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The BOYS' FRIEND 1D



Magnificent New School Serial by DAVID GOODWIN Starts This Week.

SCHOOL AND MILL.

A Grand New Serial of Lancashire School Life.

BY DAVID GOODWIN.

THE 1st CHAPTER. The Runaway Mare, SAM OLOYD!

SAM OLOYD! The teacher of the geography class banged furiously with his book upon the desk, and glared at the cheery, freckled face of the boy sixth down from the top of the class.

"If I see you looking out of the window again, I'll keep you in for an hour!"

It was a fact. Sam Oloyd, the "half-timer," who spent half his day at the National School and the other half as a "piecer" in one of the biggest cotton mills in Boltham, had been guilty of the heinous crime of looking out of the window.

He found it dull in the class-room, and outside the frosty sun shone on a white world of snow.

"Aw reight, sir!" he said, with a face like a wax angel's.

The teacher turned his back to consult the map on the wall, and Sam, with a wink at his chum, Job Armstrong, stooped and made an imaginary snowball, which he pretended to hurl ferociously at the back of the teacher's neck in dumb show. The class spluttered with laughter, and Mr. Wade spun round angrily.

"Someone's playing the fool! It must be Oloyd!" he said fiercely. "It's always Oloyd! Oloyd, step out here!"

"Mr. Wade," said the head-teacher, suddenly entering, "I should like to consult you about these examination-papers, if you can see me after class. Ah, there goes the bell! You can let the boys go, I think!"

The hour struck, saving Sam Oloyd from the wrath to come, and as Mr. Wade did not like letting the head-teacher see that he could not keep order, no more was said. The boys of Wilde Street School were let loose, and they made the most of it.

Once clear of the room, with a wild yell, Sam charged out into the yard, seizing Job Armstrong and another boy by the waist. They ploughed along in a white spray of snow, and coming down heavily, rolled over and over in it. The others poured out like a swarm of bees.

Sam was on his feet in a moment, and hurled a snowball with unerring aim at the half-open mouth of one of the pupil-teachers, with whom Sam had a feud. The pupil-teacher rushed indoors to complain, but the rest of the crowd were involved in a tremendous snowball-fight in less than ten seconds, and cheering, laughing, and whooping they swept out into the roadway. The air was thick with the flying missiles.

Suddenly a sharp shout rent the air on the farthest fringe of the battle.

"T' collegers! There they coom, lads! Let's give 'em ginger!" All civil strife ceased as, if by magic, the name of Canterfield was enough to rouse every Wilde Street boy to fighting-pitch.

Canterfield College was the proud and wealthy establishment whose red towers rose to the sky at the edge of the moors, two miles outside Boltham. Only rich men could afford to send their sons there. Many of the boys looked always as if they had just come out of band-boxes—they carried canes and nice little silk handkerchiefs. They had playing-fields that were good enough for a Cup-tie match, and their parents often brought them out or fetched them away in motor-cars and private broughams. They called National and Board School boys "Cads!"

Sure enough, just at that moment one of the Canterfield waggonettes was heard approaching round the bend of the road, and a double row of top-hats could be seen across the wall. They had caught the sharp eye of Job Armstrong. In a few moments they would be in full view.

"We'll make t' beauties hop!" grinned Job fendishly. "Run oop, lads! Meet 'em at t' corner!"

"Nay! If they see us t' driver'll whip round an' go t' other way!" cried Sam Oloyd. His voice rang out sharply: "Get under cover, lads! Back behind t' wall wi' ye, un' let

'em get well oop! Ah'll give t' signal! Ambush t' beggars!"

Sam was a born general. At times of crisis all the boys of Wilde Street turned to him. In twenty seconds he had them all marshalled on the inner side of the school-yard wall on one side and the brickfields wall on the other, crouching close and out of sight, every warrior among them making and piling up snowballs as fast as his fingers could move.

The waggonette of Canterfield, all unsuspecting, moved slowly into range.

It came in full view as it rounded the corner—a noble sight. Twenty rosy-cheeked and haughty small boys, all wearing beautifully glossy silk-hats, and many in fur overcoats, sat in the body of the waggonette.

It was breaking-up day, and they were driving to Boltham Station on their way home for the Christmas holidays.

"Hallo!" said one of them, looking round. "There's the cads' school! Perkins is an ass to drive us this way! None of the animals are about, though!"

"They've all gone home to their tea and skilly, I suppose," said his chum superciliously, "or whatever it is the lower classes live on! Dirty little sweeps! The smell of them still hangs about the place, although they're gone!" he added, putting his handkerchief to his nose. "Ow!"

A hard snowball sent by the deadly hand of Sam Oloyd burst upon the collegers' mouth like a shell. It was the signal for a terrific fusillade.

The instant Sam appeared thirty marksmen bobbed up from behind the walls like Robin Hood's archers in Sherwood Forest, and the air became dark with snowballs, whizzing in from both sides of the road.

Shrieks of dismay, howls of laughter, and the bang and thump of missiles filled the street. Silk-hats were flying in every direction, and the triumphant yells of the enemy drowned the enraged cries of the Canterfielders.

"Drat the young demons!" gasped Perkins, the driver, whipping up his horse frantically. "Why don't the police run 'em in?"

"Down to t' corner, lads! Cut 'em off!" shouted Sam. "Get across quick!"

Swish! whizz! whack! came a tremendous volley, followed by a second; but just as the waggonette was drawing clear and getting up speed the boy on the box-seat seized the reins and dragged them out of the driver's hands in a rage.

"Pull up, Perkins!" he shouted angrily. "Pull up, I tell you! By gum, I'll do it for you, if you don't! Here goes, then! Come on, you fellows; we aren't going to stand this! Down with you, and give the little bounders pepper!"

The Canterfielders were sportsmen, after all. Stopping the waggonette by main force, despite the protests of the driver, who wanted to make off at a gallop, they scrambled down pell-mell, and in a few seconds were returning the fire with all their might. Such a furious affray had never been seen in Wilde Street.

"Hooray!" roared Sam Oloyd. "T' beggars ha' got some grit in 'em still! Who'd ha' thought it? Close in there on t' other side! Show 'em a bit o' reight Lancashire!"

He received a snowball in his right eye at that moment that made him stagger, and soon he and the leader of the Canterfielders were hurling them at each other at a distance of ten yards as if their lives depended on it. The college boys fought well and pluckily, considering they were outnumbered; but in a couple of minutes, thanks to Sam's generalship and to straight shooting, they were in full flight.

They clambered hastily into their waggonette, and disappeared at a canter amid a fog of snowballs and a roar of cheering. The National School boys were left on the victorious field with the honours of war.

"Well fowten, lads!" shouted Sam, picking up a battered top-hat and clapping it on his head. "Ah niver thowt t' kids had even that much pluck."

"Here cooms another on 'em!"

said Job Armstrong, and a broad grin spread over his face. "By gow! What sort o' animile ha' we got yonder? Is it one o' they dukes?"

Some way down the road a Canterfield boy was approaching who at once attracted all eyes. He was driving a high, spidery dogcart whose brasswork winked in the sun, drawn by a spirited chestnut mare. His top-hat was cocked right at the back of his head, and he drove as if he owned all Boltham. A remarkably pretty girl of about fourteen, dressed in silver-grey furs, sat beside him, and on the back seat was a slim, dark-haired boy, with an expression of mingled sulkiness and hauteur, though the youthful driver himself at least looked cheery and a good sort.

They were still some distance away, but nearer them was Joe Capp, one of the Wilde Street boys, who stooped swiftly and made an iron-hard snowball, which he pressed between both hands on his knee.

"Hi! Drop that!" shouted Sam Oloyd, his hands to his mouth. "Leave 'em alone, or thou'll hit the lassie! Drop it, or Ah'll clout thy head!"

Joe Capp took no notice. He hurled the snowball with all his force, not at the cart, but at the mare. It struck her full on the winkers, sending a stinging shower into her eyes.

The mare gave a terrified bound, reared straight up in the air, and

BUFFALO BILL

is Coming in the "B.F."

then dashed forward at a gallop. The young driver was flung head first out of the dogcart, and the mare tore away down the road with the trap bumping and swaying behind her.

"Goy!" said Job Armstrong, aghast. "That's done it!"

The girl in the cart, though nearly jerked out at every bound, made a plucky attempt to stop the maddened animal, but was helpless to do so. The boy at the back, instead of helping, was crazed with fear.

"Stop her, Gracie! Why don't you stop her?" he screamed, clinging on to the rail and trembling, white as paper.

"Gosh!" gasped Sam Oloyd, rushing out into the roadway. "There's t' engine! They'll be killed!"

A huge traction-engine, drawing two waggons, came puffing round the corner beyond, completely blocking up the road.

In a few seconds the runaway would have smashed into it at full speed. Horror-stricken, the boys who were in between tried wildly to turn the mare by shouting and roaring at her; but they had to dash out of the way as she galloped straight at them.

One, and only one, dared face the danger. Darting straight at the mare's head, Sam Oloyd caught the bridle by a lucky clutch, and held on with all his might. He was whirled off his feet and carried like a leaf on a mill-race, the thundering hoofs seeming to strike all round him.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Jerrold's Little Ways.

LET go, Sam!" cried the spectators, terrified. "Thou'll be smashed!"

To all who saw, it seemed absolutely certain that Sam would be hurled against the traction-engine and crushed to death between it and the dogcart. But his weight hindered the mare; she slowed, slipped up, and floundered to a standstill with a terrific jerk, almost touching the engine, in the very nick of time.

"My goom!" shouted the engine-driver, springing down and coming to Sam's aid, as he held the plunging horse. "That were t' smartest thing Ah ivver see! Ay, help t' lass

down!" he exclaimed, as willing hands lifted the girl out of the trap. "Thou can thank this lad, missie, that thou'st not a broken neck this minute!"

But the moment Sam had seen the trap safe, he darted off, and seized Joe Capp by the collar, shaking him like a rat.

"Thou yong swab, to play a dirty trick like that wi' a lassie in t' cart!" he cried fiercely. "Stand oop, an' Ah'll gie thee t' biggest drubbin' thou ever—"

"Hold on!" said a voice at his ear, and a hand was laid on Sam's arm. "I dare say he didn't mean it."

Sam turned, and to his surprise saw the boy who had been pitched out of the trap. A big snow heap had saved him from injury. His hat was gone, and he was smothered in snow from head to foot, his nose was cut and bleeding; but there was a frank, jolly look about his face that made Sam Oloyd suddenly take to him.

"Let the kid off!" said the young stranger. "I don't suppose he knew what a rotten, silly thing he was doing! I ought to have kept the mare in hand. I say, you're the biggest brick I ever struck in my life! By Jove, you're a ripper!" He shook Sam's hand enthusiastically again and again. "If it hadn't been for you, my sister might have been killed! Here, come along; she's got to thank you!"

He dragged the bewildered Sam up to the cart.

"Hi, Gracie! This is the chap you owe your neck to—you and Jerrold, too! He ought to jolly well have the V.C.!"

"I think you're the bravest boy I ever saw!" said the girl, her eyes sparkling as she shook Sam's hand. "I don't know how to thank you! You were splendid!"

"It—it wasn't anything at all, miss," stammered Sam, blushing to the roots of his hair.

"It's no more than the fellow ought to have done!" said the black-haired boy viciously. He was still very pale. "It was one of his dirty little mates who frightened the mare! Which was the one? I'm going to have him locked up! Get me a policeman, one of you!"

"Oh, shut up, Jerrold!" said the other impatiently. "You aren't hurt, so you've nothing to make a fuss about. Grace doesn't mind. I say!" he added, catching Sam by the arm just as he was trying to slip away quietly. "Where are you off to? Home to tea? No, you're not! You're coming with us!" He dealt Sam a tremendous slap on the back. "Isn't he, Grace? We're jolly well not going to let you go! Nip into the dogcart—the mare won't bolt twice!"

He fairly hoisted the astonished Sam into the trap.

"Are we going to have that boundah in the cart with us?" said the black-haired boy with an angry snort. "What for? I'm not going to sit next him, for one!"

"You horrid little beast, Jerrold!" said the girl, under her breath, turning on him with flashing eyes. "To insult him like that! It's a pity you haven't his pluck! If you say another word I won't speak to you for a month!"

The black-haired boy collapsed, muttering something about "boundah," but Sam did not hear it. He was quite bewildered at the speed with which they carried him off.

In a few seconds three of them were all squeezed in on the front seat—the black-haired boy sitting in sulky solitude behind—and the dogcart dashed away amid the cheers and laughter of the crowd.

"Here, howd on!" exclaimed Sam, realising what was happening to him. "This won't do! Ah can't go wi' thee!"

"Your people expecting you at home? Will they mind?" said the young driver, whipping up the mare.

"Nay, not that," said Sam. He had no parents, and lived with an old cotton-operative, who cared very little what became of him. "I've no folk. But—"

"That's all right, then—the very thing! You'll come and spend your holidays with us—we're just going home for Christmas! We'll have a ripping time! I live with my uncle—it's only six miles on the other side of Boltham," said Sam's new friend enthusiastically. "Can you ride? I should think you can by the way you stopped the mare. I've got two new ponies—you can use which you like—and there'll be plenty of shooting and pike-fishing—"

"Goy!" exclaimed Sam, quite

dazed at this suggestion. "Who is thy uncle?"

"Mr. Neville Latimer's his name. Mine's Cecil Latimer. This is my sister Grace, and that's Jerrold Vane, my cousin, sitting behind. Rum chap," whispered Cecil, with a wink, "but no end clever. His mother was a Latimer too."

"Neville Latimer, of Latimer & Co.'s Mills?" cried Sam excitedly.

"That's it."

Sam nearly fell out of the cart with surprise.

"Here, hi—pull oop!" he exclaimed. "Ah'm not goin' any further! Ah work for Latimer & Co.!"

Cecil Latimer gave a roar of laughter, and drove on faster than ever.

"This beats cock-fighting!" he said. "What! Do you hate us as much as that?"

"Nay, t'mill's aw reight, but Ah'm only a little piecer there—Ah'm not fettle to go along o' swells like thee! Ah wean't go to Mr. Latimer's house!" said Sam in a panic.

"Yes, you will, my buck! I've got you under my giddy wing!" said Cecil gleefully. "Catch me letting go the chap who saved my sister till I've done him a good turn!"

"Why, you aren't afraid of Uncle Neville, are you?" said Grace Latimer, laughing. "He's a dear old thing! I'll tell him to make you a spinner, or whatever it is!"

"Me a minder!" said Sam, with a splutter of laughter. "Well, missy, thy brother's got me, but Ah wish Ah could get down—Ah'm fayed of Mr. Latimer!"

The name of the great cotton millionaire had always been one of awe to Sam Oloyd, though there were very few things in this world he stood in awe of. And that feeling did not grow any smaller when, after a rapid drive through Boltham and into the hills to the north of the town, they turned in at the lodge-gates, and rattled away through the splendid park surrounding Amberley Hall, and pulled up in front of the great mansion which was Mr. Latimer's country seat.

The wide double-doors flew open as the trap rolled up, a groom ran out from the stables and stood at the horse's head, while Cecil helped his sister down.

A tall, grey-haired old gentleman, with a shrewd, kindly face, came down the steps. It was Mr. Neville Latimer himself.

"Welcome home, Jerrold, my boy! Welcome, Cecil!" he cried cheerily. "Hallo! Who's this?"

Sam shrank back, conscious of his shabby clothes and thick clogs, but Cecil put an arm through his, and fairly hauled him forward.

"My word, uncle, you can thank this new pal of mine that we're here at all! He did the finest thing I ever saw, and how it is he wasn't smashed to a pulp is more than I can tell! It'd have meant broken necks for Grace and Jerrold if he hadn't been there. He saved their lives! I want him to stop for the holidays!"

In glowing words Cecil Latimer enthusiastically poured out the story of the runaway, and how Sam had averted the smash. He was a generous boy, and he made a most thorough hero of Sam. His sister chimed in, and extolled Sam's deed to the skies.

"Well done!" cried Mr. Latimer, grasping Sam's hands and shaking them heartily. "That was a plucky act, and pluckily carried out! I owe you more than I can tell you, my boy! What is your name?"

"Sam Oloyd, sir," stammered the half-timer, crimson as beetroot. "Wh-what Ah did was nowt at all. Ah'm nobut a little piecer in thy mill, sir—"

"In my mill!" said Mr. Latimer, taking him by the arm and leading him into the house willy-nilly. "I didn't know I'd got so smart a youngster there! Come along, Sam—don't be shy—I want to know more about you. By the way, tea's just in. Can you eat a tea?"

"Can a duck swim!" burst out Sam, forgetting his shyness, for he was ravenously hungry.

Mr. Latimer laughed heartily, and led the way across the huge square hall to a beautifully-furnished room, where such a tea as Sam had never dreamed of was set out on little tables before a blazing fire.

Mr. Latimer sent the others away, and Sam, losing the last of his bashfulness, obeyed orders and stowed away such a cargo of hot scones, tea-cake, parkin, jam-sandwiches, and sardine-toast as made his host wonder and chuckle.

While Sam ate, Mr. Latimer, who had the gift of making people talk, soon drew from the boy all that he could tell about himself and his life—

SCHOOL AND MILL.

(Continued from the previous page.)

the life of a half-timer in a great cotton-mill. As he was finishing, Cecil came in.

"He's going to stop, isn't he, uncle?" the boy said eagerly.

"As long as ever he likes," said Mr. Latimer heartily; "for I find there's no one in Boltham he need trouble about! And I hope my nephews will make you happy here for the holidays, Sam! I should like to see more of you."

"Me stay here!" said Sam staring. "A poor chap like me! A little peecer!"

"My boy," said Mr. Latimer kindly, dropping a hand on his shoulder, "no lad with courage and honesty is poor—he's bound to rise. As for little peecers—why, I was one myself once. Cecil, take your young guest, and give him the best time that Amberley Hall can show!"

"Hurrah!" cried Cecil, giving Sam a mighty thump on the back. "We'll make the feathers fly, Sam, before we've done! Five whole weeks—and we'll make the most of it!"

"What!" exclaimed Jerrold Vane, coming into the room. "Do you mean to say that boundah is going to stay in this house?"

He checked himself and coloured as he saw his uncle. Luckily for him, Mr. Latimer had gone over to the window, and did not hear the words. Cecil's eyes blazed.

"Look here, Jerry," he said fiercely, under his breath, "what do you mean by this?"

"I mean that gentlemen ought not to be expected to consort with chaps of that class," retorted Jerrold, in the same low tone. "What d'you want him here for? If you think he's done any good, give him ten bob, and send him home to his slums!"

"I tell you this much!" whispered Cecil hotly. "He's going to stay! And if you check him while he's here, you'll get the best hiding you ever had in your life!"

Then he turned on his heel, and, taking Sam by the arm, led him away. There was not a trace of side or swagger about Cecil Latimer. He showed Sam all over Amberley Hall, made him free of everything, put his best pony at the boy's disposal, and Sam found him the jolliest and most sporting companion he had ever met with. Cecil, for his part, grew more interested in Sam and his accounts of his life in Boltham as they roamed through the house and chatted together.

"You're a nailing good sort, Sam," Cecil said. "I wish we had you at Canterfield."

"Haw, haw!" guffawed Sam. "Ah'd look a rum 'un there! S'pose it's fine to be at a school like that, though?"

"Well, we do have some sport! Lots of life at Canterfield—I'll say that for it!"

"Ah, but thou's a rich man's son—or nephew! It's different for thee! Happen thou will have all t' mills for thy own some day—all Latimer's Mills!"

Cecil jumped up on the oak chest by the hall window, and sat there with his legs swinging.

"I'll tell you how it is," he said. "Jerry Vane and I are both Uncle Neville's nephews, and the idea is that we're to get half shares. See? We're to divide the mill, and all it brings in. Grace, my sister, gets this house, and a lot of money separately. But of course, all that's when uncle is gone—and I hope he'll live to be a hundred and fifty! He's the best chap going! Jerry and I are the same as sons to him!"

"Thy Cousin Jerrold don't seem to like me."

"He's a rum chap, Jerry. You mustn't take him too seriously," said Cecil hastily. He could never get on with his cousin, but felt bound to be loyal to him. "He doesn't mean to be rude. And I say, Sam, if you notice anything a bit queer while you're here—about Jerry, I mean—keep it to yourself. See? My uncle's the kindest man living, but if he found one of us doing—well, something that he didn't think right—why, he'd make jolly short work of him. Nobody uncle didn't think was straightforward would ever be allowed a finger in his mills nor get a penny out of them. He'd be sent to the right-about pretty quick!"

"I see," said Sam. "But thy cousin—"

"All I mean is that Jerrold's got some rum ways, and if you see any-

thing of it, keep it to yourself," said Cecil, a little confused. "He wants to be a man—of a sort—before he's much of a boy. Uncle never sees anything unless it's stuck under his nose—he trusts a fellow always. But I know you're not the sort to talk—I wouldn't have brought you here if you were. I don't want to get Jerry into trouble, and, as I said, he's a bit of an ass in some ways."

Sam was puzzled. He had no notion what Cecil was driving at, and it was several days before something happened that showed him what was meant.

He had the time of his life at Amberley Hall, and but that the tale of his doings there has nothing to do with this story, I would set them down. He rambled all over the estate with Cecil, caught a twelve-pound pike in the river, nearly shot himself while out after pheasants, fell off Cecil's pony until he learned to stick on, and generally enjoyed himself beyond belief.

Cecil put him up to everything—lent him clothes, without ever hurting his feelings—and the two were inseparable. Mr. Latimer was always kind and cheery to him. The only fly in Sam's ointment was Jerrold Vane, who hated the mill-boy, and let him feel it.

Jerrold was not like Cecil. He cared nothing for sport—except betting-news—or the open air. He never accompanied the other two on their rambles, but disappeared and went off by himself, and sometimes was away for a night or two together. Sam thought he was the oldest boy for his years he had ever come across. He seemed to be able also to do practically as he liked, and it struck Sam that he was slightly the favourite of the two nephews with Mr. Latimer.

It was on the fifth day, by a pure accident, that Sam discovered what Cecil meant by his warning. The young visitor was seeking his chum on the top floors of the great house—Cecil had gone up to rent out some fishing-rods—when he opened the door of a box-room at the end of a passage.

"Hallo, Cecil!" he exclaimed, and then he started back with an exclamation of astonishment. And well he might.

It was not Cecil he had found, but Jerrold Vane. That worthy youth was lounging in a hammock-chair, with a very green face, a large cigar between his lips, a tumbler of brandy-and-soda on a box beside him, and a sporting paper in his hands.

He started up in a panic as Sam came in, and made a wild attempt to sweep the glass and the cigar out of sight. This terror was natural, for Mr. Latimer was a strong teetotaller and non-smoker, and a still stronger hater of anything like lying or deceit. But when Jerrold saw who the intruder was his fright turned to fury.

"You!" he said, striding forward savagely. "It's you, is it, you spy and sneak?" He choked with anger. "Spy and sneak! Spy and sneak! You're always slinking about after me! You low, gutter-bred cad, you'll let the old chap know, will you? Just to curry favour!" He worked himself into such a rage that the boy did not know what he was doing, for Jerrold's temper was absolutely uncontrollable. "Cad and liar!" he shrieked, and struck the astounded Sam full across the face with all his might.

Sam Olroyd staggered back, his eyes blazing. He recovered himself, and sprang forward to the attack, his iron-hard fists clenched. Jerrold, like the coward he was, shrank quickly away; but Sam mastered himself with a mighty effort, and stood still, glaring at the boy who had struck him.

"If this wasn't thy house," Sam said between his teeth, "an' me a visitor here, I'd smash thee! But I promised to Cecil, who's worth fifty o' thee, that I'll let thee alone!" Sam picked up the glass of brandy-and-soda and hurled it with a crash into the fireplace. Then, sweeping Jerrold aside with one stroke of his powerful young arm, he strode out of the room.

Sam Olroyd was white and trembling with anger. How he had kept his hands off Jerrold he did not know. He felt disgusted and sick to his very soul every time he

thought of Jerrold Vane, the insults, and the blow that had been struck. Sam was slow to rouse. But once roused he was a very hard nut to deal with.

"Ah can't stay here!" he said to himself fiercely. "Ah shall go for him whenever Ah see him. There'll be such a row as'll bust him up. An' that ain't fair to Cecil nor to Mr. Latimer, who've been main decent to me. Ah like Cecil better'n any chap livin', 'cept Job Armstrong!" A fierce outburst of anger shook him again. "Ah'll clear out, an' get back to work. Boltham for me! A chap can use his hands there, if another chap hits him!"

Sam may have been wrong, but there was no moving him from his resolution—he felt he could not explain to Mr. Latimer and Cecil, or see them again. If he did, the whole thing might come out, and there would be trouble all round. He did not want to bring trouble to Amberley Hall.

He scribbled a note in the library, sealed it up, and left it on the hall table.

"Dere Cecil, I've gone back to Boltham, and ain't likely to see you no more. If you want to no why, ask Jerrold. It's better for you I should go, as I ain't much class, and should only make trouble. I am sorry, because I like you uncommon. Please thank Master Latimer very much for all his kindness. He would understand if he knew."

"If I could paste Jerry in the eye it would do us both good. But that won't do.—Yours, "SAM OLROYD."

hurried along with a quicker step, and a lighter heart than most. He did not have to go to school now as well as to the mill. The school holidays lasted a long time yet, but the mill holidays did not.

The mill opened again after Christmas, and Sam had to return to work. Latimer & Co.'s was an easier mill than most, too—it gave three days longer holiday than any other, and as Christmas Day happened to fall on a Tuesday, Latimer's had been shut for all the rest of the week. It was now Monday morning.

Sam had not forgotten Amberley Hall. He tried not to think about it. The present job seemed too miserable, after the splendid time he had had there. But it took a good deal to dash Sam's spirits, and, besides, he was rather late. He had to run the last part of the way, and dashed through the gates of the huge yard of Latimer & Co., which stood, not in the town itself, but on the outskirts, with a good deal of open, rough ground and building sites round it, the main streets into Boltham opening close by. Sam passed the timekeeper and dashed upstairs, shouting greetings to several of his friends who were already going into the spinning-rooms to work. He made straight for the changing-lobby, where he always got rid of his clogs and jacket.

"Hallo, Job!" he cried gleefully, gripping his chum, Armstrong, by the hand. "Ah'm main glad to see thee! Ah've had a rum time of it. Ah'll tell thee all about it—"

Suddenly the head overlooker, Elir Stott, slipped in round the

possible the owner of the mills was taking any interest in this wretched little half-timer?

Sam brushed straight past him without a word, and went down to his work with Job Armstrong. He would have given a year's pay to be big enough to challenge Mr. Stott to come outside and take off his coat. But he must obey or starve.

"Ah'd like to wring that bully's neck!" said Job Armstrong fiercely, for Stott's treatment of his chum enraged him. "Ah'll tell him—"

"Nay, let it alone or thou'll make it worse for thyself, old chap," said Sam. "Coom on!"

The two boys worked in the big No. 1 Spinning-room of the Annexe. The Annexe was a new building of two storeys, built on to the end of the great mill itself, and connected with it by passages and doors. The business was growing so fast that they had to increase the space. Sam soon found himself back in his wheelgate once more.

The hum and roar of machinery, the bare, slippery floor, the warm smell of engine-oil and cotton, and the whirling wheel-bands filled the great room. The wheelgate in which the half-timer and his chum worked was a large space surrounded by tall spinning frames, and traversed by a great vehicle called a mule-carriage, that ran back and forth spinning the threads. The "minder" who had charge of the wheelgate was a sour-looking man of forty. The boys worked under him, and their job was to stand in the midst of those two thousand whirling spindles and instantly bend or "piece-up" any thread that broke while it was being spun.

It was also Sam's duty to dash in as the mule-carriage drew back, and sweep the floor with the great brush, dashing out again before the mule rushed forward again. If it caught him it would smash him like an egg. He risked his life like this a good many times a day, and though it was against the law to make him do it, Sam had to obey. He did not mind, but carried out the job without troubling his head about the danger.

"All's ready!" shouted the over-looker from the end of the room. "Set the gears in!"

The morning's work was in full swing. Sam, barefooted and dressed only in cotton trousers and shirt, toiled at the piecing and "sweeping-under" for a full hour with hardly any leisure to look round him. The threads were breaking badly that morning. Job Armstrong was working just as hard. Presently things became a little easier, and Job found himself next to his chum.

"Did thou hear that owd Latimer's nephews are comin' to see t' mill to-day?" he said.

"What!" exclaimed Sam. "They're goin' to be shown over t' whole blessed factory. Ah s'pose they'll own it some day, an' t' old man's goin' to make 'em understand t' business. They're comin' to lord it over us," he added with a grin. "Why, here they are!"

At that moment the doors opened at the end of the spinning-room, and Jerrold Vane entered, with Cecil Latimer close behind him. The millowner's nephews were being shown over their uncle's vast possessions that one day were to be their own. Elir Stott was acting as their guide. He smiled and smirked and cringed to the two boys as if he were their flunkey.

Cecil Latimer was looking quite excited as he passed through the spinning-room. He was immensely interested in everything he saw, and asked Stott endless questions, stopping to laugh and joke with the operators as he passed. Cecil was popular everywhere. Jerrold Vane, on the other hand, looked intensely bored with the whole affair. He stalked along haughtily, looking down his nose at the workers; he complained of the noise, and said the smell of oil was disgusting. He put a scented handkerchief constantly to his nose, and kept urging Cecil to hurry up and come out of the beastly place.

Sam Olroyd cast one glance down the room at them, and swiftly turned his back and went to work as far up the wheelgate as he could. He felt he did not want the Latimer boys to see him at all. They would only sneer at him, working there in his bare feet for a few shillings, while they had all the money they wanted, and did nothing but wear fine clothes and sneer at fellows who could thrash them with one hand. Sam felt a wild rebellion at that moment against everybody who was better off than himself. The sight of Jerrold raised his gall. Even Cecil—



The occupants of the burning mill rushed out just in time, but the last of them, on the very brink of safety, was dashed to the ground by a heavy beam. It was Neville Latimer!

Twenty minutes later Sam was striding along the high road clear of Amberley Hall, and he paused and looked back for a moment at the great house.

"Ah wunner how long it takes rich folk to forget poor folk?" he said with a sigh.

Then, whistling dolorously between his teeth to keep up his spirits, Sam, the half-timer, tramped back to the gloom and mud and chimneys of Boltham.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. Fire!

CLAMP! Clamp! Clamp! The dark streets of the great cotton city were echoing to the rattle of ten thousand clogs. It was past five o'clock in the morning, and Boltham was going to work. Shivering figures, stale from want of sleep and pinched by the raw cold, thronged the streets in myriads. The huge cotton-mills showed lights at all their windows, and here and there a factory shaft belched red flames into the sky as the furnaces were made ready. Men, and women and children, tired before the day had begun, had to tramp off to the mills.

Sam Olroyd was among them. He

corner in the peculiar, noiseless way he had.

"Late again, thou young runagate! Why isn't thou at thy wheelgate?" He gave Sam a savage cuff that sent him reeling. "Get there inside a minute, or Ah'll sack thee!"

Sam, gasping from the force of the blow, shut his teeth tight and pulled off his clogs. It was no part of Stott's duty to go about hunting up half-timers, but the head over-looker, not daring to bully the older hands, took it out of the boys. He was a thick-set man with an inflamed red face, and was generally detested.

"Thou hears me!" he cried threateningly as he went out. "This ain't t' place for cubs to chatter in. Next time, out thou goes!"

"Tha'st better not clout young Olroyd's head any more," said one of the timekeepers grinning, as he met Stott at the door. "Ah've heard he spent Christmas w' owd Latimer an' his boys, an' p'raps he'll get thee sacked instead."

"Wot!" Mr. Stott almost exploded. "Who are thou getting at?"

He was assured it was true, and though he could not believe it, he stared at Sam for a moment or two in blank perplexity. Mr. Stott was a toady, as well as a bully. Had he made a mistake? Could it be

He was roused by a tremendous slap between the shoulders, and before he knew what had happened Cecil Latimer was shaking his hand as if he would pull it off.

"Why, Sam, old chap!" cried Cecil delightedly. "Here you are at last! What the dickens did you mean by scotching off like that? Uncle was awfully sick about it. We've been looking for you everywhere!"

"Ah couldn't help it," said Sam, all his anger disappearing as he met Cecil's frank look. There was something about Cecil that Sam could never resist. He began to feel a beast for having run away from Amberley as he had done. "Ah'm awful sorry, but—"

"Come on, Cecil!" cried Jerrold impatiently; and a dark shade came over his face as he saw the mill-boy. He hated to see Sam talking to his cousin. "Hurry up, I tell you, and let's go!"

Cecil turned his back on him without a word. He knew it was Jerrold's doing that Sam had had to leave Amberley, and he was unable to forget it. Jerrold's face, as Cecil drew the mill-boy aside, grew livid with anger. He felt inclined to fling Sam in among the machinery. A sudden thought occurred to him.

Nobody was looking. Stott was talking to the minder of the wheel-gate, Sam and Cecil had their backs to him. Jerrold was standing just behind Sam. There was a loose match in Jerrold's pocket, and he drew it out.

What his idea was, he could hardly have told himself, but he guessed that any blame falling on Sam would get the half-timer into the worst of trouble.

Jerrold struck the match on his sleeve. It was a "silent" vesta, and as the flame broke, hid in the hollow of his hand, he touched it quickly against one of the long threads that ran from the spindles to the mule-carriage. It was all done in a second, and he had crushed out the match in his hand, and thrust it into his pocket.

Flash! Puff!

The flame ran along the thread quick as lightning, and in an instant the spindle was ablaze. Before there was time to think, the flame had caught a hundred other threads, and was flashing along them back to the mule, and again to the spindles. Before one could count five, the whole frame was a sheet of fire, and the mule, moving swiftly along, carried the flames all down the wheel-house, flaring to the ceiling, and sending the sparks far and wide. For an instant the occupants of the wheel-house stood aghast—Jerrold more so than any of them.

"Fire!" yelled the minder, running frantically for one of the water-buckets on the wall. "Help, here, quick! What devil was it went and fired the spindles?"

"It was this chap! He set a match to the cotton!" cried Jerrold, in terror, pointing to Sam.

"You cad!" cried Cecil hotly, grasping him. "He didn't do it, and you know it! I believe it was you!"

Jerrold gave a gasp of rage and fright at the accusation, and wrenching himself free, gave Cecil a furious push straight at the mule. Cecil's foot slipped on the oily floor, and the next moment he would have been crushed to a pulp by the flaming carriage if Sam Oloyd had not gripped him in the nick of time, and jerked him out of the way.

Jerrold fled out of the burning wheel-house as if he were demented, and Cecil scrambled to his feet. Sam paid no more attention to either of them, but rushed to the buckets, and began flinging water on the flames with all his might.

Never did a fire spread with more deadly speed. The whole wheel-gate was in flames by now, and the flying sparks caught a great pile of dry waste cotton further on, and this flared up as if it were gunpowder. The folding-doors at the end of the room were opened at that moment, and a violent draught swept through and showered the flaming waste among the other mules. The entire spinning-room was soon roaring and blazing.

"Brigade!" roared the under-manager, rushing into the room. "Fall in the brigade! Take your places, quick! Hoses and axes! Man the hydrants!"

Already the men were uncoiling the hoses with all speed, even before the order was given. Nearly every able-bodied man in Latimer's belonged to the mill fire-brigade, and they often did fire-drill. Even the senior half-timers were members, and had their jobs to do.

Sam had rushed to his place the

moment the buckets became useless, and had uncapped the big water-hydrant which belonged to his section. He was reckoned the smartest of all the juniors at drill, but he had never seen a real fire before except a small one in the engine-sheds the year before.

In a twinkling the hoses were screwed together, and streams of water were playing on the flames. Everybody worked like niggers, and the pipes fought the crackling fire back for a while. Jerrold Vane had bolted at the first opportunity, but Cecil Latimer had thrown his coat off, and was toiling with the rest, blackened and dripping, to clear the place, and prevent the flames spreading.

But No. 1 Spinning-room was doomed. The fire was devouring it apace, and the men were soon driven right out of it. The brigade had to devote every ounce of energy to cutting the fire off in other directions. "The Annexe is done for!" cried the manager, seeing it was beyond hope. "All the hoses together here, and make sure it doesn't spread to the main buildings!"

Nobody doubted for a moment that they would be able to save the mill itself, even though the Annexe had to go. But suddenly a shout arose from the party who had been sent to get through the lower carding-room on the ground floor and reach the hoses and hydrants on the other side.

"We're cut off! We can't get through!"

"What!" roared the manager, rushing horror-stricken to the spot. "You must get through! It's easily stopped if you can get at those hoses! If you don't the mill's doomed!"

It was doomed indeed! With a thrill of dismay, the men saw that the fire had suddenly broken through into the central rooms of the Annexe, and a roaring sheet of flame, thin but fierce, prevented their getting through to the other pipes and hydrants.

Those hydrants were the key to safety. If they were brought into action—even one of them—the fire could be prevented from reaching the mill itself. If they were not, then Latimer & Co. was doomed. Everybody could see that. Over 600 men would be thrown out of work.

There was no way round—it could only be done by going through the fire. The hydrants ought to have been manned before; but nobody is all-wise, and the manager had hoped to save the Annexe itself.

"Get through, for Heaven's sake!" he cried.

The men tried to face that wall of flame, but they were beaten back, scorched and blackened. Even if they got through and reached the hoses, it might be too late now.

"It's no good, guv'nor!" shouted Stott. "We can't get through! If a chap got there, an' then couldn't stop it, he'd be cooked alive!"

"Then the whole mills are done for!" groaned the manager.

"Let me try!" shouted Sam excitedly, and his small form came cleaving through the crowd like a bullet.

He tied a cloth that had been soaked in the hose-water over his mouth and nose, and ran straight at the mass of flame and smoke.

To the utter amazement of everybody, he plunged straight into it and disappeared. Without a thought to the danger the active little half-timer shot through the fire, where the slower and heavier men had failed. He knew he would find the concrete floor safe underfoot, and that once through the smoky barrier, there would be a free space clear of all fire as yet in the iron-built rooms behind.

Once he stumbled, and thought he was done, but Sam came through on the other side, gasping and half-choked, but with no worse injuries than singed hair and scorched hands. It was his speed that had saved him.

Once through to the farther rooms, he reached the little open courtyard in the middle, and in a twinkling he had screwed up one of the hoses, and connected it to the hydrant. A few turns of the lever brought a tremendous four-inch stream spouting through the hose, and, lifting it up, he directed it at the oncoming fire, that was beginning to ring the courtyard all round.

And now Sam Oloyd carried his life literally in his hands. To go back was impossible, and unless he stopped the fire single-handed and saved the mill, he would be burnt to death. He knew it well.

Luckily, with the huge main-pipe hose he had, and the position he was now in, he could do more good than all the brigade outside put together. There was just a fair chance for him,

and no more. He must save the mill, or perish in the ruins of the blazing Annexe.

With a thrill running through every nerve in his body, he began to fear he had left it too late. The fire gained, the heat all round him grew terrific, the sparks flew in myriads, and the smoke rolled in vast clouds. The flames were already licking the very walls of the great factory building itself, threatening to take hold every second.

Sam found himself fainting, gasping, his strength leaving him. He almost sank to the ground as his hose played a mighty hissing stream all along the base of the fire.

The men of Latimer's were trying heroically to reach him, but it was utterly impossible. The boy inside was wholly cut off from them, and hardly anybody supposed he could be alive. The regular Boltham firemen had arrived with two engines, but they saw at once that all their force could never save the mill if the flames gripped it at the windowed end—and even the helmeted firemen could not get through to where Sam was.

In the very midst of that inferno of flame, surrounded only by a breathing-space that grew less and less, the sturdy little half-timer directed his hose with unerring aim at the one place which he saw must be saved if the mill was not to go. It was only twenty feet long or so, but he kept the stream playing all along it, for it meant life or death to him.

The fire gained. Scorched, blistered, gasping for breath, he sank to his knees, keeping the hose up with the last of his strength.

A flash of hope returned. A gasping cheer came from his cracked lips. Success! The line of flame was giving way. It grew feebler and feebler. It retreated from the great wall of Latimer's Mill, and became a mere hissing, spluttering volcano of smoke. The mill was saved!

Sam could do no more. He collapsed where he was, and the hose spouted its stream over the ground.

BUFFALO BILL

is Coming in the "B.F."

The Annexe building was burning itself out. The men outside, able to get at the fire now that Sam had cut off the worst of it from spreading, presently got the remainder well under control, and saved the last quarter of the Annexe where the boy lay. Three helmeted firemen, with a couple of Latimer's men, burst through into the courtyard, and gave a shout of joy as they saw Sam was safe.

"It's the little nipper that's done it!" cried one of the mill-hands. "We'd never ha' got through but for him! Is tha' hurt, lad? Howd him up, mates, an' give him some water!"

They soon revived Sam between them. He pulled himself together, and quickly got over his exhaustion.

Delighted to find he was not hurt, they ran him quickly out of the courtyard, for the whole buildings were now in danger of collapse. As they came through into the scorched and blackened outer hall, which was now dripping with water and full of Latimer's men, who had swarmed in, a tremendous cheer was raised.

"Hooray for young Oloyd—t' pluckiest youngster in Boltham! Three cheers for t' kid that saved t' mill!"

To Sam's astonishment, Mr. Neville Latimer himself came hurrying forward, hatless and dripping. He had arrived at the height of the fire, and hearing what Sam had done, the old mill-owner toiled and strove like the youngest man there to try and save him.

"My lad, we owe the mill to you!" he cried. "I'm proud to be a Lancashire man while we grow such lads as you, and I'll repay you this a hundredfold! Cecil—"

"Look out!" roared a fireman suddenly. "Out o' this, all o' ye, quick! T' place is nigh comin' down!"

The man's quick eye had seen the danger only just in time. The fire had made the whole place utterly unsafe, and the water was making things worse. One of the walls split right across—the roof suddenly began to bulge downwards.

There was a rush for the open. Everybody turned and fled instantly. There were no doors to get through, for the outer wall was composed of great sliding wooden gates, most of which stood open. But the warning barely came in time. With a rattle

and a roar the whole vast room collapsed in a cloud of dust.

There was a cry and a stumble, drowned in the uproar of the wreckage. One man was struck down, and one only, for the rest dashed out just in time. The last of the fugitives, on the very brink of safety, was dashed to the ground by a heavy beam from the ceiling, and lay motionless and silent, his grey hair dabbled with blood.

It was Neville Latimer, the great mill-owner, himself.

THE 4th CHAPTER.

The Hand at the Window-sill.

CECIL LATIMER gave a wild cry, and dashed back among the ruins. He had thought his uncle was the first out, and when he realised what had happened his grief was intense. He knelt by the old man's side, and tried to raise his head.

"Uncle, speak to me!" he said piteously. A sob broke from the boy's lips. "Oh, he's dead!"

"Nay, lad, not dead!" said one of the minders gravely as he stooped. "Ah'm feared he's not far off it, though!" he added, under his breath. "A bad day for us all if we've lost Neville Latimer. Here, lads, lift him out! A doctor—quick!"

A stretcher was brought instantly, for the mill was well equipped, and a doctor, who had hurried to the scene of the fire, at once attended Latimer. He looked so bad that the hearts of those around fell, and had the unconscious man removed gently and rapidly.

Sam Oloyd was horrified at the disaster. He had been close at Mr. Latimer's side when it happened, and had himself escaped scot-free. The sight of the old gentleman's dead-white face gave him a dreadful shock, and his eyes filled with tears as he remembered the kindnesses with which Mr. Latimer had loaded him at Amberley. Cecil was beside himself with anxiety and fear; his instinct told him the worst had happened.

There was a cottage on the open brickfield just beyond the mills, where one of the minders lived. It was the nearest place where a bed was to be found, and the injured man was taken there at once.

Cecil and the doctor alone remained with him in the bed-room, but as the surgeon was examining Mr. Latimer the door opened softly, and Jerrold Vane stole into the room. There was a curious look on his dark face as he peered at the bed.

Cecil cast one glance towards his cousin, but he could not trust himself to speak. The doctor left the bedside.

"You are Mr. Latimer's nephews, are you not?" he said gravely. "I must not hide the truth from you. Your uncle is injured beyond hope of recovery. He cannot live for more than an hour!"

Neville Latimer opened his eyes as the surgeon was speaking. His face was white as marble.

"You are right, doctor," he said faintly; "I know that I must die. You can do nothing for me. Please leave me with my nephews, for I must settle my earthly affairs, and do justice before I go!"

The doctor retired sadly, and Cecil dropped on his knees by the bedside in a passion of grief.

"Don't take it to heart, boy," said Mr. Latimer gently, his cold hand clasping Cecil's. "You have been as a son to me, and I am an old man. Come nearer, Jerrold. I want you"—he paused for breath—"to bring here as soon as you can that fine little fellow Oloyd, for I must reward him fittingly before I go. We owe the safety of the mill to his courage. He must be provided for as he deserves, for he is poor."

Jerrold Vane gave a start, and moved nearer.

"My dear uncle," he said softly, "it grieves me terribly to have to say so at such a time as this, but you are making a dreadful mistake! You think the boy Oloyd saved the mill. He did not; he destroyed it! I saw him myself set a match to the cotton. I saw him with my own eyes, when I was in the wheelhouse! It was he who fired the mill!"

Mr. Latimer looked aghast. But before he could reply Cecil rose to his feet, horror-stricken.

"Uncle," he gasped, "I must speak! I can't hear such a thing said to you about a boy who is innocent! I was talking to Oloyd at the very time, and I can swear upon the Book that he did not do it!"

"Oh! Perhaps you think I did it myself?" sneered Jerrold.

This was more than Cecil could stand, for to hear such a cruel lie told to a dying man appalled him.

"You did do it, Jerrold!" he said in a low, passionate voice. "You know it, and Heaven forgive you! You are trying to shuffle your crime off upon the boy that risked his life to undo the harm you'd done!"

"Jerrold!" said the mill-owner, in a terrible voice, rising with an effort upon his elbow and looking into the boy's eyes. "Is this true?"

Jerrold denied it hotly, but the dying man's eyes pierced his very soul, and Neville Latimer read the guilt in Jerrold's face.

"I see it is true—it is true!" muttered the mill-owner, sinking back with a groan.

Dead silence filled the room. Jerrold tried to speak, but his tongue refused its office. In his mean fear that the mill-boy was going to be bequeathed a sum of money by Mr. Latimer, and in his dislike and contempt for Sam Oloyd, Jerrold had overreached himself beyond recall.

"Jerrold Vane," said the old mill-owner faintly, "you have caused me more sorrow on my deathbed than ever I felt yet. To find that you, my own sister's grandson, could behave so vilely and cruelly is the bitterest blow of my life! It is not the first time I have suspected you of evil and deceit, though I have always trusted you fully. But now I know you for what you are!"

"You know my rule. You have known it all your life. I never forgive dishonesty or deceit, and yours is the blackest I have ever known, even in a grown man. No dishonest man or boy shall ever benefit from my fortune, nor have any share in the Latimer Mills! They were built up by honour and straight dealing, and so they shall continue."

"I forgive you, Jerrold, as I hope to be forgiven, but not one penny shall you have from me. You have the small fortune your mother left you, but the half-share in my mills, which I would have given you, is lost to you for ever! Go!"

Neville Latimer pointed to the door with a trembling hand. Jerrold, seeing it was useless to stay, left the room without a word, looking black as thunder.

"Uncle, don't send him away!" cried Cecil eagerly. "It was my fault that you heard—"

"Enough, boy!" said his uncle sternly. "I go by what I saw in his face. If you had not spoken, your crime would have been as great as his! Now go quickly and bring me the lad Oloyd, and send for my lawyer, Mr. Fawcett! Hasten, for my time is short!"

Cecil dared not disobey. He hurried out. The doctor was still waiting, and asked at once if he could do anything—he had a motor-car handy. Cecil was glad of the help, and the doctor hurried off to fetch Mr. Fawcett from his offices in Boltham, while Cecil went with all speed to hunt up Sam Oloyd. The motor travelled so quickly that the lawyer arrived at the same time as Sam.

"Is he very bad, Cecil?" asked Sam, under his breath.

"He's dying!" said Cecil, choking. "I don't know what he wants you for, Sam, but you must do whatever he tells you."

There was a lump in Sam's throat as he entered the room with the lawyer. Short though the time was that he had known Mr. Latimer, the boy loved and respected him.

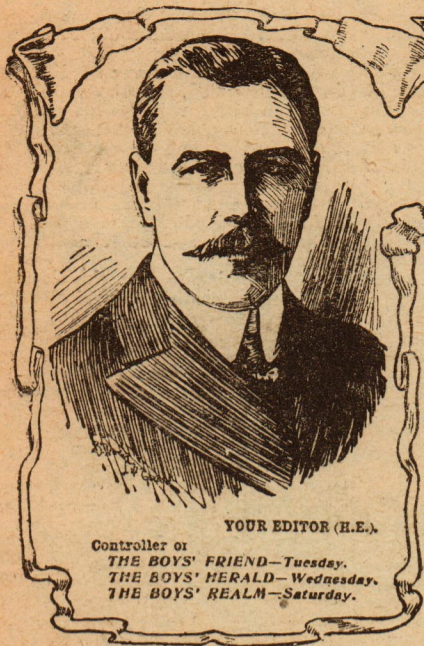
"Come here, my lad," said Mr. Latimer, with a faint smile. "I have very little time before me, so I must not speak with you till after I have done my duty. Mr. Fawcett, I wish to alter my will—to make an entirely fresh one. Will you take

(Continued at the bottom of the next page.)

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Grand New Robin Hood Story Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.

YOUR EDITOR'S HEARTY THANKS.

In this Grand Spring Number I am commencing what promises to be one of my most successful serial stories, "School and Mill," written by Mr. David Goodwin. I am very proud of this superb new story, and of our Special Number in particular, and I want to ask you all to make an effort this week to obtain me at least one new reader.

There could be no better time than the present for gaining new friends for me, for this journal has never been better, and I firmly believe that the magnificent number you hold in your hands is the very best on record.

And THE BOYS' FRIEND is booming. New followers gather round me every week in their thousands, sure tribute to the excellence of our paper. More and more grateful letters reach me from my boys, and altogether the position of the old Green 'Un is now stronger than ever.

I feel that this great boom with our journal is due in no small measure to the keen enthusiasm of my boys themselves. Personal recommendation does more to gain me new readers than anything else, and I want

to thank you all most heartily for your loyal support so cheerfully given.

Good as THE BOYS' FRIEND is, and has always been, it is by friendly counsel from one boy who is a reader to another who is not that the name and fame of the old favourite is spread; and there is no one more appreciative of this help from readers than myself.

I THANK YOU ALL

from the bottom of my heart, and you will see that I am showing my pleasure and appreciation by making THE BOYS' FRIEND better and better almost every week.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE "B. F."

The week after next, in THE BOYS' FRIEND, I am going to start a wonderful new serial dealing with that king of scouts Buffalo Bill. There is no more picturesque figure living than Colonel Cody, no man who has had so many exciting adventures, no man who knows so much about the Wild Red Man of the West, as the Indian is sometimes called.

"The Black Canyon" our grand new serial will be called, and it will deal largely with the adventures and struggles of a Scots emigrant family with whom Buffalo Bill comes in contact, and whom he assists most manfully in their time of danger.

Of all the tales of Buffalo Bill, and the great prairies of Canada that have ever been written, "The Black Canyon" will rank as one of the best, and I can promise my boys

something inspiring and thrilling with this my latest serial. Mr. T. W. Holmes, who has made a special study of Indians, their dress, and ways, and the country in which they live, will illustrate our new serial, and the author will be none other than Mr. Clive R. Fenn, the youngest son of the late Mr. George Manville Fenn, one of the ablest and most popular boys' authors who ever lived.

"The Black Canyon," our magnificent new serial of Buffalo Bill, will positively commence in THE BOYS' FRIEND the week after next.

"THE BLACK CANYON"

Every British boy knows the name of George Manville Fenn, whose books have earned for themselves such a wide popularity, and who in his later years wrote stories for my papers.

"The Black Canyon," our new Buffalo Bill serial, is being written by Mr. Clive R. Fenn, the youngest son of the great boys' author, and it is not going too far to say that the son is, to a great extent, taking up the work where his father left off.

Certainly there is no one in a better position to follow in the footsteps of his father than Mr. Clive, as for many years he acted as secretary to his father, and assisted him very greatly in working out the wonderful stories that have fascinated so many thousands of boy readers.

Morning after morning would find the father and son in the library at Syon Lodge, Isleworth, looking out on to the old-world garden and Syon Park. During those five years young Mr. Clive learned more about story writing than at any other time in his life.

"I am showing you how to write stories," the father would say. Then he would walk up and down the library talking over the chapters till

the mood took him, when it was all the son could do to keep pace with him as he dictated.

Next Tuesday, in THE BOYS' FRIEND, I will tell you more about "The Black Canyon," and its gifted young author.

HOW TO BE SOUND IN WIND.

From Taunton I have received a letter in which the writer, J. D., asks me if I can give him any exercise for improving his wind. He further tells me that he imagines he has broken his wind by smoking cigarettes.

This is undoubtedly the reason why J. D.'s wind is in a bad condition, and the very first thing he must do if he wishes to improve his wind is to give up this habit of smoking.

My Taunton reader should take up breathing exercise. Every morning upon rising he should throw open the window, and standing near it, take in a deep breath through his nose. Then slowly exhale this breath until the lungs are as far as possible emptied, when another deep breath must be taken.

J. D. should also go in for short runs, but directly he feels at all winded he must discontinue the running for that day. At first he will only be able to run a short distance, but after a time his wind will so far improve that he will be able to jog along for quite a considerable distance before he feels at all pumped or winded.

IN TROUBLE AT THE LIBRARY.

W. P., one of my Harrogate readers, is in trouble over a library book, and wisely comes to me for advice. The fact of the matter is, my chum borrowed a book from the local library, and took it to the shop where he works. When he picked up the book again he discovered that

two half-pages were torn out, and now he does not know what to do, for a notice on the cover of the book states that borrowers defacing the books will be prosecuted.

Naturally, W. P. is very worried over this matter, but I think I may tell him at once that the rule about the prosecution of offenders is only expressed so very strongly as a safeguard, and is not likely to be enforced in his case.

What W. P. should do is to go to the librarian, and make a confession of the damage. I am sure this gentleman will take a common-sense view of the position, and the damage will be fairly estimated, and W. P. will be asked to pay. I can sympathise with my chum, for his thoughtless action has made him responsible. Another time when he takes a book to his place of business he should be sure to put it away in a safe spot.

TWO IDEAL EMIGRANTS.

Two of my Preston chums write asking for my advice regarding emigration to Canada. They are both about twenty-one years of age, have been working on farms or in gardens since they left school, and one of them, F. W. N., has an uncle in Ottawa, to whom he and his friend can go.

In my opinion, these two young men are ideal emigrants, just the kind of workers who will get on—as I sincerely hope they may. They ask me to tell them where to get a list of boats, fares, and so on, and in reply I should advise them to write to the Chief Clerk, Emigrants' Information Office, 31, The Broadway, Westminster, London, S.W., and to the Agent-General for Canada, Victoria Street, Westminster, London, S.W. Either of these gentlemen will, I am sure, be pleased to give them official advice and guidance, and to help them all they can.

I hope my two chums will not forget the old BOYS' FRIEND or its Editor when they get out to Canada, and that I shall often receive letters from them from their new home.

WANTS TO BE A PRINTER.



SEVERAL of my boys have written to me regarding becoming printers, and the calling is an honourable one, with bright prospects for the lad who commences at an early age, prepared to work his way through the various stages.

I am afraid, however, "An Essex Reader" is too old now to commence in the printing trade, for he is more than twenty-two years of age, and no department is open to him. Even as a clerk to a printing-manager he would hardly be acceptable, for he has no knowledge of the trade.

If my chum will write to me again, and give me some inkling of his likes and dislikes, capabilities, and so on, I shall be only too pleased to offer him the best advice that lies in my power.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

SCHOOL AND MILL.

(Continued from the previous page.)

down my words, and witness my signature?"

The lawyer, with a grave face, seated himself by the bedside with his writing-table, and wrote down slowly as the mill-owner, in a faint but clear voice, dictated to him:

"I, Neville Latimer of Amberley Hall, Lancashire, being about to die, declare this to be my last will and testament. And I hereby revoke and declare void all former wills made by me.

"First, I expressly forbid that my grand-nephew, Jerrold Vane, shall benefit either from my estate or business in any way whatsoever, he not having proved worthy. To prevent all misunderstanding, I declare here that he shall have nothing from me. And I forbid my heirs, below mentioned, to pass any part of their legacy to him, upon any terms whatever.

"To my beloved niece, Gracie Latimer, I bequeath my house and estate of Amberley Hall, with all income and monies pertaining thereto.

"To my nephew, Cecil Latimer, I bequeath half the entire property

and income of Latimer's Mills, the same to be held in trust till he is twenty-one.

"To Samuel Olroyd, of Boltham, I bequeath an equal half of the said property and income of Latimer's Mills, also to be held in trust till he is twenty-one. And in order that Samuel Olroyd shall fit himself to fill this position, and eventually direct and manage the factory of Latimer's Mills, I provide that the said Samuel Olroyd shall be educated at Canterfield College, which he shall enter at once, the sum of £200 per annum being devoted to the cost of his education. He shall afterwards enter upon a complete course of engineering and business training at Varne Hill. Samuel Olroyd shall thus enjoy all the advantages and fortune which before I had intended should be possessed by Jerrold Vane, whom I disinherit, and who shall have nothing but what he already possesses."

Mr. Latimer paused, and passed his hand across his forehead wearily. It was at that moment that a face rose slowly above the window-sill—a listening face, livid with rage, hatred, and dismay. It belonged to Jerrold Vane himself, crouching outside the window; but it sank out of sight again, and none of the others saw it. The mill-owner continued:

"One condition I impose. My greatest wish is that an honest man and none other should succeed to the

management and partnership of Latimer's Mills. I am confident that Samuel Olroyd is, and will remain, honest.

"But should it happen, while he is at Canterfield College, that he should ever be publicly disgraced and proved guilty of dishonour, then shall he lose all benefits and legacies under this will, and shall receive only the sum of £50, and go forth into the world again with no claim upon my estate.

"I hereby appoint Wilson Fawcett, Esquire (of Fawcett & Jones, solicitors), to be my executor and trustee, on whom shall devolve the duty of seeing these bequests faithfully carried out.

"As witness my hand and seal, this thirty-first day of December, 19—"

Mr. Latimer sank back, exhausted. "Give it to me to sign," he said weakly.

It was all he could do to set his name at the foot. Mr. Fawcett called in the doctor to be the second witness to the signature.

"It is done!" said the lawyer, and folding the will gravely, without a word, he placed it in his leather portfolio, which he set down upon the window-sill.

Sam's head was in a whirl—the room almost swam before him. He, of all boys, to have a half-share of the gigantic Latimer Mills—the millionaire's factory in which he was now a little peecer! He, Sam Olroyd, to go

to Canterfield College, among two hundred rich men's sons!

He could not realise it—it seemed impossible. And benefits were the last thing he thought of there before his dying benefactor. It all seemed like a wild dream to Sam.

Yet it was simple truth. There was the will—signed, sealed, and locked away. Sam turned towards Mr. Latimer, his eyes filling with tears.

As he did so a hand moved stealthily in through the open window—a white hand and arm. Unseen by anybody, the fingers grasped the little leather portfolio on the window-sill, and silently vanished with it.

"Come here, Sam Olroyd," said Mr. Latimer faintly. "Give me your hand! And you, Cecil, my dear nephew, give me yours! You are my heirs, Cecil, I want your promise to help this boy all you can, and stand by him, no matter what befalls, in his way upward through life. Stick to him at school, and befriend him in his troubles, for you owe everything to him to-day."

"I will, sir. I promise it," said Cecil huskily.

"And you, Sam Olroyd, be loyal to Cecil and straightforward and courageous with him as you have shown yourself to be. Fit yourself for the great work I have set you, and keep to the straight path. Promise me to do your utmost, whatever it costs you."

"Ah will, sir! Ah give ma word!" said Sam, hardly able to speak.

"My blessing on you both, lads! Do right, speak the truth, and fear nothing!"

A quiet, peaceful smile came upon the great mill-owner's lips as his eyes closed, his marble-white face reposed in a gentle slumber. There was dead silence. The doctor stole to the bedside and bent over him.

"He is asleep," whispered the doctor, "and I fear he will not waken again in this world. We can only give thanks that his end will be gentle and painless."

"Amen!" said Mr. Fawcett gravely. "Cecil Latimer, my deepest sympathy is with you. And you," he murmured, turning to Sam. "I hope will prove worthy of the great trust which is placed in your hands. And now it is best that I should leave you both."

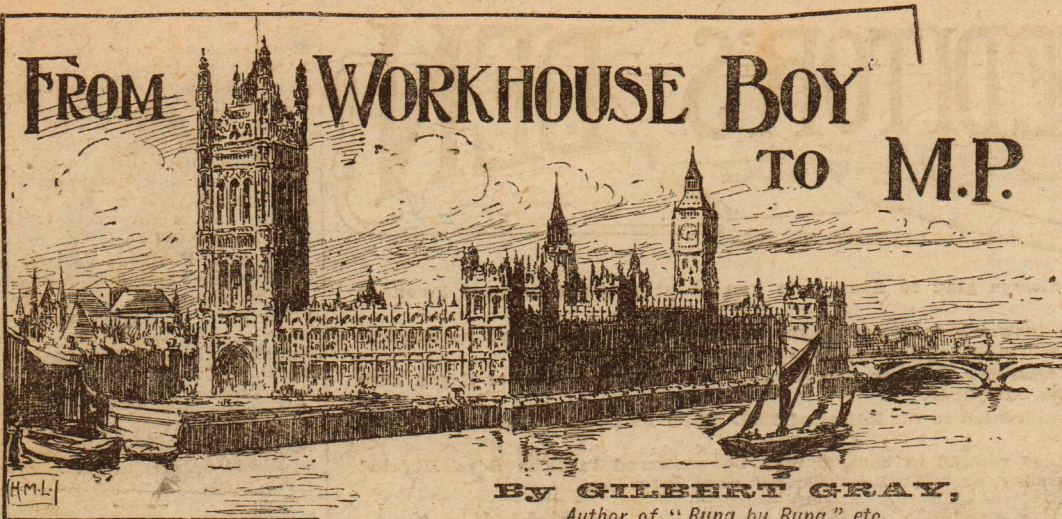
He turned to the window-sill, and a stifled exclamation came from him.

"The will! The will!" he gasped, under his breath. "Where is it?"

Ay, where? Where was the document that made Sam Olroyd a millionaire, but without which he would be no more than a pauper?

The sill was empty. The portfolio that held the will was gone!

(This enthralling new serial will be continued in next week's "Boys' Friend." Tell your chums about it!)



By GILBERT GRAY,
Author of "Rung by Rung," etc.

This is Where the New Reader-Should Commence.

Fatherless, motherless, and almost friendless, WILL BRIGGS is an inmate of the Blackfield Workhouse. Will is a sturdy, open lad, and clever beyond his years.

At a meeting of the Blackfield Board of Guardians it is proposed by the committee that Will shall be apprenticed to a trade, and the only one to disagree to this suggestion is SIR CLEMENT ROXBY, the pompous and snobbish chairman. However, force of numbers compel Sir Clement to waive the point and it is decided that Will shall be apprenticed to a saddler in the town.

A Workhouse Boy's Ambition.

Will is delighted on hearing this news. He is an ambitious lad, and has long cherished a desire to carve a position for himself in life, and to earn his own independence.

The same day Will falls foul of VICTOR ROXBY, Sir Clement's caddish young son. Victor is ill-treating a poor dog, and Will seeks to prevent him. Victor loses his temper, and strikes the boy to the ground with a heavy stone, stunning him. At the same second a little girl appears on the scene. She is WINNIE REECE, the daughter of DAVID REECE, a wealthy ironmaster and a self-made man, and one who commands Will's profound respect. Winnie helps Will to consciousness, and they part on friendly terms—the workhouse boy and the little hearse.

Out Into the World.

The following day the blow falls. Victor Roxby has told his father a very one-sided story, accusing Will of unprovoked and brutal assault. Sir Clement makes good use of his influence, and Will's apprenticeship is cancelled, and he is given notice to leave the workhouse before the end of the week.

Will manages to enlist the interest of Mr. Reece, and the ironmaster offers him a situation, which Will readily accepts. During the following four years Will puts his heart and soul into his work, and learns every phase of the business. He takes a great interest in politics, and an impending General Election gives him plenty of scope for expanding his knowledge of the same.

Sir Clement Roxby and David Reece are nominated as candidates. Sir Clement employs foul means to, if possible, ensure his return to Parliament, and endeavours unsuccessfully to engineer a split vote. The baronet has in his pay a surly workman who has been dismissed from Mr. Reece's employ.

The election results in Mr. Reece's return by a large majority, but on the result being announced it is discovered that the successful candidate has mysteriously disappeared. Will Briggs and a band of other lads scour the neighbourhood that night for the missing man, and on Whimford Heath Fred Jayner falls down a disused pit-shaft. Luckily he lodges on a ledge some few feet down, and there discovers, to his amazement, bound and gagged, a poor half-witted man named Job Little.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

One Mystery Leads to Another—The Discovery of Mr. Reece.

THE surprise of Fred Jayner as the light from above fell upon the small, misshapen form of Job Little was no less than that of the half-witted man himself. For a moment they gazed dazedly at one another, the crazy, frightened eyes of the bound workman blinking in the rays of the bullseye lantern.

"No, they mustn't know," he mumbled. "They'd kill me if I tell'd! It's more than my life's worth to tell."

Fred looked at the poor, demented wretch with pitying eyes. Once a strong, powerful man, his accident with the molten metal had robbed him of his manhood and sapped away his will power.

"You let me be," the man mumbled in a childish treble voice. "Never mind about owd Job Little. Get thee on and find the gaffer. He's beyond the heath—but I mustn't tell. They'd kill me if I tell'd! Don't 'ee worrit about owd Job."

Fred went to the entrance of the cavelike aperture, and looked up the

old shaft. The lights baffled his sight, but he could see that several of his companions were clustered round the mouth of the pit, and as he appeared impatient questions were hurled at him.

"Can't you fasten the rope round him?" cried Will.

"No," replied his friend. "His hands are tied behind him, and he is so bound up that I could never get a line beneath his arms. Send me down a knife and some water, if you can get any."

One of the lads went racing away to a moorland stream in the vicinity in search of water, whilst Will secured his pocket-knife to the rope with a piece of string, and lowered it down the shaft.

It was but the work of a few seconds for Jayner to sever the cords with which the cripple was bound, and he commenced rubbing vigorously at the cramped and bloodless limbs in the hope of restoring circulation. The rush of blood to the arteries, however, proved the last straw, and Job Little fainted dead away, his head lolling back and the eyes closing as his few scattered senses left him.

"Look out, Fred, I'm coming down!" sang out Will from above; and a moment or two later he was beside his chum, in his hand a cap partly filled with pure, fresh water from the brook.

The two knelt down beside the deathlike figure, and with a skill and tenderness one might have expected from a woman, attempted to bring Little from the swoon. Whilst Fred supported the head, Will poured a little of the water between the man's lips and moistened his forehead, unloosening his shirt collar and the ragged scarf he wore.

In a short time their united efforts were rewarded. The cripple opened his eyes, winking at the brightness from the lantern, and then commenced to mumble again.

"I tell 'ee thee sha'n't harm 't'owd boss! I've watched 'ee, Dan'l Doone, and yer pal, too. No, I mustn't tell; they'd kill me if I tell'd! You can take'n there if ye wilt, but I shall know—poor owd Job'll know, and perhaps he won't always be scared."

"We must get him up into the fresh air," whispered Will. "First of all we must pull him round, and then find out what he knows about Mr. Reece. Oh, Fred, I believe they have done the guv'nor harm! Perhaps even now they may be persecuting him. There is not a minute to lose."

Job Little had lapsed again into a state of semi-consciousness, and in his loglike attitude it was extremely difficult to adjust the rope round his twisted frame so that he could be hauled to the surface above the shaft. As Fred slightly rolled the man over, however, Will carefully slid the noose beneath the man's shoulders, tightening it up so that when the strain came it should not jerk the rope painfully about the feeble form.

Going to the entrance to the cave, Will called upwards to his companions.

"We are going to send the poor old chap up," he cried. "Several of you grip the line, and keep it from fraying against the edge of the shaft as much as you can. Now, are you ready?"

With Will and Fred carefully assisting the old man, and the others pulling from above, the lifeless body was slowly withdrawn from the aperture in the shaft, suspended for a moment over the abyss, and then gradually raised, to be tenderly lifted over the edge of the mouth

and deposited upon some warm coats that the boys had laid on the ground in readiness.

Will and Jayner were quickly hauled to the surface again, and commenced afresh their ministrations to the cripple, who slowly recovered under the influence of the fresh air and their attentions.

"Now, tell us what has become of Mr. Reece," asked Will.

"They'd kill me if I tell'd!" muttered Job weakly. "They said they'd kill me! Mr. Reece, the gaffer—If I tell'd—Dan'l Doone and the foreign bloke—They want revenge. In the owd screenin's—No, I won't tell the police. They'd kill me!"

But Will had heard enough of the old man's babblings. The mention of the screenings and the name of Reece, coupled with that of Doone and the expression "foreign bloke," raised all his old fears again, and the knowledge that his master was in danger spurred him on to fresh effort.

He knew the screenings, that part of the disused workings where the coal had been sorted, for many a time had he explored Whimford Heath, and a drearier, more desolate part it would have been difficult to find even on the lonely moor.

BUFFALO BILL

is Coming in the "B. F."

Leaving Job to the care of some half-dozen lads, with instructions to take him to his own home and to keep him from harm, Will and Fred, accompanied by the other boys, set off in the direction of the screenings.

The ground was rough, for heaps of slag and waste had been deposited haphazard over the heath in the old days before the pits were worked out, and with only the fitful light of the moon to guide them, progress was slow.

As they came within sight of the screenings, the gaunt mass of buildings silhouetted black against the skyline, another cry came to their ears—a wailing, long-drawn cry for help.

"It's the guv'nor's voice!" cried Will; and they redoubled their efforts until it became a race between the boys as to who should reach the broken fence surrounding the workings first.

The honour fell to Fred, with Will a good second, and as they rushed through the place where the gate had once been, they raised their voices, and with all the power left in their lungs called to the captive.

"Mr. Reece! Mr. Reece!" The shouts rang uncannily across the desolate yard, to be thrown back from the rotting walls of the buildings and echo hollowly among the black, forbidding sheds.

"Help! Help!" Again the despairing cry.

"It's from the tip!" called Will, rushing to a steep, inclined way, and hurrying up it.

The sloping roadway had rails running its entire length from the workings, and its original use had been for the tubs of coal as they came from the pit's mouth to be hauled up by an endless cable. At the top of the slope was a narrow gangway, and whilst one side of it was fenced, the other was open to the "screens," a kind of railing of different widths through which the coal passed to be sorted into various

sizes, automatically falling into the railway trucks that were placed below.

As Will reached the end of this gallery from the sloping way, he could see some distance down a dim form, and again came the weird cry for help, but in a weaker voice and with a still more bitter note of despair.

It was but the work of a moment for the boy to reach the side of the figure, and at a glance he saw that it was indeed that of his master, Mr. David Reece, the newly-elected M.P. for Blackfield.

Will's heart went out to the man who had done so much for him, for surely a more terrible torture could hardly have been conceived than that to which Mr. Reece had been subjected.

There he lay in the narrow track between the rails, trussed up much as Job Little had been. His arms were secured tightly to his side, around his knees were several thicknesses of rope, and his ankles were bound in the same way. The more he struggled the worse became his position. The only motion he could make was a rolling one, and to have rolled to the right would have meant that he would go hurtling down the sloping rails of the screens to sudden death, whilst on his left was the equally terrible drop from the gallery to the ground.

Again Will's knife was used to free a bound captive, and again it required all his care and skill to bring the captive back to a state of full consciousness.

"The fiends," whispered Mr. Reece—"the inhuman fiends! But, Will, my brave boy, how did you come to find me? How did you know I had been brought here? How can I thank you?"

In a few words Will explained his presence.

"You see, sir," he said, "you have been elected M.P. for Blackfield."

A look of honest pride came over the man's face.

"Then I have beaten Roxby?" he asked feebly.

"Yes, sir," replied Will, "and by more than a thousand votes. Well, when the returning officer announced the result, there were, of course, calls for you. Sir Clement Roxby was there, and made a speech saying if that was how you were going to do your duty you had better not have been elected. Then there was a terrible accident, and the gallery of the town-hall gave way. And then, sir, you didn't come. I knew that something must have happened to you, or you would have been there to make your speech. To-day I got time off from the works, and gathered the boys together—and here we are."

"Yes; but what made you think of the screenings?"

Then Will told Mr. Reece of how they had come to find Job Little, and of the broken mutterings of the old man, and as the whole story was pieced together the face of the ironmaster became distorted with rage and chagrin. Rage at the treatment that had been meted out to him, and chagrin that he had not been present to address the electors.

"I must get back, Will—get back at once. I am ill, but I must do my best. And to think of that accident and the lives lost! Dear me, dear me! That such men should be allowed to live! But how can I get back?"

"I think we can manage that, sir, as soon as you have recovered a little more," said Will.

"But I feel better now," said the ironmaster. He essayed to stand, and at once fell back weak and fainting. The pain and exposure for so many hours had been too much, and his shouts had diminished his strength still more.

"Get a couple of those iron bars," whispered Will to the boy nearest to him, pointing to where there were a number of these articles used for dislodging pieces of coal that became wedged in the screenings.

The bars were quickly procured, and then with a couple of coats, by passing the rods through the sleeves, quite a serviceable stretcher was formed, and upon this the newly-elected M.P. was tenderly laid.

The return across the heath was slow and laborious, but step by step the journey was accomplished, the boys carrying the improvised ambulance in relays of four at a time.

On reaching the outskirts of the town they quickly came upon the welcoming red light of a doctor's house, and while the ironmaster was receiving medical attention Will

hastened away to procure a carriage in which his master could be driven home.

Fortunately there was no difficulty in this direction, for a taxi-cab happened to be returning to the railway-station empty, having brought out a local resident, and by the time Will arrived back at the surgery he found his master considerably improved in strength and spirits under the influence of medical care and a cup of warm soup and other nourishing fare.

"I am going to face the electors, Will," said the ironmaster, "to tell them of the outrage that has been committed upon me, and to thank them for their confidence in me. There are sure to be crowds collected in the market-place. But before I go I want to tell you and the boys you have gathered round you that I shall never forget what I owe. This is the second time I have received help, and I thank you and your friends from the bottom of my heart."

Assisted by the doctor, Mr. Reece entered the cab, and calling Will to take a seat beside him, for he did not care to be quite alone, started for the district where the town-hall stood. Sitting back amid the cushions of the vehicle, which had no interior light, he could not be seen from without, and as he entered the busy market-place he observed that there was indeed a crowd of people gathered there.

A man was perched upon the plinth of a statue of some worthy who in bygone days had been honoured by the town, and as the taxi-cab drove upon the scene Mr. Reece caught a few sentences of his speech.

"Men of Blackfield," the orator was saying, "the man you have elected as your Member is no more fitted for the seat than I am for the throne. Instead of publicly thanking you for electing him, he has gone away to hide some shame, of which you are in ignorance. David Reece is—"

"Here, Daniel Doone," came the mellow voice of the old ironmaster from the window of the cab—"here to defend himself from your calumnies, here to see that your deserts are meted out to you. Constable, arrest that man!"

The Escape of Doone—Belated Thanks.

IF a bomb had fallen among the people they could not have been more amazed than at the clear, ringing tones that fell upon their ears. Their newly-elected member was among them again, and the tense, drawn expression on his face, the features all the whiter in the light of the electric arc-lamps, drew from them pitying glances and a questioning murmur.

It was a moment of confusion, this dramatic change from the train of thought inspired by Daniel Doone to that awakened by the ironmaster's words. Attention was divided between the two, and the diversion came as a fitting close to a day of keen excitement and intense mystery.

But if others were disconcerted, there was one among the throng whose head was remarkably clear, and whose presence of mind did not desert him for a moment.

That was Daniel Doone, and the sharp command, "Constable, arrest that man!" spurred him to his utmost efforts.

In a moment he had descended from the statue, turned up the collar of his coat, and pulled his slouch-hat well down over his eyes, preparatory to making a rush through the crowd.

It was Will whose quick eyes observed the movement, and he speedily left the cab and rushed pell-mell in the direction of the fugitive.

"Stop him!" he cried, at the top of his voice. "Stop Daniel Doone! There he is, constable!"

Accompanied by a couple of policemen, who stood by, Will took up the chase, elbowing his way through the crowd as best he could. Daniel Doone had a good start of them, and among the throng were many of his friends who not only assisted him in his escape, but also barred the way of the pursuers and attempted to throw them off the scent.

The men at the rear of the crowd, uncertain of what was happening, pressed closer forward, and others were added to the throng each moment, making either escape or pursuit extremely difficult.

Other police, not understanding the mission of their colleagues, and thinking perhaps that a pickpocket

or sneak-thief was the quarry, gave their attention more to the fringe of the crowd.

Now, there is no worse ground in which to follow a fugitive than through a densely-packed gathering of human beings. Direction is as difficult to maintain under these circumstances as in a fog, identification becomes almost impossible, and when one's quarry has been once lost sight of, if only for a moment, all the effort imaginable will not assist one to pick up the scent again.

And this was exactly what happened to Will Briggs and the constables with him. Daniel Doone had completely vanished, and they might as well seek the proverbial needle in the haystack as pursue the man further.

True, they did their best to pick up the scent again, separating in skirmishing order, and meeting again at the next electric standard, but the task was a hopeless one from the first, and Will returned dejectedly to the spot where he had left Mr. Reece.

As he elbowed his way through the dense crowd, and came within sight of the statue from which Doone had been addressing the crowd, he saw that Mr. Reece was standing on the driver's seat of the taxi-cab addressing the vast crowd.

"Men of Blackfield," he was saying, as Will came upon the scene, "I have been the victim of as cruel a plot as was ever conceived. Nothing but the pluck and resource of a boy in my employ, and some companions who have already done me good service in this election, saved me from what would probably have been a slow and lingering death. Whilst personally canvassing the cottages on the fringe of Whimford Heath I was kidnapped by a ruse, bound, and driven in a cart to the old screenings, where I remained a prisoner. But I have been restored to you, shaken, though little the worse physically for the outrage, and I repeat my thanks for the honour you have done me in electing me as your representative to the House of Commons.

"I fully appreciate your confidence in me. I congratulate you upon the magnificent victory your party has won. As a Blackfield man, Blackfield will always be in my mind, and my uttermost effort shall be made to represent your interests in Parliament honourably, wholeheartedly, and justly.

"To the Returning Officer I now offer my tardy, though sincere thanks. I mourn the accident that has come upon our town by the falling of the balcony of the town-hall, and all that lies in my power shall be done for the relief of the sufferers. Gentlemen, I thank you once again, and I look to you all for help in bringing to book the assailants through whom I was prevented from being among you at the declaration of the poll."

Cheers, more vociferous than any that had rent the air even on the eventful day of the election, rang out as Mr. Reece re-entered his cab and was driven away. As he passed up the hill leading to his home on the outskirts of the town, the waves of sound broke upon his ears, and even as he paid his cabman and passed into his own spacious hall distant shouts still reached him, telling him of his popularity and of the favour his election found with the people.

He passed dazedly into his study, the strain of all he had gone through causing a sudden weakness to come over him again. He staggered to a chair, and sank into its roomy depths. The servant who had admitted him hastened away to obtain the refreshment her master so sorely needed, and at that moment Mr. Reece's eyes fell upon a note that lay on the table.

Stretching out his hand, he reached it, and hastily tore open the envelope. A few lines were scribbled on an odd piece of paper, and the words sank deep into the M.P.'s mind as he read them:

"You have escaped once; next time we shall make sure of our revenge. You will never take your seat for Blackfield."

The writing was in a curious, scrawling hand, and there was no signature. The address on the envelope had been penned by the same hand.

The ironmaster gazed at the writing meditatively. It was in a style he had never seen before, yet there was something un-English in the formation of the "w" and "v," and the tails of the "l's," "h's," and "d's" were tall and sloped more than is usual.

Though a self-made man, Mr. Reece had not by any means neglected his education, and he realised at once the similarity between the scrawl he held and the typical Continental writing, with its thin, cramped strokes.

"This has been written by a German, an Austrian, or a Pole, I should say," he muttered, voicing his thoughts. "It is certainly not in the English style. It must have been penned by that villain Kurski, and he is hand in glove with Doone. Anyway, I shall be on my guard now, and they may do their worst."

Weary and worn from his privations, excitements, and the cruel treatment, Mr. Reece retired to his room as soon as he had received some nourishing food, and taken some of the medicine that the doctor had sent him.

Next morning he felt distinctly better, though still weak and dazed. His first visitor was young Will Briggs, who considered the importance of the task that had fallen to him justified him in taking French leave from the works. The lad was at once shown up to his master's bedroom.

"How can I thank you, Will?" were the grateful words with which Mr. Reece greeted the youngster. "I shall never forget all you have done for me, my brave boy!"

Will coloured slightly, for praise from the ironmaster was rare indeed.

"I've come, sir," he said, when he had ascertained that his master felt better, "to tell you that I am more convinced than ever that Kurski and Doone are responsible for the outrage upon you. I have seen Job Little this morning. He is in a delirious fever, but the doctor whom the police called says he has been raving about these two men all through the night."

"I believe the same, Will," replied Mr. Reece; "and a threatening letter I received makes me doubly sure."

He took Will into his confidence with regard to the letter and his suspicions, and a moment later was using the telephone that lay on a little table at his bedside to get connected with the local police-station, and speak to the inspector on duty.

"Are you there, sir?" came the inspector's voice.

"Yes, I am Mr. David Reece. Have you caught Daniel Doone?"

"No, sir, I am sorry to say we have found no trace of him at his home or in any of his usual haunts. We think he must have left the town in disguise in spite of every precaution on our part."

"Has Otto Kurski, otherwise Liggersby, been seen?"

"Yes, sir; we believe he went to London by the night mail train. Our man who was watching the station for Doone thinks he was one of three or four passengers who joined the train; but we had no cause or authority to stop him."

"Then I shall go to London, too," replied Mr. Reece, as he replaced the receiver and told Will the news.

"A splendid idea, sir, if I may say so," said young Briggs. "Do please let me come, too, sir. I believe I could help you in finding this man, and no doubt Doone will join him sooner or later."

Mr. Reece pondered over the matter for a few moments.

"Yes, you shall come, Will. We will travel by the 12.15 train. In the meantime I want you to go to the General Hospital with this card from me. Arrange for Job Little to be transferred from his own home to a private ward in the hospital, and see that he has every comfort at my expense. I will meet you at the station."

The big luncheon-car express had just drawn up in Blackfield Station, and Will Briggs, accompanied by Fred Jayner, were walking hurriedly up and down the platform, looking eagerly among the throng of passengers and officials for the ironmaster.

The train was timed to wait seven minutes at Blackfield, during which period the engines were changed, the immense locomotive that was to draw the express to London without a stop having been standing on a shunting line in readiness, the driver giving her a final oiling and adjusting. Then there were stores to be taken aboard by the luncheon-car crew, a through coach from a side line to be tacked on to the rear of the train, and the wheels to be "tapped" by the carriage-inspectors.

The time for the departure was fast approaching when Mr. Reece at last appeared, looking still frail and weak, but far more alert than he had been the evening before. He carried a handbag, and saluted the boys cheerily.

"Fred has just come down to see me off, sir," explained Will.

"I am glad to see you better, sir," said Fred respectfully. "I have been to the hospital with Will, and Job Little is being well looked after."

Mr. Reece drew Will aside.

"Would your friend like to come with us?" he asked. "Does he know Kurski as well as he does Doone by sight?"

"I know he is just longing to come, Mr. Reece," replied Will. "He was only saying how much he envied me, and he knows Kurski almost as well as I do, for he has been with me right through the election time."

"Jayner," said Mr. Reece, turning to Fred, "would you like to come to London with Will and I? There is serious work to be done, and it will not by any means be a pleasure trip."

Fred Jayner showed his gratitude by the eager way in which he accepted the invitation.

"I shall be pleased to come, sir," he said, "particularly if I can be of

help to you or Briggs. I will send a message to my mother by one of the porters here."

"Then do so," replied the ironmaster.

Of the swift journey to the metropolis there is no need to make mention here. Suffice it to say that in some three hours the party found themselves at St. Pancras Station, London, besieged by porters, all eager to hail a cab, to take charge of their luggage, to direct them to the underground railways.

The newly-elected M.P. ordered a cab, and instructed the driver to take them to the Hotel Augustine, an enormous building with countless floors and battalions of servants such as the two boys had never imagined in their wildest dreams.

The ironmaster engaged a couple of bed-rooms and a private sitting-room, and told the boys to go off for a stroll while he partook of an hour's rest after the fatigue of the journey.

Returning to the hotel punctually to time, they found that Mr. Reece had ordered a sumptuous high tea, to which they all did justice.

"After the meal," said the ironmaster, "we will take a walk round the foreign quarter, and see if we can find any trace of our man. I will also call at Scotland Yard and ask if the police have any news of Kurski's movements. Such foreign agitators are usually keenly watched by our detectives."

At Scotland Yard they found no tidings of the man through whose agency they felt convinced such a dastardly outrage had been committed, though they learned that he was well known to the inspectors there.

They passed on up Whitehall, and by way of Charing Cross Road to the district in which so much of London's foreign population settles. French and Italian restaurants abounded, and there were shops where Continental sausages, groceries, articles of apparel, and the general assortment of strange merchandise beloved of the foreigner are to be found.

Up one street and down another they went until there were few by-ways in the strange quarter that they had not explored on both sides of Oxford Street, and eventually they found themselves at a spot well to the north of this great thoroughfare. They were almost on the point of abandoning the search for that evening, when they came upon a nondescript-looking restaurant with notices on the windows in letters of enamel, telling that several languages were spoken within.

"Suppose we go inside, sir?" said Will. "After all, it is not much use our prying through the foreign quarter if we do not enter some of the restaurants or hotels and endeavour to obtain clues."

"You are quite right, Will," replied Mr. Reece. "I must confess I have not been taking the search very

seriously up to the present, for, after all, it is early yet for the man to have settled down in London, and for his whereabouts to have become known to anyone. However, we will go in here and order some coffee."

They approached the swing doors, and a commissionaire in gaudy uniform opened the portals to admit them, bowing low and waving them to the main apartment.

As, however, they were only going to partake of coffee, they elected to go to the basement, to which some stairs led, and from which arose the noisy strains of a string band. A dense cloud of strong tobacco smoke assailed the nostrils as the three descended the stairs, and a noisy babel of guttural talk rose from the hall below.

As they neared the base of the staircase, Mr. Reece and the boys could see that the room was different from any public room in a British restaurant. On the walls on regular series of hooks were suspended earthenware drinking mugs, each with a metal cover. Quaint four-legged stools with tops of great thickness did duty for tables, and the chairs were equally rough and primitive.

At the tables were little groups of foreigners conducting an animated conversation in many tongues.

A little bar ran along part of the room, behind which a fat foreigner in his shirt-sleeves kept close observation of new-comers, and presided over the pots and the various drinks.

He glanced up as Mr. Reece and the boys appeared on the stairway, and an angry frown came over his face. Britishers were hardly tolerated in this underground foreign beer-garden, and sometimes detectives in plain clothes appeared and nosed about.

"Otto," mumbled the man, in a low voice, motioning to the stairs.

A waiter in shabby evening dress glanced in the direction indicated. An expression of rage and hate came upon his face. Then he sprang excitedly to his feet, pointed a quivering finger at Mr. Reece and the two boys, and shouted an unintelligible warning in guttural tones.

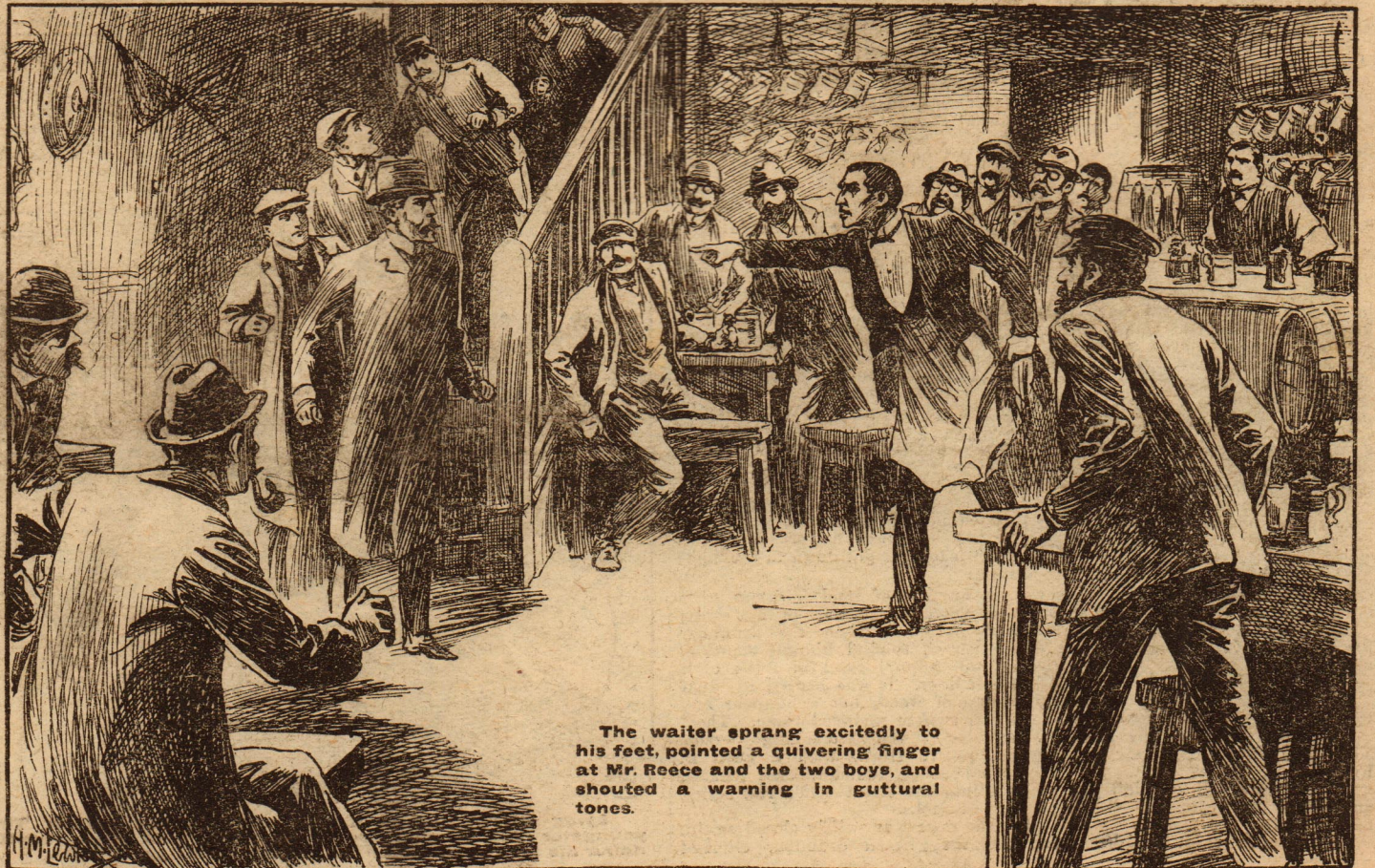
Instantly every eye was turned upon the new-comers, the band stopped its blare, and a couple of commissionaires appeared from above.

"That is our man!" shouted Will, in his excitement forgetting to be cautious, pointing to the waiter. "That is Otto Kurski, the Anarchist, otherwise Liggersby, who came to Blackfield to 'split the vote.'"

Many of the visitors at the tables rose and closed in at the bottom of the stairs, and the commissionaires pressed forward from behind.

Mr. Reece and the boys were between two fires.

(Another splendid instalment in next Tuesday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



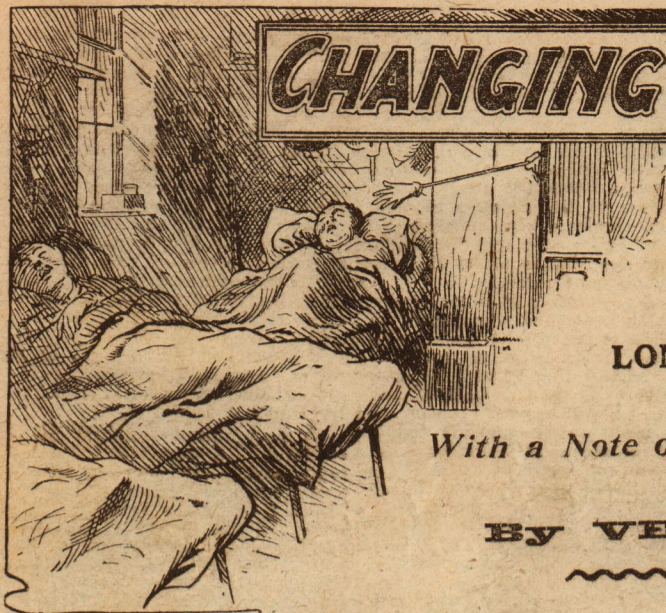
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CHANGING QUARTERS

A MAGNIFICENT
LONG, COMPLETE STORY
OF ARMY LIFE,

With a Note of Keen Humour You Will
All Enjoy.

By VESHY DEANE.



THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Drummers Are Aroused to Wrath.

"WELL mutiny!"
"Ear, 'ear!"
"We won't stand it! We'll show 'em that if we are only drummers we 'ave our rights!"
Number 2 Room, C Block, Wellington Barracks, Boltsea, was in a state of tremendous excitement. It was the drummers' room of the 2nd Downshire Regiment, and the young inmates were all gathered together in front of the fire, listening to the voice of their eloquent spokesman, Drummer Herd.

Herd was evidently qualifying for a stump orator. He was standing on one of the forms, waving his brown fists, and shouting at the top of his shrill voice.

"Fellow-drummers," he continued, "it's time we did somethin'. We're bein' trod on like—like—"
"Doormats," suggested Boy Bristow.

"Like worms," continued Herd, scorning the proffered simile. "Why should we be turned out of our comfortable room? Why should we have to shift to allow a lot of staff loafers to take over the room we've decorated and cleaned for months? Will we put up with it?"

"No!"
"Will we take it lying down?"
"No! Hurrah!"
"Will we rear up?"
"No—er—yes!" howled Bristow.
"Ear, 'ear!"

The door of the room opened suddenly. There was a swift movement of panic among the young agitators, then, recognising the face of the new-comer, a shout went up. "Good old Gipsy!"

"Come on, Freer! Let's hear what you've to say about it!"

Drummer Gipsy Freer, all-round athlete and keen, clever soldier, swung along the line of bedcots towards the group.

"Hallo, Herd!" he said.
"Having another spasm? What's the trouble this time?"

Half a dozen voices began to explain. Gipsy held up his hand.
"Steady on!" he cried. "One at a time, please!"

Herd reached out, and lifting a sheet of paper from the form, held it out.

"Read the bottom par, Gipsy," he said, "and if it don't make your blood boil, I'm a Dutchman!"

Freer ran his eyes along the bottom of the sheet. It was the usual evening orders, written by the sergeant-drummer. The bottom paragraph ran:

"The drummers and boys in No. 2 Room will parade at breakfast roll-call, with all kit and equipment, ready for changing quarters. Number 2 Room has to be handed over to the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Staff-Employed. The drummers' room is now Number 5, D Block."

"That's pretty rotten!" Gipsy murmured, as he lowered the sheet. "Rotten! Rotten ain't the name for it! It's awful, wicked, 'orrible!" added Herd.

Gipsy smiled.
"Still, I don't see what we can do to change it," he finished.

A groan ran round the listeners. They had expected so much from Freer.

"But, 'ang it all, couldn't you go and see the colonel—" Herd began.

"No fear!" said the drummer.

"I'd only get hauled over the coals if I did. Drummers are thundering important, I know, but giving advice to the C.O. isn't one of their duties, old chap."

"Couldn't we—couldn't we strike?"

"We could," said Freer, with a laugh, "but, by hookey, somebody else would be striking as well! The birch isn't abolished for boys yet, young fellow."

One or two of the boys wriggled reminiscently.

"No, striking is much too good," Freer continued; "but if you give me time to think, I may drop on some other plan."

"Bravo!"

"That's the talk, Gipsy!"
"But meanwhile, mum's the word. Set about packing your kits, and try to look happy. We mustn't let a soul into the know."

It certainly was a little rough on the youngsters. They had taken a pride in their long barrack-room. Over every bedcot each occupant had done his best to make a show. Picture postcards, cigarette cards, cuttings from illustrated papers—all were in evidence, and the bare walls had been transformed into a perfect picture-gallery.

Pounds of blacklead and shining-paste had been used in working up the table-trestles and teacans into a high brilliancy, the grates were miracles of lustre; indeed, it was an open secret that the drummers' room was easily the cleanest in barracks, and at kit inspections, when the commanding officer visited each room in turn, he had always a word of praise for the young fatigue men who were responsible for the room.

And now all their labours were to be wasted on interloping aliens! Staff men, who had not the time, even if they had the inclination, to keep the room up to its high standard.

"And then," said Herd, as he and Freer sat together on a bedcot, "what about our 'early door'? We sha'n't be able to use it any more. That's the worst of the whole business."

Freer nodded.
"You're right," he said; "there'll be no more dodging in after 'Lights Out' now."

The "early door" referred to was a secret jealously guarded by the youngsters. Herd was the explorer who had discovered it. One afternoon, while engaged in touching up the grate at the far end of the room, he had slipped and fallen against the iron frame. To his surprise it gave at his touch, and putting his weight into it, he found that the whole grate moved right out on to the hearth.

Creeping inside the opening he found himself inside the stout wall. Above him the chimney gap yawned, but to his right he saw a square shaft leading right down to the basement.

A number of steel footrests were embedded in the wall of the shaft, and in quick time the drummer descended, to find himself standing on the ground level in front of a small door. It was barred by stout staves of wood, but a hammer and chisel swiftly removed these. Then, opening the creaking door cautiously, Herd, with a gasp of astonishment, found himself looking out into the street which ran beside the barracks.

The door was swiftly closed again, and the grimed drummer climbed

back to his room, full of the discovery.

Behind closed doors the members of the room held a meeting, and Herd told of his adventure. The boys were all sworn to secrecy, and from that time onward there was a complete cessation of "late returning to barracks" crimes in that room. The sergeant-drummer, who was in charge of the room, was married, and had his quarters in the married block, so the youngsters came and went as they pleased, much to their delight.

Freer, however, held them well in hand. If one of them stayed out too long, and thus ran risks of being pounced upon by the military police, the whole room sat in judgment on his offence, and very often a blubbering youngster would have rather been settled for his crime by the commanding officer rather than his chums. But after one or two towlings the leavetakers became more careful, and the little door in the quiet side-street promised to retain its secret for ever.

"They could have the room if we could only transfer that grate," Herd murmured pathetically.

"Do you know who they are?" Freer asked.

"Most of 'em are employed at the headquarters office," Herd said. "They'll be out all day, you know. My eye, it will be filthy in a week!"

"Out all day—eh?" Gipsy murmured. "That sounds promising."

"Can't see how it does."

A plan was already commencing to form itself in the young athlete's brain.



Lying on his face on a cot, Freer saw Boy Bristow. The youngster had his head buried in a pillow, and was evidently doing his best to smother the sounds of his grief.

"This is a job that wants careful handling," he said. "We will have to shift to-morrow, of course, but"—and a quiet smile flickered on his laughing face—"they may want to shift out of it shortly after."

Herd looked up swiftly.

"Are—are you in earnest?"

"I am, my son," said his chum. "I've got an idea at the back of my head, and it's a thundering good one, too!"

"Let's have it!"

"No fear! You must wait until it's all cut and dried. But I can promise you some rare fun very soon."

Next morning a miserable cortege wound out of B Block. It was the drummers carrying their belongings out of their comfortable quarters into the square.

A fat private with a kitbag under his arm grinned at them as they passed. He was one of the interlopers—Stubbs by name, employed as a cook at the headquarters—and of course he had to say a word as the lads passed.

"Allo, me lads!" he cried. "Wot are you all lookin' so 'appy about?"

Herd turned on him.

"Git out, you loafer!" he rapped. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, driving honest duty-men out of their quarters! Wen are they goin' to wrap you in cotton-wool? Bah!"

Stubbs grinned. He knew that the drummers were sore about the exodus.

"I 'ope you've left it nice and clean," he said.

"Cleaner than it'll ever be while you're there, Greasy," cried Herd.

Freer nudged Herd furtively, then he turned to Stubbs.

"Herd is talking through his hat," he explained. "We're all dashed glad to get out of that beastly place, especially after what has been happening these last few nights!"

The grin died a sudden death on the cook's fat face.

"What's that?"

Freer looked very grave.

"Oh—er—nothing!" he said, moving away. "I—I don't know what I'm talking about."

He hurried off after the line of drummers. Stubbs looked after him with a curious feeling in his heart.

Gipsy was dissembling. There was something in the wind—a "something" which happened that night.

Anything more melancholy-looking than a newly-vacated barrack-room would be hard to find. As the fat cook shouldered the door open the bleak place seemed to close in on him like a tomb.

He was a nervous sort of man Stubbs, despite his round, jolly face. Like all North-countrymen, he was crammed full of superstition. Gipsy's words lingered in his brain, repeating themselves over and over again like some haunting song.

"Thank goodness, I'm fust!" thought the cook. "I'll keep well away from the door."

He went along the line of empty cots, and chose the one wedged in the corner of the room next to the grate.

"If there's any bloomin' things wandering about 'ere," he thought, "they'll have plenty of men to tackle before they come to me."

He little knew that he had chosen the bed next to the place from whence all the future trouble was to start—the movable grate.

For the next few days the drummers had to put up with a deal of chaff from the men of the battalion. It was an open secret that the youngsters were wild about the change. But it was noted that they did not seem so angry about it as they might have been.

"I thought that you fellows was goin' to rear up," Thomson, the C.O.'s orderly, remarked to Herd and Freer as they sauntered into the gym one night. "We was expecting to have a guard-room full of 'owling drummers."

"That's the worst of you rotten privates," Herd said; "you always jump at things. Why should we rear up? Between you and I we're dashed glad to get out of it."

"Haw, haw! Oh, no you ain't, me bold cuckoo!" said Thomson.

"All right; 'ave it your own way."

"Yes," said Gipsy, winking openly at Herd, "let 'em think what they like. We know more than they do."

Herd nodded his ginger head solemnly.

"But I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Thomson," he said. "I'll bet you a bob that these staff men will be applying to the colonel to be shifted out of that 'orrible place before a month has passed."

"Get out!"

"Will you bet?"

Thomson eyed the serious countenances before him dubiously.

"No, I won't," he said at last.

Herd grinned.

"And you're jolly wise," he murmured, "cos you would have lost."

When Thomson left the gym the two drummers exchanged smiles.

"We're laying the mine nicely," muttered Gipsy. "Old Thomson is a fair gasbag, and he'll spread this little talk all round the barracks. I tell you, my son, we're going to have the finest lark out of this you ever saw."

"That's what I think," said the other conspirator.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

In Which Private Stubbs Learns a Lesson.

"I NEVER thought that bricks would be so blessed tough," Herd whispered, wiping the sweat from his brow.

Freer shifted the stump of candle back a little and eyed the wall. It was a rather risky business that the two lads were engaged upon.

They were in the basement of the barracks—a long, rambling cellar, given over to mice and spiders—and were toiling away with a couple of iron bars, trying to cut their way through the wall. Gipsy had measured the ground carefully, and, after careful planning, had hit upon the exact portion of the wall which, when pierced, would allow them to enter the secret shaft from the basement.

This was very necessary for their plans. They would then be able to invade the staff men's quarters from inside barracks. The boarded door in the barrack wall was much too risky an entrance.

The basement was an ideal place for their purpose. An iron grating, fixed in the passage above, could be lifted out of its place to allow the marauders to enter. The interior was damp and gloomy, and littered with debris, but they did not mind that. It was safe, and that was the main thing.

"Forward, the sappers!" said Gipsy, picking up his bar again, and attacking the solid structure. "Get down to it, sonny. The first brick will be the hardest, after that we can pick 'em out."

It was well after midnight before the two sturdy lads ceased work, and by that time they had removed a square of bricks sufficiently large to allow their slim bodies to slip through.

Freer thrust the candle through the gap, and heaved a sigh of relief as the boarded door caught his eyes.

"Judged it to an inch," he said.

"I ought to have been a miner."

Herd pushed his head through the gap.

out. With a cry of alarm, Jones leaped out of his bed, and, rushing to the gas, struck a match and lighted up.

"It came from Stubbs' direction!" he cried. "Stubbs! Stubbs!" Every head was turned towards the last bed. The cook still lay rolled up in his blankets.

The corporal stepped across the room. "I believe that it's him wot's doing ov it!" a voice cried. "Why ain't 'e sitting up like the rest?"

Jones clutched at the bottom of the blankets on Stubbs' cot, and pulled. An agonised shriek went up.

"Let me go! Oh, Mister Ghost, let me go!" Then, catching sight of the line of tousled heads and the gas-jet flaring in the centre of the room, Stubs swung himself up to a sitting position.

"Wh-what was it?" he gasped. Jones looked at him sternly. "That's what we want to know," he said. "Perhaps you can explain?"

The cook blinked at him. "Me!"

"Yes, you old humbug!" cried the corporal. "You can't kid us! How did you do it?"

"Do what?" "That rotten noise!"

This was the last straw! To be half-frozen with fear, and then accused of originating the cause of that fear was too much!

"You're all up the pole!" yelled the cook, leaping out of his bed and reaching for his clothes. "I tell you this rotten room's haunted, and I ain't goin' to sleep in it another minut!"

He struggled into his trousers, pulled on his boots, and began to trudge his way toward the door.

Grimes, who was one of the hardest-headed men in the room, slipped from his bed.

"Where are you off to, Stubbs?" he asked, hastening after the cook. "I'm going to the guard-room to report this!" said Stubbs fiercely.

"I'll bring a file of the guard back with me!" Grimes reached out and gripped the cook's shirtband.

"You stay where you are!" he said. "Do you want the whole battalion to take a rise out of us?"

"Blow the battalion!" snapped the cook, struggling to free himself. "Lemme go!"

"Hang on to him, Grimes!" Jones called, from the other end of the room. "E's balmy—that's what's the matter with him! Don't let him get out!"

Grimes tightened his grasp. "You hear what the corporal—" "Bust the corporal, and you!" howled Stubbs. "I'm going out of this!"

R-r-rip! There was a sharp, tearing sound, and the cook's shirt split right up the back. Freed from the restraint, Stubbs shot forward, with Grimes after him. The telegraphist, a Rugby player, collared his man low, and they rolled over and over on the floor, snarling and wrestling like a couple of wild cats.

"You fat ass!" "I'll bust you!" "Ouch!"

The swirl of battle carried them both against a cot. Army bedcots

are made in two portions, which may be pulled out or in, as the owner desires. Stubbs grabbed one of the iron legs close to his head, and held on like grim death.

Grimes, with a tremendous effort, succeeded in pulling the cook into the centre of the floor again; but the fat fellow brought the end portion of the bed with him, and the unfortunate occupier found himself and his blankets thrown like coal from a coal-shute out on to the floor.

"Let me get a 'it at 'im!" the man bawled, struggling up out of the blankets. "I'll knock 'is fat 'ead off!"

With two stalwart foes against him, Stubbs' hope of success vanished. Nevertheless, he put up a mighty resistance, and it was not until Grimes and the other staffman had spreadeagled the fat fellow out face-downwards that the riotous fight ended.

"Carry him back to his little bed, chaps!" Jones cried. "And if he won't lie still, we'll have to tie him down!"

Half a dozen willing assistants laid hold of Stubbs, and he was carted ignominiously down the room, and placed on his cot.

"Are you going to behave your silly self, or must we tie you down?" the corporal asked.

Panting like a stranded fish, Stubbs waved his hand limply in token of surrender.

"All-right!" he gasped. "But—if I'm—dead—to-morrow, I'll know 'oo to blame!"

Inside the grate, the two drummers had heard the din of the struggle,

and although they had not been able to follow all that occurred, they knew that it was time to call a halt.

"Retire," Gipsy murmured to Herd. "We can't risk any more to-night."

Herd carefully lifted the cage, with its covered occupant, and backed down the footstools until he reached the bottom of the shaft. Gipsy followed him, and when they were safely inside the basement again the chums gave vent to their pent-up mirth.

"I sha'n't be able to go up there again!" Herd breathed. "I nearly killed myself trying to 'old my breath! He, he, he! That lamp-chimney's worth quids!"

"Ha, ha! And they blamed poor old Stubbs! What a lark!" "I'll bet the poor beggar doesn't close his eyes to-night!"

They had their laugh out, and then, having extinguished the candle and placed it ready for their next visit, the young rascals retired.

"We'll be back in our old room before the week's out, I'll bet!" was Herd's final remark, as he laid his ginger head back on the pillow, with a sigh of satisfaction.

But alas! he was to prove a poor prophet.

THE 4th CHAPTER. In Which Clegg Makes an Important Discovery.

"H OW big did you say it was, Stubbs?" Freer asked.

He and Herd were again in the coffee-bar eating their supper, and the cook sat opposite them.

Stubbs was busy harrowing the souls of his hearers by a clear account of the ghostly visitant.

"Goodness only knows!" said the cook. "But it's head was agin the roof!"

"And it tried to strangle you?"

"It's hicy 'and gripped my throat," continued Stubbs, the veracious, "and it's 'orrible eyes—eyes as big as cab-lamps, mind you—glared at me. So then, ov course, I ups with my bayonet and let's it 'ave one in the ribs. My word! You ought to 'ave 'eard it 'owl!"

Herd lifted his mug of coffee hurriedly and spluttered for a few moments. The cook glared at him.

"What's the matter with you, sonny?" he asked.

Ginger's red face came out from behind the mug.

"Oh—er—nothing, Stubbs!" he gasped. "Only—only you frighten me to death! It might have been me what was in that cot, instead of you."

Stubbs waved a thick slab of bread-and-butter at the drummer.

"You can thank your lucky stars you wasn't there!" he said. "It—it took me all my time to master it!"

Feeling that if they did not escape from the cook they would burst out laughing in his face, Gipsy rose.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you for telling us about this thing," he said; "and, of course, we'll keep it a secret."

Herd leaned over and gripped the cook's fat paw solemnly.

"I must shake 'ands with you before I go," he said. "You're just the sort of fellow to tackle ghosts,"

(Continued on the next page.)

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