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# THE BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>d</sup>



EVERY TUESDAY.

The object of THE BOYS' FRIEND is to Amuse, to Instruct, and to Advise Boys.

No. 455.—VOL. IX. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 26, 1910.]



**"ROUGH JUSTICE,"** One of Morton Pike's Best Robin Hood Stories, Appears This Week.



















**ROUGH JUSTICE.**

(Continued from the previous page.)

and it was easy to tell at a glance the guilty from the not guilty.

The sheriff had a reputation for being severely just, and it was no unusual thing for the bringer of a false charge to be placed among the accused, and to receive the exact punishment which would have been meted out to his unfortunate victim.

Moreover, FitzAlwyn was possessed of great discrimination, bestowing but a short hearing on each case, and making up his mind very quickly upon the evidence placed before him.

The crimes that morning were mostly of robbery or violence, and as the new-comers entered two villainous knaves were being charged with stealing a cow belonging to a poor widow.

Master Nicholas, the flesher, to whom they had sold it, was identifying them. The widow had already brought witnesses to prove that it was her cow, and since neither of the fellows were worth a shoe to their foot, the case was clearly proved.

"Hang them!" said the sheriff. "The earth is well rid of such rogues!" And without delay they were promptly taken outside and hanged in the market-place.

The next was the case of a bright-faced apprentice lad, whose master, an ale-soaking toper, charged him with stealing a roll of silk, which said roll had been picked up out of the mud where the master himself had dropped it.

The master, moreover, even at that moment was the reverse of sober, and FitzAlwyn looked at him with a hard eye.

"Tis no use bandying words upon such a sot," he said. "Into the yard with him and give him fifty strokes with a stirrup-leather, and mind ye lay them on until we hear his howls."

After that came a farm labourer who had killed one of the King's deer.

He had a wife and seven children, he pleaded, being unable to deny the offence,

his eyes occasionally dropping to the weapon before him; and when the Fleming had finished he looked at Dickon, who had been standing first on one leg and then on the other, vowing in his heart that if he ever got outside that hall again he would be an honest man for the remainder of his life.

"And you, young man," said the sheriff, "what manner of claim can you put forward to the possession of a thing of such value?"

"A claim that your lordship will admit to be a just one," said the rascal, making a bold front of it. "I am Walter FitzRalph, and I was on my way hither to your lordship at my dead father's bidding when these rogues robbed me."

The sheriff started, leaned forward in his chair, and eyed Dickon from head to foot.

"By my halidom," he cried, "you have Sir Ralph's black hair and high colour." Dickon had indeed flushed scarlet, and no wonder.

"Methought this thing was strangely familiar to my eyes. Gramercy! Was I not with stout Sir Ralph when he snatched it from Saladin's girdle, and would have slain the black hound had not a rush of Saracen horsemen separated them! Friend Walter, thou hast proved thy claim and found a friend in FitzAlwyn. But first these greedy rogues shall have their reward. Ho, there, men!" And he signed to the soldiery. "Strip them to the skin, and flog them three times round the market-place, as a warning to liars of their kind. Old England of late is eaten up with these foreign vagabonds, who come hither under pretence of honest trading. Nay, nay, no need to go down on your fat knees unless you would rather be whipped in that position. Come thou hither, friend Walter. Alack, I should have dearly loved to keep this bauble for the sake of thy dead sire, but the Sheriff of Nottingham has no money for such a purchase. Art still willing, Master Absolom, to give the lad the price?"

"I pray thee hold, Sir Sheriff!" said a clear, ringing voice from the back of the hall. "The true claimant has yet to be heard!" And as all eyes turned in the direction of the speaker, they saw a stalwart man in hodden grey, carrying a long bow in his hand, approaching, while behind him walked the lad in the shabby blue jerkin.

"Thou here?" said the sheriff, frowning heavily as he looked into Robin Hood's brown eyes. "How often will thou thrust that fearless head of thine into the lion's jaws? Knowest thou not that I have the King's special mandate to seize thee whenever thou canst be found?"

Robin laughed. "My lord, I know it well," he said, "but I am not one of those men who think only of their own skins. There is a great injustice here, and never shall it be said that Robin Hood shrank from helping the weak and the wronged. Hear me, sheriff, and afterwards judge for thyself."

Everybody in the court hall crowded forward to gaze upon the bold outlaw, but Robin seemed unconscious of their presence. "Those fat fools," he said, pointing to the miserable Flemings, "have had one whipping this morning, and another will do them no harm. 'This whelp'—and he looked sternly at Dickon, whose knees began to knock together—"this whelp hath the cunning of a fox, but it will avail him little."

And in a few manly words he told the sheriff all that had taken place from the time he sat in the common-room in the hostelry up to the moment when he spoke. "Here is the true Walter," he concluded, "and upon his person he hath writing to prove it."

There was a moment of extraordinary silence as, bending his knee, the rightful owner of the dagger drew forth a parchment and laid it in front of FitzAlwyn, who glanced at it, and then looked at the lad, with a smile of welcome.

Before he could speak, however, Dickon suddenly sped down the hall towards the open door at the other end, and so swift of foot was he that he ran a fair chance of gaining the open air and escaping through the crowd that stood in respectful silence outside.

Quick as thought, and before the men-at-arms could start in pursuit, Robin plucked an arrow from his sheath, fitted it to the string, and feathered it between the fugitive's shoulder bones!

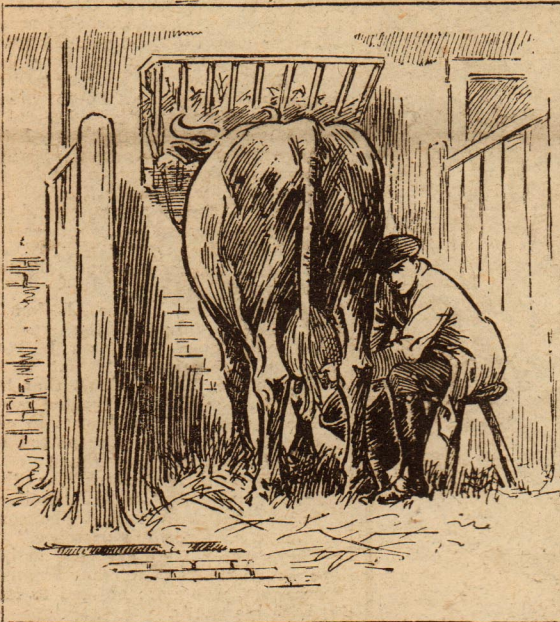
Dickon fell dead, and a murmur of applause rose from the onlookers.

Making as though he had no other intention but to recover the avenging shaft, Robin Hood passed down the hall towards the motionless form that lay half in the sunlight half in the shadow, and then he turned and looked back, a curious smile on his brown visage.

"Justice you deal within this hall, FitzAlwyn," he said, "and justice we deal in the greenwood. Farewell, friend Walter! I leave thee in safe hands. And farewell, sheriff! Forgive me if I do not linger, seeing that thou hast the King's mandate for my arrest!"

And then, springing through the doorway, with a wave of his hand, Robin Hood vanished into the crowd, which opened readily to let him pass.

THE END.



Dick Garnham milking a cow. (See "The Farmer's Boy" on page 635.)

since the horns and hide had been found buried under the floor of his hovel.

The punishment, according to the cruel code of Plantagenet days, should have been death, but the sheriff was merciful under the circumstances.

"Cut off his right hand," he said—"nay, let it be the left." And the man was removed, crying bitterly.

Just then FitzAlwyn's eye fell upon the two venerable Jews and the Flemish merchants, who came into the hall escorted by the men-at-arms.

"How now, what have we here?" he said. "Greeting, Master Absolom!"

"Greeting, my lord!" said the old man, bowing low, and then leaning on his staff, a fine venerable figure in the dancing sunbeams which played upon his snow-white beard. "I come upon a curious matter, may it please my lord." And in a few words he told of the dagger and its rival claimants.

"Give it to me," said the sheriff; and when it had been placed in his hand, the onlookers saw a puzzled expression come into his face, and a half smile played about his lips as he examined it.

"What have you to say, messires?" he said suddenly, turning to the Flemish merchants.

Beltram of Bruges, the drops of perspiration raining from his forehead on to the sweet-smelling rushes that strewed the floor, told a very plausible story of how he and his companions had been minded to carry the diamond to the King, but falling in by ill-chance with the outlaws in the forest, and robbed of all they possessed, they had been forced to offer it for sale.

The sheriff listened, with an immovable face,

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# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER BOY.

His Work and Its Rewards.

(See "Swift and Sure," the Grand Story on Page 633.)

**E**VERYONE knows the District Messenger Boy by sight, for one meets him everywhere in his neat dark blue uniform, with the smart "pill-box" set jauntily over his right ear, like an old-time cavalry man; but it is not everybody who realises the intelligence and absolute trustworthiness of these lads—the delicate missions that are entrusted to them and the responsibility that they assume "when they first put this uniform on."

The idea originated with an American gentleman, who founded the corps over here in 1890, and twenty years of useful work finds them to-day going stronger than ever.

To become a District Messenger Boy it is necessary, first of all, that he shall be of unblemished character, quick and alert, and not less than fourteen years of age.

They are recruited from all classes—tradesmen's sons, policemen's sons, some of their fathers are bricklayers; but no matter what their origin, the boys themselves are, one and all, true as steel, the very essence of politeness, in which latter respect they might very well serve as a pattern to a good many others, and they never fail the Association or the customer who gives them employment.

Twice a year there is a presentation of medals to about twenty-five per cent. of the total number for quickness on calls, general smartness, and civility.

The medal is a silver one, with the figure of a messenger boy on one side, and the legend "Reward of Merit" on the other, worn from a red-and-blue ribbon, and highly prized. It is also the custom, where a boy has gone abroad on duty to give him the ribbon of the country he has visited.

The medal of the Royal Humane Society has been won by the messenger boy, and one lucky lad, who went to Constantinople in charge of a valuable collie dog that had been presented to the Sultan, had the Turkish Industrial Order of Merit conferred upon him.

The messenger is promoted to sergeant, from sergeant to superintendent, with, of course, increase of pay, which pay varies according to the nature of the duties for which they prove themselves best fitted.

Every boy receives a free kit on joining, and he has the additional advantages of being taught gymnastics, of becoming a member of a drum and fife band, if he likes,

and the use of an excellent reading-room.

In addition to these, there is an annual camp, to which five per cent. of the best boys go free of charge for a rattling week at the seaside.

As a training in initiative and self-reliance, and a general process of will-sharpening, the service is hard to beat. They come on duty in relays at all hours. Most of the offices are open day and night, Sundays included, and no boy knows what he may have to do, or where he may have to go at the first call.

The story of Messenger Jagers, who was despatched to America, and was personally complimented by the late Queen Victoria, is too well known to need repetition here.

Another instance is that of the late Colonel McCalmont, who called one day at one of the offices, and handed in a letter marked: "For immediate delivery," the address being "Hansard, California."

In less than two hours the messenger was on his way to Liverpool, where he took the first boat

to New York, ultimately delivering his despatch several hours before the arrival of the regular mails.

As Mr. Lord, the courteous general manager, informs us, there is nothing you cannot do by the help of a District Messenger.

Before now they have paid a gentleman's bills in Paris, fielded tennis-balls for the Duke of Saxeburg, exercised hunters, taken charge of a lunatic for a whole night, managed the mess accounts at a militia race, taken young ladies to and from school, conveyed valuables of all description, guided blind people and strangers, attended at Buckingham Palace—in short, the most varied and impossible things may be expected of them at any moment, and they are never known to fail.

This is high praise, but it is well deserved, and half the Peerage figure on the company's books to show how these handy lads are appreciated in high places.

THE END.

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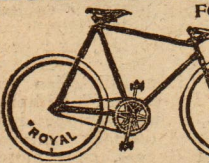
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