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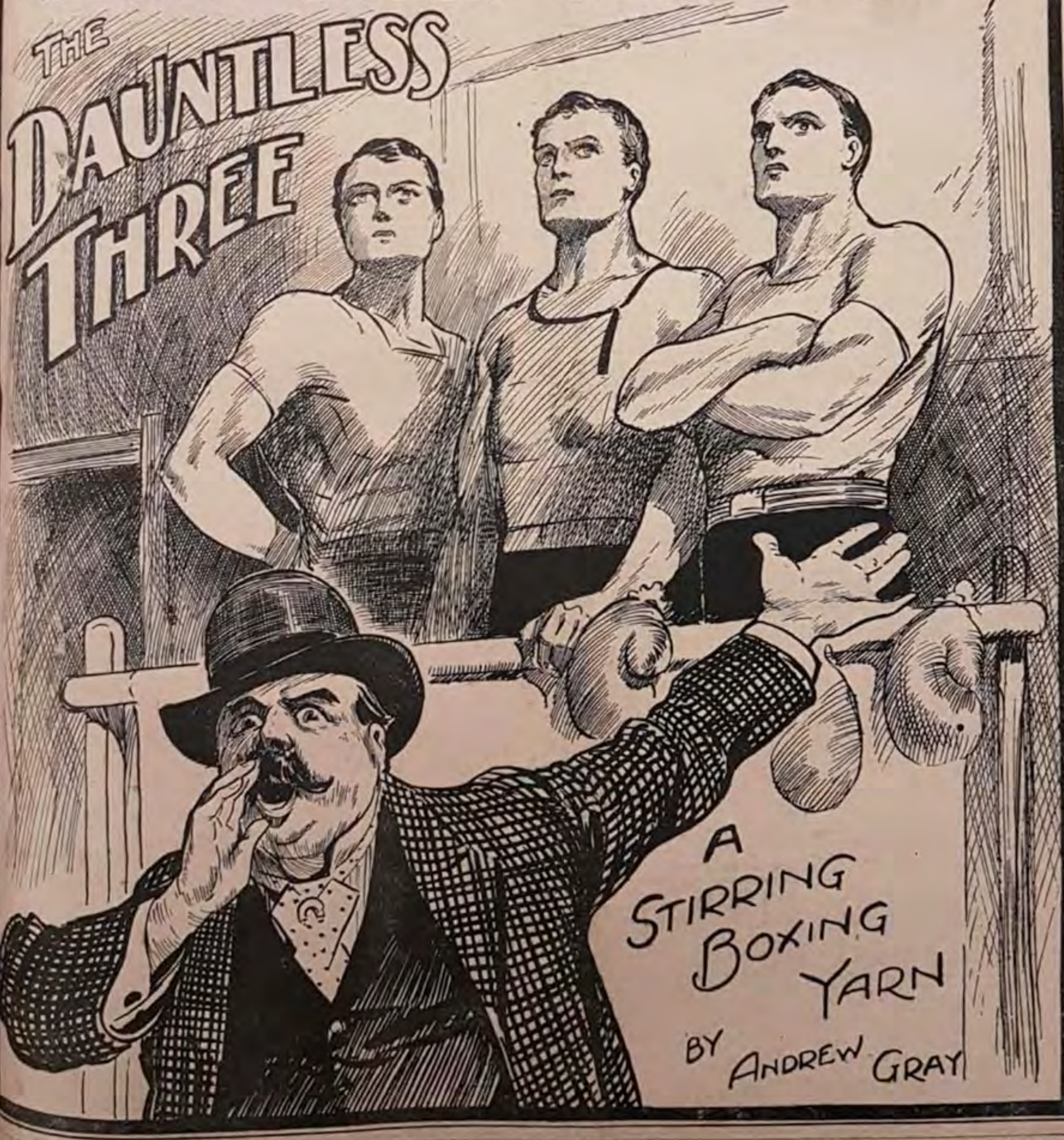
THE DAUNTLESS THREE
A STIRRING BOXING YARN
BY ANDREW GRAY

No. 435. Vol. IX.] EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY. [Week Ending October 1, 1910.

The BATTLE OF PELHAM

A Rattling Complete Tale of Jack Noble.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The School Receives a Challenge.

THE war epidemic first broke out a few days after Mr. Hector Jones's arrival to take up the post of under-master at Pelham School. Previous to his appearance on the scene, the weekly drills, held in the gymnasium, had been voted a nuisance. Incidentally, Sergeant-instructor Keppel had been voted a beast—but that is neither here nor there. The fact remains that the Pelhamites, prior to the advent of Mr. Jones, were utterly unmoved by the charms of military life.

Then the new master, drawing himself up to his full height of sixty-four inches, declared that he, Hector Jones, late lieutenant of the 5th Battalion of the Loamshire Territorials, intended to form a cadet corps, and all those who joined would be presented with uniforms and carbines.

Carbines! That did it. The Common-room was besieged, names flowed in, and by dinner-time next day fifty Lower School fellows, including Jack Noble, the captain of the third form, had enrolled themselves under the banner of Mr. Jones. Thus the cadet corps became an established fact.

A month went by. The war fever having set in showed no signs of abating; on the contrary, it increased, and, overflowing the boundaries of the school, reached Pelham itself; and the mayor of that historic town, not to be outdone by the patriotic Mr. Jones, harangued the youth of Pelham, and started a cadet corps there. Altogether, it was a stirring time, and as there had always been rivalry between the town and the school, frequently resulting in a breach of the peace, both corps could be said to be on a perpetual war footing.

"Half a dozen recruits just joined, Master Noble," announced Sergeant Keppel one morning on meeting the latter on his way to drill. "Thought the new uniforms would fetch 'em."

"Good!" said Jack Noble. "Who are they?"

"Master Clifford and his pals."

"Clifford?" exclaimed Jack in surprise. "What on earth has he joined for?"

"Patriotic feelings and a sudden sense of duty," returned the sergeant drily. "At least, that's what young Clifford told Mr. Jones. I'll just get you to put 'em through their paces. Think you'll be able to manage the job?"

"Rather!" chuckled Jack.

Really, the news seemed too good to be true. Clifford, Jack's hated rival, a raw recruit! And Jack was to have the supreme pleasure of instilling military knowledge into him. Ripping!

"My hat, I'll drill him!" thought Jack.

But why had Clifford joined, after all his sneers and gibes at "schoolboy soldiers?" Patriotic feelings and a sense of duty was too utterly absurd; Clifford possessed none of those virtues. No, there must be some other reason. Well, whatever it was, he had played into Jack's hands. The chap would have to draw in his horns, Jack flattered himself, when he was up against him on the parade-ground.

Their numbers now being too large for the gymnasium, the drills took place in the quad. Jack hastened there, and arrived just as the squad had fallen in. Notebook in hand—Jack had lately been promoted to sergeant—he proceeded down the double row of lines and took the names. Then, closing the book with an official snap, he left the corps to the tender mercies of Sergeant Keppel, and walked over to where Clifford and the new recruits were assembled.

"'Tention—dress!" growled Jack, with a frown at the weedy youth at the end. This was Clifford.

"Look here, young Noble!" exclaimed that individual. "You don't mean to say you're going to drill us?"

"Silence! Number off from the right!"

"Look here, you young worm," blustered Clifford, "I didn't join this rotten concern to be ordered about by you. If I can't have a proper sergeant, I shall——"

Clifford's voice died away, for at that moment Mr. Jones came rushing up. At least, he rushed the first part of the way, but suddenly recollecting the dignity of a commanding officer, he checked the rush and approached at a more sedate pace.

Sergeant Keppel saluted. The action in itself was worth going miles to see. His arm moved to his forehead as if it had come in contact with an electric battery.

"Going to take the drill this morning, sir?" he asked.

"No, sergeant. I have an important announcement to make. Is everyone present?"

"Yes, sir. Sergeant Noble has called the roll, and they're all 'ere. 'Tention!"

"'Tention!" echoed Jack, glaring at the rebellious Clifford.

"Ahem!" began Mr. Jones. "I have just received a letter from the Mayor of Pelham. He writes inviting us to march on the town next Tuesday evening and attack it. The town cadet corps will defend. H'm, h'm! 'Too long,' says the mayor, 'have we wasted our time in parades and drills. The moment has now arrived to show the stern metal of which we—and possibly you—are made. We intend to defend Pelham to the last brick.' He adds a postscript: 'Perhaps it would be safer if no blank cartridges were handed out. Some of the townspeople retire to rest early, and are averse to having their slumbers disturbed by any noise. Also the danger——'"

Mr. Jones paused, and, as the poet says, "his glance was stern and high."

"Of course, we shall accept the challenge," he said. "The mayor desires a taste of real warfare, and the school shall give it him. I have mapped out a plan of campaign. The town is in a valley, and should be perfectly easy to capture. In my own mind, I have no doubt as to the result. We shall proceed along the road as far as the Red Lion, and then branch off into the fields. The hedges and trees will afford excellent cover. While our advance guard engages the enemy, the main body, at a given signal, will sweep round to the rear of their position."

Now, Sergeant-instructor Keppel always held his superior officer in great respect, but this public announcement of plans, which should have been kept a dead secret, was a little too much even for him. He could only express his feelings by a series of loud snorts.

Mr. Jones took no notice. Probably he never heard the snorts. For five minutes he continued his remarks. They were full of military terms. Whatever the intrepid Mr. Jones may have lacked in practice, he had the theory of the thing at his fingers ends.

"And now," he concluded, "I hope you and the town boys will forget your private differences, and not indulge in any fighting—er—that is to say, fighting outside the rules laid down by the military authorities."

Mr. Jones then sauntered across to the batch of recruits, and gave them a few hints as to their behaviour.

"Above all," he said, "respect and obey your superior officers."

Clifford looked at Jack and sniffed contemptuously; so did Clifford's followers. Quite unconscious of the bomb he had dropped in the ranks of the recruits, Mr. Jones ambled off.

The drill lasted about an hour, but long before the end of that time, Clifford and his friends had had enough of it. They were marched hither and thither; they doubled, they marked time, formed fours—now and then they stood at ease, not often—and it can safely be said that not for many a long day had they displayed so much activity. Did they flag, Jack whipped them up to fresh exertions with a few curt words—not included in the drill-book. Deep were the vows of vengeance Clifford swore; in fact, he was within an ace of jacking up the whole thing, but something restrained him. In due time our story will reveal what this "something" was.

When the drill eventually came to an end, there was but one topic of conversation—the impending battle against Pelham.

"What do you think of it, Jack?" asked a score of fellows clustering round the captain.

Jack's opinion was summed up in one word—"prime!"

"Mind you," he added, "I don't think much of old Jones's plan. It's a bit too commonplace for my taste. Now, if I were in command——"

"Tell us what you'd do, old son," said Jack's bosom friend, Bob Russell.

Jack thought deeply for some minutes.

"Well, at any rate," he said, "I shouldn't do what our captain is going to do. It's the same old silly business. We march along until we see the enemy, then we flop down and bang away at each other until the umpires get deaf and stop the battle."

"We sha'n't even have the pleasure of banging," grumbled Bob. "No ammunition is to be given out."

"And we mustn't have a jolly good fight at the town louts," added someone else.

"I know," said Jack. "If we don't look out, the thing'll be an awful frost—not a bit like a real battle. Now, the mayor says he wants a real battle, and it's my opinion it would serve the beastly mayor and his squalling brats—I mean army—right if we did give them a sample of the real thing."

"But how are we to do it?" asked Russell. "Old man Jones will never forgive you if you upset his plans."

"Oh, of course, I shall consult with him first. This is my idea: I shall take a party of scouts, march to the rear of the town army, and enter Pelham by the bridge which goes across the river. Now, you know the mayor's house stands close by the bridge. Very well. We shall climb over his garden wall, capture the place, and if the mayor says anything, we'll simply explain that we're carrying out his instructions for real warfare."

Everyone was immensely taken with this plan. Bob, however, seemed doubtful.

"You'll never get Jones to agree to that," he said.

Jack winked.

"I shall only mention the scout part," he explained. "The other part Mr. Jones wouldn't understand. It'll be just the same as old Nelson did at the Battle of Copenhagen. He put his telescope to his blind eye so as he couldn't see the signal to retire. He didn't retire, and won the battle in consequence. If I have any luck, I'll do the same, and win our battle. Of course, I can trust you chaps to keep this dark?"

Everyone swore the deepest secrecy.

"Fancy Clifford and his lot joining us!" said Bob, as he and Jack walked back to the schoolhouse. "Did they enjoy their first drill?"

"No; I've some idea they didn't!" laughed Jack. "The lazy beggars have been slacking a bit lately, and—ha, ha!—I kept them pretty well on the move. But," he added, suddenly growing serious, "I really wished they hadn't joined. As long as Clifford was an enemy we knew how to treat him; now he's one of us, it's a little bit awkward."

"You're right. Two to one Clifford's got some deep game on. We must look out for squalls, Jack."

"There'll be squalls enough if I catch dear Cliffy at any of his tricks! I'd do anything to give him a thrashing; but there, the chap's too artful to give me the chance. However, he knows nothing of military matters at present, so he can't do us much harm yet awhile."

Jack might have altered his opinion could he have heard Clifford's remarks on receiving the news from one of his followers of the proposed attack on the mayor's house.

But if everybody knew everything there would be no stories to tell.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Treachery of Clifford.

"And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
Arm, arm! It is—it is the cannon's opening roar!"

AS a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind. It was merely Mr. Hector Jones haranguing his troops before marching them against the foe. Still, it amounted pretty much to the same thing.

Tuesday night—the night of the battle—had arrived at last! Ever since tea-time the school had been one huge bustle. The whole place echoed with the warlike preparations. The awful knots some of the recruits got into in fixing their accoutrements, and the posing before the glass—when at last they got them on—to see if they were fixed right!

Then the trying on of the new uniforms! Fortunately, most of them fitted all right. A few, however, didn't, and the Pug was one of these unlucky ones. Clifford's figure was not a thing of beauty, and his tunic and unmentionables fitted none too well.

But we will not dwell too much on the gloomy side of warfare. Let us rather hurry on to the parade-ground, and take a glance at the gallant troops assembled there.

On the stroke of seven the school gates swung open, and out into the road marched the Pelham School Cadet Corps.

By this time it was getting dusk, thereby adding a touch of realism to the affair. The only sound heard was the tramp, tramp, of the feet on the hard road, and when the army eventually came to a halt in front of the Red Lion, not one of them had the least doubt in their minds that they had embarked on a most perilous and hazardous business. To add to the excitement, the news had got round that a real live colonel—a friend of the mayor's—intended to be present to view the combat.

"Sergeant Noble!" called out Captain Jones.

Jack stepped forward and saluted.

"You will now advance with your party of scouts."

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

He chuckled to himself. His plan was to be adopted, after all. When he had first mooted the idea to his chief he had been politely snubbed. Now, apparently, Captain Jones had fallen in with the suggestion.

"I will give you six men and a corporal," announced Captain Jones. "Directly you come in touch with the enemy, fall back. Corporal Russell, Macalpine, Evans, Lawson, Valence, Prince, and Clifford, you are all to accompany Sergeant Noble."

It was just as well the darkness hid Jack's expression of disgust. Five of them were all right; but Clifford and his toady, Prince! Really, this was too much of a good thing.

Unfortunately there was nothing to be done. Here were his orders, here were the scouts, and

(Continued on the next page.)

Striking down a couple of stalwart foemen who were endeavouring to trip him up, Jack fought his way to where the rest of the scouts were gathered, and for some minutes a stern struggle ensued.

he must make the best of a bad job. Luckily, Russell and the other four would back him up if any treachery occurred.

"I don't want to say anything against Mr. Jones's [illegible]," remarked Jack to Bob, as they cautiously picked their way across the ploughed field, "but he's been guilty of a great error of judgment in making Clifford one of the party."

"[illegible]," agreed Russell. "Look at the chap's uniform! At present he's a disgrace to any well-regulated army!"

"Oh, it isn't his appearance I object to; it's the fellow himself. Do you know, I believe he's quite capable of betraying us when we get near the enemy's lines."

"Better give the tip to the others," advised Russell. "How about ordering them to shoot him on the first sign of treachery?"

"Shoot with empty carbines! Corporal Russell, you're an awful ass at times!"

Whereupon Corporal Russell subsided, and took occasion to whisper to Macalpine that everyone had better mind their p's and q's, as old Jack was inclined to be ratty.

Gradually the party of scouts approached the danger zone. They clambered through a hedge, and a second later saw the lights of Pelham twinkling in the distance. To the left was the wooded country, reaching for miles in the direction of Bartree. On their right was a low range of hills leading to the old Roman ford, close to where Pelham Bridge spanned the River Pell.

Jack ordered the strictest silence, and, with one eye on Clifford and the other on the look-out for the foe, he led his men up the winding path which communicated with the Pelham Road running through the hills.

They had just reached the top, when Russell suddenly declared he heard someone moving in the valley below.

"Then it's the town army!" said Jack. "Good! We've just missed them. Five minutes later we should have fallen into their hands. Can you see anything?"

"Think so. It's that black mass over there. What's to be done now?"

"Go on to the mayor's house!" answered Jack promptly.

"What! You're still bent on carrying out that mad-headed scheme?"

"Now, look here, Bob, that's not the sort of language a corporal should use to his superior officer!" snapped Jack.

"Oh, very well! Still, I hope you'll take the blame when your superior officer comes along. Come on, you chaps, stir your stumps! We haven't finished yet."

There was a slight sound of rent clothing as Clifford rose from the ground, the party having taken cover in a ditch.

"That's my beastly jacket!" he mumbled. "What's the game now, young Noble?"

Clifford's progress in military knowledge was still in an elementary stage. Although only a private, he persisted in addressing the non-commissioned officers in terms of equality.

Jack was on the point of setting him right on this matter of etiquette, but decided the occasion was too important to bandy words with a fellow like Clifford. Accordingly, he let it pass, though he mentally added it to the long list of crimes committed by Clifford—crimes which in due course should meet with the retribution they deserved.

"Forward!" whispered Jack, and in a few minutes they had passed to the rear of the enemy, and were making all haste to Pelham.

So far everything had gone well. The town troops were outflanked, and their city was at the mercy of the invader, unless, of course, the mayor had possessed the forethought to hold a few regiments in reserve.

Jack's knowledge of the mayor's military preparations, however, led him to believe that this was extremely unlikely. The mayor, like Mr. Jones, went in for straightforward tactics. You marched on until you met the army, and neither of them ever dreamt of indulging in flanking movements.

Silently the brave band made their way down the hillside. It was no easy matter, for a slight fall of rain earlier in the day had made the pathway slippery.

Of course, they could have taken the road, but there was the risk of meeting someone, who would be certain to give the alarm to the doomed city. Besides, who would ever attack a city by marching on it by the main thoroughfare?

Arriving at the bottom of the hills, they cautiously advanced to the river-bank. Here they paused for some minutes, and stood in the deep shadows cast by the bridge. A cart went by. Fortunately the driver never saw them. Then, when the rumble of wheels had died away, Jack gave the word to cross the bridge.

Again all went well. In less time than it takes to write it, they were over the bridge, and had reached the low wall which surrounded the mayor's garden.

So far, so good. The question now arose, what should they do next? Jack cast his mind back to the battles he had read of. He thought of some of his favourite heroes. How would they have behaved in the present crisis? Why, naturally, with a ringing cheer they would scale the wall, put the inhabitants to the sword, and run up the old flag at the topmost tower of the house. All very well, but these things are easier to write about than to do, especially in the twentieth century.

How about going round to the front, giving a postman's knock, rushing by the servant when she opened the door, and bivouac in the best bed-room? That would be——

Suddenly Russell gave a warning cry, and in a second Jack was brought out of the realms of romance by feeling a violent prod in the back. He turned, and was just in time to receive the nose of an assailant on the point of his knuckles.

What had happened? Really, for a minute he had no idea. Then all at once a light broke in on him. They had fallen into an ambush prepared by the town boys!

For some minutes a stern struggle ensued. The enemy numbered fully a dozen—irregular troops, it is true, for they wore no uniforms, and had no guns—but fists against unloaded carbines are not to be despised.

Striking down a couple of stalwart foemen who were endeavouring to trip him up, Jack fought his way to where the rest of the scouts were gathered. Even in the excitement of the moment, he did not fail to notice that Clifford and Prince were taking no part in the contest. Ah, treachery! These two had betrayed them!

"Smash 'em up!" roared the town boys. "Down with the Pelham School rotters!"

Suddenly, high above the hubbub, arose a new battle-cry. It was the magic word "Copper." Whether there was really a policeman in the vicinity is uncertain, but the mere mention of such a person bearing down on them sent the town boys scuttling away in double-quick time. The scouts also decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and, without a moment's hesitation, they hopped over the wall and sprawled in a heap inside the mayor's garden.

"Are we all here?" was Jack's first question, on regaining his feet.

"Think so," answered Russell. "No; there's one missing. Wonder who it is?"

In a few minutes they discovered it was Prince.

"Oh," snorted Jack, "no doubt he's gone off with his friends the enemy! I shall have a few words to say to him to-morrow. Still, we've got Clifford. Seize him, you chaps!"

In the darkness Clifford was sorted out and brought before Jack.

"This is your doing, Clifford!" growled Noble. "You set those chaps on us, and it's no fault of yours we weren't cut up and defeated."

"Oh, stow that rot, you ass!" snapped Cliffy, trying to wriggle out of his captors' grasp. "Let go my arm, young Macalpine, or I'll——"

"Do you deny you know nothing of this affair?"

"Go and boil yourself!" was Clifford's polite rejoinder.

Jack breathed hard.

"Bind his hands behind him!" he said. With some difficulty this was done. "Now, you see this fellow? He's a traitor. He betrayed our plans to the town boys. What fate does he deserve?"

"A jolly good kicking," suggested the prosaic Russell.

"No; he must be shot!"

"Oh, of course!" giggled Russell. "Still, we might give the kicking as well."

"This is no laughing matter, Corporal Russell," said Jack severely. "We are on active service, and the rules of warfare are very plain in the matter. All spies and traitors who are captured must be shot. Clifford's a spy and a traitor, and he's our prisoner. Very well. Tie him to that tree, and order out three of our best shots."

"But—but——" stammered Bob. "I don't think——"

"You're not required to think. I can do all the thinking necessary. Tie him up at once!"

"Oh, very well!" said Russell.

"I won't be shot!" roared Clifford. Of course, he never thought for a moment he would be. For one thing, none of the carbines were loaded—or he hoped they weren't—also, Jack Noble would never dare do such a thing.

Still, he couldn't help feeling uncomfortable. Jack Noble was such an enthusiast where military matters were concerned that there was no knowing to what lengths he would go. Suppose, in a spirit of revenge——

The same thought struck Russell.

"I say, old son," he whispered, "don't carry the joke too far."

"Pooh! I'm only going to give Cliffy a fright. Get three of the chaps to present their carbines at him. There'll be no danger—they aren't loaded."

"Oh, you never know!" protested Russell. "It's the unloaded guns which always go off."

Jack owned there was something in what Bob said.

"Very well," he whispered. "We won't point the guns at him; we'll merely get the chaps to stand in front of him."

The next difficulty was to persuade three of the scouts to be the firing-party. This took some time, for at first everyone declined to have anything to do with such a thing. The bare idea made them tremble almost as much as the prisoner was doing.

Needless to say, Clifford was in a fearful state of funk. He really believed his last moment had come.

"Mercy!" he howled. "Oh, do let me off this time! It was only a j-j-joke—really it was! I heard the mayor was going to challenge us to a sham fight, and I joined the cadet corps so as to——"

"Spoil our chances, I suppose," interrupted Jack. "You rotten pig!"

Clifford closed his eyes. He expected every minute to hear the awful words of command: "Make ready—present—fire!" Not hearing them, he opened his eyes again. No sooner had he done so than he discovered a new cause of terror.

"Look at the house!" he bellowed. "It's on fire!"

Everyone wheeled round like a shot. Clifford was right. Out of one of the top windows smoke was pouring in thick clouds, interspersed with tiny darts of flame.

"Great Scott!" cried Jack. "We must give the alarm at once! Come on!"

In a second Clifford was released, and the party scampered through the garden, and a few minutes later were hammering at the back door.

A frightened servant opened it, and the sight of the military appearance of the visitors nearly gave her a fit.

"W-who are you?" she gasped.

"Never you mind who we are!" answered Jack. "One of your top rooms is on fire! Run for the engines as quickly as you can. Now, you chaps, follow me upstairs; we'll see if we can put it out!"

What would the mayor have thought had he been present? Not only was his house on fire, but his home was invaded by the enemy!

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Capture of Pelham.

AND, in the meanwhile, on the outskirts of Pelham a deadly battle was proceeding.

The school troops had taken up an impregnable position at the foot of the hills. The town troops were massed, with the river on their left and the open road leading to Pelham at their rear. This last was of great importance in the event of any retrograde movement being necessary.

The mayor, like the celebrated Duke of Plaza-Tora, "led his regiment from behind; he found it less exciting"—in other words, he took up his position in the centre of the aforesaid road, and, surrounded by his staff, gallantly directed the operations. His friend, Colonel Trevor—an Indian veteran—stood by, but after the first five minutes ceased to offer suggestions. The mayor seemed to know so much.

So, for a quarter of an hour the battle raged with great fury, but without either side gaining any particular advantage. Whereat the Mayor of Torchester waxed merry, and confided to Colonel Trevor that he rather fancied he and his troops had demonstrated the impossibility of Pelham being captured by anything less than a couple of army corps.

Hardly had the mayor given vent to this proud boast than a sudden commotion made him turn his head. Two breathless figures stood before him.

"Why, Scoggins," exclaimed the mayor, for he recognised one of them as the town clerk, "what are you doing here?"

Scoggins replied, breathless and "h" less: "Come off 'ome at once, sir! An awful thing's 'appened! The school army's captured your 'ouse and set it afire! The whole place is upside-down, sir——"

"What!" thundered the mayor.

Scoggins's companion repeated the statement, adding a few picturesque additions, such as the town-hall being in danger, together with the lives of the inhabitants.

"The enemy seem to have outflanked you——" began Colonel Trevor.

The mayor waited to hear no more. In a brace of shakes he was off home, at a pace which baffled all pursuit.

The effect of this rapid retreat of their leader had a most disastrous effect on the town troops. Bad news circulates quickly, and Scoggins was a loquacious individual. He seemed to forget he was under fire, for he wandered in and out, distributing his woeful tidings. What was the result? The town army was seized with panic, and, to the astonishment of Mr. Jones—who, of course, knew nothing of what had occurred—they suddenly abandoned their position, and broke and fled.

Ten minutes later the school army decided on a bold course. They would occupy the ground lately vacated by their foes. They did so. No foe was to be found.

"Victory!" muttered Mr. Jones, and resolved to go a step further and penetrate into the fastnesses of Pelham itself.

In the meanwhile, the mayor and a sprinkling of followers had reached the scene of the conflagration. The crowd was large, and the Pelham fire-engine worked noisily. Little wonder, therefore, that the mayor experienced considerable difficulty in first of all making himself heard; and secondly, in shouldering his way through the densely-packed populace. However, he succeeded at length, and with a great clattering of his sword on the stone steps, he bounced into the hall.

"Where are the scoundrels?" he roared.

A medley of voices coming from upstairs convinced the mayor that the scoundrels were still on the premises. Upstairs he accordingly flew, and groping his way through the smoke, at length found himself in the room where the fire had originated.

If he had only have been calmer he would have seen at a glance that the danger was over. Unfortunately, he was not calm—nothing like it. He caught sight of several forms hovering about in the smoke, and as a nearer inspection showed him the majority were dressed in the uniform of the school cadet corps, his rage was so tremendous that all power of speech for the moment departed. Neither did part of the contents of a pail of water—thrown carelessly by Bob Russell—serve to cool him.

Now, the Pelham fire-brigade was a volunteer one, and some of the [illegible] ment of the moment [illegible] discretion. So it happened [illegible] particular member of the [illegible] to be in the room, no sooner [illegible] than he decided that here was [illegible] extreme measures.

Owing to the smoke, and [illegible] mayor was in uniform, he [illegible] nise him. He merely regarded [illegible] of the house who had temporarily [illegible] through fright. That would [illegible] traordinary antics. Very [illegible] rescued. So argued the fireman [illegible] name—long may that name [illegible] or wherever heroic deeds are [illegible]

Tomkins accordingly dashed at [illegible] seized him round the waist, hoisted [illegible] his struggles, over his shoulder, and [illegible] line for the window.

Jack and the others could only [illegible] gasp.

"Help! Help!" roared the mayor [illegible]

"Don't you worry yourself, [illegible]" fireman soothingly. "You'll be safe [illegible] a second."

Then he put one leg out of the window [illegible] the next minute was climbing down [illegible] with the terrified mayor in his arms.

For quite five minutes nothing [illegible] the cheers of the populace.

"Did you see who that was?" [illegible] collapsing limply against the wall.

Russell nodded. He was too full [illegible]

"There'll be a nice old row over [illegible] Jack. "I suppose we'd better go down [illegible] the music. Still, whatever the mayor [illegible] of us—and I reckon he thinks a good [illegible] any rate, we saved his house from burning down."

"I hope the magistrate will [illegible] when we're brought before him on the [illegible] of burglary," observed Russell [illegible]

In an extremely dejected state of [illegible] whole party adjourned downstairs and [illegible] into the street.

Their arrival in the street was [illegible] with that of Mr. Jones and the [illegible] corps. It was a stirring scene. In the [illegible] of an excited crowd of civilians, cadets [illegible] and policemen, was the Mayor of [illegible] apostrophising the Pelham [illegible] general, and the heroic Tomkins [illegible] Colonel Trevor was endeavouring to [illegible] outraged mayor, and Mr. Jones [illegible] vain attempts to discover what [illegible] occurred. High above all rose the [illegible] excited populace.

The appearance of Jack and his [illegible] the mayor's wrath into fresh channels.

"Ah!" he roared. "Here are the [illegible] who have been the cause of all this [illegible] content with setting my house on fire—"

"Why, it's Noble!" interrupted [illegible] "Noble, Russell, where have all you been? Why didn't you obey my orders and [illegible] main body?"

"So," thundered the mayor, "it was by your orders, Mr. Jones, that my house was set on fire! Very well! You will hear [illegible] solicitors to-morrow."

"But, my dear sir!" cried the [illegible] Jones. "I assure you I had no—"

"Whatever explanation you have [illegible] dealt with in due course. At the present moment, the less you say the better."

"But I insist upon speaking! Noble [illegible] mayor at once how this unfortunate [illegible] occurred."

"I refuse to listen!" cried the mayor.

"Come, come!" interposed Colonel [illegible] with a twinkle in his eye. "Perhaps [illegible] explanation. Which is the boy Noble? Now, my lad, let us hear exactly what [illegible]"

Jack felt rather embarrassed at [illegible] speak before so large and distinguished audience, but bottling up his nervousness [illegible] gave a full account of what had [illegible] Fortunately, the maidservant who had [illegible] into the house, was able to corroborate [illegible] evidence that they had entered after [illegible] before, the fire had broken out.

"Oh, I see, that's how it was," said [illegible] Trevor. "Really, this is the finest [illegible] ingenuity I have encountered in the [illegible] to-night. I suppose I have to congratulate [illegible] Captain Jones, on this plan. Excellent [illegible] A regular couldn't have done [illegible] cellent."

The leader of the school cadet corps [illegible] modestly. Jack's action [illegible] struck him in quite a new light.

"It may be that certain hints I dropped induced Sergeant Noble to slightly [illegible] orders," he said. "You as a military [illegible] understand, sir—"

"I understand perfectly," [illegible] colonel, who probably understood [illegible] either the mayor or Mr. Jones [illegible] "Now, old friend," he continued, turning [illegible] mayor, "you see exactly how it all [illegible] I'm sure you owe these lads a great [illegible] gratitude for their prompt action in [illegible] put out the fire. As for the little [illegible] fire-escape—well, let us be thankful [illegible] Pelham fire-brigade are so prompt and [illegible] like in their methods. Their state of [illegible] should make every one sleep sounder [illegible] beds at night."

The mayor seemed to have [illegible] on the subject, but holding Colonel Trevor [illegible] great respect, he so far relented as to [illegible] that it might have been worse [illegible] that they had all learnt [illegible] take. He hoped that to-night's experience [illegible] lessons from [illegible] at some length.

So ended the celebrated battle of Pelham.

THE END

(More splendid, complete yarns [illegible]