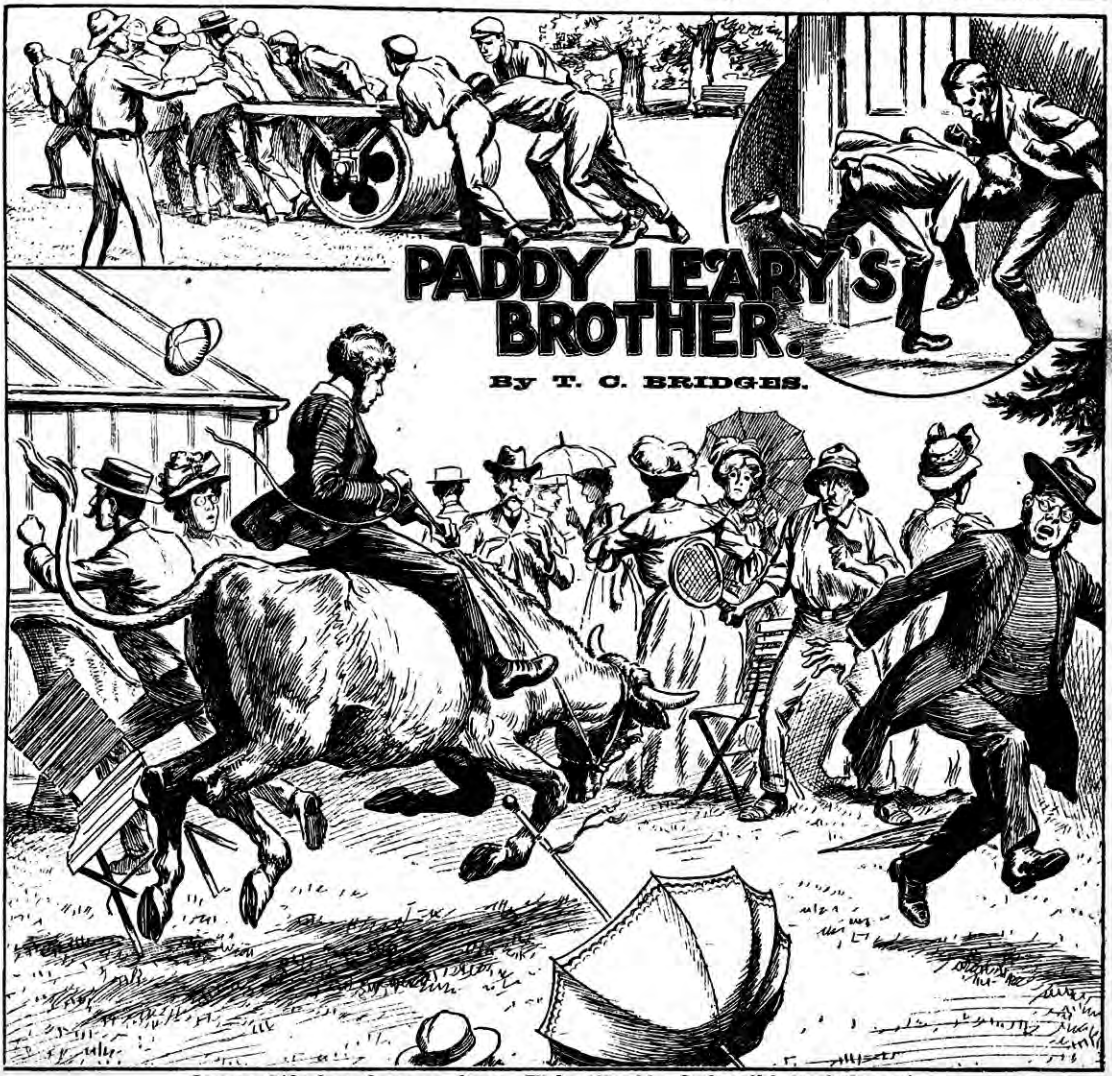
FOUR WONDERFUL NEW SERIALS NOW STARTING!

The Boys' Realm of Sport and Adventure. 1d.

No. 312. Vol. VI.] EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY. [Saturday, May 23, 1908.



Some Stirring Scenes from This Week's Splendid Instalment.

Paddy Leary's Brother

OR THE FAGS OF THE FOURTH

A FINE NEW SCHOOL TALE.

BY

T. C. BRIDGES.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

BRIAN LEARY, Paddy Leary's brother. He arrives at St. Osyth's School for the first time during a desperate struggle between the boys of the Fourth and Fifth Forms. The Fifth, a bullying, lubbing set of lads, have made up their minds to fag the Fourth, and the latter are resisting stardily. Brian lends a hand in repelling the enemy, and speedily establishes his popularity.

HOBBS, the acknowledged leader of the Fifth Form. Brian arouses his enmity by mocking him with his while he is attempting to break his way into the Fourth Form class-room. Other members of the Fifth are Swayne, Crandon, and Philips.

BURNELL, ROUSE, and **GLEGG**, chums of Brian's in the Fourth.

DANE, a pupil at St. Osyth's. A peculiar lad, who is shunned by most of his schoolfellows. He attempts to chum up with Brian. Dane is really the son of a former headmaster of St. Osyth's, named Dench, who was notorious in his time for his ill-treatment of his pupils. Later, when the school passed into the possession of Paddy Leary, Dench was dismissed. Dench is now plotting to once more regain his old position at St. Osyth's. His accomplice is

MR. MAKINS, an undermaster at the school, who is greatly disliked by all the boys. He openly insults Brian on his first day at St. Osyth's. Makins works in complicity with young Dench, otherwise Dane. At Mr. Dench's instructions he and the boy are striving to get St. Osyth's into bad odour, to sully its splendid record, so that the pupils will be withdrawn, Paddy Leary will sell the school, and it will once more fall under the control of Dench.

Makins and Dane are busy discussing their plans for the downfall of the school in the former's study, when they suddenly become aware of the fact that Brian has entered the room, and is standing quietly by the door. Makins springs across the study with a snarl, grasping Brian by the arm.

"You confounded young eavesdropper!" he cries, dragging the lad across the room.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 4th CHAPTER *(continued).*
Crandon in Hot Water.

AT Makins's accusation every drop of the hot Irish blood in Brian's veins boiled.

"I'm not an eavesdropper, sir," he blazed out. "I was sent to Mr. Garnett's room to get my books for to-morrow's school. 'Third door to the left—first floor'; that's what he said. I didn't knock, because I knew he was out in."

Makins's head dropped to his sides. He glared at Brian with his fishlike eyes full of suspicion.

"Is this true?" he demanded.

"I'm not a liar!" retorted Brian sharply.

Dane interrupted.

"Leary only came in this minute, sir," he assured the master.

Makins's face relaxed. He had sense enough to see that Brian had spoken truth, to realise that he himself had blundered badly. But he was quite cunning enough to know how to mend his mistake.

"I was talking of family matters with my young cousin, Stephen Dane," he said quickly. "Naturally, I was annoyed at your intrusion. But I see I was wrong. Your mistake was natural enough. Mr. Garnett's rooms are on the third to the right of the stairs, not the left." He paused, then went on quickly: "And, Leary, I think I should say I am sorry for what happened in class this afternoon. I have as much respect for Australia as any man. I suffer from nouralgia, and the pain makes me at times lose self-control."

"Please say no more, sir," broke in Brian, in real distress. "I'm so sorry I came in without knocking!"

Dane jumped up.

"I'll show you Mr. Garnett's rooms, Leary!" he exclaimed.

But Brian said:

"Please don't bother. I can find them now all right."

As the door closed behind Brian the two conspirators looked at one another.

"Did he hear anything?" demanded Makins angrily.

"No, I'm sure he didn't," returned Dane. And then, as if it was forced from him: "He's not the sort to listen."

Meanwhile, Brian got his books, and, as it was now ten o'clock, went across to his dormitory.

"I wonder what they were talking about?" he said to himself. "It's rum—Makins being so excited. But, after all, I suppose neuralgia does put a chap off his balance. Well, I'm glad he apologised for this afternoon. That was decent of him, at any rate."

"Hallo, Leary! Where have you been?" came a cheery voice.

It was Burnell.

"Over to get my books for to-morrow," answered Brian.

"You're just in time. It's lock-up in five minutes, and light's'll be out at half-past. Come on! You're in the same dormitory with me and Clegg and Rouse."

As the pair went up the stairs they met a youngster carrying a big can of hot water.

"Who's that for, Skewes?" demanded Burnell.

Skewes grunted something, and bolted upstairs.

Burnell had him by the collar in three strides.

"You young beast, who's that water for?"

"It's for Crandon!" gurgled the wretched Skewes.

"Didn't you hear us say that none of the Fourth were to fag for the Fifth?"

"He'll lick me, if I don't!" whined Skewes miserably.

"We'll lick you a jolly sight more if you do!" returned Burnell. "It's little reptiles like you that make the Fifth try to fag us. Put that can down at once!"

"Where's my hot water, Skewes?" came an angry voice over the banisters. "Hurry up, or I'll tan your hide for you!"

"You've got no right to fag him, Crandon!" cried Burnell boldly.

"Have I? Just you wait! I'll soon show you!"

And down came Crandon, in a furious rage, three steps at a stride.

Skewes turned tail and bolted. Brian and Burnell stood their ground.

Cheeky young blackguard!" roared Crandon, and let out at Burnell with all his might.

Burnell flung up an arm to save his head; but Crandon's fist crashed through his defence, hit him on the forehead, and sent him spinning down five steps on to the landing.

On the impulse of the moment, Brian snatched up the can, and before Crandon could recover himself a gallon of hot water soused him from head to foot.

"I'll kill you for that!" screamed the Fifth-Former, and turning madly on Brian.

But his rush had carried him a couple of steps below the other, and Brian made good use of his extra height by getting in a real nasty one on the bully's jaw.

The blow failed to floor Crandon, and the pain sent him mad as a March hare. Knowing that he had no earthly chance in a stand-up with the big fellow, Brian turned and bolted upstairs.

Crandon tore after him, grabbed at his coat-tail as Brian turned the corner, and missed it by an inch. Brian flashed down the passage, Crandon thundering at his heels, doubled like a hare into his dormitory, and ran his head smack into the stomach of someone big and tall, who was just coming out of the door.

The big fellow gave a loud "Ouch!" and collapsed like a concertina, Brian on top of him.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
Brian, the Bullock-tamer.

"DO you usually come to bed like that?" inquired the tall chap, as he picked himself up slowly. "Because, if it's your custom, just say so, and I'll be careful not to be in the way next time."

"I'm most awfully sorry," gasped Brian, looking up into a pleasant, sun-tanned face. "I—I—or—that is——"

"You needn't explain. I saw," returned the other, with a twinkle in his eye. "It was the row brought me out."

At this moment Burnell limped up, looking rather the worse for wear, but grinning all over at Brian's escape and Crandon's discomfiture.

"What, you, too, Burnell!"

"I'm awfully sorry, Miles," said the boy.

"You look it," retorted the prefect. "Get to bed, both of you. And next time you want a bear fight on the stairs, have it before ten—see?"

"So that's Miles," remarked Brian, in a whisper, as the prefect went to his cubicle in the corner of the big dormitory.

"Yes; and wasn't it decent of him?" returned Burnell, as he pitched off his clothes. "Any other prefect would have lined us. But Miles knows a lot more than he lets on, and he bars Hobbs and Crandon as much as we do. I say, you did duck Crandon rippingly!"

And Burnell rolled on his bed in agonies of delight.

School next morning under Mr. Garnett was a very different thing from any class that Makins took. Brian did fairly well, and by twelve o'clock was beginning to feel quite pleased with himself and life at St. Osyth's.

"All hands come and roll the pitch," was the order passed by Rouse when school was over.

"We've got a pick-up match on this afternoon," explained Burnell to Brian; "and, as they won't let us have a horse to pull the roller on the Fourth Form ground, we've got to do it ourselves."

A team of twenty boys was needed to haul the big horse-roller, and even so it was pretty hard work under the hot sun. Rouse was an exacting taskmaster, and made them go over every bit of the ground twice.

"It looks pretty decent, anyhow," he admitted at last, as the dinner bell began to ring.

"A jolly sight better than the Fifth Form pitch," declared Burnell. "They'd like to make us roll their ground," **he said to Brian; "but that's one thing they'll have to want. They may make some of the wretched kids like Skewes fag still, but the Fourth never, never, never will be slaves!" Have you played much?" inquired Burnell, as he and Brian walked up to the cricket ground, in their flannels, after dinner.**

"A bit," answered Brian modestly. "I was in the eleven at the Grammar School."

"Good business! We want new blood badly. I'm going to pick up one side. I shall choose you."

"Thanks, awfully!" said Brian.

Then, as they turned the corner and came in sight of the small field where the Fourth Form pitch was, both stopped short in horror.

A dozen great bullocks were grazing in the place, trampling all over the carefully-rolled turf.

"Brutes! I'll lay anything some of those Fifth-Formers did this!" cried Burnell furiously. "Shoo, you brutes!" he shouted, running forward.

"Steady!" cried Brian. "You'll start 'em galloping, and they'll cut the ground all to ribands."

"We must drive them out," returned Burnell sharply.

"I know. But let me have a shot. Is there a rope anywhere?"

"Plenty in the net-ropes in the shed."

"I'll get 'em. Stay here, and stop the chaps from driving the beasts."

Brian was back in two minutes with a long piece of rope. Half a dozen Fourth-Formers had arrived, and more were running up. They watched Brian with vast interest as he nimbly knotted the rope into a neat halter with a slip big enough to go over the horns of a bullock.

"Keep a little back from the gate, will you?" asked Brian; and, halter in hand, walked very quietly in among the bullocks.

He went straight up to the nearest, spoke to it, passed his hand gently along its shoulder, and then like a flash had the noose over its head.

"Coop—coop!" he cried; and the big animal shambled quietly along beside him through the gate.

The Fourth had never seen anything like this. They watched with the greatest interest.

Brian roped a second, and as he led it away, talking quietly to it, three others followed.

In ten minutes he had them all out except one. This was a huge dark red beast, with a great, flat back, and short, stiff, straight horns. It was shyer than the rest, and kept moving away as Brian came near.

Once or twice it put its head down, and looked as if it was going to charge; but Brian was not discouraged. He gradually worked it up into a corner of the field, and then, with one quick motion, it was noosed like the rest.

It started for the gate full trot, Brian running alongside, with the rope in both hands.

Clegg, Rouse's chum, was standing by the gate.

Clegg was not a bad fellow, but he was a bit jealous of the sensation caused by Brian's performance.

"Why don't you ride it?" he cried jeeringly, as Brian was towed through the gate by the trotting bullock.

Of course, he had not the faintest idea that Brian would take him at his word. He was flabbergasted when Brian, with a cheery "All right!" made a nimble spring, and landed astride on the brute's broad back.

"Get up!" cried Brian, and gently dug his heels into the fat sides.

The bullock had never in all its life carried anything on its back. It pulled up short, snorted violently, then suddenly tucked its great head down, and set to work kicking as only a steer can kick.

The effect was utterly absurd. First, its great quarters went up, then its wide shoulders and massive head. It looked like a sort of animated seesaw, in the middle of which Brian sat straight and tight, quite unconcerned by his mount's wild antics. The boy had learnt his riding on the wild ranges of Queensland.

The Fourth roared with laughter, and shouted encouragement.

At last the bullock got tired of kicking, and finding that the strange creature on its back could not be moved, and yet apparently meant no harm, it ambled away out of the crowd; following the rest of the herd which were now grazing down the road.

Brian was on the point of dropping off, when all of sudden the bullock gave a tremendous start, a terrified snort; then, with a bound, that as near as anything unseated Brian, bolted as hard as it could lay legs to the ground.

Brian dug his knees in, and clutched his grip on the halter. For the life of him, he couldn't imagine what had happened to frighten the creature, or make it bolt like this, and he pulled on the rope with all his might to stop it.

But the bullock paid no more attention than if Brian had been a fly. It charged through its companions, scattering them in every direction, and galloped full clip down the road towards the school.

"I never was run away with by a bullock," muttered Brian ruefully. "Wonder what I'd better do? We'll be back at the school in two jiffs. Then there'll probably be trouble."

He thought of throwing himself off, but the road looked far too hard.

"Suppose I'd better stick on and chance it," he said. "One comfort, he's too fat to keep this up very long."

"Hi! Look out!" he roared, as a nurse with a perambulator and a couple of babies hove in sight round the corner. The woman looked up, saw the awful apparition, gave one wild screech, and perambulator, babies, and all made one frantic dive into the ditch.

On tore Brian. He crossed the main road which led by the school gates, scattered a bunch of the Fifth-Formers on their way back from the tuck-shop, and nearly annihilated a fat lady with a pink parasol. The bullock thundered straight on, and Brian found himself racing down an alley which led to the side entrance of the headmaster's house.

"Murder an' Irish!" groaned Brian, as he saw a sharp corner in front, with a low wall on the far side and a gate in it.

"Come round, you brute!" And he gave the rope a desperate yank to the left.

The bullock swerved a trifle, but the corner was too sharp, and the road too narrow for such a great, heavy brute to get round.

It went straight at the wall, just to the left of the gate.

"This'll see the finish of the both of us," was on Brian's lips, when, to his utter amazement, the bullock put its head down, cleared the wall, and with Brian still on its back, came down with an appalling clatter in the middle of the doctor's cucumber-frames.

Broken glass and splintered wood flew in every direction as the wretched bullock, terrified almost out its life, blundered clear of the wreckage, and plunged forward across the beautifully-tilled kitchen-garden.

Crash, swish, and down went a whole row of well-staked peas. The creature nearly foundered in the celery trenches, but staggered out, pounded through an asparagus bed, sent a large cask of manure-water flying in a yellow flood down a neatly-gravelled walk, and rushed like a cyclone through a gateway on to the lawn beyond.

It so happened that, on this particular afternoon, Mrs. Fraser had asked a number of her friends to tea and tennis. The lawn was covered with them at the moment of Brian's unceremonious entry.

Brian caught a glimpse of white flannels and pretty hats and bright summer dresses wildly scattering in a mad stampede. He heard a chorus of shrieks, screams, and shouts. He was in the midst of chaos. Wildly at the back of a large wicker chair, and had just time to hope devoutly no one was sitting in it when the bullock caught it on one horn. The chair stuck there, and bumping and thrashing wildly, so confused the wretched beast, that it could not see where it was going.

No more could Brian, but he knew pretty soon. There was a tremendous snapping of ropes, the bullock checked, slid, gave one convulsive heave, then collapsed on its knees, hopelessly tangled in the tennis-net. As for Brian, he was shot yards over its head, and falling flat on his back with a tremendous thump, lay there with all the wind knocked

out of him, and, for the moment, quite unable to stir.

"You, Leary! Are you hurt?" A tall figure stood over Brian. It was the doctor.

"N-no, sir!" gasped Brian, struggling to his feet.

The doctor's expression changed from anxiety to anger.

"What do you mean by this disgraceful conduct?"

"He ran away with me, sir," was all Brian could find to say.

"What business had you to get on the animal's back at all?" demanded Dr. Fraser.

Brian made no answer.

"A lark, I suppose. But thoughtlessness of this kind is inexcusable. You have done most serious damage, badly frightened a number of my guests, and I'm afraid damaged this poor creature into the bargain"—pointing to the bullock which lay panting on the ground.

"I'm very sorry, indeed, sir," said Brian.

"I shall have to punish you," said the doctor half-regretfully. He liked this red-headed boy, with the bright face and pleasant manner.

"May I take the bullock out first, sir?" asked Brian. "I promise he sha'n't do any more harm."

The doctor looked at him hard.

"Can you?"

"I think so, sir."

"Very well; you may try."

With his quick, clever fingers, Brian altered the rope halter so as to make a slip-knot round the bullock's neck. Then he got a man to hold the end while he cleared the tangle of torn net from the creature's legs.

The bullock still lay panting on the ground, but when Brian had talked to it a moment, it struggled to its feet again, and to everyone's amusement followed the boy like a sheep as he led it away to the drive and out through the front gate.

Two minutes later, a servant came out to where the doctor was bending a fresh net.

"Can Mr. Clegg see you, sir?"

"Clegg, what on earth does he want?" muttered the doctor, as he went up to the house.

Clegg, looking rather alarmed, was in the study.

"It wasn't Leary, sir," was his first hurried remark.

"I must say it looked a good deal like him," responded the doctor, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, sir; but I did it." Clegg was badly flurried. "You see, they were on our ground, and Leary turned them off, and I dared him to ride it, and it ran away."

The doctor laughed outright.

"Not very lucid, Clegg, but I think I understand. All right, I sha'n't cane Leary this time. But, for goodness' sake, Clegg, next time the Fourth choose to hold Olympian games, do, please, spare my cucumber-frames."

Clegg grinned broadly.

"Thank you, very much, sir!" he said, and departed, evidently much relieved.

Later, Brian said to Burnell:

"Can't make out what on earth made that beast run away. Suppose it must have been a fly."

"A lead fly!" returned Burnell mysteriously.

"What do you mean?"

"A bullet. Peter Joyce—you know him, he's in our Form—saw a chap hiding behind the hedge with a catapult."

"Who was it?" cried Brian.

"Peter's not sure. The fellow cleared. But he thinks it was Phipps."

"Of course not."

"Well, that new chap who's taken on Dennett's—Smurthwaite his name is—he takes bets on all the races, I've found out."

"Why don't you bet with him, then?"

"He won't bet with the younger chaps," answered Dane in an aggrieved voice. "But I dare say he would with you."

"I should think he would," replied the lordly Hobbs. "I shall go straight down there now. You follow me on down. I'm not going to be seen with a kid like you in quad.!" he added brutally.

Dane agreed mildly, but in his cunning mind he added one more to the long tale of insults he meant to revenge himself for.

"Fool!" he said to himself, as he strolled quietly down the road. "I've caught you, anyhow. Smurthwaite'll attend to you. You think yourself so clever, but you're the silliest fly that ever walked into a spider's parlour!"

Dane smiled to himself when he reached the tuck-shop, and slipping through a side door in the passage, found Hobbs lolling on a sofa in the inner room, and talking to Smurthwaite as if the place belonged to him.

The room was nicely fitted up. There were big, cosy chairs, the walls were hung with sporting prints, and piles of the latest sporting papers lay on the tables. Doors covered with red baize cut off all sound from the shop.

"Always pleased to oblige any gentleman," Smurthwaite was saying as Dane entered the room. Smurthwaite was a stout man, with black hair, which, like his manner, seemed always oily. He had large, plump, white hands, which he was always rubbing together as if he was soaping them.

Hobbs affected to pay no attention to Dane. The latter could hardly suppress a chuckle, knowing, as he did, that it was he who had primed the man to expect Hobbs.

"And what can I do for you, sir?" went on Smurthwaite. "There's the Gatwick meeting next week. I had the tip that Prime Minister was a likely investment." He picked up a paper. "Let me see. Twelve to one—that's his present price."

Hobbs's eyes glistened.

"Sounds good," he said. "I wouldn't mind having a bit on that. You think he's likely to win?"

"I couldn't go so far as to say that, sir," answered Smurthwaite. "But I happen to know as his own stable fancy him. He's what they call a dark horse, sir." And he added some details of the horse's past performance which would have surprised no one more than the owner of that anything but noble animal.

Dane, who was pretending to read a paper, noticed Hobbs getting more and more excited.

"By Jove, he ought to win, oughtn't he?" he cried. "How much can I bet on him?"

"Any sum you like, sir," was the answer. "I can place the commission. Say ten pounds, sir, or twenty?"

Hobbs's face fell.

"Oh, I didn't know you meant like that," he said. "I can't afford that, you know."

"Make it a smaller sum if you like, sir," said Smurthwaite, shrugging his fat shoulders.

"Can I have a pound on?" asked Hobbs. "That'll mean twelve if I win, won't it?"

"Have a pound both ways, sir," suggested the oily rascal.

Hobbs had not the remotest idea what the other meant, but he was ashamed to display his ignorance, and agreed.

He was turning to go, when Smurthwaite gently reminded him:

"It's cash down, sir!"

Oh, I thought nothing was paid till after the race!" exclaimed Hobbs, in dismay.

Smurthwaite did not even smile.

"No, sir, we don't do business that way."

Very reluctantly Hobbs extracted a couple of sovereigns from his purse.

"You liar!" thought Dane. "Ten minutes ago you swore you hadn't got a copper."

Again Hobbs was turning to go, when Smurthwaite stopped him

"Your voucher, sir."

He handed him the slip, and Hobbs stuffed it into his breast-pocket.

Then he pretended to notice Dane for the first time.

"Hallo, Dane!" he said. "You might take a scout out and see if the coast's clear."

Dane did as he was asked.

"It's all right," he said.

Hobbs left, and Smurthwaite turned to Dane.

"If they're all as soft as that one, the job's dead easy, Mister Dench!" he said, with an ugly chuckle.

"Don't call me Dench," said Dane. "And be careful, Smurthwaite. That chap doesn't know a thing about racing, but he could turn dangerous all the same. So look out!"

Then Dane left and followed Hobbs at a discreet distance.

At the ends of the main road which ran past the school gates, Hobbs was seized with a fit of sneezing. At the same moment two boys, a tall, dark one and a shorter, red-haired one, came round the corner.

They were Jim Miles and Brian Leary.

As Hobbs pulled out his handkerchief, a scrap of paper came with it and fluttered to the ground.

Hobbs, in agonies of sneezing, did not notice it. Brian did. Dane saw him hesitate one instant. Then he stooped and picked it up, and Dane heard him say:

"You dropped this, Hobbs."

"The idiot!" muttered Dane, hurrying on. "I'll bet anything it's the voucher Smurthwaite gave him."

Hobbs saw what Brian had in his hand, and lost his head.

"It's not mine!" he answered quickly.

"The Boys' Realm" Cricket League.

LIST OF CLUBS WHICH HAVE ENTERED UP TO TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

JUNIOR.

Kentish Town Old Boys' C.C.
St. Andrew's C.C. (Peckham).
East St. Sunday School C.C. (Leeds).
St. Anne's C.C. Sheffield).
East View C.C. (Yeadon)
Neilson Juniors C.C. (Bulton).
St. Mary's Choir Boys' C.C. (Balham).
Heckmondwike Casuals C.C.
Shenkbank Works C.C. (Sheffield).
Perseverance C.C. (Honor Oak Park).
St. Wilfred's Choir C.C. (Sheffield).
St. Paul's C.C. (Homerton).
Whynham Villa C.C. (Barry Dock).
Marlborough C.C. (London, S.E.).
St. Paul's C.C. (Paddington).
Waverley United C.C. (London, W.).
St. Augustine's C.C., 2nd XI. (Manchester).
St. Joseph's C.C. (Bradford).
Lancaster C.C. (Notting Hill).

SENIOR.

Oakley C.C. (Leytonstone).
Glendale C.C. (Rotherhithe).
St. Michael's Institute Jun. C.C. (Wandsworth).
Linton Villa C.C. (West Ham).
St. Luke's Boys' C.C. (Wood Green).
St. Michael's C.C. (Bield Vale).
Sankey C.C. (Warrington).
Oxford A.C.C. (Southampton).
St. Jude's Reserves C.C. (Kennington).
Abertillery Imperial C.C. (Mon.).
Stoke Star C.C. (Guildford).
Ladies of Kent C.C.
Histon Excelsior C.C.
Deptford Co. C.B.B.C.C.
Gosport C.I.C.C.
St. Mary's C.C. (Deptford).
Wilton C.C. (Southampton).
St. Augustine's C.C. (Manchester).
Malmesbury C.C. (Southampton).
Dartmouth C.C. (West Hampstead).
Kingsgate C.C. (St. John's Wood).

HAS YOUR CLUB JOINED YET?

(For full particulars see page 855.)

THE 6th CHAPTER.
Hobbs Makes a Bet.

"I SAY, Hobbs, could you let me have some money?"

Hobbs looked round irritably.

"Oh, it's you, Dane! No, I can't. I haven't got a sou."

"I want it badly," said Dane meekly. "I've got a bill to pay at the tuck-shop, and I'm cleaned out."

"I thought you had lots of money!" returned Hobbs sharply.

Dane shrugged his shoulders.

"I've lent such a lot, you see. You owe me seven pounds, Hobbs."

"I know that," retorted Hobbs. "I'll pay you some time soon."

"But I want some badly now," urged Dane. "If you could give me a pound, I'll let you off another pound, or, if you'll give me five, I'll call it all square."

"You silly fool; I tell you I haven't got it!" exclaimed Hobbs. "I've spent all my allowance, and I owe a beastly lot myself."

Dane stood by with the usual meek expression on his pale face. As Burnell often said, the chap looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

"You might make some," he suggested at last.

Hobbs stared.

"Make some—how? What d'ye mean?"

"Did you ever have a bet on a race?" inquired Dane slily.

Hobbs never had. But it would never do to admit as much.

"Why, yes; sometimes when I've been at a race-meeting," he answered with a swagger.

"But you can bet without going to a race-meeting," said Dane.

"Don't see how," answered Hobbs sulkily. "There are no bookmakers here."

"But there are," returned Dane. "You won't tell if I tell you?"—this with a great air of mystery.

"But I saw you drop it," insisted Brian, "when you took your handkerchief out."

Hobbs saw Miles turning to see what had become of Brian. He glared at Brian, then suddenly snatched the piece of paper, and with a mutter which might have been thanks, but sounded like a curse, walked on fast towards the gates.

Dane, almost running, managed to catch him up before he reached the gates. Hobbs heard him, and swung round, showing Dane a face black with rage.

"That finishes it!" he growled savagely. "I'll get rid of that young brute!"

There was a sparkle in Dane's shifty eyes.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked quietly.

Hobbs glared back suspiciously. Then, with a face black as thunder, he remarked:

"I do!"

THE 7th CHAPTER.
On the Face of the Cliff.

"A BIRD that looked like a jackdaw, only it had red legs and a red beak," Brian was saying. "I can't think what it was."

Peter Joyce, who was skinning a mole at a desk near by, jumped up in a hurry.

"W-where did you see it, Leary?" he spluttered eagerly.

"On the cliffs at Varne Head," answered Brian, hardly able to help smiling at the odd appearance of his questioner.

Joyce, generally known as "The Hatter," was a long, lean youngster with a thin face, a mop of untidy, tow-coloured hair, and skinny, nervous hands. His clothes were covered with stains of chemicals, and he was always getting into hot water for blowing himself or other people up with wonderful chemical experiments, or also for letting some of his various weird pets loose about the school.

Joyce cared nothing for games, and very little for lessons except chemistry class. He was mad on natural history, had a wonderful power over birds and beasts, and knew more about them and their habits than any other boy in the school. He knew every inch of the country for miles round, and in spite of his skinny appearance could outwalk and outclimb most boys of his age.

"I tell you what it was," cried he eagerly. "A chough. Belongs to the same family as the crooks and jackdaws, but it's awfully rare. I'd give anything to get some eggs."

"There were a pair of them on the rocks," said Brian.

"W-will you show me where?" exclaimed the Hatter anxiously.

"Yes, rather! This afternoon if you like."

"T-thanks awfully," answered the other gratefully. "I'll bring a rope."

"Meet me at the gates at two, then," said Brian.

Dane, who had been sitting quietly as usual in a corner of the class-room, had been listening to this conversation. He got up silently and slipped away.

Varne Head is the end of the long promontory which lies between St. Osyth's Bay and Shellport Harbour. The ground rises from inland till the seaward face of the rugged limestone cliff towers to the tremendous height of 530 feet above the beach below. The top is wild common covered with furze, where the rabbits pop in and out in scores; down below, low tide exposes a narrow stretch of rough, grey shingle, but at full flood the waves beat upon the bottom of the great rock face.

"Do you mind high places?" inquired Joyce rather anxiously, as they reached the breezy summit.

Brian laughed.

"Not a bit," he answered cheerily. "We've mountains at home—lots of 'em."

The Hatter walked fearlessly to the extreme edge of the cliff, lay flat down, and began pitching tiny pebbles down the face. Seabirds flew out with weird, piercing screams, and then Brian, watching, saw two slender-looking, black plumaged birds dart away.

"There they are!" exclaimed Joyce, greatly excited. "They came off that projecting rock!—see? It's about half-way down," he continued eagerly. "Too long for my rope to reach from the top. But there's a way down to that wide grassy ledge just above the place they came out of. Are you game to try it?"

Brian's respect for his new friend increased rapidly as he scrambled after him down the cliff face. Joyce climbed like a monkey, yet knew exactly what he was about, and took no risks whatever.

Brian was surprised at the width of the ledge when they reached it. From above, it had looked a mere strip of green, but it was ten feet wide, and the cliff immediately behind it slightly overhung.

The Hatter went to work in most business-like fashion. Selecting a spot immediately above the chough's nest, he drove his iron bar deep into the turf, pounding it home with a great stone. Then he uncoiled his rope, which was light but exceedingly strong.

"It's the same they use in the Alps," he told Brian, with pride, as he fastened one end round his waist. "Do you know how to manage it?" he asked.

"Put one turn round the bar to take off the strain, brace my legs, and hold the loose end," answered Brian.

"That's it," said the Hatter, much gratified. "I say, it was luck my having you to come with me."

"Oh, I've done a bit of this at home!" answered Brian modestly. "My brother Paddy and I once took an eagle's nest near Murraslong."

"I never took an eagle's!" exclaimed Joyce regretfully. "Are you ready?"

"Right-ho!" answered Brian; and he lay back with his heels dug deep into the turf as the Hatter slipped over the sheer edge, swung into space and vanished.

Brian let out the rope slowly and carefully. The bar took the strain off his arms. Luckily there was no wind to speak of, and as the distance down to the chough's nest was not great, he anticipated no difficulty.

The strain slackened. There came two little jerks on the rope.

"That means he's safe down," thought Brian complacently.

At that moment a tiny pebble falling from above struck the turf beside him with a sharp little thud.

"That's come from the top," thought Brian, and glanced up carelessly.

Outlined against the sharp edge of the cliff, immediately above his head, he saw a great, rough block of stone weighing at least twenty pounds. As he watched, horror stricken, it moved slowly forward.

Then Brian saw that two hands gripped it—large, coarse, powerful hands. The sun was so brilliantly clear, the sunlight so strong, that Brian could actually see the veins standing out on the backs of these hands, and the muscles of the bare wrists knotted with the strain.

But of the owner of the hands he could see nothing whatever. The stone was exactly between him and the head of whoever held it.

Inch by inch the stone moved forward. Another second and it would drop straight upon his head.

(Another fine, long instalment of this absorbing new school yarn will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

Has Your Club Joined Our Cricket League Yet?

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. Back numbers of THE BOYS' REALM may be had by any reader for distribution amongst his chums on receipt of a postcard. 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.

The League of Young Athletes.

I HAVE received quite a number of letters recently from my readers wanting to know if the League of Young Athletes is still in existence. In reply, let me say, "Yes, it is," although, owing to various reasons, I have not been able to publish the notice concerning it through the winter months. But I hope next week to find room for it, and I strongly urge all my young friends who excel at swimming or running to make a point of joining. Full particulars of how to do so will appear in our next issue, and all members will receive a handsome, embossed certificate free of all cost, whilst for a very small sum they can obtain a magnificent bronze medal testifying to their prowess in one or other of these sports.

So look out for the notice next week.

Our New Stories.

BY now all my chums will have had an opportunity of judging as to the merits of our new serial stories. I shall esteem it a great favour, therefore, if they will drop me a card telling me what they think of them. If they tell me they like them, I shall be glad; and it will surprise me very much indeed if they do not consider the stories now appearing to be the best we have ever had.

But unless I hear from my friends on this all-important point, I am quite unable to tell whether the various yarns I am publishing are giving general satisfaction. I do want all my friends to consider that the REALM is their paper, and that they can have just the stories they like in its pages. For instance, suppose I get a huge batch of letters asking for a detective story to appear, then I shall know that this is what my friends want, and I shall see that they get it. So far as our grand new school tale is concerned, I have no doubts myself that it is going to add yet one more success to those already scored by our paper. "Paddy Leary's Brother" is in every way an excellent yarn, and I am looking to it to bring a host of new supporters to the REALM. My chums can help to bring about this highly desirable result by passing on their copies to non-readers.

Will you please drop me a line at once telling me how you like the stories now appearing in our paper? A post-card is quite sufficient.

Make a Note of This.

CHARLES HAMILTON writes every week for "The Boys' Herald" a ten-thousand word complete school story. These yarns are the most humorous complete school stories ever written. This week's story tells how three boys made a garden—to the delight of the rest of the school—and grew wallflowers in record time.

Besides this tale, there is another long, complete one by Max Hamilton, dealing with the great Indian Mutiny, and three magnificent aerial stories. Get the issue of "The Boys' Herald" now on sale.

Also make a note of this—that in this week's "Boys' Friend" there is a double-length instalment of "The Boys of St. Helen's," a splendid new school story, by Herbert Maxwell. Besides this, there are three other serial stories, and a grand long, complete tale.

Tuesday is the best day to buy "The Boys' Friend," for it comes out on that day; but you can commence reading "The Boys of St. Helen's" now. You ought to do so, because it's a grand tale.

He Wants His Hair to Part.

IN an extremely interesting letter from Yorkshire, in which the writer tells me how by reading the stories in my papers he has considerably increased his creative lore, I am asked if I can give a method by which my chum can make his hair smooth and flat.

My Yorkshire chum tells me in his letter that his hair is "like wire," and he is able to do little with it.

The only advice I can give my chum upon the subject is to allow his hair to grow a trifle longer than usual, and whenever he attempts to part it, well dress it with hair-oil, such as Brilliantine or lime-cream. It is more a matter of time than anything else. After my friend's daily attack with the brush and comb he will find very little difference in the condition of his hair, but after a time, if he persevere, he will find it becoming more manageable and more easily trained.

Training for a Boxing-match.

FROM Bermondsey comes a letter asking my advice upon a very interesting subject—boxing.

B. K., who is the writer of this letter, asks me to give him a few hints upon training for a boxing match.

And here they are. My friend should exercise every morning and evening with his dumb-bells, being careful not to unduly fatigue himself. The most important exercise for the boxer is undoubtedly the punching-ball, as it hardens the necessary muscles, and at the same time keeps the wind in good condition and sharpens the sight.

Great attention should be paid to the wind, and every opportunity taken to improve it. For this reason it would be advisable for B. K. to go for short sprints now and again, and if his wind is in very bad condition, make a special point of breathing exercises.

He need not be over particular about diet, eating for choice those foods which are most digestible, and avoiding greasy and fatty dishes. He should, however, gradually diminish the amount of liquid he drinks.

On the day of the match he should diet himself more strictly, lessening slightly the quantity of food generally taken. He should rest himself as much as possible—not by lounging about, however, but rather by doing his usual duties in a more leisurely manner.

Now that I have reached the eventful day upon which his match takes place, I must leave my chum with my best wishes for his success.

His Legs Ache When Cycling.

"CAN you tell me why my legs ache whenever I go cycling? I took a ride down to Leatherhead, and I had no sooner started than my calves and above my knees started aching."

Thus writes "Staunch Reader" of New Malden, in a very interesting letter he has kindly sent me. The question he puts to me is somewhat puzzling, as I have never heard of a boy's muscles feeling a strain and aching before they have properly been called into use."—Staunch Reader." intimates.

I should say that my New Malden friend has strained a leader were it not for the fact that this aching is experienced in both his legs.

Only one conclusion I can, therefore, come to is that either my chum indulges in a great deal of exercise before starting upon his ride, that his gear is too big, or that he starts off at too smart a pace. This aching would also be explained if my chum's saddle is too high, and he cannot with comfort reach his pedals.

If one of the above suggestions meets "Staunch Reader's" case, he must act accordingly.

It would be a good plan if, after each ride, my chum were to rub embrocation—applying as much friction as possible—into the muscles in which he experiences the strain.

He Wants to Obtain a Vote.

H. W. is one of my Manchester readers who is evidently interested in politics, and wishes to secure a vote in order that his interest may become even stronger and more active.

My Manchester chum tells me that he is twenty-two years of age, and thinks that he is quite old enough to give a vote, and asks me how he can place himself in a position to do so.

It is not only age that is necessary. Before my friend can obtain a vote he must prove that he is paying at least five shillings per week in rent. For this purpose he should have a ledger's rent-book.

When he is possessed of this he should visit either the Conservative, Liberal, or Labour headquarters—according to the party he favours—in his constituency. He will then be enrolled upon the registers, thus entitling him to a right to vote, and incidentally laying him open to the fierce attacks of the never-tiring canvasser.

A Boy With Plump Hands and Fingers.

G., of Reddoch, writes to say that he has plump hands and fingers, and asks me to tell him if it is possible to reduce their size.

It is very easy for my Reddoch chum to decrease the amount of fat upon his fingers by the following simple exercise:

Whenever it is possible to do so, C. G. should sit down at a table or desk, and drum his fingers upon its surface, as he would were he playing upon the piano. At first he will not be able to sustain this exercise for long, but after a while he will be able to practise it for a considerable time, and he will find that the muscles of his forearms are increasing, whilst the fat upon his fingers and hands is rapidly losing its abundance.

He Has Strained His Arm.

ONE of my London readers, who signs himself "Regular Reader," writes to tell me that some time back he jerked his arm, and ever since he has experienced a sharp pain at the top of his shoulder whenever he attempts to throw with his arm or put any strain upon it. My friend says he has tried rubbing embrocation into the affected part with little success, and now he asks me if I can help him.

Embrocation is the best possible cure for any injury of this nature, and "Regular Reader" can only persist in rubbing it thoroughly into his shoulder. It would be an advantage if my London reader could get some friend to rub in this embrocation for him, as it is very important that plenty of friction should be applied.

"Regular Reader" should rest his arm, and, whenever possible, wear a sling. If the pain has not disappeared in two or three weeks his best course would be to see a doctor.

My Brief Reply Corner.

"SANDOW'S ROUTE TO HEALTH AND STRENGTH."—W. F., Balmain. To obtain this book you should write to No. 4, Sandow Hall, Burleigh Street, Strand, London, W.C.

SHORTSIGHTEDNESS.—"A Surreyite." This is a question for an optician to decide. You should go and have your eyes tested. You can often have this done free of charge. If you can get up to London, present yourself one morning at nine o'clock at the Royal Opthalmic Hospital, Moorfields, E.C.

REFEREEING.—"A Faithful Reader." Height is of minor importance in refereeing, a complete knowledge of the game being the first essential.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

SHIELDS AND DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE.

Table up to April 18th.

DIVISION I.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
S.S. Albion	17	12	4	3	34	10	29
Chorton Star	16	12	3	2	30	15	26
S. S. Melbourne	12	7	2	3	17	11	17
St. Michael's	14	7	5	2	26	23	16
Percy Main	15	7	6	2	30	18	16
N. S. Olive Blossom	15	5	6	4	19	25	14
Blue Star	12	5	5	2	12	10	12
Marsden Rescue	11	5	5	1	10	10	11
Hawthorne	11	4	5	2	15	16	10
S. S. Temperance	14	3	9	2	10	24	8
North Bura Celtic	14	2	10	2	11	30	6

DIVISION II.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Nelson Villa	21	18	0	3	47	11	39
Church Hill Rovers	16	14	3	2	43	13	30
Wellington Argyle	21	13	5	3	34	21	29
East Side Villa	15	11	2	2	35	8	24
Elm Villa	17	10	5	2	28	14	22
Shields United	16	9	3	4	28	21	22
N.S.O. Blossom Reserves	16	9	5	2	24	14	20
North Villa	11	6	4	1	22	12	13
S.S. Marine Juniors	14	3	8	3	20	25	9
Willington United	12	3	8	1	15	40	7
Marsden Rovers	8	3	4	1	19	16	7
N. S. West End Celtic	10	3	6	1	8	16	7
Empire III.	7	2	3	2	11	9	6
Clayton Juniors	10	0	8	2	9	15	2

COVENTRY JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

The champions are Hearsale Victorias F.C., whose record reads as follows:

P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
22	18	2	2	83	30	38

They therefore carry off THE BOYS' REALM Challenge Cup.

OBAN JUVENILE F.A.

2nd Glenmore are winners of THE BOYS' REALM Challenge Cup. This club has completely swept everything in juvenile football circles in Oban. The goal-scorer's medal has been won by A. McDougall, who is a member of the same club.

STAFFORD AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

Final table.

DIVISION II.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Stafford Celtic R.	13	11	2	2	47	17	24
Stafford St. Thomas's	16	11	4	1	56	18	23
Siemen's Institute R.	16	7	4	5	43	35	19
Sandon	16	6	6	4	26	28	16
Stafford Foregate A.	16	6	7	3	38	35	15
Gnosall Institute	16	6	7	3	31	36	15
St. Mary's Institute R.	16	6	8	2	30	50	14
Walton	15	3	11	1	17	48	7
Stafford Christ Church	16	2	11	3	24	50	7

Stafford Celtic Reserves carry off THE BOYS' REALM Challenge Cup.

STOCKTON DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE.

At the close of the season the three top clubs in this league were:

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Stockton Celtic	3	2	0	1	23	4	5
Stockton West End	3	1	1	1	8	16	3
Norton Mission	3	0	2	0	1	17	0

The silver medals promised by your Editor have therefore been won by Stockton Celtic, to which club we tender our heartiest congratulations.

TOTTENHAM FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

The League and Alliance champions and runners-up are:

League I.—Edmonton Rovers and Walthamstow Imperial tie for first place.

League II.—Hollow Athletic, Standard Rovers, and Walthamstow Imperial Reserves tie for first place.

Alliance I.—Somerset Swifts (winners), Forest United (runners-up).

Alliance II.—Tottenham Avondale (winners), Edmonton Hazelbury (runners-up).

MONMOUTHSHIRE JUNIOR A.F.L.

The champions are Cwm Albions, and therefore have won THE BOYS' REALM Cup. Their record reads:

P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
18	16	2	0	69	21	32

SPEN VALLEY AND DISTRICT S.S. ASSOCIATION.

Carlinghow St. John's are this season's champions, and to them will go THE BOYS' REALM Cup. Their record reads:

P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
*2 17	1	4		82	21	38

EDGE HILL AND DISTRICT ALLIANCE.

THE BOYS' REALM Cup goes to Prescot Swifts A.F.C. Their record for the season is:

P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
18	15	0	3	79	13	33

DEVON AND DISTRICT MINOR LEAGUE.

Collingwood are champions, and St. James's runners-up. In this case the latter will be presented with the BOYS' REALM Cup. The knock-out tournament on April 25th was won by St. Barnabas.

NORTH-EAST LONDON LEAGUE.

The final for THE BOYS' REALM Cup took place on Saturday, April 25th, when All Saints (Poplar) beat All Saints (Buxton Street) by 3 goals to 0.

NEWBURY UNITED F.C.

Record for season 1907-8.

P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
34	14	6	6	62	28	

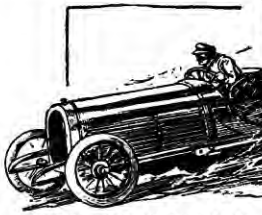
Winners of the Foxbury Shield 1906-7, 1907-8.
Winners of Craven League 1901-5, 1905-6, 1906-7, and 1907-8.
Runners-up Boys' REALM League 1906-7.

The club was founded in the year 1903 by R. C. Waldie, F. Andrews, C. Stillman, and A. N. Waldie. In 1903 it was known as Newbury F.C.; in 1904 as Craven Juniors F.C.; in 1905 as Newbury Juniors F.C.; and at present is known as the Newbury United F.C.

In 1903 R. C. Waldie was captain; in 1904, G. Stillman; in 1905, R. C. Waldie; in 1906, R. C. Waldie; and 1907, F. Andrews.

Next year the club will not compete in any league, but will play friendly matches.

"The Boys of St. Helen's" is Just Starting In "The Boys' Friend." Get a Copy To-day!



King of the Road
or the Young Chauffeur.

A Wonderful New Motoring Tale.

By HENRY ST. JOHN.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

HARRY KING, a young chauffeur in the employ of Mr. Lester, a motor-car builder. He is a clever and experienced driver.

MR. ORMOND and SIR EDWARD GARNHAM, two prominent motorists. At the challenge of Sir Edward, Mr. Ormond has a special racing-car built for him by Mr. Lester, with which to compete against the baronet's car at Brooklands. Harry King's ambition is to drive Mr. Ormond's car in the great race, but the owner has already engaged the services of a prominent Continental driver, named Riselli.

DOROTHY ORMOND, Mr. Ormond's pretty daughter. Harry greatly admires her. In his time of need, the lad finds her the only one whom he can consider as a true friend.

HALFORD, a mechanic in the employ of Mr. Lester. He is in charge of Big Ben, as Mr. Ormond's new racing-car is called. Harry is to travel down to Brooklands in the car with Halford, but during the journey Halford behaves in an extraordinary manner. He ejects the lad from the motor and drives off alone. Harry's suspicions are aroused. He suspects Halford of foul play, believing that he intends selling the race.

On the day of the great racing event at Brooklands, Riselli, Mr. Ormond's chauffeur, falls suddenly ill, and is unable to take his place at the steering-wheel. To Harry's great joy, Mr. Ormond consents to his driving the car in Riselli's stead. Halford acts as mechanic.

Under Harry's able manipulation Big Ben seems certain to win the race, but when still some distance from the finish, the car suddenly goes wrong, and to the lad's despair its speed decreases. Sir Edward's car forges ahead and finishes first.

The blame is thrown upon Harry's shoulders. He is accused of either losing his nerve, or of selling the race. The lad hotly denies the false charge, but he is not believed. Harry is certain that Halford has tampered with the car, but he has no proofs. Mr. Ormond and Mr. Lester treat him with contempt, and the latter dismisses him from his employ.

Sir Edward Garnham offers Harry a situation as chauffeur, but the lad refuses, knowing that such an action would only strengthen suspicion against him.

A robbery is committed in the district, and events lead Harry to suspect Sir Edward Garnham of having some connection with the affair.

Harry gets a situation as chauffeur to a certain Mr. Fairley. The same night the lad drives Mr. Fairley's mother and sister to a ball at Ainslie Park, some miles away. On the return journey, during the early hours of the morning, a huge racing-car overtakes them and draws across the road in front, barring their progress. Harry claps on the brakes and brings his car to a standstill. At the same moment two men jump out of the car ahead and run towards him. One leaps on to the footboard and aims a terrific blow at him with a loaded cane, which Harry dodges. A terrified scream emanates from the interior of the motor-car.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 7th CHAPTER.
Under Suspicion.

THE screams from the interior of the car roused Harry to every effort. He was at close grips with the man now, and putting forth all his strength. But the man was powerful, and he himself was hampered by the blow that had numbed his shoulder and arm, and by the steering pillar, which impeded his movements. The man had got his fingers on to Harry's throat, and Harry had grasped him by the hair, and was striking at him with all his power.

For moment after moment they rocked backwards and forwards, not a word nor a sound coming from either. Then the grip on Harry's throat began to tell; his senses began to swim; his hold on the man grew more feeble and more feeble still.

He was swaying dizzily now, gasping for breath, feeling that he was strangling, when suddenly a smashing blow on the face drove his senses out of him, and he dropped like a log on to the ground beside the car.

For how long Harry remained insensible he did not know, but when he came to himself it was to find that someone was supporting his head, and someone else was pressing a damp cloth to his aching temples. A brilliant light was before his eyes.

"The poor fellow's coming round now," said a voice. "A little more water, please. If we could get a few drops down his throat! Thank you, Miss Fairley! By Jove," the speaker went on, in an undertone, "the girl's got pluck! After what she has gone through most young women would be in hysterics, and yet she has helped us with this poor chap. Hallo! Better now—eh?"

Harry had opened his eyes.

The man who was holding him was in evening dress, his overcoat open, showing his white shirt-front, in which gleamed a diamond.

Harry knew him at once for an old and constant customer at Lester's—Mr. Verreker, of Holt Beeches.

"I am all right, thank you, sir. You are very good to have troubled about me," Harry said, rather indistinctly. "The brute got hold of my throat, that is how he got the best of me."

"And I fancy that he must have got one in on the temple. You have a pretty bad bruise there. I don't think that there are any bones broken, King."

"No, sir, I am sure not. Would you mind telling me how the ladies are, sir—Mrs. Fairley and Miss Fairley?"

"Mrs. Fairley has been greatly shocked and upset," said Mr. Verreker. "Miss Fairley has borne the shock well. I suppose you do not know what happened?"

"A big car rushed past us, sir, and pulled right across the road. I had to declutch and jam on both foot and hand brakes to avoid running into him, and as I brought my car to a standstill some fellow with his face covered by a racing mask rushed at me and grappled with me. I heard one of the ladies scream, and that is all I know."

"Well, a serious robbery has been committed. Mrs. Fairley has been relieved of jewels to great value; but for a lucky chance the loss would have been more serious still. Oh, here you are, Garuham"; King has come round."

"Has he?" said a voice. Harry looked up, and saw Sir Edward Garnham looking down at him. "Well, and what story has he to tell?" Sir Edward said.

Mr. Verreker repeated what Harry had just told him.

"I see," said the baronet. "Not a very likely yarn, it strikes me, Verreker."

"Good heavens, man, do you think——" Mr. Verreker cried.

Sir Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not? The fellow was kicked out of Lester's for some underhand practice, I should not be at all surprised. And as for the struggle and the blow, these things are being constantly arranged."

"You—you don't think, sir," Harry cried, starting up in mad anger—"you dare not think that I——"

"Quiet, quiet, my boy!" said Mr. Verreker kindly. "I do not think that Sir Edward Garnham has the slightest justification for saying what he has said. It was not until after my arrival on the scene that he came, and he can know little or nothing about it."

"Perhaps not," said Sir Edward unpleasantly. "But I am not a fool, Verreker, and if you like to blind yourself you can do so. What was this about a car pulling across in front of you, King?"

"It is true," Harry panted; "you can doubt it if you like."

"It is quite true," said a soft voice. "I myself saw the car flash past, and then I saw it deliberately pull across the road after it had slowed down. If King had not been very prompt we should have crashed into it."

Sir Edward bowed and raised his hat.

"If Miss Fairley says so, then I have no other course open to me but to believe."

"My mother is terribly shaken and upset, Mr. Verreker," Miss Fairley said. "I wonder if you would be so very kind as to take her home in your car?"

"Of course I will, with pleasure. And you, too, you will go with your mother, Miss Fairley. Let me see how it is best arranged. Ah, I have it! I will drive you to your house in my car, and I will leave Richards, my chauffeur, to drive your car home with this young fellow."

"Can you make no use of me, Miss Fairley?" asked Sir Edward.

"I do not think so, thank you," she said coldly. "You are very kind, but Mr. Verreker will help us, I know." She bowed to him and turned away. It was easy to see from her manner that the baronet was no favourite with Miss Fairley.

Mrs. Fairley, who was in a pitiable condition of helplessness, was almost lifted from her own car into Mr. Verreker's, and followed by her daughter. Mr. Verreker then drove off, and his man Richards came over to take charge of the Daimler.

Feeling very faint and sick, Harry managed to sit upright on the bank by the roadside.

"Well, King, I hope, for your own sake, that your account of this adventure will be accepted by others with the same readiness as Mr. Verreker accepted it," Sir Edward Garnham said.

Harry looked up stupidly.

"I don't understand what you mean, sir," he said.

"No, perhaps it is not worth your while to understand. Anyhow, I wish you well, King." The baronet laughed and shrugged his shoulders. "Such a genius as you would be wasted within prison walls," he added. "Coming, Halford, we have wasted enough time, we must be getting on!"

The big racing-car was standing in the road, and the two men went towards it, and a few moments later came the sharp rattle of the exhaust as the car moved briskly away.

"A nice gentleman, I don't think," said Richards. "What's he trying to make out—eh?"

It seems that he is trying to make out that I had some hand in this business," Harry said bitterly—"that they were my friends who knocked me about like this and stole Mrs. Fairley's jewels."

"It's that Halford who put it into his head, I'll bet," said Richards, who proved to be the same chauffeur who had led Harry away after his fight with Halford at Ainslie. "Halford don't love you, and I'll bet it's his idea."

"When did he and Sir Edward come up?" Harry asked.

"Oh, not until some time after the governor and me came. We couldn't make out what was happening. We heard screams, and we blew our horn. I expect it was that that frightened the blackguards. Anyhow, just as we turned the corner of the lane we saw a big car make off as hard as it could go, and your car standing here. We thought you were done for when we came up. Mrs. Fairley was terribly upset. She fainted, and it took the governor and Miss Fairley all their time to bring her round. And I don't wonder she fainted!" Richards went on. "It's come to something if we are going to have the old highwayman stand and deliver business played over again with motor-cars, ain't it? They've took all the poor lady's jewels. But I 'card Miss Fairley telling the governor that, as luck would have it, a valuable diamond necklace that Mrs. Fairley was wearing got damaged or something at the ball, and she gave it into Lady Ainslie's keeping, and forgot to ask for it back before she left; so that's safe. Still, there's seven or eight thousand pounds' worth of stuff gone, apart from that."

"From which direction did Sir Edward Garnham and Halford come?" Harry asked suddenly.

"Funny you should ask that," said Richard. "Seeing they were at Ainslie's to-night, like the rest of us, you'd naturally think they were coming the same way as we were; but they weren't. They came up towards us. Halford said that they had taken the Croft road, which is a roundabout way. The Croft road crosses this one, as you know, about two miles further down."

"Then what made them come back here?" Harry asked.

"That's just it. Halford said that they heard screams; but it is my belief that they must have jolly good earsight if they can hear screams two miles away, and that, too, above the sound of their own engine. Yes, it's rum, that's what I thought. However, I suppose it is all right."

"You didn't see the car—I mean the other car, the car those blackguards went off in?" Harry asked.

"Not to speak of. She wasn't carrying any tail-light, I noticed that. I just caught a glimpse of her by your headlight, and that was all. She was gone in a jiffy. I was for chasing her, but the governor wouldn't hear of it. He wanted to know if there was anything wrong with the ladies. And now, how do you feel? Do you think you can get in with my help?"

Very stiff and sore, with a madly-aching head, Harry was driven home by Richards. He was glad to remember that he had told his mother not to expect him to-night, knowing that it would be very late, or, rather, early in the morning, before he could get back to Brayford. He had intended spending what was left of the night on the sofa in the chauffeur's room over the garage, so his mother would not be anxious about him, and by the time she saw him again he would, he hoped, be quite himself again.

Mr. Fairley himself was waiting at the open door as the car drew up, and he came down the steps to the car.

"How is King now?" he asked Richards anxiously.

"Pretty badly shaken up, sir," said Richards, "but no bones broken. He's inside. I thought you wouldn't mind."

"No, no, of course not! Can you lend me a hand with him, Richards? We must get the poor fellow to bed. I have already sent for Dr. Norton to have a look at my mother, who is terribly upset by this affair, and while he is here he had better have a look at King, too. This is the most extraordinary affair altogether." Mr. Fairley went on. "The loss of the jewels is bad enough, but what is far worse to me is the shock my mother has received. She is not strong, and I fear that this will affect her badly. My sister——"

"Miss Fairley has got the pluck of a man, sir; I'll say that," Richards remarked admiringly. "She never lost her head nor her nerve for a moment. It was a sight to see her helping her mother, and then King."

"I will tell her what you say, Richards," Mr. Fairley returned smilingly. "I know she will appreciate your good opinion of her; and, now, lend me a hand with King."

"I can manage all right, sir, I am sure," Harry said. But in spite of his protest, he found that he needed the support of Richards's arm.

"Been pretty badly knocked about!" muttered Richards to Mr. Fairley. "Got an ugly bruise on his forehead, and the mark of fingers on his throat."

"It is an infernal shame!" said Mr. Fairley. "I wish to Heaven I had been there!" He clenched his fist as he spoke. "I'll have the police up here, soon, Richards; we sent for them at once. Whether they will do any good or not, I don't know. I have been thinking, I shouldn't be surprised if those same scoundrels who rifled Rushbrook Hall the other night had something to do with this outrage."

"I shouldn't be surprised, either, sir," said Richards.

They were helping Harry, meanwhile, up the stairs slowly, for he was very faint.

"My sister says that the villain who demanded my mother's jewels spoke in French, and, she believes, in a feigned voice."

"A Frenchman, sir! That accounts——"

"No, it doesn't, Richards, he was not a Frenchman. He spoke French very badly, my sister says, and she knows, for she speaks French herself like a native. Evidently the brute spoke in French to mislead the ladies. Here we are!"

They led Harry into a small bed-room that had been prepared for him, and within ten minutes had him snugly between the sheets.

Except for a very severe headache, and a feeling of soreness in the region of the throat, Harry was not much the worse for his adventure when he awoke late in the morning.

"How are you, King?" Mr. Fairley was asking.

"I think I am all right, sir, thank you!" Harry said. "I feel all right. It was very kind of you to have me——"

"Nonsense, boy!" said Mr. Fairley quickly. "Do you think you are well enough to get up? I have the police here, and they are very anxious to speak to you, and hear all that you

The inspector, a fat, pompous-looking man, blew out his cheeks. "H'm!" he said. "You were driving the vehicle when this outrage took place? Is that so, young feller?" "Yes," said Harry.

have to say. If you don't think you can get up, they can come to you here."

"Oh, I will get up, sir," Harry said.

"Don't disarrange the bandage on your head; the doctor fixed it after you had fallen asleep. Well, I'll leave you, then. Come down to the study when you are dressed. Your breakfast will be waiting for you, but you had better see the inspector first."

There were several people in the study when Harry put in an appearance. He was looking white and spent, and the bandage round his head gave him the appearance of having been in the wars.

Alice Fairley rose as he entered.

"I am so glad that you are better!" she said, in her sweet voice. "Come and sit here."

"Yes, sit down, King," Mr. Fairley said. "This is King, my driver, inspector."

The inspector, a short, fat, pompous-looking man, blew out his cheeks. It was a habit that he had, and which he indulged in at moments when he was at a loss for words.

"H'm!" he said. "You are Mr. Fairley's driver. You were driving the vehicle—the—ahem!—the car last evening, when this outrage took place?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"What is your name?"

"Harry King?"

The inspector made a note.

"Very good. Now, tell me all that you can tell, if you please! Tell us exactly how it all happened."

"I was driving slowly homeward," Harry said, "from Ainslie——"

"Slowly? Oh, very likely! I know you—you drivers; forty miles an hour——"

"Nothing of the sort," Harry said. "I was driving, as I said, slowly, not more than at about sixteen miles an hour. Mr. Fairley objected to fast driving, and so I drove slowly."

"It is perfectly correct!" Alice Fairley said quietly.

"Very good, miss," said the man hurriedly. "Well, go on, young feller!"

Harry, the man as angry glance, which Mr. Fairley caught.

"I do not think that there is any need to speak in this manner, Jordan," he said coldly. "You seem to forget yourself."

The inspector turned red, and blew out his cheeks.

"Beg pardon, I'm sure!" he said confusedly. "I thought he was your servant."

"He is my chauffeur, but that is no reason why he should not be treated with civility," Mr. Fairley said coldly.

The inspector blew out his cheeks again. At that moment Harry made an enemy, a bitter enemy, and one who would pursue him with all the malevolence of which his small mind was capable.

"If you will be so good as to explain," Inspector Jordan said, with exaggerated politeness.

"I heard the sound of a horn behind me," Harry said, "and, thinking that a faster travelling car wished to pass, I drew slightly in to my left. A car whizzed past a few moments later."

"What sort of a car?"

"I was going to tell you all that I can. It was either a racing-car, or a touring-car, of high horse power, from which the silencers had been removed."

"What's that mean?"

"I mean, that the exhaust was not muffled in any way; the spent gas was exhausting into the open air."

"How do you know that?" the inspector demanded.

"By the noise," Harry said.

"It is very easily told," Mr. Fairley said. "When no silencer is used on a car, the engine exhausts into the air with rapid reports, when the exhaust gas is desired no silencer is used."

"I see," said the inspector, who did not see in the least. "Well, what then?"

"The car was burning no headlights, only a couple of sidelights, which were very dim, and no tail-light," Harry said. "She went past us at about forty miles an hour, slowed down quickly, and then, when she was almost on the point of stopping, her driver pulled her right across the road in front of us. I had just time to jam on my brakes, and pull up, to prevent running into her. Then two men, with their faces concealed by masks and goggles, jumped out. One made for me, and the other, I believe, went to the back of the car, where the jewels were. I closed with the man who went for me. He struck me on the shoulder with a stick. The blow was meant for my head. After that, we struggled. He got his hand on my throat. That and the blow he managed to give me finished me, and I know nothing else till I found Mr. Verreker bending over me."

"I can hear out nearly everything that Mr. King says," Alice Fairley said. "I heard him struggling with the man, and while his friend was demanding our valuables?"

"Has the inspector seen Sir Edward Garnham?" Harry asked.

The inspector turned pink.

"What's that got to do with it?" he demanded. "Supposing I have, what then? Sir Edward was there, and I went to see what he could do to help us sift this case."

"Sir Edward Garnham hinted last night that I had something to do with this robbery," Harry said quietly. "He suggested to Mr. Verreker that I was in league with the men."

"Sir Edward Garnham said so?" said Mr. Fairley. "Are you sure, King?"

"Quite sure, sir! Ask Mr. Verreker. I thought the inspector had been with him, from the manner in which he has been speaking to me."

"I consider that Sir Edward has cause for his suspicions," said the inspector. "You have saved me from making this statement myself, King. I don't know much about motor-driving myself, but Sir Edward says that it is very unlikely that a man would draw his car across the road like King says these two did."

"I saw the car drawn across the road," said Alice Fairley hotly. "Sir Edward Garnham has no right to try and throw suspicion on an innocent man."

"Thank you, Miss Fairley!" Harry said.

"Sir Edward pointed out that King had left Lester's only a few days since in disgrace," said the inspector.

"In unmerited disgrace!" said Mr. Fairley hotly. "In disgrace for being suspected of having been in league with Sir Edward himself. He should be the last man on earth to rake this up against King. If there was any truth in it, the mere fact that he has spoken of it to you, indemnes me to believe entirely in King's honesty."

"Mr. Fairley, you can blind yourself to the facts as much as you like, but it is my duty to tell you that strong suspicion rests on this young man."

"On me! You say that!" Harry rose to his feet. "Suspicion!"

Alice Fairley laid her white hand on his arm.

"Mr. King, my brother and I believe in you entirely," she said softly. "What does it matter what this person thinks?"

"Person!" thought Inspector Jordan. "Person, she calls me, does she? Confound her cheek!"

"I entirely deny the correctness or your surmise, Jordan; and if you are going to waste time shadowing and suspecting my driver, I had better find someone else to try and find the real culprits," he said Mr. Fairley coldly.

"Can I ask this man one question?" Harry said. "Sir Edward Garnham seems to have told him so much, did he tell him how it came about that although he left Ainslie when we did, he was coming towards Ainslie when he found our car stopped by the road?"

"Sir Edward explained," said the inspector loftily. "He was coming by the Croft road, which crosses the main road about two miles below where this took place. He heard the ladies scream——"

"Two miles away?" said Harry.

"It sounds impossible," said Mr. Fairley. "Was that his explanation, Jordan?"

"It was, sir; and the right one. I am convinced."

"He turned into the main road, then, where the Croft road crosses it," Harry said. "He then came to where our car was at a standstill."

"Yes," said the inspector shortly. He did not like to be cross-questioned himself, and showed his resentment. Was it not that Mr. Fairley was a justice of the peace he would not have answered Harry at all.

"Then," said Harry, "he must just have passed the car containing those two men, or if he did not pass, then he must have seen them going down the main road. He could not have failed to, for the Croft road is perfectly straight for miles, and crosses the main road at right angles."

"I don't know nothing about it," said the inspector shortly. "Sir Edward did not mention having seen any car—him nor his man, either."

"Halford," said Harry—"the man who acted as mechanic on the car which I drove in the match."

"I don't know nothing about it," the inspector repeated sullenly. "And now, sir, I'll be getting on," he said.

Mr. Fairley nodded, and the man went out of the room.

"I am afraid it is a poor look out for my mother's jewels, King," Mr. Fairley said, "if the thing is to remain in the hands of this fellow Jordan." He looked at Harry closely as he spoke. "King, you had some motive for asking the questions you did. Will you be frank and straight with me. Will you tell me exactly what you suspect?"

Harry hesitated, and turned red.

"It would sound like madness to you, sir," he said.

"No; tell me the truth—tell me, however insane it may sound. Tell me," Mr. Fairley said.

"Then, sir, I believe that the two men who stopped our car last night, and who stole Mrs. Fairley's jewels, were"—he hesitated for a fraction of a second—"Sir Edward Garnham and Halford!"

THE 6th CHAPTER.
Harry Tells His Suspicions.

FOR some moments there was an intense silence, during which Mr. Fairley stood staring hard at Harry, as though lost in thought.

"You have some reason for saying this, King."

"Yes, sir; I would not make such a statement without cause," Harry said.

"George, wait—wait; let me think!" Alice Fairley cried suddenly. "What Mr. King has said has given me an idea—has awakened my memory. Does Sir Edward Garnham wear a ring on the third finger of his right hand?"

"Right hand? I should think not! A ring is usually worn——"

"I know; and that is why I ask. A man usually wears a signet ring on his left hand. The man who held out his hand for the jewels last night wore a signet ring on his right hand on the third finger, and I believe Sir Edward Garnham does. I never thought of it till this moment."

"It would be a coincidence, and a curious one; but let us listen to King's reasons."

"I will tell you, sir," said Harry; "but I must go back to the day on which I entered your service."

He told them as they listened to him how he had left Lester's, and how, by chance, he had met Sir Edward on the road, how he had driven Sir Edward's car back, and how they had met Mr. Lewison, who had told them about the burglary at Rushbrook.

"One of the main clauses that the police had to go on," Mr. Lewison said, "was the peculiar tracks made by the wheels of the car that was employed by the burglars. Three of the four wheels were fitted with non-skids, two being of the usual studded pattern, and the other was fitted with metal plates, which left a track not unlike the broad arrow. After I had driven his car home and put it into the garage Sir Edward would not let me remain. He told me to go at once; he would not even let me get my bicycle from the car. As I walked down the avenue towards the gate, sir, I saw in the soft gravel the distinct impression of the wheels of the car I had driven up the avenue a few minutes before. It was shod with three non-skids and one plain-soled tyre, sir. Two of the non-skids were studded, the other left the impression of a row of broad arrows on the soft gravel."

Mr. Fairley uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Go on, King!" he said breathlessly.

"I went home, sir, and my mother dissuaded me from accepting Sir Edward's service. She pointed out that it would give colour to Mr. Ormond's suspicion of me if I did. I saw she was right. I went back to the house to tell Sir Edward that I could not drive for him. When I got back to Beersford I saw that the avenue had been freshly rolled. The roller was still at work when I got there. I went to the garage and found the car I had just driven jacked up, and all four of its tyres off. In a corner of the yard was a heap of smouldering rubber and leather, sir."

"And you said nothing?" Mr. Fairley cried.

"I did not know what to believe, sir; it seemed madness for me to suspect Sir Edward. I thought that someone might have used his car without his knowledge, and that he, knowing that his wheels made the same tracks as Mr. Lewison described, resolved to destroy the tyres. How could I bring such a charge against a gentleman of his position?"

"No, no, you are right; and yet—— Well, King, is there anything else?"

"One other thing, sir," Harry said. And then he told George Fairley and his sister how he had seen Sir Edward and Halford together in the ground of Ainslie, and of what he had heard pass between them.

"George, I am certain—certain that Mr. King is right!" Alice Fairley cried. "If we find that Sir Edward has this ring as I have said, then it will only confirm what Mr. King has said. What can we do?"

"Nothing," said her brother. "We are dealing with a cunning and unscrupulous man—a man who has everything in his favour, and who will be ready to deal with us if we are to denounce Sir Edward Garnham now, what would it mean? It would mean that I should be laughed at by the whole county—by the whole kingdom, and that I should have to face an action for slander. Remember, that he would probably get from me. I do not know what to say. I cannot jump at conclusions, but I believe that what King has told us will be valuable to us. You will keep this to yourself, King, you never speak of it?"

"Never to a soul, sir"

"Good, then! Keep your own counsel, King," Mr. Fairley said.

His lips quivered for a moment.

"If Sir Edward Garnham is the villain we believe him to be, then I have the greatest and gravest reason for making every effort to bring the truth to light," he went on, speaking quietly. "I shall need your help and your secrecy, and I can rely on you, I believe, and I have always believed, that you were greatly wronged in the matter of that match. Halford had a hand in the building of the car; he acted as mechanic during the match, and now he is Sir Edward's employment. All these things point him out as the man who was mainly responsible. It will be my effort, and yours, King, to bring the villainy of these two to light. I have something to gain than the re-possession of the Fairley jewels which they have stolen, if they are the thieves. There is someone who needs protection from this man—someone who——"

Alice Fairley laid her hand on her brother's arm.

"I am certain that Mr. King is right. He will help us. We three will bring the truth to light, and save Dorothy from him!" she whispered.

Dorothy? Did she mean Dorothy Ormond? Was she in danger?

Harry started.

"King, as you know so much, you may as well know more," Mr. Fairley said. "My sister has mentioned Miss Ormond's name. I may tell you this, that both Sir Edward Garnham and myself are suitors for Miss Ormond's hand, and that Mr. Ormond greatly favours Sir Edward's suit. I think I could with a good grace give up the girl I love to a better man than myself, but to such a man as Sir Edward Garnham I will not give her up, for I believe him to be what you yourself think him, a villain not fit to touch the hem of her garment. We will work together, King, and if we win you will earn my gratitude."

"We will win, sir," Harry said quietly.

He went out thoughtfully; he had no appetite for breakfast, and so he made his way round to the garage.

Both suitors for Miss Ormond's hand! He wondered why he took the news so quietly. Of course he knew, and had always known, that he could not dare to lift his eyes to Mr. Ormond's daughter. She had been kind to him, sympathetic, and sweet, because it was her nature to be all these.

"I think I understand," Harry muttered to himself "why Dick Brenton said that he would consider it an honour to lie down so that Miss Fairley could walk on him. I think I should consider it an honour, too. What pluck she has! How she stood by me this morning!" His eyes glowed. "But I am a fool—a fool!" he muttered bitterly. "What right have I to think of her—I, a chauffeur employed by her brother?"

"So you've come, have yer?" Miggs was sitting on an inverted pail, drawing a design on the wet concrete with the toe of his boot. "Like 'is cheek, I calls it," he muttered, "coming nosing round here!"

"Who?" Harry asked.

"That there spectator of policemen," said Miggs.

"You mean the police inspector?"

"I said policemen, didn't I? Coming nosing round."

"What did he want?" Harry asked.

"Wanted to know all about you. What you was, and 'oo you was, and why you was, and where you was, when you wasn't, and all the rest of it."

"So he has been here asking questions, has he, about me?"

"Yus; wanted to know if any people ever come to see you here, and what sort of complexions they 'ad, and when they was born, and what their pedigrees was."

"And what did you tell him?"

"Tell 'im?" said Miggs. "I told 'im several things. Said as 'ow you and five Spaniards and a Frenchman 'ad been 'ere yesterday, and three niggers and an old woman with a wart on her nose to supper the night before. Ugly, impertinent monkey, nosing about!" Miggs added disgustedly.

Evidently Inspector Jordan had been here to question Miggs, and evidently he had been wasting his time.

Harry clenched his teeth.

"All right," he muttered. "If Jordan is on his side, we'll fight him, too!"

He was feeling himself again by the time the day drew to a close, and he went home to tell his mother of his adventures, and of his suspicions, which she shared with him.

During the next few days Inspector Jordan called several times, sometimes on Mr. Fairley to report progress, or the want of it, sometimes on Miggs, to whom he put questions, which Miggs answered by drawing liberally on his imagination.

* * * * *

"I shall want the car to-night, King," Mr. Fairley said a few days later. "I am going to Mr. Ormond's to dinner, and I shall want you to fetch me later."

"Very good, sir!" Harry said.

At seven o'clock he left George Fairley at Ormond Hall, and drove back to Brayford, with instructions to come back to Ormond Hall at eleven o'clock.

It was a bright, starlight night when Harry went back to fetch Mr. Fairley, too bright a night to spend inside a close carriage, so Mr. Fairley took his seat beside Harry in the front of the car.

"I feel like a run to-night, King," he said. "Let us take a run down the Horsham road for an hour—that is, if you feel up to it," he added thoughtfully.

"Of course I feel up to it, sir," said Harry. "Shall I let her go?"

Mr. Fairley nodded.

"Yes; I do not share my mother's prejudice against speed."

Harry drove slowly till the open road was reached. It was too late for traffic or cyclists, and the brilliant headlights lighted up the road for nearly a quarter of a mile ahead, so there was nothing to fear. Little by little he opened the throttle, the engines hummed, and the car gained speed. The quivering hand of the speedometer jumped slowly forward—twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty. The wind whistled past their ears.

"She's running splendidly!" Mr. Fairley cried. "Hallo!"

Brrh, brrh! A horn sounded behind them.

"By George, they must be in a hurry if they want to pass us at this pace, King!" Mr. Fairley cried. "Open out a bit more, if she will take it."

The indicator was showing forty-five miles an hour now.

Brrh, brrh! came the persistent note of the horn, nearer this time by far.

The Segrave evidently means to pass us!" muttered Mr. Fairley. "Keep a bit on the side to give him room, and then open out to the full. We'll see what he can do!"

The car was tearing through the night at fifty miles an hour now, when once again came the sound of the horn close behind them—brrh, brrh!

The next moment she flashed past them, leaving them behind as though they were standing still. A long, low car, in which two men were seated, their faces completely covered by masks and goggles.

And as it flashed by Harry started. He had recognised it.

(To be continued in next week's issue of THE BOYS' REALM.)

"The Boys of St. Helen's" is Just Starting in "The Boys' Friend." Get a Copy To-day!

THE MASTER BATSMAN.

A Wonderful New Story of County Cricket.

By A. S. HARDY.

The Opening Chapters.

KARA NOOGNARAHJI, a young Indian prince who is in England at Cambridge University. He is a splendid cricketer, and during a Freshmen's match at the beginning of the season he shows something of his true worth as a batsman. Kara is terribly upset upon receiving a cablegram from India informing him of the death of his father, the Jam of Hidorhampoor, in a frontier war. At his death the Jam leaves instructions with his old friend,

COLONEL HOWARD DAVIES, that Kara is to succeed him as the ruler of his native state, and not Mulai, Kara's step-brother, as would follow in the natural sequence of events, and by law of descendency. The Jam knows Mulai to be treacherous and underhand. He believes that it was Mulai's hand that had fired the shot that had mortally wounded him. He tells Colonel Davies of his suspicions, and asks him to keep a watchful eye on Kara, to see that no harm befalls him through the machinations of Mulai.

MCDOWELL, a young man at Cambridge who has taken a great fancy to Kara, and who becomes his firm friend. He is a brilliant cricketer.

MEDWAY, DANKS, and JARKINS, college graduates who have a spite against the young Indian prince.

Kara is menaced by a mysterious enemy, whose object seems to be to rob the young Indian prince of his life. The first attempt nearly ends disastrously for Medway, who in the dark, while entering Kara's apartments, is mistaken for the prince, and narrowly escapes being stabbed to the heart. The unknown assailant escapes.

The second attempt, made a few days later, almost meets with success. The young Indian Prince is drugged, and his rooms set on fire, he being left to be burnt to death. It is only due to McDowell's prompt-ness that Kara's life is saved and the flames extinguished. Again the assailant escapes.

McDowell distinguishes himself in a Freshmen's match by dismissing a dangerous batsman, and bringing the innings to a close just as stumps are about to be drawn.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

On the Trail—Retribution.

THERE was a rousing cheer for both the batsman and the man who had caught him out so cleverly, and then McDowell, pushing his way through the ranks of the men who wished to congratulate him, set off towards the college at a run. He wished to know how Kara was, so snatch some food hastily, and then to keep his appointment with Philip Batley.

It was with anxious, nervous hands that he opened his door and entered his rooms.

"How is he?" he asked of his man as he went into the sitting-room.

"Mr. Kara's still sleeping, sir," was the satisfactory reply. "The doctor's been, and says there is not the slightest danger now. He only needs rest and nourishment, sir."

"All right," said McDowell, smiling his delight. "Just let me have my dinner, and you can go."

Mac went into his spare bed-room and saw Kara sleeping as peacefully as a child, with a smile on his well-shaped mouth.

"He'll do," muttered Mac, as he closed the door; and he set to work to finish his dinner with an appetite born of exercise in the fresh air.

It was just seven o'clock when he made his way down to the entrance to the college, wearing riding-breeches and gaiters and a Norfolk coat. Sure enough Philip Batley was there, with his horses and his two bloodhounds.

The dogs were taken up to Kara's rooms. But these had been close locked, and there had to rely upon whatever scent may have been left behind in the corridor. It was a ghost of a chance, and no more. It was a million to one against anything coming of it. Hundreds of people had trod that corridor since the sensational events of the morning, and McDowell never thought for a moment that his plan would succeed.

It has generally been stated and proved by authorities on the question, that the blood-hound is incapable of following the scent of man from the clean boot through crowded thoroughfares in towns, or where many foot steps have crossed the path taken by the chase; but there are exceptions to even this rule, and now, for some reason that the biggest expert in the world upon the subject would have found it impossible to explain, the two hounds, with scarcely a moment's hesitation, chose a trail for themselves, and started off at a jog trot. They followed the line of the corridor along which the mysterious man had run, went down the steps, and out into the street through the broad gate of the college.

Philip Batley was in his saddle in a moment, and Henry McDowell followed him, feeling genuinely excited now. Through the town the hounds went with scarcely a check, people turning to watch them in astonishment, and across the bridge into the country beyond. The scent twisted and twined, and finally returned upon itself, making a detour of some miles in extent. It grew dark. There had been some checks of late, but presently on went the hounds again. Philip Batley called them by name. He tried to help them from the trail. But they would have none of it. They were keener than any hounds upon the trail of the fox. Over fields they went now, and at length, before them in the darkness, Batley and McDowell saw the line of the railway embankment.

They had almost reached it, when the hounds dashed forward with loud, joyous barks. Lights were moving on the line. Men were hurrying to and fro. There seemed to be a great commotion, the reason for which puzzled McDowell exceedingly. The hounds rushed up on to the line, and, leaping from their horses, McDowell and Philip Batley followed.

"Hi, hi!" cried out somebody. "Keep those hounds off, can't you? Stand back there!"

But McDowell pressed onward, until he was stopped by an official in uniform.

"Do those dogs belong to you, sir?" demanded the man.

"Yes," said McDowell. "We've been following a trail here, and the scent had just grown hot. What's the matter? What's going on on the line?"

He would have pushed forward, but the man set him back.

"You can't go there, sir," he said. "It's no sight for you to see. A man's been run over by a train, and we're going to cart the remains to the town mortuary."

McDowell uttered an exclamation of astonishment. This was something he had not bargained for. He felt awed by the uncanny instinct of the bloodhounds which had led them here. He turned to Philip Batley.

"Did you hear that?" he cried.

The landlord of the Pied Bull nodded. Then he turned to the official.

"What sort of a man is it who has been killed?" he asked.

The official touched his cap.

"A dead one, sir," he said. "I might have known those dogs were yours. I shall be glad if you'll call them away, just the same."

"Here! Douglas! Bruce!" cried the hotel proprietor, cracking his whip fiercely. "Come here! Do you hear me, sirs? Heel—heel!"

The dogs hesitated, then came back to him and threw themselves, tired out, upon the grass, their tongues lolling out of their gaping mouths.

"You haven't answered my question, Mr. Prime," said Batley, turning again to the railway official.

"What sort of a man was it who has been killed, Mr. Batley? Well, we don't quite rightly know; but he's a foreigner of some kind. A dark-skinned man. An Indian, I should say, though we've only looked casually at him up till now."

McDowell grasped Philip Batley by the arm.

"The hounds were right," he cried hoarsely. "That will be the man right enough. And he is dead? Well, so much the better for Kara. He will be able to sleep in peace now."

And before them the lights flickered, as the men lifted up the remains of the dead, and began to wheel them in a truck along the line.

A Cable from India—The Colonel's Advice —Unseasonable Weather—A Snowfall at Fenner Delays the Match.

AS Henry McDowell opened the door of Kara's bed-room he saw the Indian prince standing in front of the dressing-table adjusting his tie as he looked into the glass, a stream of joyous morning sunlight fell full upon him.

"Hallo, Kara!" said the cricket Blue, with a smile. "That's the style. You look more like yourself. All right?"

Kara turned, and McDowell saw that his eyes were bright and his face beaming.

"I feel as well as can be expected, Mac," the Indian prince replied, "though I can't get over the depression caused by my father's death. I can't help thinking that I ought to go back to Hidorhampoor and look after my affairs. It was my father's wish that I should succeed him as Jam, and here is my brother Mulai taking the reins into his own hands, and shutting me out of the way. I have no business to be here."

McDowell laid his hand fondly on the Indian prince's shoulder, and regarded him seriously.

"My dear Kara," he said, "do you really believe what you are saying? Can you think that you would be better off in India? Your half-brother Mulai has the ear of the authorities there. He has evidently far more influence than we ever could have believed, and you will have to wait and hope. For my part, I am assured that your life would not be worth a moment's purchase if you were to go back to Hidorhampoor. Why, it has even been attempted here in staid old Cambridge. No, Kara, you've got to stay on in England until events take a turn for the better. Remain at Cambridge. Don't go down until you have won your B.A. degree. Play for your Varsity and your county if you can, and then go back and claim your own."

Kara glanced gloomily towards the window.

"Perhaps you are right," he murmured. "But you can't think how waiting here depresses me. I feel so helpless, so bound hand and foot. I feel as if I were stifling, and want to get into the air. Besides, I have but little money left, and where am I to get more if it is not sent me from India?"

"It will be sent, my dear old chap," responded McDowell. "And even if it isn't you've got a great many friends over here who will see you through. My dad would for one. Colonel Howard Davies will stand by you. I'll stake my life on that. But don't let us worry about your personal affairs on such a beautiful morning as this, Kara. Have you shaken off the effects of yesterday's poisoning yet?"

Kara nodded.

"Yes," he said. "I feel quite well, with the exception of a slight languor, which is, perhaps, not unnatural. But my head is as clear as can be. I'll have something to eat, Mac, then go down to the mortuary and see if I can find the fellow who tried to injure me. You are quite sure that those hounds of Batley's tracked down the right man?"

McDowell nodded emphatically.

"I haven't the slightest doubt about it," he cried; "and the fellow must have been mortally afraid of pursuit for him to have doubled about as he did, and I can't help thinking that his death was the result of suicide."

"You think he threw himself upon the line in front of the train?" said Kara thoughtfully.

"I feel almost sure of it," returned McDowell.

They went out into McDowell's dining-room, and here found a generous breakfast spread out upon the table. Beside the table stood McDowell's man, a grim-visaged, taciturn old fellow, who had waited upon the undergraduates at the colleges for almost more years than he could remember. He held a blue envelope in his hand.

"A cable, sir," cried McDowell. "When did that come?"

"Just arrived," said the old fellow, speaking in a hard, disagreeable voice, which was habitual to him. "It's for Mr. Noognarahji."

"From India!" cried the prince, stretching out his hand and seizing the cablegram which he tore open. He hurriedly scanned its contents, then handed the sheet to McDowell, whose curiosity had been fully aroused.

"From Colonel Davies," said Kara.

It was a fairly lengthy message.

"Mulai has left for England," the words of the message ran. "Remain at 'Varsity. Father's last wish you should continue studies, and do best to make name British sports. Mulai scheming against you. Immense influence works more to deprive you of rights. Letter follows will explain fully. Am returning soon. Have firm and lasting friend in me. Your father laid to rest with all honour and ceremony. Mulai rules Hidorhampoor. Have patience. Wait and hope best.—HOWARD DAVIES."

"Dear old chap!" muttered Henry McDowell. "That's just the sort of message I should have imagined the colonel would send. He's the best fellow that ever breathed, Kara, and with him to fight on your side you can afford to wait. Mulai will find more than his match in the stern old colonel. You ought to be satisfied now. There's only one thing for you to do, you see, and that is to remain here and do as I suggested this morning. And don't give up your games, Kara. You know how much the late Jam loved our British sports, and you can do nothing better than strive to win your Blue."

"Yes," said Kara moodily: "I must stay on here, and trust to Mulai's honour and integrity to see that my father's last wishes are obeyed. Mulai would not suffer at my hands. He ought to know that."

"I'm afraid," returned McDowell, "that your half-brother Mulai is not to be trusted, Kara. Give him plenty of rope. The rogue is sure to hang himself in the end."

They continued the discussion of Kara's affairs during breakfast—McDowell was pleased to see with what a hearty appetite and relish his friend set to his food—and the meal had scarcely been finished when of a sudden the light seemed to vanish, the room was plunged in darkness, and they turned to look out of the window at lowering skies and fast flying clouds which had blown up from the north-east in an incredibly short space of time, blotting out the sun and chilling the atmosphere.

"Well, Kara," said McDowell, looking ruefully down at his cricket things, "it almost seems as if the weather prophets have proved themselves right again. When they prophesied snow and frost in yesterday's paper I looked upon it all as a huge joke. Why, it was as warm almost as midsummer! But it feels deuced cold now. And if there is any snowfall we may not be able to finish our match."

"Snow in the middle of May," cried Kara.

"Yes. It does seem impossible," said Mac, with a cheerful laugh. "But you never know what this quaint old climate of *ours* is going to be up to next. Well, snow or no snow, we've to play out the match, and as it's cricket, I suppose I've got to keep on my flannels, although I would feel much more comfortable in a motor-coat."

Kara slipped on a winter overcoat over his walking things, and McDowell donned his thickest sweater, and so they sallied forth a minute later, Kara bound for the mortuary, where the body of the dead man lay, and McDowell for Fenners.

"Come along and see a bit of the play as soon as you are free, Kara," said McDowell on parting with his friend. "I don't want you to be out of my sight longer than I can help after what's happened these last few days; and, besides, I shall be eager to know if you have recognised that fellow."

"All right," said Kara; and they parted.

McDowell arrived on the cricket ground to find leaden skies lowering overhead, and almost chilled through by the north-easterly wind which seemed to blow completely through his clothing. His face had assumed a purple tinge instead of the healthy red-brown that was characteristic of him, and when he entered the pavilion he found most of the players clustered round a huge fire.

"Cheerful weather, Mac," said Payne, the Blue, glancing up at the new-comer with an expressive grin on his face. "I've sent home for my snow-shoes. Can't finish the match else. We shall have the white flakes falling soon, confound 'em!"

"Did you ever know such weather?" grumbled Watts, the fast bowler. "I can't remember anything like it."

"And yet," said McDowell, "worse has been known. The Derby was once run in a snow-storm in June—Hermit's year. That wants a bit of beating, doesn't it?"

At this moment in came Medway. He had his black eye painted over, but still bore evidence of his rough handling at the hands of McDowell. He looked surly and dissatisfied, both with himself and with things in general, no doubt.

"What's this I hear about you, Mac——" he began. But the cricket Blue cut him short.

"McDowell to you," he said, looking the big fellow straight in the eyes, and there was a tiger amongst the men.

"I hear you hunted down the fellow who attacked Noognarahji with Philip Batley's bloodhounds. Is there any truth in it?"

"Yes," put in Helstone, one of the Freshmen. "There's a lot of talk about it, although the fact is supposed to be kept secret. You found the fellow lying cut up on the line, didn't you, Mac?"

McDowell nodded.

"I don't care to talk about it," he said; "it's not one of those things one likes to dwell upon. Anyway, there can be no doubt about it that a deliberate attempt was made to kill Kara. Let's talk about something else. It's time for us to turn out, isn't it?"

The others looked on at the playing-field, which was looking splendidly fresh and green despite the dulness of the atmosphere. Above, dark snow-charged clouds were fleeting across the leaden sky, and the wind whistled and howled about the cricket pavilion. It was much more like a football day than one set apart for the indulgence of the great summer pastime.

"Better make a move," growled Payne, who had settled himself down in a comfortable chair, and was stretching out his feet towards the blaze, whilst he sucked away at a briar pipe—one of those exquisite straight-grain briars which are to be bought at Cambridge. He seemed the only one to enjoy the cheer, and not blame him. The nets were deserted. No one had the courage to try practice-batting on such a morning, and there seemed to be a sorry outlook for the match against Lancashire next week.

Some of the fellows moved towards the door, but even as they did so, large white, feathery flakes of wintry snow began to fall. Tossed

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about at the mercy of the wind, they wrought all sorts of quaint patterns in the air. It was a pretty sight to see, but most unseasonable; and a group of flannel-clothed undergraduates stood ranged in the windows of the pavilion, hands in pockets, looking out at the strange scene.

Fast though the snow fell, it melted as it lodged, which was some comfort.

"Oh!" cried Payne cheerfully, refilling his pipe with tobacco. "It'll clear up presently. And he settled himself one more in his chair, and lazily closed his eyes.

The Finish of the Match—Batting Under Difficulties—Muriel In Danger—Kara's Resource—The Match Abandoned on Account of Snow.

IT was twelve o'clock when the Seniors took the field, and Helstone and Sanderson went in to open the innings; Watts, the fast bowler, and Bannister taking the ball for the Seniors as before.

The umpires, after inspecting the pitch when the snowfall had ceased, had declared it fit for play, and, curiously enough, it was not in half such bad condition as it would have been had rain fallen instead of the snow. The dark clouds had vanished, and a fairly warm sun sent his rays down upon mother earth, tempering the icy chilliness of the north-easterly wind.

Helstone looked profoundly serious as he shaped at the wicket. He did not quite know how the pitch was going to play, but he reckoned the wet ground was going to be of material assistance to the bowlers, and he scraped very cautiously at Bannister's opening balls. Sanderson, on facing Watts, treated him with like respect, and three maiden overs had been bowled before Helstone got the first run off Bannister.

The ball was not breaking much. The bowlers were trying their best to impart swerve and spin upon it, but seemingly without avail; and they were as much puzzled by the conditions as the batsmen were.

The scoring was tediously slow. The spectators surrounding the playing-field could be counted easily, and one of them was jeeringly heard to call upon the batsmen to "Wake up!" Indeed, slow cricket under such extreme conditions was staggering in its dulness.

Sanderson and Helstone began to realise this. They began to realise that they must do something better than merely keep the bowling or play it safe if they wished to receive recognition at the hands of the powers that be; and, besides, beginning to feel their fingers numbing, they decided that they would hit out.

Sanderson was the first to make the attempt, and a slashing boundary was the result. This made him bold, and a terrific, vicious swipe at a ball from Watts, spelt trouble for the bowler. But the ball landed on the very edge of the bat as Sanderson got his wrists half round, and he was caught splendidly in the slips for 5. Grant began to hit as soon as he made his appearance, and had 8 to his account, when Helstone faced the music again. Helstone seemed fidgety and ill at ease, and Grant was not a bit surprised when he saw his comrade's middle stump whirled into the air by a clipper from Bannister.

It was now McDowell's turn, and a pair of lovely blue eyes watched the splendidly-built Cambridge Blue as he ran to the wicket, with the collar of his sweater turned up about his neck to keep out the cold wind. But he did not notice that Muriel Davies was looking on.

McDowell's arrival at the wicket was graced by a going-in of the sun, and a whirl of snowflakes which danced about him, and settled on his face as he took his centre and prepared to face the bowling. But Mac didn't mind. As steady as a rock he watched Bannister's hand, and as the ball came down, with a slashing hit, opening his shoulders as he swept the bat through, he landed the ball bang upon the roof of the pavilion. There seemed to be no effort in the stroke, and Muriel Howard Davies, who was standing beside a good-looking boy of fifteen, the son of some of her father's friends who lived at Cambridge, applauded with all her might.

Mac declared. It was all far too cold to wait about; and, besides, there were a lot of arrears against the Freshmen which required hitting off.

The way Mac shaped filled Grant with confidence, and the latter began to ply the willow with might and main. The bowling was now so completely mastered that Bannister and Watts were taken off. But Barford and Joyce, who took their places, did no better; and up and up the runs rose by leaps and bounds, until Grant was caught from a skied miss-hit when he had scored 23. Maydew, next in, began to stone-wall, and he and Mac continued together until the luncheon interval, when McDowell had his 54, and the Freshmen's total was 107 for three wickets; Maydew not out 11, and extras 5.

During play, the snow had continued to fall in a desultory kind of way, and the overcast sky threatened further discomfort when the match was resumed in the afternoon.

McDowell did not meet Muriel Davies. In fact, he did not know she was on the field. Nor did he see Kara, who was not at his rooms when he got back. But there was a brief note sent by express messenger from the Indian prince, which explained that he was too busy to get back to lunch, but that he would turn up on the cricket-field later on in the afternoon.

The same lowering skies overhung Fenners when Mr Dowell got back, and the innings of the Freshmen was continued. But the period of Mac's greatness had almost passed. The deadly luncheon, so often fatal to a batsman, as is the unfinished innings continued from overnight, did its work; and after Mac had scraped and fluked up another 12, carrying his total to 66, he was clean bowled by a beauty from Bannister. As in the first innings, the departure of their captain had a demoralising effect upon the Freshmen, and the wickets began to fall fast. When Medway made his way to the batting-crease, and the score stood at 142 for seven, he noticed that Miss Davies was looking on, and a smile of pleasure spread over his face. He felt that on this occasion, at least, he was destined to make a good score. He had failed so far in all his attempts to hit up a decent total, and by all the laws of average it stood to reason that he ought to do well. Muriel watched his advent with some attention, and she could not help smiling as she saw with what ostentatious flourishes he took his centre, and prepared for the fray. He crossed the pitch and had a talk with Gault, who was with him at the wicket.

"Does the wicket play true?" he asked, though he had heard all about it in the pavilion.

"Yes," said Gault. "But I'm hanged if you know what to do with the bowling all the same! They've fair stuck me up, so you had better be careful, Medway!"

The big fellow smiled a superior smile. How could he help but do well, he thought, since he had been one of the best all-round men at Winchester? He had carefully watched the bowling from the pavilion, and it had struck him that neither of the four bowlers who had hitherto acted for the Seniors had done much in the way of fine bowling.

But he now discovered that Rimington, of the Seniors, who had failed in batting, and had done no good at bowling in the first innings, had taken the ball, and was about to deliver. Medway let the first one go, as it was off the wicket. Rimington was bowling slows, and slow balls that looked easy to hit were just what Medway liked.

He caught the second delivery with a mighty crack, and hit it clean to the boundary, despite a valiant effort on the part of a fielder to make the catch.

Ah, that was something like! He would show 'em! He would let Miss Davies see that there were other cricketers beside stuck-up McDowell!

His would win her admiration for him as a batsman if he did nothing more. Another fierce smite brought his total to 9, and Medway really felt that he could hit this time. But Rimington had found his length now, and Medway could take no further liberties with the bowling.

Payne now took the ball at the other end, and with his very first delivery had Gault cleverly caught at the wicket. Then Williams was stumped whilst reaching out at an elusive ball; and on the new man coming in and standing out the over, Medway faced Rimington once more. Rimington sent down what looked to be a loose ball to leg, and Medway, with a wild swipe caught it, and sent it flying towards the boundary to the very spot where Miss Davies stood. He watched the flight of the ball spellbound. It was going at a terrific pace, and seemed to be swerving round in its course. The whole field stared.

"Look out!" cried somebody, for it seemed that the pretty girl must assuredly be hit. The sun was shining straight in her eyes, and she seemed not to see the oncoming ball.

Kara Noogunarshji, who had come on to the ground ten minutes before, and who had been talking to McDowell in the pavilion, and had then come down with Mac to join his charming lady friend, had arrived within a few yards of her when he suddenly saw the danger, and dashed forward.

"Move, Miss Davies—move!" shouted Mac, at the same time realising Muriel's peril.

She heard the cry, turned her head, and smiled at him. It was a hundred to one she would be struck, for the ball was at a level with her head, and it seemed impossible for Kara Noogunarshji to get to it in time. Henry McDowell uttered a cry of alarm, and sprang towards the girl. Then out shot the Indian prince's arm, as he hurled himself with a spring through the air, and the ball was safely clutched in his outstretched fingers. But the momentum was so great that he lost his balance, and fell headlong, rolling on to his shoulders and neck, resting on the latter for a moment, and then coming flat to the ground, where he lay stunned for a second or so, and unable to move.

Muriel uttered a shriek of alarm.

"Whatever is the matter, Mr. McDowell!" she cried; and Henry pointed solemnly to the ball, which was still clutched in the Indian prince's strong fingers.

"It nearly hit you!" he cried. "It was lucky Kara got to it in time, for I am afraid you would have been badly hurt, Miss Davies."

The girl realised the danger she had been in now, and turned pale. She had never forgotten a story her father had told her of an accident which had happened when he was at school at Rugby. A ball had been carelessly hit by a thoughtless boy standing in the midst of a number of his friends, and it had struck one of his chums on the temple, and had killed him instantly. And this ball might have killed her, had not Kara been there to save her. She stood staring down at the dazed and motionless Kara, and Henry McDowell, springing past her, knelt by his friend's side.

Out shot the Indian prince's arm as he hurled himself with a spring through the air, and the ball was safely clutched in his outstretched fingers.

He gathered him up in his arms, and rested his head against his knee.

"Are you hurt, Kara?" he cried, somewhat alarmed.

The Indian prince opened his eyes, and tenderly felt the back of his head.

"No," he said, trying to get up on his feet; "but I landed a rare crack on the back of the head, and it knocked my senses out of me for a moment. I got the ball all right. She, Miss Davies, wasn't hurt, Mac?"

"No, my dear old chap," said Henry McDowell fervently, "thanks to you! You caught the ball with those safe old fingers of yours, just as anyone might have expected you would do, Kara."

Kara smiled, gasped, pulled himself together, and flung the ball to one of the fielders, who had anxiously run to see if he had hurt himself or not.

Then Kara became conscious that Muriel Davies was holding out her shapely hand to him, and was smiling at him out of those glorious eyes of hers.

"It seems," she said, "that it is my turn to owe you thanks, Mr. Noogunarhji," she said. "I should have been hit, for I did not see the ball coming. It was clever of you. Thank you, so very much!"

Kara took her hand, and flushed, in spite of himself. He was conscious of a thrill which ran through him at the touch of her hand.

"It is brave of you, Miss Davies," he said, "to come down here in such awful weather. It is going to snow again. Look at those black clouds over Madingley up. I should think you would be wise to get back to the town."

"You are anxious to get rid of me," she said, with a laugh.

"You ought to know better than that," he answered; and she was silent, wondering why his eyes burnt with such a fire, as he looked at her.

"And so," said Mac, in a whisper to Kara, seeing that Muriel's attention had now been engaged by her lady friend, "you did not recognise the man who was killed on the line, Kara?"

The Indian prince shook his head.

"No," he said. "I have never set eyes on the fellow before in my life. He is a native of Upper India, I should say by his look of him, and I cannot see how he could bear me a grudge. It may be that he was a religious fanatic, who objected to one of his race liking English ideas, and studying English ways in preference to his own. It may have been that, I may have been that he had read in the newspapers about the death of my father, and the generally accepted fact that I should reign as Jam after my father. You may remember that the papers said that this would be a good thing for Britain and for British India, as I should have a strong leaning towards the home country. Perhaps those newspaper articles inflamed his mind, and he determined to kill me, in order that British influence might no longer be felt at Hidorhampoor. It is the only explanation that occurs to me."

"And," cried Henry McDowell emphatically, "I have no doubt it is the right one, Kara. After all, why should the man have tried to kill you, if his mind had not become unbalanced by reading such statements as that? And, as you know, the fanatical native would stop at nothing."

Henry McDowell felt immensely relieved. Kara's theory seemed to point to the fact that the attempt upon his life had been the work of one man, and not an organised affair. In that case there would be no reason to fear a repetition.

Whilst Mac turned his eyes moodily towards the field, and folded his arms in thought, he suddenly saw a straight ball from Rimington scatter Medway's stumps all over the field.

"A poor stroke that!" he cried. "It wasn't a good ball. Medway ought to have got it away. As usual, he was thinking more of how he looked at the wicket and about his style, than the way to hit the ball. It serves him jolly well right that he's out! That fellow had the makings of a fine cricketer in him when he was at Winchester, Kara, but he was always too conceited to learn the game thoroughly. I'm afraid he'll never be anything but a very moderate bat, and there goes any chance he had of being included in the eleven that is to face Oxshire on Monday."

"Poor Mr. Medway!" said Muriel, turning a roguish glance on Henry McDowell.

"Do you mean that?" he whispered, bending over her.

"Yes," she said, watching Medway's sullen retreat to the pavilion. "He looked so funny with his black eye yesterday!"

As she spoke heavy snowflakes began to fall, and before the last batsman on the Freshmen's side could take his place at the wicket, the snowstorm had become so violent that none could scarcely see from one side of the field to the other.

The umpires gave one upward glance at the sky, and then led the rush to the pavilion. Helter-skelter off the field raced the Seniors, and it became plainly apparent, as the air grew colder, and the snow began to lie thick, that there would be no more cricket that afternoon.

"The match will have to be abandoned," said Henry McDowell.

And so it proved, for at the end of another thirty minutes there was a thick carpet of white where the green had been, and, with no signs of the weather clearing, the stumps were pulled up, and the disconsolate cricketers went their various ways.

(Another fine, long instalment of this popular cricket yarn will appear next week.)

TALES OF THE STADIUM

No. 1.—HOW BRITAIN WON THE GREAT MARATHON RACE.

By ANDREW GRAY.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
First Favourite.

"YOUR car is ready, sir."

A mess-waiter, tall and straight as a ramrod, had appeared suddenly in the ante-room of the officers' mess of the Cavalry Barracks, Windsor.

Two of the belated occupants rose from their armchairs at the announcement, and reached for their heavy motor-coats.

"Very good, Fergus," answered Captain Vandervell; and turned to the third, who sat already muffled to the chin.

"Now then, young shaver," he said cheerily, "up you get. How are you feeling—fit?"

"Oh, fit enough!" answered the other, climbing to his feet. "I can't say that I quite relish this fly-by-night business, though. Why on earth you can't let me——"

"Oh, tut-tut!" interrupted the captain. "Now look here, Master Dick, I refuse to go over all that ground again, so I tell you flat. I'm your trainer, at your own invitation and wish, and you must leave me to work things my own way."

"Quite so," answered Dick Steele, the latest joined subaltern of his Majesty's 3rd Life Guards; "but, at the same time, I can't help but say again that this midnight spin does not appeal to me."

He stood up as he spoke, his tall figure illuminated by the glow from the fireplace. The great fur coat he was wrapped in fell open, revealing the fact that he wore underneath only a running-costume. The skin-tight zephyr set off his broad, deep chest, while the firelight playing on the long, lithe muscles of his bare limbs, made him the perfect picture of a trained athlete.

"I know you think I'm an ungrateful young cub, sir, and a wretched grouser," he went on, with a laugh; "but that's just how I feel. I can't help thinking that all this savours of a secret trial, and honestly I had rather you did not insist upon it."

"But I do insist upon it," answered Captain Vandervell testily, though Dick was his favourite. "Both you and I know that it is full time you ran the Marathon course, if you mean to win. Very well. Your idea is to make the trial in broad daylight, with bookmakers' touts skulking in every hedge——"

"Ah, that's the worst of it!" growled Dick. "It's this infernal betting on one's chances that sickens me, and makes me regret that I ever entered."

"That may be, but you have entered, and there's an end of that. A score of countries have sent over their champions to compete in this Marathon race, the chief of all the Olympic games. Britain looks to you to win it for her, and, no matter what your own feelings may be, you must not—cannot leave her in the lurch. You are first favourite; there must be thousands and thousands of pounds wagered on your chances, and that's where the danger lies."

"Danger?" exclaimed Dick, looking up.

"Yes, danger. Has it never occurred to you that, with so much money at stake, it would pay some unscrupulous ruffian to cripple you before the race? That is just why I am making you run this trial in the dead of night and secretly."

The barrack clock chimed the hour of one.

"No, Dick," added Captain Vandervell, after a pause. "You leave this to me. I have more experience of the wicked world than you—a youngster fresh from Sandhurst. I hate hole-and-corner tactics just as much as you do, particularly in sport; but this time I know what I am doing. Come along now. Let's drop the argument and get to business."

"Hear, hear! The skipper's right, Dick," chimed in Lieutenant Dacre, the third member of the group, closing his tobacco-pouch with a slap and lighting a bulldog briar. "Now let's cut the cackle, and just see if you can't lower that 2 hours 15 mins. 45 secs. record of yours at the Wembley trial. I noticed that an American all but beat you over the distance, so you'll have to pull up your socks."

The Marathon race was open to the whole world. Nearly two thousand four hundred years ago, after the amazing battle from which the contest takes its name, a soldier of the victorious Greeks ran with the glorious news from the battlefield to Athens—a distance of twenty-five miles. He recled into the Stadium before the assembled, anxious crowds, proclaimed the victory with his last breath, and dropped dead.

The feat was considered so remarkable that each year, on the anniversary of the victory, the Grecian athletes tried to emulate it. With the fall of their empire the race was allowed to lapse. It was revived with the Olympic games, in 1908, when a Canadian, running ankle deep in dust over the historic track and in terrific heat, came in the victor. Now that the games were transferred to England, the course was laid between Windsor and the Stadium in the Franco-British Exhibition at Uxbridge Road.

The preliminary race, to select the English team, had been run a few weeks back, from Windsor to Wembley Park, and Dick Steele had registered in an easy winner apparently. His performance came like a thunderbolt to the running world, for few outside Harrow and Sandhurst had ever heard of the young officer as a long-distance champion.

Truth to tell, he had surprised himself, though he knew from many a cross-country steeplechase and long day with the harriers, that he possessed endurance out of the ordinary, and a pretty turn of speed when matters came to the pinch.

Since that date he had settled down to steady training under a comrade-officer, and now, a little less than a week from the great event, he had decided to run the actual course. Captain Vandervell had insisted that this should take place at night, and, but for the truly British dislike of anything savouring of secrecy and stealth in sport, Dick could have hailed the plan with pleasure. He hated performing before crowds, and he loathed the ordeal still more when he knew that since the eliminating trials his name was on every bookmaker's lips, as the favourite for the prize which all the world coveted.

The night was dark but fine, and there was just a faint breeze stirring in the trees. The three officers stepped into the car drawn up before the mess, and Captain Vandervell took the driver's place.

"All ready, Dacre?" he asked, over his shoulder. "Hammer, rugs, towels, stop-watches? Right you are, then. We'll get off."

The car wheeled round, and made towards the barrack-gate. A sentry challenged from the shadow of a wall, and another as they forged slowly past the guard-room door. The next instant they were out upon the road, heading for Windsor town, where the start was to be made.

Captain Vandervell had just set his hand upon the lever to increase their speed, when a tall, soldierly figure stepped from the shadow of a buttress, and stood with hand raised in the full glare of the powerful headlight.

"Here, I say, what the dickens is the meaning of this?" spluttered the captain, bringing the car up with a jerk.

"Sorry to intrude, sir," answered the man, saluting respectfully, "but you have Mr. Steele of the 3rd Life Guards on board, if I'm not mistaken."

"Well, what if we have? What the deuce has that got to do with you?" snapped the officer.

"I'll tell you, sir. But first of all oblige me by looking at this card, and it will explain who I am," said the man quietly.

Dacre took the square of pasteboard, and held it in the light of one of the side lamps. It was the authority carried by all police-detectives, issued from Scotland Yard, and signed by the commissioner.

"Detective-Sergeant Rice," read Dacre, aloud, and whistled.

"Of Bow Street," added the detective; "and I am detailed for special duty in regard to the Olympic games."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Vandervell, wondering what next was coming.

"Yes, sir. Though it's not so much the games themselves I'm concerned with, as the sporting riff-raff and hangers-on, who have come flocking from every corner of Europe and America to the ring-side to see what they can get their fingers on. 'Fair or foul' is their motto, and, I can tell you, they're a pretty tough handful and take a lot of watching."

"So I can easily imagine; but you'll oblige us by stating your business with us at once, as our time is precious," said Vandervell, setting his hand upon the starting-gear as a warning.

"Certainly," replied the detective coolly. "Mr. Steele is about to make a full trial of the Marathon course, and, wisely enough from his point of view, has chosen night-time for his spin."

The three officers were completely taken aback at this. Every precaution had been taken to keep their arrangements a secret beyond the mess, yet here was an outsider fully acquainted with their plans.

"Well, I'm hanged! How did you find all this out?" demanded Captain Vandervell hotly, at last.

"And what do you mean when you say 'wisely enough from my point of view'?" asked Dick Steele.

"I'll give you the whole story at length, if you like, gentlemen, but it will take time. Suffice it to say for the present that not only do I know of your arrangements, but that the information is also possessed by at least one dangerous gang of sharpers, who are only waiting an opportunity to make good use of it. It is to put you on your guard that I am here."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
Kidnapped.

CAPTAIN VANDERVELL shot a triumphant glance at Dick at this, but the young athlete was too bewildered and perturbed to notice it.

"Dangerous gang of sharpers, eh?" drawled Dacre. "This sounds interesting. Have you got any idea what their little game is, sergeant?"

"Foul play, for a certainty," answered the detective. "Though exactly when or how they're going to strike, we have not discovered yet. Mr. Steele here is first favourite for the Marathon race, as everyone knows, and all the money is on him. This syndicate of sharpers has been laying heavily against him, and if they can only succeed in nobbling him before or during the race, they'll pick up a small fortune between them. They're only watching now for a chance; in fact, there's a dozen of them strung along the course at this very moment on the look-out."

"The deuce there are!" cried Vandervell. "This wants thinking out. What's your opinion, Dick?"

"My opinion!" exclaimed Dick Steele. "I say, take Sergeant Rice with us and go ahead. We're not going to show the white feather to a handful of rampers, or half a hundred, either. I was not keen on running this trial half an hour ago, but wild horses wouldn't stop me now."

"That's just how I feel myself," answered Vandervell. "But then, there is such a thing as discretion, you know. We don't want to give them a chance to hamstring you in the dark, if we can avoid it. I tell you what, Dacre, you cut back to the guard-room, and write a note to be taken up to Captain Greeley. Tell him that we've gone on ahead, that there is a chance of a dust-up, and we want him to follow on in a second car, with three or four others as our reserves. They'll jump at the chance."

"I didn't say, sir, that I could promise you a dust-up to-night for certain," said the detective, with a smile. "Though it's quite on the cards that such a thing might happen. So far as reinforcements are concerned, I should suggest that we call at the police-station and take two or three constables on board—your car will hold them."

"That be hanged!" answered Captain Vandervell ungraciously. "We don't get a chance of sport like this every day. If the scoundrels try any tricks with us we'll rope them in unaided. Cut along, Dacre, now, and we'll wait till you get back. We can't afford to delay our start any longer."

In three minutes one of the guard was on his way to Captain Greeley's quarters with the

(Continued on the next page.)

With a wild, despairing effort, Dick forged ahead and breasted the tape, Britain had won the great Marathon race.

message, and the car was speeding to the starting-point with Detective-Sergeant Rice seated beside Dick.

At a quarter to two in the very tick, Dick got the word to go, and set off at a raking stride, danger forgotten, and all his faculties bent on lowering his previous record for the Marathon course.

A shade under six minutes for every mile was Dick's task, and he attacked it confidently. He ran beside the car, for when in front the fantastic shadows of his own limbs, flung by the headlight on the white road, distracted him; and, at the detective's suggestion, it was not at all wise to let him follow in the shadow behind.

Ahead, and on the hedges on either side, both Vandervell and Dacre kept a vigilant look-out for signs of lurking treachery. Behind stood Sergeant Rice, expert, scanning every shadow with his steely eyes.

Once or twice he turned, but only for a second, as if to see if there was any glimpse yet of the lights of the following car. But the six miles slipped away without a sign. Perhaps they were driving without lights, to conceal from the enemy the fact that reinforcements were close at hand.

Dick was drawing close to a stretch of road overhung with trees. The white searchlight beam, projected far ahead, showed straggling bushes on either side of the road. Here was a likely spot for an ambush, though he had long ceased to worry his head about such a possibility.

The detective, however, was on the alert, and a low grunt from him told Dacre and Captain Vandervell what was running in his mind. Each kicked aside his rugs ready to make a spring at the first sign of danger. The car's chauffeur, and Vandervell, slowed down a pace or two to bring Dick into the full flood of light.

He had scarcely done so than something, thin as a whip-thong and sinuous as a snake, whirled out from the lying thorn-bushes above Dick's head. A noose dropped about his shoulders to the level of his elbows, then tightened with a twang.

Before he could cry out, or his escort in the car recover from their surprise, he was jerked sidelong from the road.

Dacre was the first to spring to his feet, but as he rose something descended with a leaden thud upon his head. Vandervell saw him reel, and a clubbing arm at him, when he, too, received a stunning blow which crushed him down upon the steering-wheel. Then his senses slid away from him, and he seemed to find himself falling headlong into a sea of fire.

"I don't like this. There's some infernal hanky-panky here! This is the third puncture we've had, and always from one of these triple-pointed spikes!"

It was Captain Greeley who was speaking. Once again the reinforcing car had been compelled to halt to effect necessary repairs, and he was holding in the light the tiny engine of destruction which had played such havoc with his tyres.

"Why, it's just like one of the ancient 'crow's-feet' that infantry used to scatter round in olden times, when a cavalry charge was expected, to lame the enemy's horses," said Vandervell, a red-headed subaltern, who was only Dick's senior in the regiment by a month.

"Well, it's a diabolical contrivance, and the man who dropped them on the road ought to be pulled limb from limb by wild motors!" chimed in Ruthven, another subaltern, who had been roused out of bed to take part in this midnight adventure.

"The man who dropped them on the road knew what he was about, anyway," growled Captain Greeley. "He must have taken out a wheel, and he is succeeding handsomely! I wonder how Vandervell's faring and young Steele? We ought to push on; we must;" he excitedly added, realising what all this might forbode. "There's duty work going on ahead, depend upon it, and we must be in it, even if we have to drive her on the rim! Come on, boys, all aboard! No time for punctures!"

The car had scarcely started than the second rear tyre sank flat as a pancake with a long-drawn hiss.

"All the better," grunted Captain Greeley philosophically; "it will make the steering easier!"

A couple of uneasy miles were covered, and a stretch of flat mead lay before them. Proceeding, as it was, at a comparative snail's pace, Captain Vandervell's car should have been well in sight by now. Still, there was no glint of light ahead. At last they drew into the black shadow of the trees. The great acetylene lamps made the road before them like a broad, white ribbon.

"Hallo! What was that, you chaps?" sung out Greeley suddenly, clapping on the brakes and bringing the car up with a jolt which nearly made its occupants somersault from their seats.

"What was that?" demanded Wardell, with a gulp.

"A stain in the dust which might have been blood, and a groan from those bushes we just passed. Didn't you hear it?"

Captain Greeley was already out of the car and foraging about in the undergrowth.

"Why, it's Dacre!" he cried. "And here's Vandervell, too! Hold up, old man!" he added, addressing the latter, who had lifted his head, dazed and bewildered. "What ever's wrong? What's happened, and where's young Dick Steele?"

But that was a problem which was not to be settled for many days, as it turned out. All that could be extracted from Vandervell and from Dacre, when he had recovered his senses, the reader knows already.

Both Dick and the detective had been spirited away. The dark stain on the road proved quite beyond doubt that blood, but neither of the two victims had any mark to show what had felled them so effectually.

"We've been outmanœuvred and ambushed like a pack of varmints, and they collared young Dick—that's all!" groaned Captain Vandervell, holding his aching head. "That detective chap was a fraud—one of the gang put up to throw us off our guard!"

"I don't let us be too sure of that," said Dacre. "He seemed genuine enough, and we must not forget that it was he who suggested calling at the police-station first and taking some constables with us. He may have dodged the buzzer, and be hanging on to their heels even now."

"Let's hope he is," said Captain Greeley. "By Jove, even if no bodily harm comes to young Steele, it'll be bad enough if the curs succeed in holding him until the race is over! That's what their game will be, depend upon it; and we've just got to ransack all England to spoil it. Come on, you chaps, lend Vandervell and Dacre a hand in, and I'll make for the nearest police-station! You stay behind with the lamps, and just see if you can pick up any clue as to which way the car has gone."

On a dusty road scored by a hundred tracks this proved an impossible task, however. Nor did the surrounding scrub, though it showed marks of trampling feet, afford any tangible clue to the energetic subalterns left behind.

In half an hour Captain Greeley was back with a posse of police and a countenance as long as a fiddle.

"There is no use in building any hope on that detective chap," he confessed dolefully. "Scotland Yard's record back at once to say he is a fraud. My aunt, what a howling outrage and what a screaming joke this will be for the evening papers!"

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
A Close Finish.

THE amazing disappearance of Lieutenant Steele, the British long-distance champion, and hot favourite for the Marathon race, set all Britain in a ferment. The papers were full of it, and scarcely anything else was talked of in the clubs.

Day and night Scotland Yard worked, following up clue after clue, no matter how unpromising. On the morning of the outrage Vandervell's car was discovered lying bottom upwards ten feet deep in the Thames, opposite Magna Charta Island. Then came news from some bargeman of a fast motor-launch that made its way down-river in the early morning, its crew opening the locks without troubling the lock-keepers.

An hour later this craft, or one answering the description, was found above Teddington Weir, deserted, entangled in some overhanging branches, into which it had apparently drifted. From this point all trace of the kidnappers and their victim was lost.

Dick had been poisoned. The troopers of the 3rd Life Guards raged and roamed like wild beasts, begging leave, and taking it when it was denied them, so that they could scour the adjacent country for some trace of their young officer.

Yet, whenever they crossed Windsor Bridge, they must have looked down a thousand times upon the roof of his prison. A long, lean canal barge, with blue and yellow paint, lay cosy alongside one of the wharves. She had been towed up, with a string of others, two mornings after Dick's disappearance, and had sheared out into the stream, after discharging her cargo of bricks from West Drayton, to await orders—at least, that was what her bargee said.

In the little cabin in the stern lay Dick Steele, his legs manacled and padlocked to a staple at the side of the locker, and his wrists secured in a like fashion, except when his gaoler freed his hands and ungagged him, so that he could eat.

The gaoler was the man who had masqueraded as Detective-Sergeant Rice, and a ruthless brute he showed himself to be, when Dick made the first of many desperate struggles for liberty.

The only other who ever came near was the bargeman. Except when Dick was to be unfettered to take his food, this fellow was generally ashore, swilling beer and bad spirits in the waterside taverns. As for Rice, he never showed himself. One of the hatches was darned all the days of Dick's captivity, and rarely ventured on deck, even on the darkest night.

Those days were like years of purgatory to the young officer. To be actually within eye of his comrades, and yet to have to be fretting and aching there in that stuffy cabin, watched day and night by those steely eyes, wasted him body and soul.

He recognised the cunning of his captors in bringing him back to Windsor, trading on the fact that the last place men search, when looking for a lost thing, is that under their very noses.

The eve of the Marathon race came round. Dick could scarcely believe that only five sweltering days and nights had passed since he had been dumped in there, muffled head and arms in a thick sack, from a boat which had removed him from the bank to the waiting barge.

To-morrow Windsor would be throbbing with all the excitement of the historic start. Dick cared little for that, but he would have given worlds to be there—to toe the line for England against the world. Even as he was, stiff, cramped, and wasted by confinement, he felt that if he had the chance, he could run a good race yet. Would that chance ever come?

The evening wore on, and when the public houses had closed, the bargee came aboard, staggering with the drink inside him, the pockets of his monkey-jacket loaded with bottles of cheap spirit.

Rice looked on, eyeing the bottles hungrily. In all those long evenings Dick noticed that he had never touched a drop of liquor himself. Evidently he was taking no risk of surprise.

But to-morrow his vigil would be over. Just one drink to celebrate the success of their scoundrelly coup could do no harm. One drink only—or, perhaps, Rice could stand a dozen, he knew, and never turn a hair.

Rice wrenched the bottle out of the bargeman's shaking hands, poured a tot into a pannikin, tilted it down his throat, and smacked his lips. His comrade bellowed with drunken glee at his fall, and pressed a stiffer dose upon him. Rice eyed it wistfully, and succumbed again. A third and a fourth followed, and Black was almost forgotten.

But not quite. The bargee rolled at last upon the floor like a log, and the pitiful spectacle he presented seemed to stir Rice's half-drugged senses. He pushed the bottle aside, and sat smoking, gazing with reddened eyes from it to his helpless captive.

So long he sat, and so silent, that the hope which had begun to flicker in the young-ster's heart died down little by little, and at last, worn out with misery and despair, Dick fell asleep.

When he awoke the sun was high. He looked at the cabin clock without stirring, and saw that the summer morning was already half spent.

Bells were clashing from the town steeples, and there was a joyful hum of music in the air. The little hatch was wide open. That was a stranger. Rice was not over-fond of fresh air, as Dick knew to his cost.

What was stranger still, was the fact that Rice's hand and arms was flung across his ankles. Dick raised his head, and saw that the bottles on the table were empty. He raised it still further, until his eyes rested on his two gaolers.

The bargee lay where he had fallen first, and half across him, sprawling on his back, reposed Rice, his mouth wide open, breathing thickly, as if he were slowly choking.

Dick took his bearings, and lay back, his heart beating like a big drum. Rice lay within reach of his manacled hands, and in his pockets were the keys which freed him.

Scarcely daring to breathe, only moving his hand inch by inch, as if all around him hung the clappers of a hundred bells waiting to give warning of his escape, he gradually sought the inner pocket of the man's jacket.

The keys clashed with a noise loud enough to his ears, it seemed, to awaken the seven sleepers; the rusty lock of his handcuffs rasped and grated, and the links of his leg-irons fell with a rattling clap upon the locker, yet neither of the men moved.

It took Dick ten long minutes to hoist him self six feet out of the cabin. Then, looking neither left nor right, he slipped overboard, noiseless as an otter, and struck out for the shore.

He swam on, ignoring the nearer bank, and heading for the shore beneath the towering castle. The cool water was like balm to his fevered, tired, stiffened limbs after the first stroke. In a little while he clambered, dripping, on to the bank. And still not a soul was in sight.

"Get ready on your marks!" sang out the starter; and, at the word, the long-distance champions of a dozen nations crouched for the pistol-shot which was to send them like hounds from the leash on the long race from Windsor to London.

Captain Vandervell was there, white with disappointment, and so was every officer and trooper of the 3rd Lifes who could get permission to be present. Up to the last moment there was one man who had not hoped against hope that Dick Steele would turn up to do battle for his country and his regiment. How this seeming miracle was to be performed they dare not stop to think.

"Are you ready?" cried the starter, pistol in the air, and a groan went up from the red-jacketed troopers grouped in the breathless crowd lining the course. The last chance was gone.

But suddenly a shout went up. There was a wild yell of "Wait!" from a hundred throats. The crowd was burst asunder by a squad of troopers, and Dick Steele was hustled forward to a place in the ranks of the competitors.

Scarcely was he there when the shrill blast the pistol exploded. The starting judge, in his surprise, had tightened his grip upon the trigger unconsciously. The blank shot rang out, and with a plunge and a rush, the great Marathon race had begun on its course, amid a storm of cheers and the crash of bells.

Scarcely realising what had happened, or where he was, Dick was borne along with the rest. His racing number he held in his hand, where Captain Vandervell, ready for all emergencies, had thrust it. He seemed to be moving in a dream, treading on air.

It was not until the first mile had been covered that he came fully to his senses; and then he awoke to the fact that, while many had trailed away behind him, ahead of him ran a squad of less experienced runners, or second strings, perhaps, bent on cutting out a killing pace to weed out all opponents who were foolish enough to hang on to them.

Gauging his strength, and paying scarcely any heed to those who ran beside him, Dick fell into the loping, raking stride which had before carried him to victory.

But days of inactivity, cramped and confined in stuffy surroundings, had made a woeful difference in wind and limb. His legs seemed leaden, and his muscles like wet catgut. At the fifth mile he awoke to the fact that he was almost last in the bunch. Many had passed him, and some had even come down up the sponge, unable to keep a pace so hot.

One competitor, and only one, he noticed. A little, clean-limbed athlete with thick, dark hair parted in the middle, and a grim, clean-shaven face, who ran like a fine man, and wondered dazedly who he could be, and why he hung so persistently on his flank. A blue silk handkerchief, spangled with stars and stripes, was round this runner's hips, revealing that he was an American, though Dick scarcely realised even that fact, so deep was the stupor that had settled down upon his senses. Yet his limbs, as yet, showed small signs of flagging.

Another mile, and another, and still the same never-ending ribbon of human faces, the same hoarse roar of voices. Dick was suffering agonies now—such pain that his brain was no longer numbed. His breath came in piteous sobs, and again and again his knees almost gave way under him.

The grim-faced man at his elbow heard the signals of distress, and quickened his pace. Dick noticed the silent challenge, and forced himself to respond. The grim-faced man saw that there was life in his antagonist yet. He also was showing symptoms of exhaustion, and he fell back to his old place on Dick's flank, resolved that the supreme moment of trial had not yet come.

Ten yards ahead of Dick there had been running—for the last ten years it seemed to him—a man with the number 33 on his back. That was all he saw. Suddenly the number vanished. The English champion had just time to scramble to one side as the man pitched forward, and fell exhausted.

The cheering had risen to such a perfect hurricane now, that Dick looked ahead again. To his amazement the long road before him was clear. He and the man who ran almost neck and neck with him were leading, and, what was better than all, they were now striding through Shepherd's Bush, and the white pinnacles and towers of the Franco-British Exhibition loomed in the sunshine scarcely more than a mile ahead of them.

The joy of the discovery sent him forward with a spurt. His limbs had suddenly grown less leaden, and his breath whistled more freely in his nostrils. Still the grim-faced man hung on his flank, foundering a little, as he himself was foundering, but game. Dick saw it was going to be a mighty tussle at the finish, yet he had confidence in himself.

He quickened his pace, but the other responded, determined not to be shaken off. Now the leaves of the plane-trees on Shepherd's Bush Green flung patches of grateful shadow across the road. On every side were masses of frantic faces, waving hats and handkerchiefs, cheering them on. Each window had its cluster of eager faces, while against the hot blue sky stood out the dark figures of men clinging to the very chimney-pots.

"Britain wins! Britain wins! No, America! Go it, Jonathan! Go it, John Bull! Bravo, Steele! You've got him sel! Hurrah, the Stars and Stripes!"

The din was deafening. The two champions gathered themselves for the last mighty effort. Ahead of them yawned the great gateway leading to their goal.

Now the American shot to the front.

Dick knew that all that spurt meant, and sobbed aloud in his agony. Heart and brain bursting already with exhaustion, he yet managed to goad himself to respond. Still the American was three yards ahead, and kept his lead in spite of all he could do to pull him back.

A belt of cool shadow! They had passed the gate! Before them lay a vast arena; tier upon tier of seats, packed from ground to sky with spectators, who had leapt to their feet in wild excitement as they appeared.

"Now for it!" groaned Dick. And, gauging the distance with swimming eyes, flung himself forward stride upon stride, reeling, swaying, yet clinging to the pace by inch upon inch adversary.

The American saw it, and his heart sank. Dick was level now, and the tape was scarcely ten feet from them. One, two, three! With a wild, despairing effort, the Briton pitched headlong, breasted the tape, and sprawled face foremost in the sand.

Instantly the band crashed out "Rule Britannia," in honour of the victory; but so far as the cheering here was concerned, the music fell on deaf ears. For Dick lay as senseless as a log, and across him lay his antagonist in a like state, beaten but not disgraced.

The strain of that mighty test of endurance, following on five days' of semi-captivity, was very near to costing Dick his life. It was so many hours before he returned to consciousness that "Detective-Sergeant" Rice, the bargee, and the rest of the gang of kidnappers, had ample time to make good their escape out of England.

Not that Dick would have worried much about them, perhaps. A man who is fortunate enough to win the Marathon race against all the world can afford, after all, to forgive and forget a very great deal.

THE END.

(Another Complete Tale of The Stadium next week.)

"The Boys of St. Helen's" is Just Starting in "The Boys' Realm!" Get a Copy To-day!

CYCLING.

By a Famous Wheelsman.

Another Tip!

ALWAYS remove the cover off the rim the opposite side to the chain, otherwise the inner tube will get covered with oil, or damaged by catching in the cogs and chain.

Sometimes no puncture can be found, and yet the tyre will not keep up. In such cases examine the valve. Perhaps it is not properly fitted in, or may require a new piece of tubing. This is easily put on, and extra pieces of valve-tubing should always be carried in your repair outfit.

Another tip, and one that is very little known, is this. Sometimes the outer-cover develops a swelling, owing to the canvas linings giving way, or the tyre may be badly cut, allowing the inner tube to protrude, which will most likely burst. In such cases—and I am referring now to when these misfortunes arise when out riding—the tyre should be deflated immediately. Then obtain a length of broad tape. Pull out the inner tube, and inflate it a little, and wrap the tape round the tube where it comes against the weak place in the cover. It is advisable to do this for about six inches each side of where the weak spot is. Then carefully replace the tube, and you can

then inflate the tyre

as hard as is necessary without any danger of its bursting, as the roll of tape prevents the inner tube expanding too much, and consequently relieves the pressure on the weak spot in the cover. You will find this tip very useful, and preferable to using Smith's bands, which are made for this purpose, but are placed outside the tyre. I have ridden for weeks with a tyre treated in this way, and have had no further trouble with it; but, of course, it is advisable to have a thorough repair made at the first opportunity.

There is greater pressure, and more wear and tear on the back tyre than the front, and consequently it deteriorates more quickly. When this occurs, a good plan is to change it to the front wheel, and vice versa, the front to the back. By doing this you will get more wear out of your tyres than you would otherwise.

Keep the machine well oiled. The parts needing lubricating are the head, the bearings—front, back, and crank—the pedals, and the chain. Never let the bearings run dry, and if paraffin is used to clean them out, instantly replace with lubricating oil, for if allowed to remain the paraffin will eventually eat its way into the bearings and spoil them.

If a naked chain is used, it should be cleaned often. The proper way is to take it off, dip it in paraffin oil, leave it for half an hour, then wipe dry, and put in a warm place—say, the top of the oven—until the paraffin has thoroughly evaporated. Then rub over with lubricating oil, or immerse in mutton-fat, and boil over a fire. This is a good plan, as each link is then thoroughly lubricated.

By careful attention to these

small but important details

you will be amply repaid by the delightfully easy running of the machine.

Learning to ride is a fairly easy matter. If possible, hire or borrow an old cycle, and obtain the services of a friend. He should take hold of the saddle at the back, and leave the steering entirely to the rider. One of the main things in keeping the balance on a bicycle is to "always lean the same way as the machine is inclined." This is a golden rule, and should be always borne in mind.

To ride safely in "grouse," or on muddy roads, the rider should have confidence. Ride in as straight a line as possible, and when you wish to turn, do not do it abruptly, but endeavour to swing the machine round with the body, instead of pulling at the handle-bar. Always cross the tramlines at an acute angle, or the back wheel may get caught, and a spill will result. If the back wheel should "skid," do not lose your nerve, but keep up the pressure on the pedals, and the machine will generally right itself. It is the slipping of the front wheel that is the most dangerous.

With a little experience and nerve, the rider should be able to ride over the worst roads in comparative safety. In grease keep a tight grip on the handle-bars, and endeavour to steer with the body, and, above all things, beware at a critical moment of pulling the front wheel round.

(Another of these splendid articles next week.)

SWIMMING.

By Montague Holbein.

Correct Movements.

LIKE bladders, water-wings are often worn incorrectly. The proper place to attach water-wings is not close up under the armpits, but rather nearer the centre of the body. If the pupil will only take the trouble to move the water-wings about until he finds his proper balance, he will be able, straightaway, to make progress; and then, comfortable and confident, can devote all his time to acquiring the correct movements of arms and legs. My own two children—a boy of nine and a girl of eleven—could travel all over the bath from the shallow to the deep end of it, etc., with the help of these "wings" before they could swim a stroke.

Aim at a Correct Style from the Beginning.

I cannot impress too strongly on all beginners the great importance of acquiring a good style at first. I know, to my cost, the evils of swimming in a bad style, as I was self-taught as a youngster; and when some years ago I took up the sport, being advised to swim so as to recover the use of my knee-joint, which was stiff as the result of a very severe accident whilst cycling, in which I broke my thigh, I found my swimming was full of faults. Although all the best men in the swimming world have taken me in hand from time to time, and have been only too willing to point out my faults, still it took me some three or four seasons to get rid of these faults one by one.

It is very much more difficult to unlearn or eradicate a bad style than to learn a good one to begin with. When beginning to learn, therefore, it is far better to seek out an instructor who is known to have a good style and the ability to impart the same to his pupils, a power which is by no means possessed by all instructors.

In addition to securing the services of a good teacher, make a point of always going to see expert swimmers, and studying their style; as, speaking generally, the better the style the better the pace, and good style enables one to get the best out of oneself—that is to say, with less exhaustion the swimmer can make the best of his powers.

Benefit by Watching Others.

It does not follow by any means that the best swimmer is necessarily the best teacher; it is often quite the opposite. Some of the finest swimmers lack the ability to impart their knowledge to another; they cannot give any reason for their fast swimming. They have developed their speed, as it were, by accident; but, as they generally hail from a district noted for its fast swimmers, they have no doubt picked it up unconsciously through watching others. Therefore my advice is—always go to such events as the Amateur Championships, and watch the legwork and armwork of the leaders and topsawyers of our sport. In every branch of athletics, remember you must meet better men than yourself if you wish to improve.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

CRICKET.

By Albert Trott.

Laying a Ground.

IF you have to lay a ground you must have some competent authority from a county ground. The Wellington College cricket ground had to be made, and it was done by Tom Hearne, who first took off the surface eight inches of sandy soil, and filled in with clay and chalk five inches deep, with two or three inches of good loam, and then the very best turf obtainable. But you must watch your loam very carefully, or it may be found to contain a lot of weeds and worms, and this will give a deal of worry to those who have charge of the ground.

No; it is not everyone who can lay a ground. Almost as much headwork is required in the returfing of it as in the construction of a house, and to achieve the best results, it must be carried out by one who has

a knowledge of surveying,

draining, of chemistry, and also how to use a level.

Many have wondered how it is that the grass at Lord's is so green. The ground is of clay, and when it gets dry it is the fastest wicket in England. A great deal of brown chalk is put upon it in October, and spread by hand, not too thick, and this helps matters a good deal. The question of how to get good wickets I must leave to another article.

There is still time to get a passable wicket this year, both for matches and practice. Now, if you have to get your ground ready, it is wise to mow a space forty-four yards long and about ten feet wide for your matches. Let this be quite level and free from weeds. Then comes the rolling, and you must beware about the heavy roller and the watering of the wicket. Take particular note of the latter. This may always be done after sunset; on no account before it. A great many of my young friends make a mistake here, and it is one that costs them a great deal before the summer is over. The ground is often soft while the sun is still shining upon it, and the result is a funny wicket. Boys often do this through ignorance.

A common mistake is to water the ground and then to roll it an hour afterwards. This is wrong at all times, but particularly so in

a dry summer.

Water must saturate the ground thoroughly, and the roller must not go on it until this has been done. Take the advice of Mr. Tom Hearne, at Lord's Cricket Ground, who emphasises the fact by personal example that "the very best thing is that the watering should be done in the evening after sunset, and then the next morning before the sun rises, the roller should be applied, and the natural dew will bring about a good surface. The water should be evenly distributed by means of a spreader all over, and not flooded here and there. In using the hose, see to it that the water comes through a fine mesh."

So, whoever looks after the ground must be an early riser. At three o'clock on a June or July morning they are hard at work at the M.C.C. headquarters and at the Oval, and have finished their labours long before some get out of bed.

(Another fine article next week.)

RUNNING.

By a Winner of Over 200 Prizes.

Commencement of Practice Spins.

HAVING arrived at the practice-ground, the young athlete should at once peel off his ordinary attire under warm shelter, being careful to keep out of draughts. He should get the attendant, or a companion, if he has one with him, to rub him down well with a rough towel, and afterwards with flesh gloves. This puts the body in a glow, and braces it up for action. Running attire is then donned, a sweater, or else a jacket, being put on over the vest to keep the runner warm on his way to the track.

Cantering down to the mark from where the practice-spins are to take place, off comes sweater or jacket, these being placed handy for the return journey from the track, when another good rub down with towel and glove is essential.

It is unwise for the young probationer in athletics to confine himself to any one distance in his training. He should leave specialising to the older athletes, who, by dint of much experience, have found out the distance they best can command, and, naturally, train assiduously to improve at this alone.

It is possible that a young runner has already a predilection in favour of one particular event, but his training at this early stage should consist of all-round athletics—sprinting, middle and fairly long distance striding, as well as hurdling and jumping practice, not neglecting the Indian club swinging, dumb-bell exercise, skipping, and chest expanding movements already advocated, which will build up his strength and develop the necessary auxiliary muscles he will have to call to his aid later, when, having found his distance, he makes a speciality of it. The distance best suited to his powers will soon be revealed to him as he continues his regular all-round practice.

My Early Failures.

Specialisation at too early a date has blighted many a promising career, or lowered it into a second-rate one. It nearly ruined my career in its entirety.

I had won my first race as a youth over four miles of Hendon road and Hampstead. This little achievement led all my friends to suppose that long-distance running was my forte, and, in consequence, I commenced to take up this class of work. After running long distances on the roads and across country for two or three months with no success, I began to doubt whether I had any running powers at all, and became so disheartened as to seriously think of throwing it up.

Fortunately, at this time a members' handicap was due for decision. The distance was one mile, and the race was to be run on a track. As I journeyed down to the ground, I resolved that if I lost this race the running-path would know me no more.

Now—you will see—I never afterwards looked back in respect to track athletics, for at this time I came under the very best guidance in the whole athletic world. I was set to work sprinting to attain speed, alternated with practice extending over distances up to one mile to acquire strong striding and staying-power, with the result that in a few weeks' time I won at one two-day meeting five prizes, at such varying distances as 100 yards, 120 yards, 220 yards, one mile, and two miles.

I am endeavouring in these articles to give my readers the gist of the excellent advice I received from my old coach, than whom no better ever lived, coupling with the same the cream of my own observations gained from practical experience both as competitor and as coach.

Take a Pleasure in Your Exercise.

There are trainers and trainers. Some strive to get every ounce out of their young charges in order to force some brief spasmodic brilliancy just for the time being. Great promise in athletics is often seen spoiled in this way. The boy becomes a youthful champion, but finds he is "worked out" when it comes to senior athletics and first-class honours. The growing youth is able to get through a good deal of work, but if this is made too severe he will lose all that nervous force and vitality which is so essential to success in athletics.

All exercise should be made as pleasant as possible to the one in training.

With reiteration of my early advice anent good, plain, wholesome food, and the avoidance of too many dainties, and with the added recommendation to stick regularly to the scheme of training as laid down, I will proceed to instruct and advise on the most approved methods of practising and training for competition in the various events which go to make up the programme of athletic sports.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

OUR FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

Below are shown the positions of the two top clubs only in each division, up to and including week ending April 25th.

"THE BOYS' REALM" NORTHERN LEAGUE.

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Derby Villa	24	21	0	0	230	10	42
Heaton Mersey	24	24	0	0	153	11	48

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Northgate White Star	24	24	0	0	179	25	48
Annfield Plain	24	24	0	0	120	13	48

"THE BOYS' REALM" SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Eastleigh Argyle	24	23	0	1	134	16	47
Malvern	24	23	0	1	126	30	47

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Fareham	24	24	0	0	120	33	48
Loughton Ferndale	24	23	0	1	127	30	47

"THE BOY'S REALM" SCOTS LEAGUE.

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Orion	24	21	1	2	97	21	44
Granville	19	18	0	1	119	28	37

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Grange Albion	24	22	0	2	101	14	46
Fernlea	24	22	0	2	96	26	46

"THE BOYS' REALM" IRISH LEAGUE.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Mervyn	23	20	2	1	91	22	41
Victoria	20	17	1	2	78	13	36

"THE BOYS' REALM" NORTH LONDON LEAGUE.

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Martin's Juniors	24	24	0	0	318	20	48
Upper Chelsea	24	21	2	1	124	24	43

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Norwood Juniors	24	22	2	0	130	35	44
Norland	23	21	1	1	96	26	43

"THE BOYS' REALM" SOUTH LONDON LEAGUE.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Nicholas	24	23	0	1	196	14	47
Woodman	24	22	0	2	125	19	46

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Jarbles	22	20	1	1	84	21	41
Holmesdale	24	18	2	4	77	30	40

Has Your Club Joined Our Cricket League Yet?

A Powerful New Story of Railway Life.

BY

L. J. BEESTON.

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

GERARD GRAY, a lad of unknown parentage, whose great aim is to become an engine-driver. He learns of a plot to wreck the night mail which passes through Cruppington every evening. Gerard manages to prevent a terrible accident, and is badly injured in the attempt.

MATTHEW GRAY, whom Gerard supposes to be his father, is struck down with a fit. Matthew is an old retired railway servant, who had found Gerard in a railway carriage after a serious disaster on the line thirteen years before the opening of the story. The old man believes he dies acquainted Gerard with the mystery surrounding his parentage. He hands the lad a sealed envelope which he has found tied round his neck at the night of the accident, and which bore instructions that it was not to be opened till the child was sixteen.

PETER MILL, son of Steve Mill, the leader of the plotters who tried to wreck the mail. He hates Gerard intensely, and following him home one night overhears Matthew Gray's confession. Phil steals the letter which the old engine-driver hands Gerard before the lad can read its contents. Steve Mill and his son hatch up a yarn, and claim the credit for saving the mail. The result is that the two get good positions in the employ of the Red Star Railway Company.

After the death of Matthew Gray, Gerard makes a start in life on his own. By the aid and influence of Sampson, the driver of the night mail, who was an old friend of Matthew's, he gets a berth as cleaner in the engine-shed. In time he rises to the position of fireman.

Gerard on several occasions comes into contact with a mysterious stranger named Hermann Marx. Mr. Linnason, the superintendent of the railway, seems to have a strange fear of this man, who knows some secret of his past life, and blackmails him on the strength of it.

Gerard, by saving Phil Mill from certain death, earns that worthy's gratitude, and the two lads become firm friends. Phil returns to Gerard the letter he had stolen from him on the night of Matthew Gray's death. The letter contains nothing tangible relating to Gerard's real parentage, but warns the boy against some other than the mysterious stranger, Hermann Marx.

Gerard slowly works his way up in the employ of the railway company, until he is promoted to fireman on a passenger train.

Some time later to him falls the honour and responsibility of taking a Royal special by which a foreign prince is travelling. On the night of the run, the engine-driver, a man named Sharp, greatly puzzles Gerard by his strange manner and unusual taciturnity. After leaving the station Sharp opens the throttle to its fullest extent, and the train rushes through the night at a terrifying speed. To Gerard's horror, a signal at danger is passed by unheeded. The lad grips Sharp by the arm, determined to stop the train at all costs. Then the driver turns a white face towards him, and Gerard starts back in utter amazement. It is not Sharp at all!

(Now read this week's instalment.)

To Smash the Express—The Danger Signal—A Leap of Agony.

WHEN Sharp, the driver of the night passenger express, was speeding "off" duty in his bed of goodly repute in his cottage down the line, he did not dream that four pairs of eyes were watching him from the adjoining hedges, and that the owners of them, in which he was to entangle himself like a fly.

If anyone had said to him, "For three months a party of masked men have met in a cellar in one of the capitals of Europe in order to discuss ways and means of your undoing," he would have very naturally classed the speaker as a lunatic of a particularly pronounced and grotesque order, for whom the gates of Hanwell would assuredly open.

And yet the words would have been strictly true.

The visit to England of the Royal personage who was at this moment preparing for his journey northward had been arranged long beforehand, and one of the objectives of Anarchists who infested the country had agreed that the occasion of his visit should be the occasion of his death.

A proposal as novel as it was terrible had been urged by one of the conspirators.

"On such-and-such a date," this man had declared, "the prince visits the estate of Lord Monkgraven, in the North of England. He will, of course, travel by a special train. This train may be wrecked."

It was argued that English lines are well kept and well guarded, and that on such an occasion precautions would be redoubled.

"The driver may yield to a big bribe or to threats," was the answer.

"Wildly improbable," was the objection. "A British driver does not accept money to murder his passengers; and, besides, the act of wrecking the train destroys himself."

"I have another suggestion," was the reply. "It should be easy to ascertain the name of the driver on that line generally chosen to drive the Royal train. At the last moment it may be possible to secure his person, and to substitute for him one closely resembling him."

"That might be done," it was admitted. "But the substitute would have to possess a complete knowledge of the driving of a locomotive, or he would betray himself at the outset."

"And among the thousands, drawn from all classes, which we have enrolled among us, is there not one who understands engines?" was the retort. "There are a great many such; and one of them may well resemble the English driver so much that, with a little artificial assistance, he may pass for him. In wrecking the special he kills himself—true; but who among us did not accept the risk when swearing brotherhood?"

In the end the daring proposal was accepted, and for three months the most careful preparations were made. It was eventually decided that the train should run against the signals. A collision is always the most disastrous of railway catastrophes. There would scarcely be more than five coaches to the Royal train; and if those five coaches could be hurled at sixty or seventy miles an hour against a formidable obstacle, there would be next to no chance of anyone escaping alive.

The driver Sharp, who knew nothing of this nice little web woven around him, was therefore considerably astonished when, as he left his cottage one sultry evening, he was set upon by four determined men in a lonely lane.

An engine-driver is always a brave man, and almost always a strong one. Sharp got home a good blow on the point of one man's nose, which made the owner of the injured organ sit down for reflection. Another received a terrific kick on the shins which landed him in a ditch. A third got a swinging smack that made him see stars for a week; but the fourth knocked the driver senseless with a thick stick.

When he opened his eyes he found himself bound hand and foot, and reposing in the dry ditch. Night had fallen. It seemed to him that he had been there for many hours. He remembered that his night's duty was to drive the Royal special. Maddened with rage, Sharp tugged and wrestled until at last he freed himself.

Faint, reeling, he contrived to reach the nearest station at last. The stationmaster could hardly believe his ears. He did not for a moment suspect that there was a conspiracy against the Royal train, which was expected within fifteen minutes, but he flashed the tidings of the attack on the driver to headquarters.

When it reached the London terminus it almost paralysed the officials.

"I don't believe it!" said one.

"There is some amazing mistake!" declared another.

"I spoke to the driver just before he started," said a third, "and I noticed something unusual about his manner."

"What can be the meaning of it?" asked one.

"There can be but a single answer to the question," said the superintendent of the line, who was hastily summoned. "A dastardly attack has been made on Sharp in order that his place should be taken by another. It is proved by the very fact that this second man so closely resembled ours. His Royal Highness's life is in danger. The express shall be stopped!"

When the superintendent of the line speaks, none may contradict. By his instant orders the telegraph flashed a message down the line.

"Stop the Royal train! Arrest the driver!"

At the moment the Royal train was whirling onward at an appalling pace. But however fast a train runs, it cannot outstrip the telegraph, and so it was that the driver found a red light glaring down at him at the junction of a distant signal, and perceived the group of people on the platform of a country station, two of whom were police officers ready to clap the handcuffs on their man.

But their man had no intention of stopping. He had started with the one and terrible intention of carrying the special to destruction, of sending to his death its Royal occupant. For this he was quite prepared to sacrifice his own and the lives of any others in the train.

So he paid no heed to the signals, but went roaring through the station with the shock of a whirlwind.

It was then that the truth flashed upon his fireman, that Gerard first realised, with an overwhelming astonishment, that the driver was not his customary mate at all, but a stranger.

Fortunately, he at once perceived that he would have a larger chance of mastering the driver if he kept his startling knowledge to himself, and continued to address him as Sharp. If he hoped to overcome the driver, he could only do so by taking him unawares, for the latter was considerably the stronger man of the two, and there was a glitter in his eyes, a set look on his pale face, that showed he was in the most desperate of moods.

"Very well," shouted Gerard. "If you are determined to wreck your train, the mischief be on your own head." And he turned and took up his shovel to fling more coal upon the furnace.

The driver was deceived. He told himself that his fireman had not suspected the truth, but he kept an eye upon him, all the same. He could not do without a stoker, or he would have pitched Gerard out of the engine cab there and then, but at the least sign of rebellion he knew how to act.

And Gerard was perfectly aware of the fact. He felt that his life, and the lives of those behind him, hung in the balance. As to the actual conspiracy he knew nothing, but he could not help guessing that this was part of an attempt on the life of the Royal prince in the resplendent saloon carriage in the centre of the train.

Gerard was not aware that the truth was known to the officials, and that the telegraph was clearing the line for miles ahead of every possible form of obstruction. He only remembered that the express was racing against the signals, and running at a frightful pace. At any instant danger might loom out of the darkness and send them all to destruction.

For a few moments the young fireman seemed to feel his heart in his throat, while a cold dew of fear stood upon his forehead. Then his brain cleared, and as he resolved upon immediate action he perceived the way of it.

A mile further on were the long tanks between the metals where the engine was to take in water without slackening speed. At a certain point it was his duty to lower a scoop or pipe through which water would be forced upward by the movement and pace of the locomotive. It sometimes happens that when the fireman is not quite experienced enough, or by some means the scoop gets fixed, that a rush of water overflows the top of the tank, filling the cab with scalding steam.

"That is what is going to happen now," said the fireman to himself.

He removed his coat, as if to convey the impression that the work was too hot for him, but in reality that he might have it to protect his face at the critical moment. The driver suspected nothing. The express tore on. It uttered a deep humming note as it rushed over a bridge, and that note told the fireman that the moment had come for him to lower the pipe.

In a second a rush of water was being driven from the feed-trough through the pipe into the tank. Long use had told the fireman just when to disengage the "pick-up" apparatus, as it is called; but just where he should have done so he sprang back upon the tender, at the same moment burying hands and face in his jacket.

The driver uttered a terrible oath as he realised the trick that had been played upon him. He leaped to draw in the scoop. He was too late!

The tank had overflowed. The cold water streamed upon the footplate, and the cab was instantly filled with scalding vapour. His very footprints on the floor of the cab in the place was most fatal to the driver, for the steam from the hissing furnace shot up into his face.

Human nature could not endure such agony. Blinded, maddened by agony, the driver uttered a piercing scream and leaped from the footplate.

The locomotive was travelling at the rate of more than a mile a minute. The man's body struck the four-foot way of the up-line, rebounded with frightful force, struck again, and was pitched down an embankment, lifeless as a stone.

The action of the water on the furnace had already reduced steam and speed. In a very few minutes the fireman had brought the express to a stop.

Black Steve Reappears—Fresh Mischief Afoot—Made out of Footplate.

IT was a week or two before Gerard could resume his place on his engine, for he had not escaped without a few burns. He was granted the holiday by a grateful company, who recognised what he had done, but when he said little about it, though the affair made a big stir outside the line. The man on the footplate often performs heroic actions, but they rarely bring a shower of praises. The captain who goes down with his ship cuts a sublime figure, but the driver who sticks to his engine in time of peril does not get half the glory.

When a driver or fireman gets a holiday he spends it, in eight cases out of ten, watching his less fortunate fellows. Gerard dragged himself away from the engine-sheds and erecting-shops to visit the works where passenger coaches and goods trucks are fashioned.

He saw the steel tyres of the carriages spun out of blocks of solid steel, and the teak blocks forced into shape under terrific pressure; he roamed over the big shops where the work of fitting and decorating the carriages is done; he saw the coaches, after a lengthy process of rubbing down, painting, and varnishing, lowered on the massive frame of steel with its wheels and axles. When quite complete the carriage was placed in a cool shed for the paint and varnish to harden and dry.

At every important station there is a man or two who must examine running parts of carriages that stop at his station. He taps the tyres of the wheels with a hammer, and if there is the smallest defect or flaw the sound lets him know it instantly.

This man, who is called an examiner on most lines, has men under him. He sees that the greasers look after the axle-boxes of every carriage that stops at his station, and that they replenish those boxes with oil or grease.

At all large stations there are sheds which

(Continued on the next page.)

CLUB NOTICES.

Challenges from Readers' Own Clubs.

HAZLEMERE F.C. (average age 17) require matches, homeand away, for season 1908-9.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, T. Payne, 119, Camden Road, N.W.

ALBION F.C. require fixtures for the coming season, 1908-9. All dates open. Also a few good players; half-backs preferred.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Wells, 112, Wirtemberg Street, Clapham, S.W.

ROSEDALE F.C. (average age 15, medium) require fixtures for season 1908-9 within six miles' radius.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Weller, 8, Lasmyth Street, Hammersmith, W.

CAMDEN ALBION F.C. have all dates open for season 1908-9.—Clubs desiring matches should apply by postcard to Hon. Secretary, A. Hancock, 98, Liverpool Road, Islington.

HUNGERFORD UNITED F.C. (average age 16) require matches for the coming season 1908-9.—Apply by letter only to Hon. Secretary, 402, York Road, Camden Road, N.

YOUTH (age 16) wishes to join junior league team as outside-right or centre-half; former preferred.—Apply to A. E. R., 27, Oxford Road, Stratford, E.

WANTED a few players of all positions to form a football club. Also a goalkeeper, age between 19 and 20, for season 1908-9. Small subscription. Usual ground, Hackney Marshes.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Wakeman, 24, Powell Street, Goswell Road, London, E.C.

WANTED a few respectable lads (average age 15) to form a football team in Southend or Westcliff district. Small subscription required.—Apply by post to L. L. C., 161, Hamlet Court Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex.

PLAYERS (average age 14-16) wanted for 1st and 2nd teams of a football club for coming season. First team in a league. Ground, Clapham Common.—Apply for particulars and enclose stamped envelope to Hon. Secretary, P. Almond, 82, Union Grove, Clapham.

LAD (age 14) wishes to join football team in or near district of Fulham. Height, 4 ft. 11 in. Can play any position in half-back line.—Apply to V. Ford, 21, Brunber Road, Fulham.

LAD (age 15½) would like to join football club, within three miles radius of Bermondsey, for season 1908-9. Can play half-back or in forward line.—Apply to Fred Green, 52, Alscot Road, Bermondsey, S.E.

BOYS wanted (age 14-16) to complete a football club. Boys must be in the Waterloo district.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, 20, Stangate Buildings, Upper Marsh, Lambeth.

FOREST JUNIORS (average age15-16) want players for all positions, including a good goalkeeper, for next season. Entrance fee, 6d.; and 1d. per week.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. Newton, 115, Berridge Road East, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham.

WANTED, LADS (ages 14-16) to form a football club in Bootle, Liverpool.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. Mcgill, 13, June Street, Bootle, Liverpool.

RAVENSCROFT F.C. require a few players to complete their team for 1908-9. Also have matches for April, 1909.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, R. Sarbey, 77, Midmoor Road, Balham, S.W.

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CRESCENT F.C. (average age 16, weak) have all dates open, home and away, except July 4th, July 11th, and August 1st. Ground, Harlesden Road, Willesden Green.—Terms and letters answered.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. E. Groves, 5, Cooper Road, Willesden Green, N.W.

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ST. LEVN MISSION C.C. (average age 17, medium) have all dates open for this season home and away.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, E. Vampiew, 90, Priory Road, East Ham.

LION C.C. (average age 15, weak) require matches within three miles of Mitcham; also few good players wanted.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, B. Fleming, 4, Stone Cottages, Lower Mitcham, Surrey.

GORDON C.C. (average age 17, medium) want matches. All dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. Axford, Oxford Medical Mission, Bermondsey Street, Bermondsey.

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are built specially for the washing of the carriages, and which have wooden stages the height of the carriage floor.

Besides the humble "carriage-washers," there are the "cleaners," who, with brooms, brushes, leathers, and dusters, look after the inside of each compartment.

Another man has to keep the foot-warmers going. A good many people wonder what is inside the familiar foot-warmer that enables it to retain its heat for eight hours. It is filled with about six quarts of acetate of soda, reduced to liquid form. As many ounces of water are added, and then two balls of iron, weighing nearly a pound and a half, are placed inside. The hole at the end is then covered with a cap and soldered down, with a small hole left in the centre of the cap. After that the foot-warmer is put into a tank, its contents heated once more to boiling-point, the hole sealed up, and all is ready.

The waggons of a through goods train are looked after, if it be possible, with still greater care. The examiner not only taps the wheels, but he inspects them, while he is particularly careful to see that the axle-boxes do not run hot. He watches the wheels slowly revolving in order to ascertain if an axle is bent.

If he finds anything wrong, out of the train that waggon goes, shunted into a siding, with a red card on it to show that it must not be used under any circumstances until it has been put right.

Returning home on the day before taking up his duties, Gerard found his friend Phil awaiting him in a state of considerable excitement.

"I've heard from—from him!" said Phil, in a hoarse whisper.

"Marx?"

"No; my precious parent. He sent me a note. He is quite near, been lying low all this time. He wants help—money. Says he dare not stop outside the place, as there's been a man watching the house ever since he entered it."

"Oh!" answered Gerard, in a tone of real concern. "The police, do you think?"

"Who else?" said Phil, greatly agitated.

"Then why don't they step in and arrest him if they want to?"

"That's what I thought. What do you say to going round?"

"We can't do better."

The address indicated on the note took them to a grimy back street off the Marylebone Road. A man in a long overcoat and tweed cap stared at them as they entered the tenement, a look which Phil returned with interest.

"A detective!" he whispered to Gerard.

The once ferocious Steve cowered back as the others entered. The old bullying manner of the discharged signalman was gone, and by words and looks he showed that he was tamed.

"Is he out there?" he asked, with a jerk of his thumb towards the window. "I can't get away from the sight of him. He's followed me about all over London. I've tried that 'ard to shake him off, you wouldn't believe, but it can't be done. He's got on my nerves, Phil. I shall kill 'im, lad, I know I shall."

"Sit down, and don't talk like an ass," was the filial advice Phil tendered to his unworthy parent. "We know what is wrong. You were the tool of a man with ten times your brains. There's a detective outside the house

CONCLUSION.

MYSTERY ISLAND.

By HARCOURT BURRAGE.

The Return Home.

DURING his absence, Herbert had an interview with Sprague, who seemed to be a bit of a philosopher in his way, and accepted his position calmly. Not a word was said to him about the discovery of the star. He was simply questioned as to the object he and his friends had in coming there.

He frankly told the story. They came there to discover a treasure which Sprague's grandfather, an old American sailor, had told them would be found in the caves. He gave them a full description of the spot on the west coast of Africa where it could be found, and told them exactly the class of natives they would have to deal with. He also located the caves; but the actual spot where this treasure could be found he did not know, as he had only heard of it from an old shipmate, who talked in his cups, and declined to give full particulars.

"And on the strength of that story you came here?" said Herbert.

"Yes; we are a speculative people," replied Sprague, "and having had a streak of luck at the silver mines, we clubbed together, and fitted out a fair-sized yacht. Most of my pards are ex-sailors, and they ran the vessel over. Finding the country and people as described, we went on with the business."

"But you did not find the treasure!" said Herbert.

"No; bang it! Although we've dug and dug our very hearts out. We thought you'd got hold of the yarn and came on the same quest—more fools we. If we'd let you alone we might ha' been going on all right now."

"Well, you can go on again," said Herbert coolly, "for we are going to borrow your yacht to get home with. You've acted rather roughly to us, so you cannot expect much compunction in this matter on our part."

"I s'pose not," replied Sprague; "but, hang it all, you won't leave us to frizzle here for ever, will you?"

"No," returned Herbert; "we will try to make arrangements for your rescue; but if we remain ourselves first in this matter, you have only to thank yourselves."

It was late in the afternoon when Iroquois came back. Meanwhile, Herbert had sent some food and water to the prisoners in the cave by Sam Gorgon and Tomlinson, who had instructions to lower it through the hole in the ceiling of the cave.

It was a task that suited both admirably.

"I feel like the wax dummies Romans I've read of fed their wild beasts," said Sam; "and they snarled much the same way—not at the victles, but at us."

Tomlinson asked them what they were doing down there, and they didn't go out for a walk in the fresh air, and the language they used to him was awful.

In a consultation between Herbert, his father, and the two Trevelyns, it was decided to go to the yacht at once, taking their three captives with them.

Iroquois knew where it was, and he was their guide. An hour after the sun had gone down, the light of the young moon revealed it to them lying in a snug retreat—a small, natural harbour. It was a yacht of about one hundred tons, and they could get aboard of her by means of a boat upon the shore.

Then the plans they had devised were put into operation.

First, one of the prisoners was released, and told to go and search straight away on pain of being shot. He lost no time in obeying this injunction. Then a second one was despatched, and, finally, Sprague's arms were loosened.

To him was imparted the secret of the place of confinement of his nine friends, also about the hiding-place of the stores.

"Which may be useful to you," said James Standish, "as there is a prospect of your prolonging your stay here for some considerable time."

"I'd like to ask a question of you afore I go," said Sprague, looking round at the men ready to carry out their threat to shoot if he attempted to attack upon one of them.

"Well, what is it?" asked Herbert.

"You've got the mopusses," said Sprague, "but I don't see it about you. None of you look bulky."

"It is only a few diamonds," said James Standish. "Value, as I judge, about two hundred thousand pounds."

"Snakes!" exclaimed Sprague. "Well, when my pards know it I reckon they will skip round."

He put his hands into his pockets and went off with his head down, a very fair specimen of a man overwhelmed by defeat.

"Iroquois," said Herbert to the savage, "you will go with us?"

"All place," replied Iroquois, with one of his sweeping, graceful bows.

So they all got into the boat, and pulled to the yacht, which lay about a quarter of a mile off shore, and were soon on board.

There was no wind there seldom was at night in that latitude—so they hauled up the boat, and took it in turns to watch for the morning.

The only way the men they had left ashore could get aboard was by swimming, and they were hardly likely to attempt that.

Nero was with the party, of course, and when he had been assisted up to the deck he lay down and gave a contented sigh, as much as to say:

"All troubles are at end. Peace and rest at last."

In the morning a breeze sprung up, and Ginger and the men set to work to fix the sails. While they were thus engaged, Sam Gorgon, who was leaning over the side, uttered a shout.

"Here they are!" he said. "All of them!"

Yes! There they were on the shore—twelve defeated and almost maddened men. They ran up and down, shrieking aloud in their rage, and it was almost ludicrous to see them pick up stones and hurl them at the yacht, which was far and away out of the reach of such missiles.

"Richard Warden," said James Standish, "I reckon this is about as sweet a revenge as we could have. It is better than killing them. Even poor Carroll, if he could know of it, would consider himself avenged."

Richard Warden smiled.

"I am quite satisfied," he said.

An hour after the little yacht with its party was out of the harbour, and six miles or so from the scene of so many strange adventures.

That night James Standish made a proposition to his fellow-wanderers which was gladly and gratefully accepted.

If ever they reached a civilised land the diamonds were to be sold. Half of the proceeds to go to the Standishes, and the rest to be divided among their comrades.

The Drop Scene.

FIVE months afterwards the party landed at Liverpool.

After a time of privation at sea in their little yacht, they fell in with a trader outward bound to New York, and having no money to pay for provisions, wisely abandoned the little craft, and what eventually became of it was never known.

They were taken to New York, where James Standish sold one of the smallest diamonds for ten thousand pounds.

He had to explain that he had found it in that far-off land before the sale could be completed, and as nobody had lost such a thing, and interference with him was impossible, he was paid the money. The jewel was purchased by a Yankee millionaire as a birthday present for his wife.

The captain of the vessel which picked them up was handsomely rewarded, and the crew was not forgotten, then passages home for the whole party were taken.

They arrived, as we have said, at Liverpool, and from thence proceeded to London, where James Standish put himself in communication with one of the most noted bankers with whom at one time he had an account, and through him the diamonds were disposed of. Only the richest could buy them, and the large one was purchased for an emperor as one of the rarest jewels in the world.

The united sales, when all expenses and commissions were paid, realised two hundred and ten thousand pounds.

It was so quietly carried out that the world heard little of it, and Herbert and his father went into Berkshire to settle in a quiet country home.

Originally James Standish had been a fairly rich man, but was robbed of all by a friend, who held a high position as a lawyer, whom he trusted. Now all that was forgotten and forgiven, and once more he was a country gentleman.

Richard Warden lived near them, and settled down as the bachelor of the village; but Herbert, ere long, married one of the sweetest girls in Berkshire; which, of course, was somebody very sweet indeed.

The two Trevelyns went abroad with their money, and started mining on a big scale. They have been very successful.

Sam Gorgon has now a drapery and general establishment of such a vast extent that it is quite a hard task to saunter all over it. He has become both rich and fat, but he is a kind employer and a good fellow all round.

As for Ginger and the seamen, they, acting on James Standish's advice, bought an annuity with two-thirds of their money, and then, sailor-like, went on the "spree" with the rest.

But their spreeing was mainly good-fellowship, and many a poorer Jack Tar had reason to bless them for their generosity.

Down Wapping way they made things lively for a week or so, and then started on a round, visiting a number of seaports, and spending freely among their brother tars, until the surplus was exhausted.

Then, like sensible men, they decided to settle down.

Ginger and Tomlinson are married, and live by the sea on the east coast, where they can get a good blow all the year round.

Starbutt and Griffiths are somewhat erratic in their movements, living here and there, but they enjoy life, and they don't squander wealth with dissipation.

They have all had a black star tattooed on their arms in commemoration of their adventures.

Iroquois is an attendant or servant in Herbert's house, but he has no specified duties. In civilised attire he is not quite so picturesque a being as he used to be, but he is a lasting object of interest to the village, where his strength and agility are themes of much juvenile and adult admiration.

Herbert had been married about a year when he read in a daily paper of twelve men who had been rescued from a desolate spot on the African coast, and brought to England.

One word as a finale about that star on Tomlinson's breast. It is there still, and the secret of its manufacture is locked up in Iroquois's heart.

"No make here," he says. "No stuff for it. Me neber tell—no good to anyone."

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Harry Valance Steps In.

"THAT brute Kirke again!" muttered Valance of the Fifth as he came down the stairs at Wynwood College.

The door of Mr. Kirke's room was open, and the voice of the Form-master could be plainly heard in the passage.

"Hold out your hand, Gilbert!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Harry Valance's brow darkened, and he paused irresolutely as he passed the door of Mr. Kirke's study. It was useless, or worse than useless, for a Fifth-Form boy to interfere between a Form-master and another lad, and yet——

There was a swish of a descending cane inside the study, and a cry of pain followed it.

"The other hand, Gilbert."

"Oh, sir——"

"Will you obey me?"

Swish again, and a sharp cry.

Harry Valance could stand no more. He stepped in at the open door of the study, and Mr. Kirke looked round angrily at him.

The Fourth-Form master was a heavily-built man, with a dark, severe face, and little, cold eyes. He was looking angry, very angry, at the present moment. Mr. Kirke was a man of a hard nature, and much given to losing his temper; a fact which caused his Form to look upon him with very little respect, though most of them feared him.

The lad who was the present object of his wrath was one of the youngest boys in the Fourth Form, a pale and delicate lad, who seemed little fitted for roughing it at a big public school like Wynwood.

The tears were rolling down his cheeks as he nursed his hands, tingling from the sharp cuts of the cane. Mr. Kirke did not use the cane like the other masters at Wynwood. He laid on his strokes as if he meant the sting to last for hours, as perhaps he did.

"What do you want here, Valance?"

Harry Valance hesitated.

"The fact is, I heard Gilbert cry out, sir, and——"

"And you dared to come in here to meddle with a Form-master in the exercise of his authority?"

"Not exactly that, sir. But I don't think Dr. Ranke would approve of that punishment if he knew of it."

Mr. Kirke's eyed blazed.

"Leave my room instantly, Valance!" he thundered.

"I don't want to anger you, sir. But you know very well that one of the rules of the college is that no junior shall be caned without the express knowledge of the Head," said Valance steadily, not at all daunted by the savage look of the Form-master. "You are always hard upon poor Gilbert, and I don't think he is strong enough to stand it. I have been on the point of speaking several times."

Mr. Kirke seem to be too enraged to reply. He glared at Valance, his lips moving, but no word coming from them. He knew that he was in a false position, that he had transgressed more than once the limits of his authority, but it was extremely galling to be called to account by a boy.

"I don't think you realise how rough that is on Gilbert," went on Valance. "He's not like the rest of us—he's a weak kid, and——"

"Enough!" said the Fourth-Form master, in a choked voice. "Gilbert, you may go!"

The junior turned and quitted the study without another word.

The Form-master looked at Valance with gleaming eyes. The Fifth-Former met his gaze steadily.

"You have dared to interfere with me, Valance! This is not the first time you have shown me insolence, though previously it has been confined to looks, and stopped short of words——"

"I have not meant to be insolent——"

"Don't interrupt me! I will make you sorry for this, Valance. You shall learn that you cannot meddle with me with impunity."

"I am not afraid of having the matter carried before the Head," said Valance undauntedly.

"That is not my intention. Take care, what is all I have to say to you! Take care, Valance! Now, leave my room."

"I have no desire to remain, I assure you!"

And Harry Valance went out of the study and closed the door.

A Dead to the Dark.

VALANCE came out of the cricket dressing-room as the dusk deepened over the Close and the ancient buildings of Wynwood. Valance was one of the mainstays of the Wynwood First Eleven, and at this time he was keeping up steady practice at the nets, in preparation for a big match that was coming off on the following Saturday. A half-hour's hard practice had completely chased away the Fifth-Former's "blue devils," and he had quite forgotten the incident in the Form-master's study as he left the pavilion and walked towards the school-house.

It was dusky in the Close, and duskier still in the house, where the gas in the passages had not yet been lighted. Harry Valance went up the stairs.

"My word! What's that?"

Valance started as he heard a sudden crash in the passage beside the stairs, followed by a cry of pain and a heavy fall.

"Good heavens——"

Someone was hurt, but the Fifth-Former did not know what had happened. He caught a sound of scampering footsteps on the stairs, and a form flittered in the darkness. Valance sprang forward and clutched at it, and a slender lad wriggled in his grasp.

"Gilbert!"

The junior struggled frantically.

"Let me go—let me go!"

"But what——"

The boy tried to tear himself away. There were cries now in the passage, and a gleam of light. Others had heard the sounds, and a crowd was collecting from all quarters.

"Let me go!"

"What have you done?"

"I—I've got even with him!" gasped the boy half hysterically. "I—I said I would! He—he has licked me since—since you were here, and I—I have got even!"

Valance's heart turned cold within him.

"What have you done?"

"Let me go—let me go! If they find me they'll—I shall be flogged—expelled from the school! Don't tell! Valance, promise me you won't tell!"

Gilbert was not trying to escape now; he clung to the Fifth-Former almost convulsively.

"Of course I won't tell, but——"

"Promise that—promise!"

"I promise."

Gilbert gasped. Valance saw that the boy was in a hysterical state, and that if he were not calmed, the consequences might be serious. He gave the promise without thinking much about it. The junior tore himself away the next moment and disappeared into the darkness.

Harry Valance looked over the banisters, and a shiver went through him. A lamp was gleaming there in the dusk now, and he could see a form extended upon the floor.

The white, set face was that of Mr. Kirke!

There was a smear of red upon the white skin, and horror in the faces round. The Form-master made a sudden movement, and his eyes opened. He stared wildly round him.

"Who did this, sir?" cried Hilford.

"The—something was flung at me from the stairs, as I was going to my room," muttered Mr. Kirke confusedly. "It struck me on the head——"

"It was this lump of wood!" exclaimed Kidd of the Fifth.

He picked up a rough lump of wood from the floor as he spoke.

The Form-master gave a groan.

"Let's hunt for the cad who did it!" he exclaimed sharply. "He must be upstairs somewhere—why—why——"

He broke off, for looking upward as he spoke, he looked full into the white face of Harry Valance peering over the banisters.

"Valance!"

Mr. Kirke's eyes gleamed.

"Valance! I might have guessed it!"

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Hilford. "It wasn't Valance that threw——"

"Yes, it was. Help me up!"

Hilford looked dismayed. He lent the Form-master his aid, and Mr. Kirke staggered to his feet. His little narrow eyes were fixed spitefully on the pale face that looked over the banisters. Valance drew back.

"Valance! Come down here!"

The Fifth-Former slowly descended the stairs.

He felt that he was in a difficult position, and the promise he had made to Gilbert weighed on his mind.

He had heard the Form-master's angry accusation, and he knew that he might have some difficulty in clearing himself of the charge.

He joined the group of lads gathered round the injured Form-master, and the light gleamed on his face—pale, and set, but fearless.

His Pledged Word.

MR. KIRKE looked at the Fifth-Former with a slow, spiteful smile.

"So this is your work, Valance."

"No, sir."

Valance spoke quietly and calmly.

"I knew he hadn't done it," murmured Hilford, but it was in the tone of one who tries to convince himself.

The Form-master's smile became more disagreeable.

"You deny having hurled that piece of wood at me from over the banisters, Valance?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Then, who did it?"

Valance was silent.

"You were on the stairs."

"I had just gone up."

"You must have seen whom it was that committed this outrage, if you did not do it yourself," said Mr. Kirke coldly.

"I did not see the missile thrown."

"You are prevaricating."

"I am doing nothing of the kind," said Valance haughtily. "I repeat that I did not see the missile thrown, and that if I had known what was intended, I would have stopped it instantly."

"You saw who threw the lump of wood?"

The Fifth-Former was silent.

"Will you answer my question, Valance?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Then I can only conclude that you committed this outrage."

Valance went white to the lips, but he did not speak.

"Valance!" cried Hilford. "Speak up, man! Why don't you say you are innocent!"

"I have said that I am innocent, but Mr. Kirke does not believe me."

"I am not likely to believe a bare-faced lie," said Mr. Kirke, with a bitter smile.

A flush of red came into Valance's pale cheeks. He made a step towards the Form-master, and then restrained himself and stopped.

"I am innocent of all knowledge of this," he said, looking round. "I hope you fellows who have always known me to be a decent chap will believe that I couldn't descend to such a dirty trick."

"But who did it?" asked Kidd.

"I cannot tell you."

"You saw him?" asked Hilford bluntly. "Why don't you try to shield one who has used Mr. Kirke in this brutal manner?"

"Yes, I saw him!" exclaimed Valance, almost desperately. "But I cannot—I will not—tell anybody whom it was. There, is that plain enough?"

"I don't see your reason."

"I have my reason."

"Perhaps; but it will want explaining before you get anybody to believe a yarn like that," said Hilford coldly. "I'm sorry to see this, Valance."

"You don't believe me?"

"I must say I don't."

Valance winced for a moment. Then a cold and haughty look came over his face, and his eyes flashed defiance at the condemning faces round him.

"You—you think I am guilty. You think I did that cowardly thing. Well, think so if you like; I don't care."

He did care—very much; he was wounded to the very heart. But he spoke hastily. He turned on his heel and walked away without another word.

For Another's Guilt.

VALANCE went to his own study, and closed the door. He did not trouble to light the gas, but threw himself into a chair, and rested his throbbing head upon his hands.

What was to be done?

He had passed his word to the hysterical Fourth-Former, and he could not break it. That was first and foremost in his reflections.

Valance had always been a fellow of his word; and whatever the consequences might be, he would never break a promise.

OUR CRICKET LEAGUE.

ALL ABOUT YOUR EDITOR'S GREAT OFFER TO JUNIOR CRICKET CLUBS AND COMPETITIONS.

SILVER CUPS FOR CRICKET LEAGUES.

In order that the trophies presented by your Editor shall fall into the hands of bona fide readers of THE BOYS' REALM, he has decided to make the following conditions binding upon the Leagues desiring to obtain a cup:

1. Each League Secretary must, during the season, collect from the members of the affiliated clubs not less than 1,000 coupons, one of which will be published in THE BOYS' REALM each week until the end of August. Members of clubs affiliated to Leagues should carefully cut out the coupon published each week, and forward it to their League Secretaries, as an alternative to this, one hundred fully-paid subscriptions to THE BOYS' REALM for three months will be sufficient. The cost of this will be found on your Editor's chat page.

2. In making application, League Secretaries must signify their willingness to conform to one of the above conditions, or the application cannot be considered.

3. The Leagues must play the game according to the Official Rules of Cricket.

4. Each League must be a properly constituted League in which the clubs engage in a genuine competition.

5. Each application 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. A League Handbook should also be enclosed.

6. Only a limited number of cups can be presented, and your Editor reserves the right to make the final selection and to inform applicants of his decision before the end of May.

CRICKET CUP COUPON.

One of these will appear each week until the end of August.

CUPS FOR UNATTACHED JUNIOR CLUBS.

Two Solid Silver Challenge Cups (Senior and Junior) offered to Bona-fide Cricket Clubs of not less than one year's standing.

The First Division Cup will be presented to the Team (the average age of members of which must not exceed eighteen), which up the best performances in their Saturday matches only, played between April and September.

The Second Division or Junior Cup will be presented to the Team (the average age of the members of which must not exceed fifteen) which puts up the best series of performances in their Saturday matches played between April and September.

SOLID SILVER MEDAL for Each Member of the Winning Team.

SOLID SILVER MEDAL for Each Member of the Runners-up.

A FIRST-CLASS CRICKET SET will also be awarded to the Third and Fourth Teams in the Junior Cup Competition at the End of the Season.

In addition to the above, a handsome cricket bat will be awarded each week to both divisions to the club which in the opinion of the Editor has put up the best show on the preceding Saturday. In all cases the Editor's decision is final.

SOLID SILVER MEDAL for Each Member of the Third and Fourth Teams at the End of the Season.

A HANDSOME CRICKET SET will also be awarded to the Third and Fourth Teams at the End of the Season.

Rules and Regulations:

(a) Only clubs which have been established at least one season (exclusive of 1905) are eligible for entry, and the respectability and standing of the club must be vouched for by some responsible person.

(b) Where clubs have two or more teams, only the premier team matches will count.

(c) Clubs desirous of entering this contest may make application now. In doing so a list of their engagements between the dates mentioned above, with the names and addresses of the secretaries of the opposing clubs, and a letter from the president of the club, should be sent to the Secretary, BOYS' REALM Cricket League, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

(d) The cups and medals will be presented at the end of the cricket season to the clubs in each section which your Editor, the Secretary, and another umpire consider to hold the best records in the matches played between the dates stated above.

(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 official rules of cricket.

(g) The cups to be won outright.

(h) Opposing teams must, in every case, be of the same average age.

A FULL LIST OF CLUBS ALREADY ENROLLED APPEARS ON PAGE 843.

Has Your Club Joined Our Cricket League Yet?

His pledge to Gilbert would be kept. But what would be the price of his silence?

The fellows all believed that he had committed that brutal action. He was already condemned by his own Form. Mr. Kirke believed him guilty, or chose to believe him guilty. He was not the kind of man to be patient under such an injury.

What steps would he take? A complaint to the Head would be the first. Valance would be called over the coals in the Head's study, and what explanation had he to make?

He would be expelled!

There was little doubt upon that point. The lad almost groaned at the thought.

It was no wonder that for some moments the temptation assailed the lad to speak out what he knew, in spite of the word he had passed.

Gilbert's action had been cowardly and cruel; yet there were excuses to be made for him, too. He had been treated with cowardly malevolence, and had been worked up to a state of hysterical passion before he avenged himself.

Valance shook his head.

Whatever happened, he would keep the miserable junior's secret; he would keep his pledged word.

As to what would happen, he could only face it, with all the pluck he could. But what would his friends say—what would his parents say?

There was a sound of the door opening, and then shutting again; and though it was too dark to see, Valance knew that someone had entered the study. He raised his head.

"Who is there?" he asked quietly.

There was a sob in the darkness. Valance started.

"Gilbert?"

"It's I, Valance!" The junior came gropingly towards Valance in the gloom. "I knew you were here, and I—I——"

"What do you want?" Valance's voice was cold and hard.

"Oh, I—I— Forgive me, Valance! I know what they are saying about you. I—I know they think you did it."

A gleam of hope lightened the Fifth-Former's heart for a moment.

"You can confess, Gilbert."

He was interrupted by a cry of terror.

"Confess! I dare not! He would kill me!"

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you I dare not! Remember your promise—remember you gave me your word! You can't break it—you're a cad if you break your word."

"Don't be frightened," said Valance, with more compassion than contempt in his voice, "I have no intention of breaking it."

Gilbert gasped with relief.

"I'd confess if I dared," he whimpered, "but you know how he'd treat me if he knew. And—and I might be expelled. I might be—and—I couldn't face that."

"I don't ask you to confess."

"But—but you think I ought."

"Well, yes, of course."

"I—I would if I dared, but—but I can't." The boy was whimpering. "I dare not. But—but—Oh, I didn't mean them to suspect you—I didn't."

"I know you didn't, Gilbert, and I forgive you for this fix you've got me in, if that's what you want. Cut along!"

"Oh, Valance——"

"Oh, cut along! I've got to think over it."

The junior gave another sob as he groped his way to the door. Valance's heart softened. The boy was so weak and sensitive, so unfitted to face the position he found himself in, that the big, strong fellow could not help feeling for him.

"I say, don't be cut up about it, Gilbert," said Valance. "I can face it better than you. Keep a stiff upper lip, or the fellows will guess something."

"I—I——"

"It's all right. Only leave me now."

The junior groped out of the study, and Valance was left alone. He jumped to his feet with an exclamation of impatience.

"Well, it's no good thinking about it," he muttered. "I shall have to face it out, and take what comes. Hang it, did ever a fellow get a harder stroke of luck?"

And Valance quitted his study, his brows dark and moody.

Kicked Out.

VALANCE passed Hilford in the passage. The captain of Wynwood glanced at him with a glance that was like cold steel, and passed on.

Valance walked on into the common-room. There was a very perceptible hiss as he entered. He looked round sharply, and mocking faces were on all sides.

"Get out!" said Kidd.

Valance looked at him angrily.

"Are you speaking to me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am," said Kidd, coming towards him. "We don't want a dirty cad in here, and, what's more, we won't have him. Get out!"

And Kidd's words were taken up by a dozen voices.

"Get out!"

Valance turned red with rage. He had endured much already, but there was a limit to his patience.

"Are you going to get out?" exclaimed Kidd. "You rotten cad——"

Biff! Valance's fist shot out, and caught Kidd on the point of the chin. Kidd rolled over on the floor, and knocked over a couple of chairs as he went. He sat up about half a dozen paces from Valance, and stared round him in bewilderment.

Valance was glaring at him, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Here, enough of that!" exclaimed Russell, of the Sixth; and he caught Valance by the shoulder and swung him round.

Valance struck out savagely, and Russell reeled away. But half a dozen fellows were crowding round now, and Valance was hustled towards the door.

"Chuck him out!" roared Kidd, rubbing his damaged chin ruefully. "Chuck the rotter out on his neck!"

"Outside!" said several voices emphatically.

And outside Valance went, from many vigorous shoves and pushes. He reeled out into the passage, and then, blind with rage, he came charging back.

"Hallo! He wants more!"

"Chuck him out!"

Two fellows reeled over from Valance's furious blows, and then he was seized by many hands and fairly flung along the corridor.

He staggered blindly away, and went with a crash to the floor, and remained there for some moments. He rose at last unsteadily to his feet. His collar was torn out, his jacket split, and a red stream was oozing from his nose.

The doorway was crammed with seniors, grinning and jeering. With slow steps Valance turned away, followed by a storm of hisses.

He went back slowly towards his own study, in a state of fury and humiliation hardly possible to describe. A master tapped him on the shoulder in the passage.

"Dr. Ranke wishes to see you in his study, Valance."

Valance started. Mr. Kirke had evidently lost no time.

Harry Valance could stand no more. He stepped in at the open door of the study, and Mr. Kirke looked round angrily.

"Certainly, sir. I—I had better go and put myself a little to rights first."

"I was asked to send you at once."

"But I cannot go like——"

"That is your business."

The master walked away. Valance stood breathing for a moment, and then, fastening his crumpled collar, and mopping his reddened nose with his handkerchief, he slowly made his way to the Head's study.

The Doctor's Sentence.

MR. RANKE, the Head of Wynwood, looked up sharply as Harry Valance entered his study. He gave no sign, however, of noting the curious condition in which the Fifth Former presented himself, save by a slight hardening of his brows.

Mr. Kirke was seated in the study. The Fourth-Form master's head was bound up, and he presented a sorry-looking spectacle, and his looks were not improved by the ominous tightening of his lips, and the glitter of spite in his narrow eyes.

Harry gave him one glance, and then fixed his eyes upon the doctor.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Valance; I sent for you to answer a serious charge which Mr. Kirke brings against you. A billet of wood was hurled at Mr. Kirke this evening in the darkness, before the lamps were lighted, and he accuses you of having done this spiteful and cowardly deed. What have you to say?"

"That I am innocent, sir."

"I sincerely hope that it will prove so," said the Head quietly. "But I am afraid the evidence is against you, Valance. You were on the stairs when the missile was hurled over the banisters, I believe?"

"I was just going upstairs, sir."

"You saw who hurled the missile?"

"Not till after it was flung, sir. I had no idea of anything about it till I heard Mr. Kirke cry out and fall in the passage."

Mr. Kirke's lip curled in a bitter sneer.

"But after the outrage," said the Head, "you saw the perpetrator?"

"Yes, sir," said Valance reluctantly, "I saw him then."

"Who was it?"

Valance was silent.

"If you know whom it was, why cannot you tell me?"

"I cannot, sir."

"If it is any question of schoolboy honour, any fear of appearing like a sneak, that restrains you, dismiss it from your mind," said Dr. Ranke. "This is too serious a matter for such considerations to be allowed to enter. If you are shielding anyone, you must know that such a cowardly and dastardly person does not deserve to be shielded. I ask you again the name of the perpetrator?"

Harry Valance's face was very white; but his resolution did not falter.

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"Enough!" said the doctor coldly. "I am compelled to regard your story as a mere prevarication, which will not save you from the punishment of such a deed, Valance."

"I am sorry, sir——"

"You may go. You will be expelled from the school to-morrow morning, in the presence of all Wynwood. Go!"

And Harry Valance left the study with a step as unsteady as a drunken man's.

Expelled!

So it had come! Harry walked away like one in the mazes of a terrible dream. Hilford was standing before the notice-board in the hall, marking a paper there with a blue pencil, and Valance smiled bitterly as he saw what the captain of Wynwood was doing.

The paper contained the list of the cricket eleven that was to meet St. Winifred's on the following Saturday afternoon. Valance's name had been down, and Hilford was drawing the pencil through it.

"That's not necessary," said Valance, with a bitter smile. "You might have left it there, Hilford. I leave Wynwood in the morning."

The captain gave a start.

"You are expelled?"

"I am to be expelled in the morning."

"Well, I can only say that you deserve it," said Hilford, walking away.

"I Confess!"

THERE was a solemn hush in the great hall at Wynwood College. The Forms were ranked in the great hall, with the masters and prefects in their places, and the Head entered and moved slowly up to the dais. Every eye was fixed upon him. Then the glances were turned to Harry Valance, standing in his place with the Fifth Form, the other fellows as far from him as they could get, as though he were stricken with some dreaded plague.

No one had eyes for a white face in the ranks of the Fourth; no one noticed how the glance of little Gilbert was fixed in an agony of apprehension upon the face of the stalwart Fifth-Former.

Would Valance speak at last?

"Valance!"

The doctor's deep voice rolled through the crowded hall. Harry Valance stepped out of the ranks of the Fifth, with a firm and steady bearing.

"Valance, you have been found guilty of a cowardly offence—a piece of bullyism for which no defence can be found. Have you anything to say?"

There was a tense silence. A pin might have been heard to drop. Dark clouds were gathering on the brow of the doctor, and his eyes were flashing with indignant scorn.

"You have nothing to say, Valance? So I expected. Your guilt is clear. You can have no defence to make. Henry Valance, you are expelled from this school! You will go——"

A cry rang through the crowded hall, followed by a fall. There was a general exclaiming, and the Head stopped short.

"What is the matter there?"

"It is a boy in the Fourth. He seems to have fainted."

Valance compressed his lips. Like everyone else in the hall, he turned his head to look at the form of Gilbert, which was being raised from the floor. With a few swift strides Dr. Ranke reached the spot.

"Back! Give him air!"

The fainting boy was raised. His face was like wax, his eyes closed. He looked like one dead. Mr. Kirke, with a strange expression upon his face, put out his arm to support the junior. Valance sprang forward, and thrust him back.

"Don't you touch him!" he said, in a low, concentrated voice. "This is your doing."

"Valance!" cried the doctor, while the Fourth-Form master's face was convulsed with rage.

Gilbert's eyes opened wildly.

"He is better now!" exclaimed the Head.

"Gilbert, my poor lad——"

"I—I confess!" gasped the junior. "Don't—don't expel him. I did it. I thought I would let him bear the blame, because I was a coward, but—but I can't! You mustn't expel Valance. I did it!"

There was a buzz in the hall.

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Kirke. "This is a trick to save Valance——"

"Silence, sir!" said the Head sternly.

"I don't care if you expel me," moaned Gilbert. "I couldn't stand it. And—and I want to leave Wynwood now. Now Mr. Kirke knows, he would half kill me——"

"Enough!" said the Head very quietly. "This will be inquired into. Boys, you are dismissed."

The Forms broke up, and crowded out of the hall, eagerly discussing the strange occurrence. There were a crowd of friendly faces round Harry Valance, and Hilford was the first to grip him by the hand.

"I was a fool!" said the captain of Wynwood. "We were all fools to think that you could do a thing like that, Harry! Give us your fist!"

And Valance gave it, with his whole heart. He was almost dizzy with the relief of the unexpected happening; but he was concerned for Gilbert. The unhappy junior had saved his protector, but at what cost to himself?

But Gilbert was not expelled. The strain on his mind had reacted on his delicate frame, and he was ill for several days, and before he left his bed the doctor had learned enough of Mr. Kirke's methods to enable him to judge that gentleman more accurately than he had done before, and Mr. Kirke received a polite hint that his resignation would be acceptable. He was gone from Wynwood before Gilbert reappeared in his place in the Fourth Form, and no one missed him.

Needless to say, Valance's name was reentered in the list of the cricket team, and when Wynwood met St. Winifred's, the hero of the Fifth played up for the school in his best form, and thunderous cheers from the whole of Wynwood greeted him as he concluded his century knocked up from his own bat, for the whole school, from the Head to the youngest fag, was proud of the brave lad who had, under such trying circumstances, proved himself to be a fellow of his word.

THE END.

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