that, seeing that his goading had had the desired effect, and that Jack Fordyce was quite unnerved, he got into his seat on the car, and the mechanician—who on this occasion was none other than Henry Fordyce's late lad Bruce—setting the engine going, he steered it out on to the track.

Jack Fordyce had a faithful lad from the Cyprus works going with him. He had seen that tyres and everything else were in order, and, it being time to go to the post, the engine was started, and Jack, trying his best to steady himself, drove the car quietly to the post.

There were some minutes of delay, then up went the gate, and off rushed the racing motors, the thunder of their open exhausts sounding like the rattle of artillery on the still air as they tore along.

Despite its high gear the Western car took the lead, as it had done a fortnight before; but when the cars raced past the stands there was only twenty yards dividing them—not much of a distance, and a deficiency that could be made up at any time.

The crowd settled down to quiet enjoyment, heads being craned to see the cars come round. The great width of the track, and the immense height of the banking made them look like toys as they came tearing round on the first circuit, and killed all sense of great speed. The cars were now abreast, the Cyprus being wide up the banking. Then George Astbury used his oxygen, and drew away. The crowd cheered as he took the lead and flashed from view. At the end of the second circuit the Western was leading by fifty yards. The third found it about the same distance ahead, and at the fourth and fifth it was a little less. The yellow car was holding its own, and there was no knowing how the race would end yet.

On they flashed, tearing, rattling, screaming, with dust and smoke floating from them, as it seemed, into the air. With four laps to go, the Western led by thirty yards. With three it was quite sixty, the biggest lead that had yet been established. Astbury was smiling triumph as he crouched over his wheel, his mechanician, Bruce, glancing back from time to time, and telling him what the positions were.

But Jack Fordyce was cool now. His nervousness had stood him in good stead, and he was driving as crafty and as skilful a race as ever motorist drove. He had not used any oxygen yet, and George Astbury had, as he well knew. Astbury, on his part, reckoned that Jack had been striving his utmost from the very start. However, such was not the case. Jack had been nursing his car all along, content to remain in the rear, and it was his antagonist who was all out.

With two laps to go Jack made his effort as they came along towards the stands, and, using his oxygen, to the astonishment of the crowd the yellow Cyprus was seen to sprint as if possessed. It took back the sixty yards as if they had been nothing, and Bruce, who saw it coming, uttered a yell.

"The car's gaining, sir!" he shouted at the pitch of his voice. "It's right on us!"

And up from the crowd went the roar, "The Cyprus wins!"

It was sweet music in Henry Fordyce's ears, and he cheered for Jack as he waved his hand.

George Astbury, white now, tried to cut off the car by drawing his own across it; but Jack had anticipated the move, and, going wide, he collared the Western whilst going round the inside of the basin, and yard by yard it gained, until it had got away. Breathless, the crowd waited for its coming, and round the last lap it went. Seeing the signalman waiting to raise the red disc that warned him to turn into the final straight, Jack Fordyce swept his car about, and along he came like a demon.

He reached the winning-post a hundred yards ahead, having driven the race of a lifetime, a race that would make any sporting popular. And as he laboured on in the rear with overheated engines, and water leaking from the tank and radiators, which had been shaken to bits, George Astbury cursed aloud. Then, as the car flashed over the finishing-line, there was a sudden loud report, a sheet of flame, and, exclaiming on the brakes hard, he had only just time to draw the car up and leap from it, ere the whole vehicle was alight. The open exhaust had set fire to the flooded carburetter, and as the sheets of flames leapt madly into the air, and licked the steel framework of the racing car, the spectators realised that the Western racer was doomed.

But not caring a jot what became of Astbury's machine, Jack drove his car off the track to receive the congratulations of his brother and his friends. The spectators cheered him again and again.

George Astbury heard the cheering and ground his teeth in rage, not moving a finger to get sand to put the blazing machine out.

"Curse the luck!" he cried. "Henry Fordyce has won on every point! It's I who am ruined, and this win will make his fortune."

And he hurried away in gloomy silence as he realised that he was beat, hopelessly beat, this time. His luck was dead out.

THE END.

(Your Editor begs to remind his readers that in a fortnight's time the opening chapters of Mr. A. S. Hardy's powerful new football story will appear. No lover or devotee of the great winter game should miss this story, which will be Mr. Hardy's masterpiece.)

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

We are pleased to notice the enthusiasm which is being displayed in our great football leagues, and the large number of applications for admittance that are coming to hand day by day. That the scheme is an assured success, and scores of clubs are intimating their desire to be enrolled under our banner. We are this week publishing another long list of clubs which have joined already. Here it is:

Christ Church Juniors F.C. (Burton-on-Trent), Crusaders A.F.C. (Erdington), Albert Victoria F.C. (Bethnal Green), Boutefract Celtic F.C. (Pontefract), Northgate White Star F.C. (Yorks), West Smethwick F.C. (W. Smethwick), Park Athletic F.C. (Custom House, E.), Penketh Albions F.C. (Lancs), Sevendale F.C. (Prestbury, Gidney United F.C. (Paddington), Hartshill Baptists F.C. (Middlesex), Norwood Juniors F.C. (Norwood), Seton Highlands F.C. (Seton), Grange Albion F.C. (Edinburgh), Lynton A.F.C. (Stepney), Crellow Wood Reserves F.C. (Tooting), Barnsbury United F.C. (Barnsbury), Manningham A.F.C. (Yorks), St. Mary's A.F.C. (Greenwich), Ferndale F.C. (Luton).

Applications for our football cups are also coming to hand from leagues in various parts of the country, and these are being carefully considered by your Editor. We hope to publish the names of some of the competitions to which cups will be given next Saturday.

OUR CRICKET LEAGUE.

The following clubs have this week been awarded cricket bats for the best performances on Saturday, July 27th:

SECTION 1.

SWINTON AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.
SCHOLES C.C.—Secretary, Mr. E. Quibell, Scholes Lodge, Scholes, near Rotherham.

EAST LONDON CHURCH LEAGUE.
ST. GABRIEL'S C.C.—Secretary, Mr. A. Butterfield, 3, Wellington Street, Canning Town.

SOUTH LONDON SUNDAY SCHOOL LEAGUE.
OXFORD MISSION C.C.—Secretary, Mr. P. Whichelow, 3, Paul Street, Maltby Street, Bermondsey, S.E.

BLACKBURN AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.
ASNIL ST. C.C.—Secretary, Mr. J. Fecitt, 28, Wellfield Road, Blackburn.

WORTH LIVERSEDGE AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.
BROUGHAM C.C.—Secretary, Mr. P. E. Westerdale, 100, Exmouth Street, Birkenhead.

SECTION 2.

JUNIOR DIVISION.

CHORLTON JUNIORS C.C.—Secretary, E. Mortimer, 1st North Stafford Regiment, Aldershot.

SENIOR DIVISION.

HISTON KECELSIOR C.C.—Secretary, H. Peck, Grove Terrace, Histon, Cambs.

League Table up to and including Saturday, July 27th:

JUNIORS.

Name of Club.	P.	W.	L.	D.	R's F.	R's A.	P.
Rebecca St. C.C. ..	12	12	0	0	1,849	393	24
Garfield C.C. ..	12	12	0	0	1,100	406	24
Primitive Juniors C.C.	12	11	1	0	809	509	22
Wilton C.C. ..	12	11	1	0	807	625	22
Chorlster Juniors C.C.	10	10	0	0	325	184	20

Name of Club.	P.	W.	L.	D.	R's F.	R's A.	P.
Malmsbury C.C. ..	11	10	1	0	309	333	20
St. Barnabas C.C. ..	9	9	0	0	890	570	18
Highfield Juniors C.C.	10	9	1	0	592	370	18
Hockmondswyke C.C.	9	9	0	0	481	257	18

SENIOR.

Camden C.C.. ..	11	10	1	0	755	373	20
Northgate C.C. ..	9	9	0	0	653	258	18
Hanley C.C. ..	9	9	1	0	606	209	18
Lovely Lane C.C. ..	8	8	0	0	852	182	16
Lily C.C.	7	6	0	1	623	331	12
Stoke Star C.C. ..	7	6	1	0	613	301	12
Horsforth Vic. C.C..	8	6	2	0	118	113	12
St. Jude's C.C. ..	6	5	1	0	363	222	10

PORTRAIT NO. 4.

The following readers have been awarded the sum of five shillings in accordance with the conditions laid down in connection with the above competition.

Charles Pugh, 315, Lovely Lane, Warrington; V. Revitt, 2, Spa Common, Retford, Notts; A. Fall, Alexandra Dining Rooms, Victoria Road, Woolston, Southampton; A. Rulves, 114, Lisbon Road, Freemantle, Southampton; G. Buckingham, 15, Horton Street, near Council School, St. Philips, Bristol; Leonard Cohen, 1, Hinton Terrace, Loughboro' Junction, S.E.

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KING CRICKET!

A Fascinating Story of County Cricket.

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

*****

The Chief Characters in this Fine Story.

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

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

LEN VALANCE, Kit's twin brother.

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

JAMES LAGDEN, who has ruined Arthur's uncle.

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

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

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

Kit Valance, Arthur's bosom chum, has a twin brother named Len, who is not a model youth. 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 Kent and Ponsonby is appointed in his place as captain. Ponsonby is not a success, and has to resign his captaincy. Arthur Lovell is offered the post, but refuses the honour, much to Colonel Hilton's chagrin.

Later, 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.

The following day the match with Kent starts, and Lagden, by his insubordination and faulty play, rouses Lovell's anger. Lovell orders him off the field. At Colonel Hilton's behest Lagden is allowed to return and bat during the Loamshire innings, when the amateur shows his entire lack of gratitude for his reprieve by deliberately slipping whilst crossing the bat, and causing the downfall of Lovell's wicket.

Lovell is now determined that Lagden shall not play again during the match. After the day's play Kit Valance overhears his brother Len and Lagden discussing a plot they have arranged, the object of which is to disable Lovell and prevent him from crossing the following day. Kit rushes off to save his old chum, but is too late. Arthur attempts to cross a plank-bridge which has been loosened, and falls twenty feet into a cutting below, badly spraining his leg. Kit rushes to his side in alarm.

(How read this week's instalment.)

How Kit Saved the Match.

"THIS is more of the cowardly work of Len and Geoffrey Lagden. Arthur, I was wrong—all was to blame," said Kit, in a low voice; "you were right—it was Len who struck down poor Blane. I know it now, and I ask your forgiveness."

Arthur Lovell held out his hand.

"Let us forget all that, Kit, and let things be as they were before."

"You mean that?"

"With all my heart!"

Kit grasped his hand.

"And as for this—this business," said Lovell hesitatingly. "Do not speak yet—we must think about it."

"The scoundrels must be punished —"

"We don't want to make a cricket scandal—and proof might be hard to get. No, say nothing for the present; at least, until we have had time to reflect," said Lovell. "Nothing is to be gained by bringing the Loamshire Club and the good old game into disrepute. Say nothing for the present, Kit."

Kit pressed his hand.

"I understand you, Lovell. It shall be as you say." He passed his hand across his eyes. "Now, I will go for help; I shall not be long."

He passed along the cutting and climbed out. Lovell heard his rapid footsteps pass into the wood above and die away. He was alone!

He lay there in the thickening darkness, in the deadly silence, with the pain of his injured limb growing ever keener, waiting for Kit's return.

Gloomy indeed was the prospect before the best bat of the Loamshire team. He would be barred from the game he loved, at a time when his county badly needed him; he did not know for how long. The Loamshire eleven would be facing many a hard tussle—possibly many a defeat—while he lay helpless to bowl a ball or swing a bat.

Yet in the midst of his gloomy reflections there was a feeling of relief and gladness in Arthur Lovell's heart.

The cloud that had lowered between him and his chum had passed away; they were upon their old footing again now. And in the future, whatever he had to endure, whatever he had to face, he would face it with a true chum by his side; and that meant much to Arthur Lovell.

Morning, bright and sunny. Bright sunshine, green turf, and a dry, hard wicket.

The enclosures on the Angel ground at Tonbridge were filling rapidly, the weather, and the previous day's tussle between Loamshire and Kent, promising a splendid day's cricket.

And interest in the struggle between Loamshire and the champions was very keen in the hop county, and cricket-lovers were coming from near and far for the second day's play.

But a strange rumour had penetrated the crowd long before the time came for the first ball to be bowled in the Kent second innings.

Something had happened to the captain of Loamshire. Arthur Lovell, the young professional who was captaining the visiting team, had met with an accident, and would not be able to play.

The rumour gained ground, and presently it was confirmed, and all who cared to know knew that Arthur Lovell, the previous evening, had fallen into a disused chalk pit in the Highbank Wood, and sustained a severe sprain. There was no hint of foul play.

It was "hard cheese" for Loamshire and for Lovell, all agreed upon that, but no one surmised that anything more than an accident had occurred.

Arthur and Kit had kept their own counsel. Lovell had, indeed, had a slight hope that matters might not turn out to be so bad as they seemed at first, and that he might be able to play again. But upon this point the doctor's verdict was final and decisive.

"Complete rest for a few weeks, and you will be all right again," he said; "but if you attempt to use the limb before I give you permission you will probably be laid up for the whole season."

It was a bitterly hard blow to Lovell; but, as he had said, he could take his gruel without complaining. There was no help for it, and he resigned himself to his fate.

Kit came into his room just before going down to the match, and his concerned face showed how deep and real his sympathy was.

"It's as I really expected," said Lovell, with a smile. "I'm laid up for weeks, Kit."

The young bowler compressed his lips.

"By the act of my brother, Lovell!"

"Oh, don't speak of that! It was Lagden's work, and if Len had not aided him, probably he would have found someone else."

"But what is to be done about it?" said Kit abruptly. "It is impossible to allow the rascals to escape punishment!"

Lovell shook his head.

"We must make up our minds to that, Kit. You don't want your name disgraced in a miserable prosecution. Neither of us wants the name of the Loamshire Club, either, dragged through the papers in a sordid case."

"But—"

"Besides, where's the proof? What you overheard wouldn't count as evidence in a court of law. It would be your word against Lagden's, for, of course, he would deny everything."

Kit was silent.

"No, Kit; it can't be helped. Talking about it and raising a scandal would only make matters worse," said Lovell.

"But you will let Colonel Hilton know?"

"What's the use? He would rather believe that you dreamed it all than that a Loamshire amateur could be guilty of such dirty treachery."

"I—I suppose so. Then you counsel not saying a word?"

"Not a word—at present, at all events. In the future we shall be guided by circumstances. What worries me mostly, now is the fate of the match with Kent."

"We can't win without you, Arthur."

"You must try, Kit," said the Loamshire captain earnestly. "We shall not do much in the last innings with a bat gone—and not the worst bat in the team." He smiled faintly. "It is in the bowling that our hope lies, Kit—our only hope."

He laid his hand on the young bowler's arm.

"You remember how you backed up in the last innings in the Yorkshire match, Kit, and pulled the game out of the fire for us?"

Kit nodded.

"You must do it again. Kent have knocked up 195 in their first innings, and we have replied with 190. How many do you think we shall knock up in our last innings?"

"Fifty, perhaps."

"A low estimate, but probably quite correct. Putting the figure at 50, we can't afford to let Kent have more than 45 runs at the outside in their second innings."

"Then we should just beat them."

"I don't care how close it is, Kit, so long as we beat them. You can see that it all depends upon your bowling in the innings to-day."

"I suppose it does."

"I hear that Ponsonby is taking my place, pro tem," said Lovell. "That won't make any difference. With the eyes of the colonel upon him, and the world looking on, too, he won't dare to ignore you. If he left you out of the bowling he would be brought to book sharp enough."

"Yes; I am not uneasy about that."

"Then you've got to dismiss the Kent batsmen for 40 runs, or thereabouts, Kit," said Lovell, with a smile. "I know you'll do your level best."

"I'll put into it all that I have in me," said Kit. "I feel in splendid form, and if the wickets are to be taken, I'll take them."

"Good luck, Kit!"

And the young bowler pressed his chum's hand and left the room. He went with the steady determination in his breast to pull the game out of the fire if it could be done by human efforts.

Loamshire's batting would be weak in the last innings, and all depended upon the Loamshire bowling in Kent's innings to-day. And of the Loamshire bowlers Kit Valance was head and shoulders above the rest.

Kit Valance was the player who was to save the match if it could be saved. But the task was a heavy one. To many it would seem hopeless. And, indeed, when it became generally know that the Loamshire captain was disabled, the crowd made up their minds that the visiting county hadn't an "earthly" left.

If Loamshire had failed to equal Kent's score in the first innings with their captain playing, how were they to exceed it in the second without their captain?

That was a conundrum which the Kentish men propounded and could find no answer to.

They concluded that Loamshire would go defeated home, and that the match would end in another point for Kent towards retaining the championship.

In the Loamshire team, truth to be told, there was somewhat of the same feeling. Without their champion bat, what headway could they hope to make against bowlers like Fielder, Fairservice, and Frank Woolley?

And even the amateurs who had disliked Lovell, and had been jealous of the young professional's fame, realised now, as they had never realised before, how much his presence meant to the team.

Lagden was glad that he was out of it, and his feeling, to a lesser extent, was shared by Ponsonby. But of the rest, friends or foes of Lovell, it is safe to say that all would have been joyful to see him back among them.

As for Colonel Hilton, he was inclined to tear his hair. The news of Lovell's disablement had been a terrible shock to him, and ever since he had heard it he had worn a worried look.

He had seen Lovell early that morning, but he had not been able to utter much of sympathy. He was more inclined to utter reproaches for the carelessness of the Loamshire captain in tumbling into the chalk pit. He had no suspicion of the foul treachery that had been at work, and Lovell did not enlighten him.

Fortescue, too, paid Lovell a visit before the match was resumed, and he came back looking concerned. Fortescue was of too careless and light a nature to take things to heart as a rule, but he liked Lovell, and he was keen to see his county win. He could not resist a remark to Lagden as he met him in the pavilion.

"Well, you've got your way now, Lagden," he said. "I hope you enjoy it."

Lagden started violently.

A guilty conscience, it is said, needs no accuser, and to Lagden, whose conscience was guilty enough, Fortescue's words were invested with a deeper meaning than the young amateur intended.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he exclaimed angrily.

Fortescue looked at him curiously. He wondered why his remark should have startled Lagden so much, and caused the colour to fade for a moment from his cheeks.

"Just what I say," he replied. "You've been wanting to get Arthur Lovell out of the team for a long time, and now chance has favoured you."

Lagden drew a breath of relief.

"And we're in for a licking," went on Fortescue. "If that's what you've been aiming at, you've got your way now. Lovell is laid up for weeks, and I expect we shall end up this season lower down the table than we did last. Pleasant prospect, isn't it?"

"Bah! We can win matches without Lovell's aid."

"I hope so! But I have my doots," said Fortescue. "Still, I should be glad to see you compensate for Lovell's absence by making up a century or two in our last innings, Geoff. Of course, you can do it. You wouldn't want to get rid of Lovell if you didn't feel yourself quite able to fill his place."

And with a genial Caledonian shot Fortescue walked away, leaving Lagden red with annoyance. But it was now time for the Loamshire captain to lead his men out to field, and the crowd cheered as the stalwart figures in spotless white issued from the pavilion.

Arthur Lovell was conspicuous by his absence, a substitute fielding in his place. Ponsonby, elated by finding himself in the position of captain once more, though only for the time, placed the men to field. He did not venture upon his former tactics. Lovell, indeed, was not there, and so he could not show his dislike of the champion bat of Loamshire as he had done in the match with Yorkshire.

But Kit Valance was under his orders as before. But there were too many eyes upon him for Ponsonby to act as he might have wished. The ball was given to Kit for the first over, an indication of what was to be the Loamshire skipper's policy during the innings.

Kit walked to his place, and sent down a couple of trials to the wicket-keeper. He was in fine form. Never had he felt a more complete mastery of the leather, and never had he been imbued with so strong a determination to win for his side.

Marsham, the Kent captain, opened the innings for his county with Fielder at the other end. Kit Valance bowled first to Marsham.

The Kent captain had been out for 0 in the Kent first innings; but that was because he had put himself in last of the list. In the second innings he was evidently resolved to make a better show. He faced Kit's bowling steadily, and stopped the first two balls; and then, as if he had got his hand in, cut away the next two right to the boundary.

Then he ran a single, and brought Fielder to the end facing Kit. Kit's eyes glinted as he gripped the ball for the last of the over. Fielder faced him coolly. Kit took a little run, and his arm went up and over.

Down came the ball like a four-point seven shot—just such a ball as Fielder himself was in the habit of sending down when he was bowling.

It eluded Fielding's bat, and whipped his middle stump out of the ground in a twinkling. There was a shout.

"Well bowled!"

"How's that?" grinned the Loamshire fieldsmen.

And the umpire grinned, too.

"Out!"

So Fielder carried his bat to the pavilion with a big, round 0 to his credit. Huish came in to take his place. Geoffrey

A Startling Incident from the Great New Sexton Blake Story now Commencing in THE BOYS' HERALD— Our Wednesday Companion— Price 1d.

Lagden was now bowling from the other end to Marsham, and Kit Valance was at mid-off, watchful for chances. And at the third ball of the over the chance came. Marsham lifted it a little too high, though it is safe to say that any fieldsman but Kit would have regarded it as an impossible chance. But the best maxim of a fieldsman is to attempt impossibilities if necessary, and Kit went for the ball—and caught it!

There was a faint click as the hand of the fieldsman met the ball in full flight and closed upon it with a grip of iron. And then a roar!

"Well caught!"

"Bravo!"

"Caught indeed!"

And a storm of hand-clapping. Good sportsmen were the men of Kent, and though it was their county captain who had been caught out, they heartily cheered the splendid catch.

Marsham left the wicket, and the board showed 13 runs for the Kent captain. Hardinge was next man in. He took four for the over of the over, and then Kit Valance was given the bowling again, and bowled to Huish's wicket.

Huish put up a good defence, but the bowling was too much for him. He did not venture to run, and would have been quite content to let the over prove a maiden; but he was not to escape so cheaply as that, even.

The fourth ball escaped his bat in some mysterious manner, and although he could have sworn that he hit just where the ball was, his bat swept the empty air, and the crash of a falling wicket told him where the leather had gone to. He glanced down at it in dismay.

"Out!"

There was no gainsaying that word of doom from the umpire. Huish strode away to the pavilion, the second of the Kent batsmen to earn the unenviable duck's egg.

Frank Woolley came to the wicket. Now there was a buzz of anticipation in the crowd. Frank Woolley was expected to make a stand against the bowling of the Loamshire champion, at all events.

The young Kent colt, splendid with both bat and ball, took his place at the wicket and faced the bowling. He was prepared for a difficult task, but he did not quite know how extremely difficult it would be. Kit Valance was on his mettle. He meant to take that wicket, if it was within the bounds of possibility to do it, and he put all he knew into the next ball.

Down it came, a baffling googly, which had proved fatal to many a batsman before Frank Woolley, and was destined to prove fatal to many a batsman after him.

Clack!

There was a shout from the spectators.

"Bowled!"

There was no mistake about it. That clack had been the signal of a falling wicket, and the bails were on the ground. Frank Woolley was out!

The young Kent colt, like a true sportsman, left the wicket cheerfully enough, and gave Kit a pleasant nod as he passed. Blaker came out of the pavilion.

The crowd were silent with expectation now. After the bowling of Frank Woolley, first ball, they were prepared for anything. It was just as well that they were, for Blaker's fate was destined to be as hard as that of the young colt.

Kit Valance was evidently out for scalps, and the last ball of the over took Blaker's leg stump fairly from the ground, and laid it down with the bails.

"Bowled!"

"The hat trick!"

"Hurrah!"

Kit Valance had performed the hat trick against the champions! Three successive wickets had fallen to his bowling! No wonder the crowd cheered and clapped. Sensational cricket is rare enough in modern days, but Kit Valance was giving them something to reward them for coming to see Loamshire play.

"Bravo!"

"Well bowled!"

As Blaker walked away to the pavilion, and Fairservice came out to take his place, the ovation for the hat trick was still in full swing.

Colonel Hilton shouted as loudly as any, and Molly clapped her little hands. Kent were five down for 17 runs now, and that collapse of the champions at the wickets was encouraging to the Loamshire men.

Loamshire's prospects had been gloomy enough, but Kit's bowling had caused them to brighten considerably. Unless a stand was made by the later batsmen it was certain that Loamshire would be left with only a small total of runs to get in their second innings, and the absence of Arthur Lovell would not be so much felt.

"Good—good!" exclaimed the colonel. "How well Kit Valance shapes to-day! It is almost as if he was showing such splendid form to make up for the absence of Lovell. By Jove, I believe we shall pull off the match after all!"

Tweedie was bowling to Hardinge now. The cautious Scottish professional did not give the Kent batsman much chance to score off his bowling, but at the same time he was not able to touch the wickets.

Hardinge gained a couple of runs for the over. Then the field crossed again, and Kit Valance resumed bowling, with Fairservice to face him. Fairservice kept his end up well, and gained 3 for the over.

The Kent players breathed again. It seemed that the tide of defeat was stemmed at last, and the innings looked like lasting; but the respite was only for a short time. Fate had heavy blows yet in store for the men of Kent.

The runs were added slowly, between Fairservice and Hardinge, and when the score was at 29 Hardinge was caught out in the slips by Tweedie, by a ball from Geoffrey Lagden.

The board now displayed the figures: Six for 29, last man 2.

All hope of equalling the score of their first innings was abandoned by Kent now, but hope of victory was not gone yet. The men of Kent had four more wickets to fall, and they were determined to make it a fight to a finish.

It wanted yet half an hour to lunch-time, and the Loamshires were beginning to hope to see Kent all down before the interval.

But the most sanguine amongst them did not expect what was to come.

The score was at 32 when Kit Valance bowled to Fairservice, with Seymour at the other end. Fairservice was on the alert, as usual.

But the champion Loamshire bowler was on the warpath, and alertness could not save the batsman from a ball that came down with a twist on it that seemed magical.

Clack!

Down went the middle stump and the bails.

"Out!"

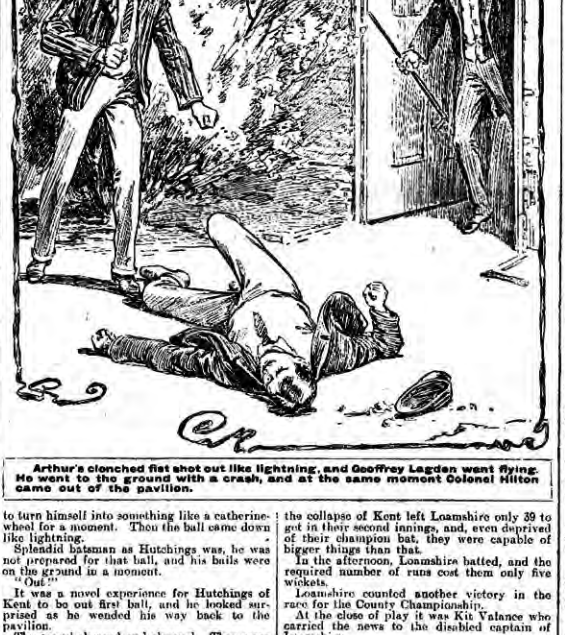
And the crowd shouted:

"Well bowled!"

Fairservice went back to the pavilion, to be replaced by Hutchings, and a cheer greeted the appearance of the mighty hitter of the hop county.

But there was bad luck in store for the Kentish giant.

Kit Valance took his little run, and seemed



Arthur's clenched fist shot out like lightning, and Geoffrey Lagden went flying. He went to the ground with a crash, and at the same moment Colonel Hilton came out of the pavilion.

to turn himself into something like a catherine-wheel for a moment. Then the ball came down like lightning.

Splendid batsman as Hutchings was, he was not prepared for that ball, and his bails were on the ground in a moment.

"Out!"

It was a novel experience for Hutchings of Kent to be out first ball, and he looked surprised as he wended his way back to the pavilion.

The crowd cheered and clapped. They were buzzing with excitement now.

Was it to be another hat trick?

Many of them knew that in the Loamshire v. Yorkshire match, Kit Valance had performed the hat trick twice in a single innings.

Was history to repeat itself here?

Alas, for the men of Kent, it was to be even worse than that!

Hubble was next man in. He came in and took his middle with the air of a man prepared to do or die.

A breathless hush fell on the crowd as Kit Valance gripped the ball and took his run. A deep-drawn breath as he swept his right arm up and over, and a yell as the wicket was seen to fly to pieces the next second!

"Out!"

"Bravo!"

"Well bowled!"

Hubbie carried out his bat.

Humphreys was last man in. He probably felt a little uneasiness as he came to the wicket where three of his predecessors had met an ignominious doom, but he faced the bowling with a steady pluck.

Kit Valance prepared to deliver the fourth ball of the over. All eyes were upon him. Thousands of eager watchers hung breathless upon his movements.

A run, a swing of the arm, and the ball, for good or ill, has sped!

Clack!

Humphreys has played at the ball, or where he believed the ball to be, which is rather a different matter, and the nimble leather has broken in in a most unexpected way, and eluded the sweep of the willow.

"Out!"

The fourth wicket down to the fourth successive ball! The hat trick outdone!

The crowd cheered and clapped frantically.

And Kit Valance's comrades crowded round him, and ebook hands with him, and slapped him on the back in their delight at his splendid play, forgetting all thought of distinction between professional and amateur, every snobbish feeling lost—for the time, at least—in keen admiration and comradeship.

Kent were all down in the second innings for 32.

The cricketers adjourned for lunch and congratulations at the sudden close of the home innings.

Colonel Hilton gripped Kit warmly by the hand as he came into the pavilion in the midst of the delighted Loamshire men.

"You have saved the match," he said.

And his prediction proved to be correct, for the collapse of Kent left Loamshire only 39 to get in their second innings, and, even deprived of their champion bat, they were capable of bigger things than that.

In the afternoon, Loamshire batted, and the required number of runs cost them only five wickets.

Loamshire counted another victory in the race for the County Championship.

At the close of play it was Kit Valance who carried the news to the disabled captain of Loamshire.

Lovell was in bed, and his face was somewhat pale, but his eyes were eager.

"We have won!"

That was his first question.

"Yes."

"Bravo, Kit!"

"You won the match, Kit! I felt that you would do it."

"Well, I did my little bit."

"You won the match! If Kent had left us 50 or 70 to get, we should have failed to do it."

"Yes, I think that's very likely. Well, we have beaten them, Arthur, and it's a point more for Loamshire in the struggle for the championship."

Arthur Lovell Loses His Temper.

THE days that followed were dark days for Arthur Lovell. It was a week before he was able to leave his bed, and then it was only to move about with the aid of a crutch.

A fortnight more passed before he was able to dispense with the crutch. Even then he was by no means fit to resume his place in the Loamshire team.

Meanwhile, events in the cricket world were moving on, and Arthur Lovell chafed impatiently at being compelled to stand aside from the struggle his county was engaged in.

Six county matches were played while Arthur Lovell remained out of the team, at first an invalid, and then a looker-on from the pavilion. In those six matches the Loamshire team learned how terrible was the loss that had fallen upon them in the disablement of Arthur Lovell.

But for the presence in the team of the best bowler of the season, it is certain that Loamshire would have sustained a series of crushing defeats. As it was, although the batting was decidedly weak, the bowling was so strong that this county were able, to some extent, to keep their end up.

The matches were with Surrey at the Oval, with Essex at Leyton, with Lancashire at Old Trafford, and with Yorkshire, Warwickshire, and Gloucestershire at home on the county ground in Loamchester.

The match with Surrey was hopelessly lost, Loamshire being defeated by an innings and a wide margin of runs, before a crowd of ten thousand people at the Oval.

At Leyton, however, the somewhat weak Essex team fell before the Loamshires, who won by 15 runs. It was a bowler's game, however, and Kit Valance contributed the chief part to the victory.

At Old Trafford Loamshire drew with Lancashire, the rain on the third day coming down in torrents and making it impossible to play out the match, a result which was fortunate for Loamshire, who had been left 360 to get with four wickets—a hopeless task with the batting they were able to put up. It was the luck of cricket, and the rain, much abused during the 1907 season, had at least served Loamshire a good turn.

The home match with Yorkshire in Loamchester was drawn, the home second innings being only half finished when the stumps were drawn at the end of the third day's play.

Warwickshire met with defeat on the Loamchester ground, a result entirely due to the Loamshire bowling, which again was principally contributed by Kit Valance.

Gloucestershire came next, and after a struggle right up to the close of time on the third day, Loamshire won by a single run, the last Gloucester wicket falling just in time to a ball from Kit Valance.

The last two matches were witnessed by Arthur Lovell from the pavilion. Lovell by this time being something like his old self.

He had resumed practice on the Loamchester ground, his hand, of course, being greatly out after his long rest.

But as soon as he began to practice it was seen that he had not lost his old mastery of the willow and the leather. The old skill came back to his hands, and though he was not yet fit for a county match, it was certain that as soon as he was fit, he would again be the heavy scorer of old.

No one was more delighted with his return to cricketing form than Colonel Hilton, unless, perhaps, it was his daughter Molly.

During Lovell's illness, Molly had been all kindness.

She had seen to it, with a woman's delicate care, that he wanted for nothing, and during his convalescence she had more than once come to see him with her father.

Those visits were bright intervals in a period otherwise very dark for Arthur Lovell.

It was exasperating to lie idle on the summer days, or to lounge in the pavilion watching others play, while his county drew matches where victories were wanted, or won by the narrowest possible margins.

But if these days were not very pleasant for Lovell, neither were they for the man who had caused his injury, Geoffrey Lagden.

Lagden, with his rival out of the way, had hoped to achieve his ambition at last.

He had always considered that he was overshadowed by Arthur Lovell, and that, given a chance, he could do as much for Loamshire as his rival.

But it did not come about.

Lovell's disablement, indeed, was a fortunate circumstance for Lagden in one respect. It prevented the otherwise inevitable inquiry into the unpleasant happenings on the Tonbridge ground in the match with the champion county.

Lovell being disabled, and his captaincy necessarily at an end, the incident was dropped, and Lagden was not called upon to rebut the charge of deliberately failing his side in the match.

It was just as well, for though Arthur would never have succeeded from the position he had taken up, the county committee would have formed their own opinion about the construction he had put on Lagden's action.

The matter would probably have been considered as "not proven," a result which would have been satisfactory to nobody.

So it was allowed to drop, though it was remembered by many that Geoffrey Lagden had been ordered off the field in the Tonbridge match, and he sometimes received unpleasant reminders of that humiliating experience.

(Another thrilling, long instalment of this splendid tale of county cricket will appear in next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM. Place your order with your newsagent at once.)

The Eversley Eleven

A GRAND COMPLETE CRICKET STORY.

By L. J. BEESTON.

Author of "The Airship's Quest," &c.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

A Dark Outlook—The Challenge—Tom's Fearful Predicament.

"WHAT are our chances of licking 'em?"

"We sha'n't lick them! They're too good for us. Jerome House has got a better eleven than we can put into the field. In batting and bowling they can give us points, though not in fielding, perhaps. Besides," added Dick Marsh, of Eversley College, gloomily, "their new bowler, Simons, is by all accounts a marvel. Only entered the school last term. A treasure, they say he is. Can send a ball down you can scarcely see, and the next so slow you might catch it in your hat, but more dangerous than the first. No; we are going to be thrashed this time."

Marsh was the captain of the Eversley first eleven. He wouldn't have unburdened his despondency to anyone except Daventry, who was his close chum. Five minutes ago he had informed Weary, his beat bowler, that Jerome House was going to receive the most complete, humiliating, all-round, speech-paralysing licking it had ever had the misfortune to run up against in a cricket match. But that was to give Weary heart.

Daventry, who was sitting on a field gate, kicking his heels against the bars, answered:

"If Dering comes off——"

"Ah, there you speak!" interrupted Marsh. "Tom is capable of making his hundred. But then, he is wretchedly inconsistent. One day he'll play an innings that would make Yorkshire proud of him, and the next might make a schoolgirl grin to see. But, of course, we can't leave him out."

The great cricket match with Jerome House School—a rival academy ten miles distant—was to take place in three days' time. Jerome House had an unbeaten certificate, and were said to be the strongest team in the county. This position was largely due to the deadly performances of their new bowler, Sim Simons, who made the stoutest batsmen tremble. It was generally felt that the eleven which succeeded in lowering the colours of the all-conquering Jerome House team would earn for itself imperishable honour.

"Well," said Daventry, after a silence, "we can only hope for the best, sit tight, and——"

At this moment a small boy came running round the corner with such a yell of excitement that Daventry neglected his own advice by tumbling ignominiously backward off the gate.

"Have you heard the news?" cried the small boy in almost a shriek.

"Speak, demented worm," said Marsh sternly.

"Tom Dering is to fight a duel!"

This astounding piece of information failed to excite the interest it might be supposed to have aroused. Do not be misled. No sanguinary encounter with pistols or rapiers was meditated for a moment. Dueling was just then in high favour at the school, but the terms of each "combat" were peculiar. A quarrel between two boys was not followed by the throwing off of coats and instant recourse to bare fists. Just now this was not considered good style. A friend of one of the aggrieved parties would bear to the other a formal challenge, which consisted in the undertaking of some more or less foolhardy and reckless feat. The challenger had the right of naming this feat, and the toss of a coin decided who was to carry it out. Great sensations had arisen from this practice. Hadlett minor, when he quarrelled with Wilson, found himself pledged to remain under water for seventy seconds. The row between Burton and Marsh resulted in the latter having to spend a most uncomfortable five minutes in a meadow that contained a bad-tempered bull. And so on.

This duelling novelty had reached the ears of the Head. Dr. Redmayne, who was determined to stamp it out before any of his pupils obliterated their existences by something extra daring.

And now here was the startling news that Tom Dering, the hope of his side in the great forthcoming cricket match, was involved in a challenge.

"I won't have any of this rot at such a time," exclaimed Marsh angrily. "Who's the row with, young 'un?"

"Billy Bitmead," answered the small boy, shaking with excitement.

"Then Billy Bitmead will be hit," said Marsh, in a rage. "Come on, Daventry! I mean to stop this."

Leal by the small boy, they raced towards the school. On the verge of the playing-field they perceived a group of boys, with Dering and Bitmead in the centre of the circle.

"Stop all that!" shouted Marsh, running up.

"Ye're over late, my friend," said McWhittle, a Fifth Form Scot. "Ta beesiness has been settled. Billy challenged, and Tom has feer."

"What's he pledged to?" shouted Marsh, facing the challenger.

There was a silence. Bitmead looked rather scared. None of the excited spectators appeared anxious to enlighten the questioner.

"What condition did the fool propose, Tom?" repeated Marsh.

"I've got to climb Maresfoot Spire," answered Tom quietly, though he turned rather pale.

"What!" exclaimed Marsh wildly. "You'll do nothing of the sort!" he added with grimness.

"He's bound to, in honour," cut in Hadlett minor. "Don't you interfere, Marsh."

"Look here, you fellows," expostulated the cricket captain despairingly, "you'll agree with me that this choice bit of lunacy must be put a stop to?"

There was no answer; neither the least encouragement in any of their faces. Marsh groaned.

"You're sending Dering to his death, you idiot!" roared he, turning savagely upon Bitmead. "No one ever yet succeeded in climbing the spire."

"Then the more honour to Tom if he does!" retorted Hadlett.

"Honour be jiggered! He will fall, and be picked up an indescribable skinful of splintered bones!" groaned Marsh.

Even this pleasant forecast failed in its effect.

"Let me alone, old chap," said Tom Dering. "After all, I've long wanted to climb Maresfoot Spire. My head is pretty cool, you'll allow."

"And what about this match?" cried the cricket captain. "You can't play for us with a pair of broken legs or a bent spine?"

This seemed indisputable.

"Play against Jerome House first," insisted Marsh. "make fifty runs, and afterwards you can climb to the moon for all I care."

"Selfish beast!" said Hadlett. "If Tom's wise he'll climb the spire first. How can you expect a man to play in an important match with such a thing hanging over his head?"

Marsh made a gesture of rage and turned away.

"I shall tell the Head," he said to Daventry.

"You dare not! I mean, you really mustn't!" beseeched Daventry. "An affair of honour, you know——"

"I shall go straight to the doctor's study!" interrupted Marsh, with firmness. "This has got to be stopped!"

And to the doctor's study he went.

The Head listened in stern silence. He made no comment; only, when Marsh had finished, he said:

"You have done the right and sensible thing in coming to me. I will see Dering without delay."

Ten minutes later the doctor got the astonishment of his life. He had summoned Tom before him, and requested from that individual a promise to abandon his mad idea. But, though Tom was the very essence of respect and humility, he declined to give his word. At first the doctor boiled over with rage; then he perceived that his pupil was labouring under a mistaken sense of honour. His sentence was decisive.

"Disobey me, Dering," said he, "and I shall expel you from the school at once. You understand?"

That was all. And Tom understood. The Head never went back on his word.

Tom explained the situation to Bitmead. He could not have made a worse enemy. Bitmead was a bully and generally detested. Tom had once thrashed him for ill-treating a small boy, and the tyrant never forgot or forgave the offence. He now refused to listen.

"You can back out of it if you like!" he sneered, in the presence of half a dozen others. "And you probably will."

"If you think I'm afraid——" began Dering, turning fiery red under the other's contempt.

"That remains to be seen!" retorted Bitmead. "This is an affair of honour, between gentlemen. I have nothing more to add."

With those haughty and scathing words Bitmead gave his ultimatum. And Dering, mad to think that such a cad should call him a coward, flung all prudence to the winds, and went straight off to climb Maresfoot Spire.

Marsh happened to be with the party. He had only to look at Tom's white, set face to perceive that further remonstrance was out of the question; so he resolved to go with him, to look after him as much as possible.

Not for worlds would Marsh have confessed to a sneaking delight in the thought that the famous spire of Maresfoot church, which had baffled more than one climber, might now be scaled by an Eversley House boy. Also he did not know of the threat of expulsion hanging over Tom's head.

It was the interval between tea and prayers. In an hour it would be dusk. The big, historic church was deserted. No one perceived the half-dozen boys who ascended by a narrow stone stairway to the foot of the spire, which rose to an apparently needle-like point from a six-foot wide stone gallery, surrounded by a low parapet.

Tom Dering looked up the immense, tapering column of stone blocks, surmounted by a huge gilt ball, and on that a vane that was visible for half a dozen miles round. He took off his coat leisurely.

At irregular intervals, projecting a few inches from the spire, were iron projections, fixed for all time in the stonework. These were for the use of the steeplejack when he wished to attend to the lightning-rod or the weather-vane. Strong arms, long legs, and a nerve of steel were needed to draw oneself up from one to the other of these projections; but they were the only means of ascent.

To reach the first Tom would have to climb upon one of the battlements at the four corners of the gallery. He proceeded to do this. For one frightful second he looked down, with folded arms, into the profound void of space below.

A groan of agony burst from Marsh, who turned his head away.

Then Tom faced the spire. It rose a hundred and fifty feet from the gallery. A slight spring took him to the first of the iron projections. For a moment he hung there, then drew himself up. He gained the second—the third.

Not a sound came from those who watched him, who hearts were beating with a growing horror. It was plain that should Tom miss his hold and fall backward, nothing could save him from striking the parapet of the gallery and pitching out into the abyss!

Higher and higher! He was getting on grandly. Marsh was wiping his forehead, down which beads of perspiration were rolling.

"We ought never to have let him go!" he groaned. "Bitmead, if he comes down alive I shall regard it my special privilege to give you the thrashing of your life for this!"

Suddenly a deep gasp went up. Tom had actually reached the summit of the spire. Round this an iron rail, fixed to the stone by stanchions, ran for the entire circuit. Tom drew himself upon this rail, leaned forward upon the huge golden ball, resting and steadying himself. A strong wind was blowing. He could feel the spire trembling.

Marsh sat down. He was really too weak to stand. He buried his face in his hands.

Presently Tom stooped for the rail. In doing so he was compelled to look through the abyss of air under his feet. For an instant his nerve shook. The spectacle of that blue gulf of space made his brain rock, his heart almost stop. The vane under his head creaked dismally as the high wind swung it to and fro. Far down some large bird flew by. It looked as small as a bat.

Then Tom recovered himself. He gripped the iron rail, let himself hang while he felt with his feet for that last iron projection which must now be the first to help him in his descent.

He could not find it!

He shifted his body slightly to the left, still feeling with his foot for the projection; but in this he made a terrible mistake. He should have moved to the right!

Bitmead dropped down in a dead faint. Hadlett minor was leaning against Wilson for support. The latter tried to shout explanations to Tom, but his voice, hoarse and husky with agony, could not carry up that enormous precipice of stone.

Tom was still moving to the left, hand over hand along the circular rail, feeling blindly with his feet for the iron projection, and not finding it. It was evident that he would have to complete the entire journey round the summit of the spire. Could he hold on?

(Continued on the next page.)

The match was won! Tom Dering was carried shoulder high to the dressing-tent. There he met the doctor, who shook his hand with a hearty grip.

ANSWERS
ONE PENNY.
Every Tuesday.

The Eversley Eleven.

(Continued from the previous page.)

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

What the Telescope Revealed—The Head's Anger—Sentence of Expulsion.

At the time that Tom Dering commenced his ascent of Maresfoot Spire, the headmaster of Eversley House was in consultation with Mr. Martin, the science-master at that abode of learning. They were in the latter's own study, which was fitted up in keeping with its owner's pursuits. In a corner of the room, by the large window, was a good-sized telescope clasped to its stand.

The Head and his assistant-master were not discussing science, however. Far from it. They were talking about the great cricket match which would take place the following day on the Eversley House ground.

Mr. Martin was a cricket enthusiast. He had played as an amateur for his county many years back, and his 240 not out against Yorkshire was the pride of his life. He thought more of that glorious performance than if he had discovered a new planet. It was he, too, who had trained the first eleven, and he had hopes of their beating Jerome School on the morrow.

"We don't want much luck to do it," he said to the doctor; "but I must confess that, if Tom Dering fails with the bat, our hopes will not be rosy."

The Head frowned. That name was not in his good books just then.

"If Dering would only begin more steadily," continued the science-master. "He is always frightfully shaky for the first over or two. Once he survives those, we hope. Till then—— Do you want to use the glass?"

The Head was directing the telescope over the distant country.

"Wait a moment," said the science-master; "you can't see in the day with the night-lenses. Let me fix up the terrestrial power for you. Nice clear afternoon for a good view. Turn it on Maresfoot Church."

The doctor turned it accordingly. The telescope was a very powerful one. Every stone in the great spire became distinctly visible. The Head elevated the glass a trifle. Suddenly he uttered some unintelligible exclamation, and recoiled from the telescope so unexpectedly that he sent the science-master sprawling over a chair.

"Good heavens! What's the matter? Discovered a new sun?" asked Mr. Martin, with deep unreason, for his shins had been pretty badly barked.

"Can I believe my eyes?" gasped the doctor. And he flew to the telescope once more.

"Church on fire?" queried the other, with satire. "Perhaps a balloon fallen on top of steeple; unfortunate aeronaut hanging by his coat-tails to the vane?"

"Mr. Martin, this is no occasion for such flippancy!" cried the Head sternly. "Look yourself; you will see something that will surprise you!"

The other looked. A long, low whistle of astonishment and horror broke from his lips.

"Tom Dering himself," he exclaimed, "hanging on to the iron hoop at the summit! He'll fall! He's doomed! Done for! He will be smashed like an egg. Want to look?"

"Indeed, gasped the doctor; "it is too frightful! What's happening now?"

"Working his way round. Very slow. Arms giving out, I should think. Heaps of pluck to get up, anyway. Trying to find a support for his feet to climb down. Group of our boys on the gallery. A merciful Heaven, he's down—— No, he isn't!"

"For goodness' sake be accurate!" cried the doctor, wringing his hands.

"He has found what he wanted! Splendid! Steady, Tom—steady, I say! He'll get down all right if—if—slowly does it! Nearer and nearer! Looks as if a nail stuck sticking to the stone. Thing to be proud of, though none but a fool would have tried it! Still descending! Ah, he's safe!"

"Safe, is he?" echoed the doctor, drawing a long breath of relief.

"By a miracle. Are you going to take any notice of this, or pretend to know nothing about it?"

"Dering leaves Eversley House to-morrow morning!" was the quiet, decided answer.

"What! You will not expel him!" gasped the science-master.

The Head condescended to explain.

"He has openly defied me," he added. "I shall write to his people at once. I shall request his father to come here to-morrow morning and take the boy away!"

"But permit me——"

"I will listen to no defence on his behalf!"

"But per——"

"To discuss the matter is waste of time!"

"But——"

"The subject is closed!"

"No; by Jove, it isn't!" cried the science-master, very bold in his excitement. "Have you forgotten the cricket match, sir?"

"What has that to do with it?" demanded the Head sternly.

"Tom Dering is our finest bat."

"That makes no difference."

"Pardon me; it makes all the difference in the world, my dear sir. For goodness' sake, doctor, postpone this expulsion until after the match, at any rate."

"Certainly not!"

"Oh, come, you will not be so arbitrary! Consider——"

"Mr. Martin," cried the doctor, boiling over with wrath, "Dering goes to-morrow! Am I to be set at defiance by one of my own pupils? An act of gross disobedience! No other punishment can possibly meet the case!"

"Not a thousand lines!"

"Not a million!"

"Not a thrashing!"

"Not a flagellation!"

"Then, to oblige me, consider my training. It is the school's reputation which, in a way, is at stake. We have made up our minds to lick those cocksure Jerome House boys. Do not—do not deprive us of our most likely bat on the eve of the match. Wait just one day; then act as you think best. I ask it as a personal favour."

The Head strode up and down, muttering fiercely. His rage against Tom for defying him knew no bounds; but he was partial to his favourite master, and also he nourished a secret hope that Jerome House might be sent back with their tails between their legs. Dr. Redmayne had captained his Varsity one year at Lord's, and, though he professed to take little interest in cricket, saying that it was much overrated, yet he always turned first to the county matches when reading his morning paper.

At last he said, in a deep growl:

"Very well, Martin, to oblige you I will defer the expelling of Dering for twenty-four hours—no longer. He knows what to expect, and leave Eversley House he shall, and in disgrace! On that point my mind is made up, and nothing shall make me change it!"

"Thank you!" answered the science-master.

He had got what he wanted and was satisfied. He would sooner have dreamed of lifting the school bodily than of persuading Dr. Redmayne to forgive Dering. Tom's hours at the school were numbered.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

What Happened at the Cricket Match—A Test of Nerves—Gloom, Deep Gloom.

FLUSHED with a long record of successes to steady their nerves, the Jerome House team had played well. For two hours and more their opponents had chased the leather, seeing the score against them mount and mount. Not a failure in the innings! All had done well.

Finally, with 104 runs to get for victory, Eversley School went in, represented by Marsh and Wilson. Dreaded Sim Simons pre-pared to send down the first ball. He was a mild, innocuous-looking youth, with a somewhat vapid smile on his insipid countenance; but beneath that innocent exterior was hidden a mass of cricket, wile and cunning.

A long run, a swing of the arm, and there were two stumps and bails lying on the ground in wretched-looking confusion, while the third stump leaned over at a depressing angle. Wilson's wicket had been spread-eagled. The batsman walked away, his face scarlet, his feelings a deeper scarlet. There was a howl of delight from the Jerome House supporters.

"Bad," said the doctor to the science-master, who was seated next to him.

The science-master refilled his pipe.

Daventry went in next. By a lucky snick he got a couple, stopped the next ball, sent the next for 4, and scooped the next into the hands of point. Another frenzied yell of applause from the visiting team. Daventry returned grinning. He was one of those boys who always grinned when others might weep copiously.

"Too strong for us, I fear," said the doctor sadly.

The science-master thoughtfully put a finger into the bowl of his pipe, burned it, and said something, which he hurriedly changed into:

"Here comes Dering!"

The Head frowned. He looked another way as Tom walked to the crease, his bat under his left arm. Tom was notoriously a bad beginner. He had never been known to start with his eye dead in. He watched Marsh steadily block every ball of an over; then it was his turn.

The doctor looked away again. He was so angry with his pupil that he declined to watch his play. Suddenly there was a gasp from a hundred throats, followed by a roar that was checked off into a lugubrious howl.

"Dering out?" said the doctor laconically.

"All but," answered Mr. Martin. "Chance to wicket-keeper, who fumbled the catch and let it drop. Dering's nervous."

Poor Tom! He knew well the fate that was hanging over his head, and perhaps he guessed why it was being delayed. How could he stand up with courage, to good bowling, with such a heavy weight on his head?

He smote at the second ball, but it beat him altogether. Simons had a way of following a lightning ball up with one that dragged at the critical moment in a puzzling fashion.

"Next one down for me," growled the science-master, wiping his forehead, more excited than he would have confessed to his dearest friend. Down came the third ball of the over.

"How's that?" yelled the wicket-keeper, in the voice that reminded one of the abrupt bowl of a cat.

"Not out!" answered the umpire instantly. The appeal had been for "leg-before."

"Why does Dering always behave like this!" snapped the science-master, looking furious.

The fourth ball the batsman stopped dead. At the fifth he swiped terrifically. Up and up it went. There was a man in the deep-field waiting for it. He knew that many a goodsized pairs of human orbs were upon him. He didn't mind that, but the sun was in his eyes. He missed the ball by a couple of inches. A scream of joy from the Eversley supporters drowned the spasmodic groan from their opponents.

"Is the boy out yet?" asked the Head indifferently.

"Not yet," replied Mr. Martin. "He has survived the over by a series of flukes, to which I can only apply the word ghastly."

Getting the bowling, Marsh proceeded to lay about him vigorously. He secured a 4, a 2, and cut the next finely for 3.

This gave Tom an opportunity to show what he could do off the other bowler, but he was no more successful than with Simons. He managed to stop the first, but all but got his foot over the crease at the next.

"How's that?" yelled the man behind the stumps.

"Not out!" answered the umpire, putting on the removed bails. But he added to himself: "A hair's breadth more would have done the trick."

Facing Simons, Marsh played a stone-walling game. Ironic cheers greeted a runless over. By that time Tom's feelings had undergone a change. He put forth a great effort, and flung away his woodly, miserable thoughts. A sudden rage appeared to overpower him; a passion convented itself entirely upon the bounding spheroid that was trying to scatter his wicket. First there was a straight, clean drive out of the ground; then a leg-drive that disturbed the spectators to the tune of a null. Any amount of savageness in it; then a cut which the slips scarcely saw; and the whole followed by another off-drive, that sent the ball like a shot straight in the doctor's direction.

Tom's eyes had not been kept his eyes averted, and the first warning that he received came in the form of a violent push from Mr. Martin. Too late! The ball struck the doctor full on the chest. He gasped as if he had been hit by a brick.

"Excellent drive!" murmured the science-master complacently, throwing the ball back.

The Head readjusted his gold folders and glared round angrily. But no one was taking the slightest notice of him. All were cheering themselves hoarse.

"Hope you're not hurt?" asked Mr. Martin, rubbing his hands in a way that showed how little he cared for his superior's person. "Dering is getting into form."

The doctor looked long and hard at Tom. This was injury to insult.

"Was it possible," that dark glance seemed to ask—"was it possible that the audacious batsman had purposely directed the ball upon his headmaster?"

Marsh, dazzled by that electrical display, settled down to play an absolutely safe game. It so happened that for ten minutes Tom had not to face Simons's bowling. In that time he added 13 runs to the score. The Jerome House boys were gnashing their molars.

"Wait till the beggar faces Sim!" they said.

This was bound to come, and come it did. Simons gave his right arm a preliminary rub, a sinister whirl as he prepared for his run. The science-master glanced at the doctor, and he chuckled to see the expression of deep interest on that gentleman's countenance.

Down came the ball. It was one of Sim's best, and he knew it. He fancied that there was even a slight swerve on it. It was meant to strike first on the batsman's block, and pitch up into the wicket.

Tom leaped out to it. For a fraction of a second Simons told himself that, if the swerve was there, it would be a case of "next man in." But whether the swerve was there or not, it is very certain that Tom's bat was. The ball hummed past short-leg's ear like a small planet, and reached the boundary in record time.

"Very nice—very nice, indeed!" Mr. Martin heard the doctor murmur.

Tom played the next three balls with care, but the fifth he cut along the grass for a beautiful three.

"He's getting set," said the science-master. "Isn't he a treat to watch? That late cut was worthy of Tyldesley himself."

"Rubbish!" answered the Head; but his eyes shone with delight.

Getting the bowling from the other end, Tom treated it with the most wretched courtesy. Then Marsh got his leg in front of a straight one, and had to retire.

Three good wickets down for 31. Hadlett major was next. He reached just double figures, then Simons stopped a hot return, and bold it. The diminutive youngster was next. Shouts of laughter from the Jerome House clique hailed his appearance. But little Fraser could hit right well when in the humour, and before long he was smacking away at the leather in lusty fashion. Tom had quieted a bit. The bowling was being changed pretty frequently, and no liberties could be taken with it.

A wild rush told of the dismissal of Fraser, whose legstumps turned a somersault, as if it gloried in the defeat of the batsman. Five for 69.

"We shall not do it," said the Head thoughtfully.

"Game hangs in the balance," answered the science-master, "while Dering is there, I hope."

McWhittle came in next, but for a while had nothing to do except watch his partner's grand play. Tom was walking up again with a vengeance. Boundary after boundary—he was opening his shoulders to splendid purpose. Every time he leaped out a gasp of agony went up, but he never missed.

Third Dering! and the ball was away again. Eighty-four runs on the score-sheet.

"Another hundred wanted," said the doctor.

"Too many!"

"Pooh!" answered the science-master, with glistening eyes. "We'll do it on our heads."

A great stand was made for the sixth wicket, and when McWhittle retired, the score was 115. Tom was then 71 not out, but obviously a little tired.

Then came disaster. The seventh and eight wickets fell without a single run being registered. Walker was smartly stumped, and his successor, Blythe, was out to a yorker.

The doctor was quite pale.

"What a pity! Oh, what a pity!" he kept muttering.

"Dering is still there, though," answered Mr. Martin.

"Yes, yes; it all depends on him!" replied the Head.

Runs now came very slowly. Still, they came. Gradually the score climbed up, and gradually the faces of the Jerome House boys fell down. At last, when Tom had made just 95, his partner was caught by third slip.

A yell that awoke the echoes went up. One more wicket to fall; 29 runs required to give Eversley a victory. Would they get them?

Wibley was last man in. A tall, lanky, funereal-looking youth. A good bowler, a wretched bat, but never trembled with nerves.

"Dering will make them, if Wibley will only stay!" said the doctor, who was so excited as to perspire, though he showed it in the least.

Wibley got the bowling first. He survived the over, which seemed like an eternity. One or two faces turned quite haggard under the strain. The Head was breathing with difficulty.

"Now, Dering, steady my boy!" he muttered.

Round came Tom's bat with terrific force. Horror of horrors! He missed the ball! It almost took the paint off a section of his leg stump.

"For goodness' sake be careful, Dering!" ejaculated the Head.

"Consider the strain on the youngster," said Mr. Martin.

But Tom got hold of the next ball, fair and square, and it went for 4. A leg-glance for 3 followed, giving the hundred.

The game was interrupted, while a roar of applause did the batsman's heart good. But now Wibley had the bowling. He snicked away a single. Then Tom got a couple more.

Nine runs wanted!

Wibley, with a daring that nearly stopped the hearts of the spectators, pulled a ball round for 3.

"Six more!" said the Head, who was quite white with agitation. Tom snipped one past the wicket-keeper for 2. Four more only.

The next ball beat Tom altogether. It was one of Simons's best, and all but shifted the bails. The next, the batsman stepped to drive, suddenly changed his mind, and stopped it in his block. A shiver went through his admirers, while the Head caught the science-master violently by the collar in a choking grip.

Simons put all his heart into the last ball. Tom leaped up to drive. The wicket-keeper's hands trembled with desire. Would he miss it?

No! There was the ball, skimming a yard over cover-point's clutching fingers, whirling to the boundary.

The match was won! Tom Dering was carried shoulder-high to the dressing-tent. There he met the doctor, who shook his hand with a hearty grip. As the Head turned away, he collided with the science-master, whose face was glowing with delight.

"Are—are you going to—expel him—now?" said Mr. Martin.

"Don't talk rubbish," replied Dr. Redmayne.

THE END.

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

The Crawl-Stroke.

As the speed of the shark is to that of the frog, so is the swiftness attainable by the crawl-stroke to that which can be attained by the breast-stroke. The frog thus stands as the representative of the breast-stroke, and the shark represents the new and improved method of speed swimming so far as the comparative pace is concerned.

The shark, when in rapid motion, appears to propel itself chiefly with its tail, which is made to act from side to side in the same plane as the surface of the water. In the breast-stroke, owing to the action of the legs in propelling the body through the water, the position which the swimmer takes borders upon the perpendicular. The result of this is that a larger surface is presented in the direction of progress, which, of course, retards the forward action. In the overarm or trudgeon strokes, this is, to a great extent, obviated, as the body is kept on its side, and, if the position be correct, only the head and shoulders stop the forward movement, but as in most cases the swimmer opens their legs far too wide apart, they also thereby present the thighs to direction of the forward movement of the body, which naturally do much to impede the speed of the swimmer.

Independent Action of Limbs.

On the other hand, in the crawl-stroke there is no opening of the legs or drawing up of the knees, as in the other strokes. The swimmer is almost flat on the surface of the water—of course, face downward—and the arms are dipped in, bent at the elbows, just beyond the head, and drawn smartly back till they come out of the water fully extended along the sides of the body near to the hips. The right arm enters the water as the left foot strikes, and vice-versa. This action is very laborious, because all the limbs are acting independently and at one time or another out of the water.

In the leg action the thighs are kept in position nearly together in line of the body. Only the foot is lifted out of the water, and immediately it comes above the surface, and is struck downward, the water being hit with the instep and front of the foot, which has the effect of pushing the body forward at the moment that the opposite arm is pulling.

Less Resistance.

The advantage of this stroke is that less resistance is offered to the recovery of the limbs for the effective stroke, due to the legs, as well as the arms, being out of the water during a portion of the recovery stroke. The resistance offered by the water to the sudden downward action of the legs and arms, in which are in the best position to make the effective stroke. But the good results to be obtained from the stroke greatly depends upon the timing of the different parts of the stroke, which is most important, and must be carefully attended to by those who wish to learn. There must be no dead points, and in the crawl-stroke I think there are fewer of these than in any other, because there is hardly an instant without an arm or leg effectively making a forward stroke, and the swimmer having once got up speed has only to exert himself sufficiently to keep up that speed.

If one can make the arms and legs act at different times to each other, one could then obtain a continuous forward stroke of the four limbs in rotation, and thus avoid the great dead point one observes in the breast-stroke when the swimmer "hangs upon it" after making the leg kick.

Practising the Crawl-Stroke.

The best way to practise the kick for the crawl-stroke is to first tie the knees together, enter the water at the shallow end of the bath, take hold of the steps or rail, and lay the body straight out on the surface of the water. When the body is in this position, start slowly to move the feet up and down in regular time, and when able to perform these slow movements regularly, the swimmer may start to put some force into them by lifting each foot out of the water about twelve inches above the surface, and striking it down, hitting the water with the instep of each foot alternately. The more regular the action of the feet and harder the water is struck, the greater will be the speed.

Combination of Hands and Feet.

In order to learn to combine the legs and hands, the learner must proceed gently. At first he will lay upon his breast, then he will strike with his right foot and pull with his left hand, and vice versa. For the first few lessons it will be best not to lift the arms out of the water. These may be used as in dog swimming until such time as the strokes can be properly timed, after which much practice will be necessary, which should be taken daily, and in that way make the crawl-stroke part of oneself, and be able to perform it without having to think of what one has to do.

(This splendid and instructive series of swimming articles will be continued in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

CYCLING:

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

Unregistered Meetings.

THE young rider who desires to compete in an open cycle race must take care first of all to ascertain that such race is held under the rules of the National Cyclists' Union; that is, if he wishes to compete regularly in amateur events.

There are athletic meetings dotted about the country at which cycling events form part of the programme. The prize is not always a cash one, and this fact may therefore be misleading to the young amateur who desires to preserve his status. These meetings are known as unregistered meetings, and the sport they engender is frequently as spurious as most unregistered imitations are. The meetings referred to are not run by a club, but usually by a syndicate of promoters, who act as their own handicappers, judges, and referees, and it is not unusual for a protege to be placed on a mark which makes winning a certainty, but accident, on condition that a certain proportion of the value of the prize is returned, or that a goodly sum may be won by backing the good thing to win.

Occasionally the good thing comes undone, but this is very rare, and as a rule it is bad business for anyone, consciously or unconsciously, to upset the "hot-pot" of the handicap, as he will learn to his discomfort. Let any competitor look like winning, or be known to possess a chance of winning when he is not wanted to, and then

the "fun" commences.

If it is not possible to pocket or hopelessly shut him in, he will be elbowed over, or will have his wheel fouled, even though it involves a double fall, and any protest he may make will be laughed at by the corrupt officials, or quite ignored.

I do not say that all unregistered meetings bear this taint, but I warn the young amateur not to tempt fortune in their midst. One secures fair play at any meeting under N.C.U. rules, and plenty of good sport all over the country. Moreover, the handicapping is done by official handicappers, men of integrity, and the meetings are carried through by responsible officials.

Whilst on this subject of the N.C.U., it would perhaps be as well to state that the laws of the Amateur Athletic Association permit only pure amateur cyclists and pure amateur runners to compete at meetings held under their license. The N.C.U. rules, however, permit a mixed meeting, at which both amateur and professional cycling and also professional running events are included in the programme. Thus, an amateur cyclist may compete at a purely amateur meeting one week, because the meeting is under the combined rules of the A.A.A. and the N.C.U.; on the following week he may be competing at a meeting held under N.C.U. rules only, where amateur and professional cycling and also professional running (no amateur) events are included in the programme.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

A practice spin at half speed.

CRICKET:

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

Long-On and Long-Off.

THOUGH I have fielded in most positions of late years, I have not often had to be in the deep field. But I do believe that a good man who is fond of fielding will do well anywhere. Two persons stand out in my mind as examples of this, and you may well learn something from the great displays of G. L. Jessop and Leonard Braund. Put them where you will, and they will enliven the tedium of the slowest-scoring matches by catches that are dazzling in the extreme. R. H. Spooner and A. C. Maclaren are others who might be added to the list.

There are two positions in "the country" which are important. The one on the on side is called long-on, and the other on the off is called long-off. The duties of the two are very much alike, and there is no need to take them separately. One of the greatest of players in this position is Clement Hill, and if you watch him you will learn a great deal that it is very difficult to describe in words. He takes a catch sideways, with his arms well extended, allowing plenty of room for the hands to give after the impact.

It must be remembered that long-on may be placed anywhere from the on-side of the bowler, but, of course, very far behind him, round by nearly square-leg, and long-off may be moved about a good deal on that side.

The great thing to notice, however, is the very large number of runs that a good man can save in this position. To become a success here you want the gift of observation, and then very soon you will be able to tell where a batsman is likely to hit certain balls, and, of course, be within a few yards of the place to receive them.

Masterly inactivity is at a great discount, and if you want to know what it is to feel thoroughly tired out, all you have to do is to emulate one of the great players of whom I have spoken.

You will, perhaps, have an opportunity of seeing A. O. Jones, who is very alert indeed, and if you watch him closely you will soon see that he enjoys his work thoroughly. With wonderful intelligence and a keen eye, he watches the ball from the moment it leaves the bowler's hand until the time when it is played by the batsman, and from the manner in which the latter shapes for his stroke he can tell where the ball will go. The result is that very often his intelligent anticipation is realised, and the certain four to the boundary only becomes one.

No one would dream of occupying this position unless he can throw well. Very few men that I have met can throw very far, but every boy can return the ball quickly, and this is what prevents batsmen from running. Therefore, before you occupy this position, you have to remember that you must practise throwing in from at least sixty yards. You must also be a fast runner, or else leave the position alone altogether.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

CHARITY CUP:

Mr. G. L. B. COVERDALE, Hon. Sec. East Riding of Yorkshire F.A., tells readers how to found a Charity Cup Competition.

A Charity Cup Competition.

ASSOCIATION football has done a lot in the cause of charity, and rightly so, too. A charity cup competition should be in vogue in every district, and in many districts one or more such competitions should be in existence. The English Football Association will not allow any charity cup or benefit competitions to be formed without their consent, or that of the County Association. All applications for the formation of such competitions must be made on what is known as Form E (this form I shall again refer to later). The bylaws of the F.A. governing charity cup competitions also provide that where the competition is conducted on the challenge cup (i.e., knock-out) principles, at least one-tenth of the gross gate receipts of the preliminary rounds, and at least one-third of the gate receipts of the semi-final and final ties must go to charity, and I am pleased to say that in the majority of cases a very much higher percentage is given to charity's aid.

The F.A. rule that a salary or honorarium must not be paid to the secretary, treasurer, or other official of any charity competition, and at the close of each season every charity competition must forward an audited balance-sheet to the association from which sanction has been received.

At the present time it is

the Senior Clubs

that are to be found figuring chiefly in charity cup competitions, for the simple reason that a senior club has greater drawing powers than a junior club, however, no reason why a fostering interest shown by county associations' competitions in aid of hospitals, etc., should not be more numerous, and be supported by junior teams.

With this end in view, I shall proceed to give a model set of rules for the formation of some such charity competitions. I will not enumerate as to the election of officers, president, vice-presidents, etc., as what applies to a league the same applies to charity competitions.

RULES.

1. The competition shall be called "The —— Charity Cup Competition." It shall be conducted on the knock-out system, and all its matches shall be played in accordance with the rules, regulations, and bylaws of the Football Association, and the laws of the game. The competition shall be affiliated to the —— County Association.

2. The entrance fee to the competition shall be (say 2s. 6d.), which must be paid before the draw is made.

3. The cup shall be open for annual competition amongst the affiliated clubs within a radius of —— miles from ——.

4. The management shall be in the hands of the president, vice-presidents, hon. secretary, hon. treasurer, one representative from each competing club, and a representative from the —— (the institution to benefit by the competition); three shall form a quorum.

5. The draw shall be so arranged that, if possible, no byes occur after the first round. Clubs drawn first have choice of ground.

6. No player shall play for more than one club during the season in the competition, and each player's name and address shall be registered at least twelve days prior to the match, and each player shall be a bona-fide resident within (say 5) miles of his club's headquarters.

7. In the event of a player being registered for two or more clubs, the secretary of the competition shall notify the player concerned, requesting him to confirm in writing one or the other of the registrations. Such confirmation shall alone be deemed valid. Failing any reply within seven days, the player shall be considered ineligible to compete for either club.

8. The management committee shall have the power to exempt any clubs from the qualifying rounds (should these be necessary). The clubs of the previous season to be exempted from the first round.

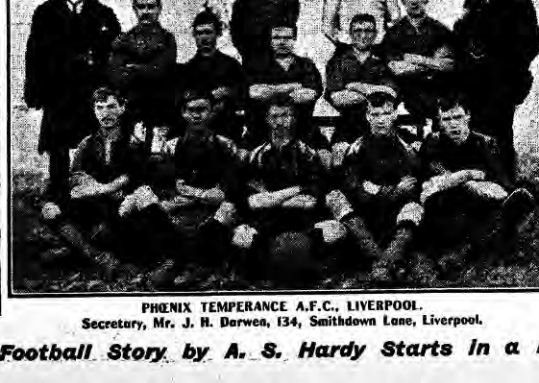
9. Referees shall be appointed by the local referees' committee, and shall receive (say 2s.), and third-class railway fare, to be paid by the home team. The committee shall choose neutral linesmen for the semi-final and final ties.

10. In case of any dispute as to the field of play or appointments, objection must be lodged with the referee prior to the kick-off. All objections must be confirmed in writing in duplicate, accompanied by a fee of (say 5s.), and reach the secretary not later than three days (excluding Sunday) after a match, in the event of the objection not being sustained, the fee to be forfeited.

11. In the rounds up to the semi-finals the home club shall forward to the treasurer on behalf of the charity fund, at least (say one-third of the gross gate; and the remaining net receipts, after deducting the following expenses—viz., billposting, printing, referee's fee and railway fare, and gatesmen, 1s. 6d. be equally divided between the competing clubs.

(The remainder of these rules will appear in next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM.)

"THE BOYS' REALM'S" PORTRAIT GALLERY.



PHŒNIX TEMPERANCE A.F.C., LIVERPOOL.
Secretary, Mr. J. H. Darwen, 134, Smithdown Lane, Liverpool.

Powerful New Football Story by A. S. Hardy Starts In a Fortnight's Time.

THE FIGHTING FIFTH.

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

By Popular MAXWELL SCOTT.

The New Rajah of Tanjore.

"YOU have a microscope, haven't you?" said Nelson Lee to Nipper, as he and the two boys left Mr. Rant's study.

"Well, seeing that you gave it to me, you ought to know!" said Nipper, with a laugh.

"Let's go up to your study, then," Nelson Lee said. "I'd like to examine this photograph as soon as possible."

Followed by Nelson Lee, Dick, and Lal, Nipper led the way to the study, where Dick switched on the light, and Nipper produced the microscope.

Having placed the film on the stage of the microscope beneath the object-glass, the detective studied it attentively and in silence for nearly half an hour.

There was a curious look on the detective's face as he removed the film from the stage and carefully replaced it in the locket.

"It strikes me, young man," he said, turning to Lal, "that you've done a better night's work to-night than you have any idea of at present."

"How? What do you mean?" queried Lal, in an astonished voice.

"You're the eldest son of the late Rajah of Tanjore, I believe?" said Nelson Lee, as he placed the locket in his purse.

"The only son," said Lal.

"In the natural course of events," said Nelson Lee, "you would have succeeded your father; but a distant relative of your father's, named Golab Singh, seized the throne immediately after your father's death, and has occupied it ever since."

"That's so," said Lal, with more than a trace of bitterness in his voice. "My mother appealed to the Indian Government, and afterwards to the British Government, to drive the usurper out. In some way or other, however, Golab Singh had won them over to his side, and, instead of giving me my just rights, they formally acknowledged Golab Singh as the new Rajah of Tanjore. But what has this to do with the locket? What did you mean by saying I had done a better night's work to-night than I imagined?"

The detective hesitated for a moment.

"I'd better say no more at present, for fear of raising false hopes," he said. "Perhaps I've said too much already; but I think, when the British Government have read this secret treaty— However, I'm letting my tongue run away with me again. Good-night! I must go now and have a chat with the Head."

Before they could question him he was gone, and that was the last they saw of him that night.

Next day, after giving evidence at the inquest on Karl, the detective left for London, taking the locket with him. Up to then nothing had been known of Heinrich's end; and it may here be added that nothing more was ever heard of him—in England, at any rate.

"Good-bye for the present, my lads; and, if you can't be good, be as good as you can!" laughed Nelson Lee, as he bade good-bye to Nipper, Dick, and Lal on the platform of Clevedon Station. "I shall interview the Foreign Secretary to-night, and show him this photograph, and then we shall see what we shall see."

Five minutes later the detective and the locket were on their way to London.

Those of my readers who have read the account of a certain case which Nelson Lee investigated on behalf of the Newport Rovers' Football Club, and which was published in "The Boys' Herald" under the title of "The Football Detective," will remember that the famous detective, who was one of the finest amateur forwards in the country, played for the Rovers in the Final Tie for the English Cup at the Crystal Palace.

They may also remember that it was stated in the account referred to that Nipper and Dick, by special permission of the headmaster of St. Ninian's, came up to London to see the match.

It was on the Thursday before the match that Nipper received the first letter he had had from Nelson Lee since the detective left St. Ninian's, and even then it was only the briefest note, with no mention of the locket or the secret treaty.

"Dear Nipper," the detective wrote, "just a line to tell you that I'm playing at the Palace on Saturday. I thought you'd probably like to see the match, so I've written to Dr. Shuttleworth by same post as this, asking him if you and Dick and Lal may come up to town by the first train on Saturday morning, and return by the last at night. If he consents, I'll meet you at London Bridge, so be sure to look out for me. As ever,—THE GUV'NOR."

Dr. Shuttleworth did consent, and accordingly the three boys left Clevedon at six o'clock on Saturday morning, and arrived at London Bridge at a quarter to nine. Nelson Lee met them with his motor, and a few minutes after nine they all sat down to a sumptuous breakfast in the dear familiar rooms in Gray's Inn Road.

"I intend to motor down to the Palace," Nelson Lee said, when breakfast was over. "It will be quite soon enough if we leave London at one, so what do you say to a spin in the car meanwhile, and an early lunch at the Trocadero?"

The three boys approved of this programme, and after a delightful run across Hampstead Heath the car turned south, and ultimately landed them at the famous restaurant.

Shortly after half-past twelve they took their seats in the car again, and a few moments later, to their surprise, the car pulled up in front of a handsome building in Whitehall.

"Hallo! Why are we stopping here?" asked Nipper. "What's this place?"

"This is the India Office," said Nelson Lee, as he stopped out of the car and signed to the boys to do the same. "The official headquarters of the Secretary of State for India."

"But why—what—where are we going?" stammered Nipper, as they entered the building.

"I have an appointment with the Secretary at one o'clock," said Nelson Lee, with a twinkle in his eye. "Come along!"

Wonderingly they saw him hand his card to an official, who presently conducted them into the presence of the famous statesman who controls the destinies of our Indian Empire.

"So this is the young prince, is it?" said the Minister, when Nelson Lee had introduced the three boys. "And these are your wards? Fine boys!"

"Yes!" said Nelson Lee. "If their behaviour were as good as their looks I should have reason to be proud of them!"

The Minister laughed; then, after gazing at Lal, he turned to the detective again.

"How much does he know?" he asked.

"He only knows what he heard Hoffmann say," replied the detective—"that is, he knows the treaty was between Russia and Germany."

The Minister pondered for a moment; then he laid his hand on Lal's shoulder.

"You will regard what I am going to say to you as strictly confidential," he said. "There are many reasons why I cannot enter into full details, so I will content myself with saying that the film which was found in the locket contained a photograph of a secret treaty by which Russia and Germany agreed to attack Great Britain in the autumn of this year. Russia was to invade India, and as soon as we had poured all our available troops into that country, Germany was to land an army on these shores."

He smiled a complacent smile.

"But forewarned is forearmed," he continued. "And, thanks to our fortunate discovery of the secret treaty—for which we are in no small measure indebted to you—we have been able to make such arrangements with France and Spain and the United States that our Russian and German friends have thought better of their little scheme, and have wisely decided to leave us alone.

"You are wondering, no doubt, why I have told you this. I will tell you. In the secret treaty there is a clause in which it is enacted that Golab Singh, the Rajah of Tanjore, having agreed to aid the Russians in their invasion of India, shall receive, as a reward, a certain portion of the conquered country, the boundaries of which are all set out in the clause to which I refer."

"The beastly traitor!" exclaimed Lal.

"Traitor indeed!" said the Minister. "Whilst professing friendship for the British, and receiving favours at our hands, he was secretly conspiring with our enemies. However, he has received his reward. Golab Singh was arrested yesterday, and in due course will be deposed and banished.

"And then an injustice which ought never to have been perpetrated will be righted," he concluded. "Then, my boy, you will come into your own. The proclamation only awaits his Majesty's signature—he has already given his approval—and in less than a week from now you will be proclaimed the rightful Rajah of Tanjore!"

"Hurroo!" yelled Nipper and Dick, forgetting where they were. "Three cheers for the new Rajah of Tanjore!"

"My mother must know of this at once," said Lal, who was trembling with excitement. "May I wire to her from here? She's in Paris at the present time."

"I wired to your mother yesterday," said the Minister. "She arrived in London this morning."

"In London!" gasped Lal. "Where is she staying—do you know?"

The Minister crossed the room and opened an inner door.

"Madame, your son is here," he said.

A queenly woman, dusky-haired and beautiful, walked quickly through the door. Lal sprang towards her with a glad cry of delight.

And so as the curtain begins to descend we see Lal closely folded in his mother's arms—we see the tears of joy that glisten on her long, dark lashes—we see the Minister turn away and pretend to be absorbed in some papers on his desk, and we see Nelson Lee and his two young wards stealing quietly out of the room.

Then the curtain falls, and our story is done.

(Read "The Iron Hand," by Maxwell Scott, in THE BOYS' HERALD.)

THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

All About 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 results 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 investigation 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 .....

Powerful New Football Story by A. S. Hardy Starts In a Fortnight's Time.

THE SCHOOL ON THE CLIFF.

A Magnificent New Story of Stirring Adventure.

By E. HARCOURT BURRAGE.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS FINE NEW STORY.

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

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

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

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

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

Our story opens on a warm sunny day. Dan Callis, a pupil at the School on the Cliff, and a bully, is daring another lad, Gerard Inglis by name, to descend the 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 makes friends with some new arrivals at Sternerraig, a Mr. Belton and his two daughters, Ivonne and Laura.

Peter Pinnick and two strangers make an unsuccessful attempt on Jack Jaunty's life. The police are set on their track, but they only succeed in capturing Pinnick.

Jack has an altercation with Mark Ricketts father who is staying in the village under the name of Terrapin. The man has a gun in his hand which goes off, and wounds Jack in the leg. Mr. Terrapin flees, pursued by Bob Baxter and a crowd of villagers whom he manages to elude. Mr. Belton is summoned to the police-station by Peter Pinnick, who declares that he has something of importance to reveal to him.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Peter Pinnick is Interviewed. Crooked is the Plant that might have grown as straight—A Terrible Discovery—Terrapin's Hiding-place.—A Charge Dismissed.

"PINNICK!" the warder said.

"Well?" growled the prisoner.

"Mr. Belton is here."

"I am ready to see him."

"You'll find a bell which you will ring when you want to come away," the inspector said. "We generally allow twenty minutes, but I won't disturb you if you wish to stay a little longer."

Mr. Belton thought that five minutes would be ample in such a place, but he made no remark, and entered the cell as soon as the door was opened to admit him. Pinnick was sitting upon a bench that formed his bed at night, and he bestowed a surly nod upon his visitor.

"There's room for you if you care to sit down," he said. "Oh, you'd rather stand! Well, do as you like. I suppose," he added, "you wondered what on earth I sent to you for?"

"I must confess that I was surprised."

"I want you to set me at liberty," Pinnick replied; "and you can do it if you will."

"I am afraid that the law must take its own course," Mr. Belton said.

"Bother the law!" Pinnick rejoined. "Just listen to me. I sent to you to talk about that Jaunty chap. I've done with Terrapin, and I mean to make it hot for him."

"I am afraid that he has made it hot for himself, as you call it," Mr. Belton said. "He has shot Jack Jaunty!"

"What?" Pinnick cried, starting up. "Is that Jaunty chap dead?"

"No; only slightly wounded."

Pinnick, breathing hard, sat down again.

"If you wish to speak about the lad, you had better send for the Stranger," Mr. Belton said. "He arrived at Sternerraig to-day."

"Not I!" Pinnick responded. "I don't want nothing to do with him. I hate the sight of him, because he suspected me from the moment that — I'm saying too much. If I speak out, and tell you summat that that Jaunty chap and the Stranger would give their ears to know, will you promise not to press the charge again me?"

Mr. Belton remained silent, turning the matter over in his mind. Presently he said:

"You ask me to make a promise, but first I will ask you to make one."

"What is it?"

"Will you try and lead an honest and better life?"

"I'm afraid that I've gone too far to be what you call respectable," Pinnick replied, "but there will be no harm in tryin'. I'll do my best. I've taken a lesson out o' your book. You were accused of hammerin' me, and you bore it like a gentleman—like a man! I have my suspicions who cracked my head, but I've my reasons to keep that to myself. Draw nearer, and let me whisper to you. They say that walls have ears, and sartinly 'stonishin' things do manage to get out of the police-cells."

Mr. Belton hesitated, and looked towards the cell door, though he scarcely knew why.

"I sha'n't bite or poison you," Pinnick said; "but, after all, it's natural that you should turn shy from me. Come nearer, if you want to hear what I have to say. How am I to know the inspector ain't dodgin' about outside?"

Mr. Belton hesitated no longer, and Pinnick began to talk rapidly in a low tone of voice, and his listener's face underwent a number of changes.

"Does Terrapin know of this?" he asked, as Pinnick finished.

"No. He thinks he knows who the boy is, and employed me to get him out of the way as best I could, and I'd ha' done it, until I found that he meant to put all the blame on my shoulders, and leave me in the lurch. Somebody employed him to come down here, but who it is I don't know, and never cared to ask."

"You have told me an astonishing story," Mr. Belton said. "Do you mean to tell me that you were at the Bowl the night when Jack Jaunty was washed ashore?"

"I do!" Pinnick replied. "I sneaked over in my dinghy just an hour before the storm came on. The Stranger was living all alone, and I—well, I wanted to see if anything could be made out of him."

"Do you mean that you were jealous of Bob Baxter's good luck?"

"Never mind about that," Pinnick replied, wincing. "I went there to see if I could pick up a trifle, so there's an end to the matter, and you can make whatever you like out of it."

Mr. Belton knew what the ruffian meant, and the softened expression of his face hardened.

"You have shaped a bad course for yourself," Mr. Belton said.

"It's like this," Pinnick responded. "Some men are like good captains of vessels, who look after the charts and steer clear of danger. Others go sailing anywhere and anyhow, and strike upon shoals. I struck upon shoals when I was a nipper. I'd no one to care for me, nobody to mark my chart, or to tell me when to take a reef in. I set sail in a leaky boat, and the rough and tumble of the storms of life made me what you see me now."

"Well," said Mr. Belton, as he rose to go, "you have put your early history to me in your own way, but it is full of truth. As the twig is bent so the tree inclines."

He rang the bell, and the inspector opened the door.

"I suppose he has been coming the soft-soap dodge?" the official said, as Mr. Belton reached the office.

"What he did say, I must keep a secret for the present; but this I will tell you. Sterncraig may look forward to some startling revelations."

. . . . . .

The Stranger walked straight into the house, and, advancing to the couch on which Jack Jaunty was lying, took the boy's hand in his own and pressed it warmly.

"My brave boy," he said, "it makes me very unhappy to see you like this. I arrived, alas! just too late to save you from this pain."

"I did not see you," Jack said, smiling.

"No; I did not show myself after the mischief was done. I saw the cowardly shot, Jack, and knowing that it had done but little injury, I took a path of my own to find Terrapin, hoping to bring him to bay single-handed, but I failed."

"The sight of you makes me feel better," Jack said. "Please tell them that I am not hurt, and that my wound is a mere scratch. I want to get up; Mark Ricketts is missing, and——"

"I have seen him," the Stranger interposed. "I met him wandering about the seashore in a lonely fashion, and he seemed to be meditating. Well, I did not like the expression of his face. Jack, do you know who this boy really is?"

"Yes! He confessed to me that he was Terrapin's son, but that the lawyer had given him an assumed name, and put about a rumour that he was a ward in chancery.

"Jack," said the Stranger, after a pause, "you must keep yourself quiet to-day, and come over to see me to-morrow at the Bowl. The Seamew will call for you to-morrow afternoon. I have been to London on important business, and perhaps I shall have some strange news to tell you."

Before Jack could question him any further he was gone. Our hero had never seen his friend so reticent before, nor so full of thought.

"To-morrow," the lad said, "I am to go over to the Bowl and hear some news. What news? The Stranger looked at me in a peculiar manner as he spoke. Perhaps he has discovered something about the mystery connected with my birth and parentage. But how can I expect such a thing when so many years have passed away without a single sign or clue to guide me to the truth?"

Jack informed Mr. Bonnington that the Stranger had seen Mark Ricketts, and Nickey Hopkins was despatched in company with Bob Baxter to find the fugitive. But their search proved a vain one. Nobody had seen Mark, nor anybody like him. The only information they received was from a round-eyed, chuckle-headed youth, who said that he had seen a boy walking in one of the lanes; but when asked what he was like, remarked that he didn't know, as all boys were so much alike.

This wearisome task was put aside as being utterly useless, and after wandering about, up hill and down dale, they returned, footsore, weary, and lowspirited.

Mr. Bonnington stood at the door, and as he saw that Mark Ricketts was not with them his face lengthened considerably.

"Something dreadful must have happened to him," he said.

Bob Baxter tilted back his sou'-wester, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"It's my opinion, sir, that he's run away," he said. "I've noticed him a long time, and he always seemed to have something on his mind."

"Bless me!" gasped Mr. Bonnington. "It is preposterous to think that a man alone anybody to run away from my establishment. If anything happens to the boy, I shall be put to no end of trouble. Perhaps accused of cruelty to my pupils."

"Perhaps he has gone for a soldier," observed Mr. Redditch, who came up at this moment.

This remark so exasperated Mr. Bonnington that his face became absolutely contorted in his endeavour not to fly into a temper.

"Ricketts go for a soldier!" he said. "Perhaps you will tell me where there is a recruiting sergeant in Sternerraig? And if there were such a person, do you think that he would enlist a boy of tender age?"

Mr. Redditch took the end of his nose between his finger and thumb, and mentally confessed that his knowledge of military matters was not very extensive.

"Well," he said, "I may be wrong." Then, as a brilliant idea seemed to strike him: "Perhaps he has taken a boat from the beach and escaped to France."

Mr. Bonnington spun round on his heels like a tee-totum.

"Mr. Redditch," he said, "will you kindly take a walk to get your thoughts into shape? I am afraid that your mind is still in a confused state."

Mr. Redditch took the hint, put on his hat, and departed like a man roused from a long, distressing dream, and was not yet quite awake. Turning his footsteps seawards, he saw the figures of three ladies, and recognised in them Miss Harrison, who had returned to Sternerraig, and her two young charges. The fond, sympathetic heart beating beneath Mr. Redditch's waistcoat gave a great leap.

To his delight he saw Ivonne and Laura leave their governess and wander down the sand, rendered hard and smooth by the tide, in search of sea-shells.

But this was merely a ruse on the part of the young ladies. They had seen Mr. Redditch approaching, and as they stooped upon the shore they giggled in the expectation of being witnesses to some capital fun.

Miss Harrison, as soon as she was conscious of the presence of Mr. Redditch, turned in the direction her pupils had taken; but the love-smitten tutor was not to be denied.

The sting of Cupid's dart was still in his heart, and rankled there with ever-increasing pangs. His rival, too, was out of the way, and why should he not press his suit?

"Miss Harrison," he said, as he overtook her, "this is an unexpected pleasure. I—I hope you enjoyed your visit?"

"Very much indeed, thank you," she replied distantly. "Good-morning, Mr. Redditch. It is time that the young ladies and I returned to the Folly."

"But is there need of such hurry?" the tutor said. "I did hope to have the honour, and—er—the exquisite pleasure of having a few words in your sweet company."

His face turned all sorts of colours when, after an effort to suppress her mirth, she turned her head aside and laughed. The laugh was so musical and delicious, but withal so scornful and exasperating, that it almost maddened him.

Before he could speak, she was face to face with him again.

"Mr. Redditch," she said, "I will be plain with you, and I hope that you, as a gentleman, will refrain from annoying me again."

"Annoying you, Miss Irene——"

"Please do not call me by my Christian name," she interrupted. "There is only one man in the whole world I permit to address me

"Hallo!" Pinnick cried, as the stone fell back with a crash, "somebody has robbed me! I hid the letters away with my own hands, but they ain't here now!" (See next week's instalment.)

The School on the Cliff.

(Continued from the previous page.)

by it, and he will be my husband on this day month."

Mr. Redditch recied and tottered under the shock.

"Jupiter, hurl thy thunderbolts upon this benighted head!" he cried, bashing his hat over his brows.

"Pray do not act so stupidly, Mr. Redditch. The young ladies are quite looking at you."

"I care not!" he almost howled. "Awake me from this dream! Where is the man who has dared to aspire to your heart and hand? Bring him forward, and let me smite him!"

Miss Harrison's pretty cheeks flushed crimson.

"Please let us put an end to this ridiculous scene," she said. "If it continues I shall be compelled, I need not say how reluctantly, to put myself under the protection of the police."

Mr. Redditch came to light, so to speak, by tearing off his battered hat.

"Police!" he gurgled, trembling in his boots. "Would you have me dragged to a dungeon like the reptile Pinnick, by a myrmidon of the law, and with gyves upon my wrists? Then, fare thee well, and if for ever, fare thee well!"

He stalked away as if engaged in some walking-match and was determined to beat the record. Straight back to the school he went, and startled Mr. Bonnington by tumbling over the doormat into the study.

"It is over!" he cried, as he cannoned wildly against the table.

"Not quite," Mr. Bonnington said, steadying himself in the chair. "May I ask what brought you into my room in such an extraordinary style?"

"The die is cast! She loves another, and will go to the altar with the base-born miscreant!"

Mr. Bonnington took up a large, dagger-shaped paper-cutter and prepared to defend himself.

"Oh, sir," Mr. Redditch said, sinking into a chair and weeping copiously, "distracted as I am, you need not fear anything from me! Miss Harrison—oh, my lost Irene—has just told me that she will change her name this day month."

"Well," replied Mr. Bonnington, stropping the paper-knife on the edge of the table to show that he was prepared for any emergency, "I suppose that is the lady's business."

"I loved her dearly—madly!" Mr. Redditch moaned. "I would have died for her, gone down in a coal-mine, up in a balloon, or hurled myself into the crater of Vesuvius, had she bidden me with a single word."

"You are raving, sir!" said Mr. Bonnington.

"I could rave the roof off!" Mr. Redditch cried, tearing at his hair. "If I had never told my love I might have suffered in silence, but she laughed at me—laughed in my face! This is no longer the place for me. I must away—away anywhere."

"I thought it best for you months ago," Mr. Bonnington said.

"I will away to the crystal springs—no; I mean London, where, amid the fogs, the houses and cabs, I may meet with an untimely but welcome end. Bear with me—bear with a blighted mortal whose head is shrivelled up like a leaf nipped by the cruel frost of winter."

With this, Mr. Bonnington, seeing that he was an easy subject to crack on the head and sell up for firewood afterwards, took a fat-looking purse from his pockets, and emptied the contents upon the table.

"Mr. Redditch," he said boldly, "we must part, and at once. Here is your money, and a trifle over in consideration of your services, which I once esteemed highly. You may write to me for a reference, and—and in it I will not make any mention of this distressing scene."

"Money!" groaned Mr. Redditch. "What need I of gold, silver, or copper? Such

With Pick and Lamp.

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 Aberfort 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 Ross, 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 each receives a little surprise at the large amount of coal tallied to them each day. In the evenings they return to Starve-Crow Farm.

At last, after many thrilling adventures and numerous narrow escapes from death at the hands of Kenyon Price and his wife, the lads remember that they have accumulated sufficient capital to commence operations upon their own seam of coal, which they accordingly do.

Work now starts in earnest at the Bryn y Garth Pit, but during the second week a sudden rush of water flooded the mine, and the occupants have a narrow escape from death. It is believed to be more of Kenyon Price's work, as he is known to have sunk a shaft a short distance away. Roddy and Tom put the matter in the hands of a lawyer. While Mr. Sully, Kenyon Price's overseer is bathing in the river, Tom steals his clothes, and strikes himself in them to surprise Roddy. He is seen by Kenyon Price, who takes him for Sully, and shows himself to be the author of the many outrages on the boys before he discovers his mistake. Just then the real Sully turns up, and together they make a rush at Tom.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

A Bold Move.

TOM ducked as Kenyon Price caught hold of him, and, twisting deftly round clear of the gate, dived out under his clumsy captor's left arm. The colliery-owner made another wild grab, and caught him by the shoulders; but Tom threw his arms straight back behind him, and slipped out of the loose-fitting overcoat, leaving it in Price's grasp.

The boy had left things somewhat late for making an escape, and another two or three seconds would have turned the scale. As it was, Sully came rushing at him with a shout of rage and surprise, when he was barely clear of Price, nearly caught him. Tom plucked the soft felt hat off, and dashed it in the ex-viewer's face, and then sprinted off pell-mell down the road, with a mocking laugh.

"Stop him! Catch him!" gasped Kenyon Price.

The chase did not last a dozen yards, however. Neither of the men had any chance against Tom in a sprinting match, and they soon found themselves hopelessly outclassed, and gave it up.

"What a night we're having!" said Tom to himself, glancing back over his shoulder. "Pity R. P. doesn't have a try at it—do him the world of good. They've given it up, though. Well, Sully's got his clothes back, the beggar!"

Tom did not slacken his pace, but scudded on down the highway. He was past the cross-roads, when he saw an unmistakable figure approaching.

"Hallo, Roddy!" exclaimed the fugitive, pulling.

"Hallo! What on earth are you runnin' for? Where's your hat?" said Rodwell, in surprise.

"I left it with Sully."

"What!"

"Yes, an' Kenyon Price has got the over-coat. Never mind, it's a warm night, an' they're welcome to 'em. Come over to the stile here. I've got a jolly queer tale for you. Sully's had a nice long walk in a state of nature. Price thought I was he—— But I'd better explain."

He told Roddy how Sully had been surprised in the act of taking a bath in the moorland pool, and how Tom had annexed his clothes and taken them to the cottage. He embroidered the story considerably, and Roddy began to grin.

"That's a score to you," he said. "I wish the brute had had ten miles to walk instead of two. It was a rippin' score, anyhow."

"There's more yet," said Tom. "I really believe we've got the line at last that we've been seekin' so long. When I got to the cottage, I put on Sully's hat an' overcoat—you know 'em—and started out. The idea was to play it upon you. I wanted to see if you'd take me for Sully."

"What then?"

"I went down to the gate near Plas Rhyll Lodge to wait for you, when Kenyon Price, of all people, turned up from the other direction. He saw my soft hat an' overcoat, an' thought I was Sully. Nobody else wears anything like 'em about here, you know, and he couldn't see my face. He started slangin' me like anything."

"What for?"

"Because he thought I was coming to Plas Rhyll, an' it seems he's forbidden Sully to show himself there. I was pretty surprised, of course, so I sat tight, and didn't say a word. He got more angry still, and said he wouldn't be blackmailed by me any longer."

"Phew!" said Roddy, staring. "That's a rum 'un! Blackmail him! I thought Sully was in Kenyon Price's power, not the other way about."

"There's a little of both, I fancy. Sully is in the power of K. P. somehow, because he said he could hang Sully. But Sully's got a paper that would prove Matt Matthews' right to the Coed Coch, an' that's where the deadlock is."

"Great Scott!" said Roddy excitedly. "This is the biggest scoop we've ever made! But how——"

"Price gave it away himself. He said he was goin' to have the paper out of me, an' that I'd bled him long enough. It fairly knocked me out, as you can guess. I never said a word, but let him curse away like anything. He was in a fine rage. He declared he'd get me hung an' bust his own show up, too, if I didn't hand over the proofs I'd got.

"Then suddenly something made him suspicious, and he came nearer, and saw I wasn't Sully at all. He was in such a fright that he went for me bald-headed. I don't know what he reckoned to do. The queerest thing of all was that Sully himself turned up just then an' saw me. They nearly nabbed me between 'em, but I got away."

"A paper," exclaimed Roddy—"a paper in Sully's possession, provin' Matt's right to the Coed Coch? My word, but we've stumbled on the very thing we've been groping blindfold for all this time! No wonder we never got on the scent of it, if Sully has it! Tell me exactly what Kenyon Price said."

Tom repeated every sentence as nearly as he could remember, and at the end Roddy was silent for some time.

"Come on," he said, hooking his arm into Tom's. "And they set off in the direction of Bryn y Garth.

"Where to?" said Tom. "I say, what did you arrange to meet me here for?"

"I'd got a notion for payin' a surprise visit at Plas Rhyll, an' tryin' to get on the track of things myself. But this alters matters entirely. You've done us the best turn of any since we started on our own, Tom. We won't go to Plas Rhyll now!"

"Where to, then?"

"We'll call on Sully instead. What d'you think?"

"And tackle him about it straight out? He won't give us the papers, though."

"That remains to be seen. Are you game for a rather risky expedition?"

"I don't think you need ask me if I'm game. I'll tackle anything you will," said Tom.

"I know that, old boy. But this'll be a ticklish sort of job. I mean to get my hands on that paper if it can possibly be done. It'll be in his house."

"D'you mean to take it by force?"

"If we can find it, certainly. It's the only way we ever shall get it. I think we've got hold enough over Sully to prevent his making a fuss. It's quite justifiable, for he and his scoundrel of a master are keeping us out of our own, an' they've got the only proofs."

"Where d'you think the paper will be?"

"Sully's got a big locked desk in his study, on the ground floor of that little house of his. That's where the paper'd be, I think. It's one of those patent desks with a secret drawer, an' I've seen one of just the same pattern before. I know how to find it."

"But suppose the paper ain't there?"

"We must take our chance of that, and anyhow, we may find a clue. We've got to do the whole thing for ourselves; nobody can help us. If Sully turns up, perhaps we can get it out of him."

"All right, I'm on. It's our best chance. Why not go at once, while he's out?"

"I don't want to do that," said Roddy, frowning. "It'd look almost like thieving, though we're only seeking our own. No, it'll be safer when he's in the house himself."

Tom did not quite see why, but he said no more. They made their way back to Bryn y Garth, where they found Dafydd had gone out, but had left a meal for them, which they did justice to.

"Burglars always grub themselves well," said Tom, grinning, after they had done.

"Burglars be blowed!" returned Roddy, rather gruffly. "We're policemen, if anything."

"I hope Sully'll think so. I say, why don't Kenyon Price buy the paper off him? That's what I can't make out. You'd think he'd offer any price for it, and he's got tons of money."

"I suppose Sully finds it more profitable to keep the proofs an' bleed him, as he calls it," Roddy replied, "or else K. P. knows too much about him, an' Sully daren't give up the only hold he's got over his master. We can't tell till we know more, though perhaps that don't matter much to us."

"There's another thing. Why should Sully have tried to put us out of the way when we worked in the pits? You'd think he'd prefer us alive, for if we were dead, Price'd have nothing to fear from Sully and his blessed papers."

"That ain't so, Tom. That paper would prove Kenyon Price had been enjoyin' thousands of pounds he's got no right to all these years, even if we were dead. The property has to go to somebody. Whoever it belonged to, K. P. had no right to his partner's half. And I'll bet that paper is a deed of partnership, or something very like it, between Price and Mad Matt's father. We're the heirs to it now, by Matt's will."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Then all we've got, if we win, is a partnership with that beast Kenyon Price? I'd a soon not——"

"No, no, not a bit of it! If the proofs are found, it shows he's a thief and a felon. He's denied there was any partnership, and swore the whole collieries are his all this time. It means Price's Prison for him, and Kenyon Price stands or falls by that paper. It's gettin' late," added Roddy, looking at his watch, "so now, instead of talkin' about it, let's go an' see if we can get it."

"Deeds, not words," said Tom. "Here's Dafydd comin' back."

"That's good, because we've got to leave somebody to look after the place. Dafydd, my boy, just screw the neck of anybody who comes monkeying round the shaft, will you? We want to take him with us."

"Ah, I begin to twig," said Tom, with a dry grin. "It's a fact, Sully don't like our little dawg. Come on, Gripe, old chap."

They set off at a good pace down the hillside, and soon were on the road to Aberford. Sully's small house stood well on the outskirts, in a garden looking over the open fields. The boys approached it cautiously.

"There's a light at one window," said Roddy—"no, at two. The lower one's his study. Wonder if he's there. The doors are sure to be locked for the night by now."

"Most likely he's warmin' himself after his trip across the moor," chuckled Tom. "He must have had those clothes at Price's shaft-buildings, by the way, to get down to Plas Rhyll so soon. But never mind that now. How are we to get in?"

"Stop fooling!" said Roddy irritably. "If he's in the study we'll——"

"Go in by another way?"

"On the contrary, go straight in and surprise him."

"Rummy way of housebreakin'. I s'pose you know best, though!" murmured Tom.

They climbed into the garden by way of the palings, and crept towards the lighted window through the shrubbery.

"Lucky there's no dog," whispered Tom. "else there'd be a battle royal with Gripe and enough row to raise the dead. There's nobody in that study, Roddy."

They could see through the closed French windows that opened on the little lawn. A candle was burning on a side-table, but the room was empty.

"No use makin' two bites of a cherry," said Rodwell. And, walking straight up to the window without any concealment, he took a chisel from his pocket, applied it to the meeting-point of the pair of windows, and came open easily enough. There were heavy shutters inside, but they had not been closed yet.

"Now, if this was an honest man's house," said Roddy, striding in, "I should feel a pretty complete scoundrel, I reckon. But as we're only lookin' for our own property, an' there's no other way of gettin' it, I don't care a snap! There's the desk I told you about; and now we'll see."

A large roll-top desk of especially heavy make stood against one wall. The hood was drawn down, but the key, to which was attached a bunch of others, was in the lock.

Gripe, looking as if such expeditions were all in the day's work, sat down and panted cheerfully. Rodwell turned the key, and thrust the hood back. The desk was littered with papers.

It did not take him long to open the back part, press the spring, and the secret drawer flew open at once. In it were three parchment documents.

"Is that it?" said Tom eagerly, under his breath.

"Don't whisper. I'm doing nothing I'm ashamed of," said Roddy calmly, looking through the documents one by one.

He examined them twice, and a look of disappointment grew on his face.

"Drawn blank," he said gloomily; "none of these are anything to do with it whatever."

He searched the drawer again, and pulled it right out, but found nothing. He tapped the whole desk over, without discovering any other hiding-place, and then rapidly emptied some of the other drawers.

"I'm afraid——" he began.

"Look out!" interrupted Tom. "Somebody coming!"

There was a quick step outside the door, and the next moment Sully darted into the room, a savage frown on his face, and in his hand a large kitchen poker.

The Man with the Contract.

"CAUGHT you, have I?" he cried, darting forward with the poker raised. And then he started violently and stopped dead. "Good heavens, you!"

A terrific growl from Gripe was the answer, and the dog, baring his fangs, stood ready to spring.

"Mark him, Gripe!" said Roddy swiftly. "If you move or shout, Sully, before I give you leave, Heaven help you, that's all!"

The ex-viewer's mouth was open to yell for assistance, but the cry died on his lips as he saw the bulldog crouching before him with its eyes fixed on his face, and he remembered Gripe of old.

Sully stared at the boys in silence for quite a minute, and then, regaining his self-control, he found his tongue.

"So you've turned housebreakers!" he said, with a savage sneer.

"As you please," said Roddy coolly. "We've got up the part pretty thoroughly, if that's so. Capital dog to go into the business with, Gripe; don't you think so? What's the poker for?"

"I heard a noise, and thought some tramp or sneak-thief had got in to pilfer," said Sully viciously. "I was right, it seems."

"Now, look here," said Roddy, whose cheeks were reddening rapidly, "we're in this house in search of our own property, which you, like the dirty little robber and blackmailer you are, have stolen."

"Thank you!" said Sully. "Calling me names doesn't make what you're doing any the better."

"I'm telling you cold facts," said Roddy. "It's impossible to commit any crime against

(Continued on the next page.)

BILIOUSNESS
YIELDS TO
Proper treatment; and proper treatment is that which restores the liver to a healthy condition and regulates the flow of bile. *Mother Seigel's Syrup* acts directly on the liver, and strengthens it for the important work it has to do. Biliousness becomes impossible, and as the Syrup stimulates also the stomach and bowels, it frees you from indigestion and constipation.
MOTHER SEIGEL'S SYRUP
"I have had as many as three bilious attacks in a fortnight. They came on with headache and dizziness, and ended in vomiting. I used to heave till I could hardly stand. At all times I was plagued with constipation, and felt thoroughly wretched. Mother Seigel's Syrup cured me." From Mr. Herbert Shipley, Seawcett Farm, Epworth, by Doncaster, January 3rd, 1907.
AND SO DOES
CONSTIPATION
The 2/6 bottle contains three times as much as the 1/1½ size.

WITH PICK AND LAMP.

(Continued from the previous page.)

you. What we're doing is just as right as for a man to get his purse back by force from the pickpocket who's stolen it."

Sully turned sea-green, and if a look could have killed, Roddy would have dropped dead.

"However, I didn't come here to argue with you," added Roddy, hunting among the papers. "Tom, there's another drawer we haven't opened. Unlock it, and turn it out."

They did so before the enraged Sully's eyes, but the paper they wanted was not there. The ex-viewer almost forgot the dog in his fury.

"Got no dam' fer yourself now!" he cried. "I'll have the police in to you! You shall be in the cells in half an hour!"

"Do!" said Roddy, turning and facing him. "Call the police by all means! I won't prevent you, and neither shall the dog. Shoon for 'em. Or ring the bell—it's just behind you."

Sully hesitated, and bit his lip savagely, glaring at the boys uneasily.

"Fire away. What are you waitin' for?" said Roddy. "I'm sure you're willin' to see the police. I'd like this case brought into court—by you. There'll be plenty to be said on both sides."

The ex-viewer muttered something under his breath. He looked at the bell, but did not move towards it.

"No," said Rodwell, with a nod, "you prefer not to—eh? We can't prosecute you yet for want of evidence to start a case. But we're willin' enough for you to prosecute us. Do it, an' we'll make all England ring with the story of the Coed Coch, an' its agent, an' its owner, as it comes out in the courts of law!"

"I would settle your business, though!" growled Sully.

"Would it? I think it'd make much shorter work o' yours. But neither you nor your precious master dare appear in court in such a case."

Sully was silent.

"Now look here!" said Roddy, "I'm goin' to give you a chance to play straight for once—it'd be much better for all of us. You know what Tom and I came here for. We want that paper which proves our right to the Coed Coch Colliery."

"What paper?"

"Oh, don't start bluffin'; it's too late for that. You've already admitted you've got it, an hour or two ago."

"I did nothing of the sort."

"Well, no. I ought to have said Kenyon Price admitted it. You an' he must have been in a pretty stew when you discovered he'd let the cat out o' the bag to Tom on the road at Plas Rhyll. Very well, we learned the paper is in this house, an' we came here to get it. I reckoned it might be in this desk, but it ain't. Now, where is it?"

"You're talking through your hat!" said Sully scornfully.

"I'll put it to you straight," said Roddy. "I've failed to find that paper, but I know it's somewhere in the house. To search the whole building for it ain't possible. So I ask you to give me the paper of your own free will, and I promise you you'll find honesty the best policy."

"I've always found it so," Sully replied.

"Yes," said Tom drily; "you're a white, innocent lamb, aren't you?"

"You shan't lose by it," urged Roddy.

Sully looked at him quietly.

"What's the offer you're makin' to me?" he said.

"I'm not goin' to bargain with you," returned Rodwell, a grim look growing round his mouth, "or to name any prices or bribes to a man that's tried to murder me. Take it or leave it. I ask you to put Tom and me into possession of our own, and I'll pay you best. If you don't, we'll beat you sooner or later, an' you'll not only lose everything, but find yourself in the felon's dock as well."

Still the ex-viewer said nothing.

"Well?" said Roddy, "which is it to be?"

"You're makin' a mistake," said Sully calmly; "there is no such paper. I don't even know what you're talkin' about."

Rodwell shrugged his shoulders.

"That means that you prefer to stick to Kenyon Price, after all?" he said. "There's no more to be said, then. You'll be sorry for it before long. Don't say you weren't warned. Come, Tom, old boy!"

He and Tom walked out through the open window, accompanied by Tom and Gripe. Sully stood and watched them out of sight, a dark, uneasy look upon his face. Then he locked the outside shutters together with a shake of the head, and closed the window.

"What d'you think of it?" said Tom to his partner, when they reached the road again. "Has he got the paper?"

"Of course! You could read it in his face as plain as print. I believe he'll be to shop over an' take our side, for the sake of what he could get out of it, if he had the choice. But he daren't, that's what it comes to. Kenyon Price must have a mighty big hold on him."

"Why don't Kenyon Price force him to give the paper up, then?"

"He can't show Sully up as long as Sully holds the paper, because Sully could show him up in return. But if the fellow gave up the paper to anyone else, then Price'd certainly bust Sully up. Can't you see? Neither of 'em can move."

"How are we to get hold of the proof, then?"

"We must wait till we've got more money an' something else to go upon, unless a lucky chance turns up. It's an awkward sort o' deadlock; but we'll win, never fear."

"There's no chance of Sully destroyin' the paper?"

"Of course not, you chump! It's the one thing that makes him secure. But we'll get our hands on it somehow. There's nothing more to be done to-night."

They returned to Bryn y Garth and bed. Next morning, before work was fairly started, a note came by hand from Mr. Wynne Williams for Roddy.

"You'll have to take sole charge here to-day, Tom," he said, as soon as he had read it. "I must go into Aberford, an' take the next train to Cardiff. Lawyer Williams says I ought to see this John Vaughan, who's supposed to hold the mortgage, and try to settle matters. Mr. Williams is sure to be right."

"When'll you be back?"

"Not till late. I shall stay on an' try to draw up a fresh contract before I leave Cardiff. It's a good opportunity, and we've got to have a fresh job on hand when the present contract is done—that's most important. You might put me some samples together, Tom, while I get ready."

Roddy hurried into his best clothes he had learned that it pays to dress well when seeking to do business—and Tom had the coal samples ready for him in a bag. There was no need to pick them out specially; all the Bryn y Garth coal was so excellent that the quality ran nearly level all through the seam.

Away went Rodwell for Aberford, and caught the morning train to Cardiff. He had

There was a quick step outside the door, and the next moment Sully darted into the room, a savage frown on his face, and in his hand a large kitchen poker.

to change at the junction, and it was eleven before he reached the noisy, busy seaport upon the Bristol Channel.

Without wasting any time, he made straight to the address given him by Lawyer Williams, and found that Mr. John Vaughan was apparently a coal-broker, and spent his business hours in a mean little office on the second floor of a shabby building in a side street.

"This don't look much like the abode of a wealthy mortgage holder who's goin' to squeeze the blood out of Bryn y Garth," said Roddy to himself, as he saw the name-plate in the dirty entrance-hall. "It's fishy, as I expected. Now, it's quite likely they'll put me off, or refuse to see me, if I make inquiries, so I'll take the liberty of walking right in."

There were two doors to the offices when he reached them—one marked "private," and the other bore the words "John Vaughan & Co." This was evidently the ante or waiting-room, so Roddy tried the "private" door. He expected to find it locked, but it opened, and he strode in.

The room was dusty and shabby; and an equally dusty and shabby, elderly man, in a faded frock coat, was sitting at a desk, littered with bills and documents. And standing behind him, with his hat on, was Sully, of all people.

"Good-morning!" said Roddy. "We live an' learn, don't we?"

The ex-viewer gave a start as he saw who the intruder was, but he said nothing, being taken by surprise. The old man in the frock-coat cried out in a querulous voice to know what Rodwell meant by bursting in like that, and asked who he was.

"My name's Owen, and I've called about the mortgage you hold over the colliery owned by Tom Hughes and me," said Roddy.

"I can't see you!" cried Mr. John Vaughan, in a flutter. "The—the matter is in the hands of the lawyers. What do you mean by this extraordinary behaviour?"

"I'm told to deal with you direct," said Roddy, giving him a note Mr. Williams had enclosed. "Here's the notice of acceptance, or whatever it's called. Now, look here, sir; do you mean to stick to that foreclosure?"

Mr. John Vaughan, who seemed terribly taken aback by Roddy's visit, looked helplessly at Sully, who gave him a quick nod and a frown.

"Yes, yes; certainly!" said Mr. Vaughan fussily. "The—the mortgage is foreclosed, and must remain so."

"We'll give you double interest if you'll extend it six months," said Roddy.

"No, no; impossible!" cried Vaughan nervously, after another glance at Sully, who made a negative sign. "Things must—or—take their course. I am very sorry, but——"

"Very good," said Roddy coolly. "I quite understand. We don't really need the extension, and I only asked you for the fun of seein' your signal to your boss there."

"Wh-what do you mean?" cried the coal-broker, in a shaky voice.

"Oh, never mind explainin'! I see you're only a tool in the hands of these others," said Rodwell cheerfully; "but I'll give you a warning word. You're lettin' yourself be made use of by a very shady lot, an' if you don't give it up an' steer clear of 'em, you'll be sorry for it when the smash comes, and they pull you down with them. See?"

Sully sneered savagely, but still remained silent. The coal-broker looked frightened.

"You are t-t-talking nonsense!" he stammered.

"Am I? You think Kenyon Price & Co. are mighty big bugs, and much too high up to get hurt. I don't know what price they've bought you at; but their finish is in sight, and a very dirty set of scoundrels they are, of whom that lantern-jawed fellow standin' behind you is one of the worst. When they're shown up, which won't be long now, this story'll be part of a pretty big sensation."

"This is libel!" cried Vaughan, in a quavering voice—"libel against a most wealthy and honourable firm. The law——"

"Right! Tell him to prosecute me for the libel," said Roddy, grinning, and jerking his thumb towards Sully, who scowled fiercely. "You'll do for a witness. It'll be a very pretty case; but I'm afraid Kenyon Price won't take it up."

"Pay no attention to him," muttered Sully in Mr. Vaughan's ear. "You know where your interest lies."

"Well, good-bye!" said Roddy, with a cheerful nod to Vaughan. "I don't want to be rude, but you seem more fool than knave! You take my tip, and get out of it, or you'll find yourself up a gum-tree when the finish comes along."

He walked out of the office and down the stairs, whistling cheerily, and now and again breaking out into a chuckle. It was just as he expected, and now the boys knew what they had to deal with. But it had tickled him to actually drop right upon Sully in the man's office.

"It was a shocking give-away," he said to himself, laughing. "Price would ha' done better to buy up the mortgage openly, an' lay his own claim to Bryn y Garth. But I s'pose that wouldn't suit him. Now for a hunt after contracts."

Roddy started out on this enterprise in high spirits, that were destined to fall decidedly low before he had done. The first big coal-broker-age office he went to was not encouraging, and the manager asked him whom he was acting for, and why he employed put so youthful a commercial traveller on the road. Roddy explained that he was not only a traveller, but a partner, showed his samples, and used some very persuasive talk. But the manager would not bite, and seemed to think some sort of joke was being played on him.

The next office would have nothing to say to him at all. Roddy tried several shipping firms that bought their coal direct, but with no better success, and when business was beginning to close for the day, Roddy found himself stranded. All he had got was a couple of vague promises from two small dealers to come and inspect his pit before deciding on a contract, but they did not look much as if they meant it.

"They all jib because they think I'm too young," said Roddy to himself discontentedly, as he came out of the last offices. "They think it's a do; or, anyhow, they don't take it seriously. Silly fools! Ours is the choicest steam-coal of any seam in South Wales, if they'd only look at it. I ought to have brought my last-signed contract from Aberford with me to convince you. I'll do that next time."

He made his way to the railway-station, feeling rather glum. The afternoon had been wasted, he thought. Roddy considered the question of putting things in the hands of an agent to sell the coal and get the contracts for him. But he gave up that idea at once. It was so expensive to cart the coal—as they had no truck-road and no machinery—that the profits were very small as yet, and to pay an agent's commission as well would swallow most of them up.

"If only we could raise the money to get modern machinery, an' build a truck-line to the Aberford railway!" sighed Roddy. "But there's no chance of that while the mortgage hangs over us. We're in touch of bein' rich, an' yet it may be snatched from us."

He got into the train for Aberford—a third-class carriage, of course. The compartments had low partitions, so that one could see from end to end of the carriage by standing up. There were few people in the train, and Roddy's compartment was empty.

At the last moment, however, just before the train started, he saw a man hurrying to catch it, and calling to a porter to know if his luggage had been put in the van.

"Yes, sir. First-class carriages this way, sir!" cried the porter; and at the same time the whistle blew and the train began to move.

"Look sharp, there!" cried the guard. "Jump in anywhere, or you'll be left behind."

Roddy's door was thrown open, and the man swung himself into the carriage. He was about forty, well-dressed, and pleasant-looking, but with a very keen, commanding air about him, and intensely business-like. He dropped into the corner seat.

"I think this is right for Aberford?" he inquired of Roddy, with a smile. "Deuce of a hurry. Nearly missed it."

"Yes," said Roddy; "quite right. Change at the junction."

"Do you know Aberford?" said the well-dressed stranger, looking at him.

"Rather, sir!" replied Rodwell. "I belong there."

"Indeed! Then, perhaps you can tell me how far it is out to a place called Bryn y Garth, and the best way to get there?"

Roddy looked at the stranger keenly, and felt an eager thrill; he scarcely knew why. He liked the look of the man.

"It's about two miles out, sir; and the way lies over the moors. So you want to get there to-night?"

"I do, though it will be rather late when we arrive at Aberford. You know of Bryn y Garth, do you?" said the stranger keenly. "There's a new colliery lately opened there, I believe? What do they say about it in your neighbourhood?"

Roddy pricked up his ears.

"By gum!" he thought. "This chap's after coal, or I'm a Dutchman! I won't let on I'm part owner, or he'll think I'm too young, like the other fellow an' shy off. Better lie dogo till I get him there."

"Why, sir," he said aloud, "I've heard it said there's a six-foot seam of about the finest hard steam-coal in Wales. Are you connected with the coal trade?"

The stranger gave an amused and hearty laugh.

"That's rather good," he said, still chuckling, "to be asked if I'm in the coal trade? Well, yes, my lad, I may say that I am. And perhaps the owner of Bryn y Garth Colliery may be rather surprised—and pleased—to see me. I shouldn't wonder."

Roddy's heart leaped with joy, though he did not show it.

"If that's so, sir," he said, "I'll show you the way to the colliery myself; and I'll introduce you to the owners of it as soon as we get there. They——"

He broke off suddenly. Opposite him, on the carriage wall, was a small mirror, part of an advertisement. And in it he saw reflected the sallow face of Sully, peeping over the partition behind him, and listening eagerly, with an angry scowl on his brow.

(To be continued in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

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