David Goodwin's Latest and Best Serial STARTING.



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.

SCHOOL AND MILI

A Grand New Serial of Lancashire School Life.

DAVID By GOOD WIN.

NEW READERS START HERE.
SAM OLROYP, our here, a breezy young milkhand of Boltham. Sam is an Gent. LATTERIS, a beight, typically coleil is the implace of the production of the

"Stop! Jerrold, stop!" yelled Cecil at the top of his voice.

Jerrold only ran the harder. A fierce anger seized the pursuer. He would have set things right, and let Jerrold go, if his cousin had only trusted him, but all thoughts of mercy left Cecil now. He vowed he would run Jerrold down it it took a week.

Cecil was decidedly the facter of the two. He was in better training, and a noted long-distance runner at Canterfield College. Cigarettes and stray whiskies-and-sodas had not improved Jerrold's wind. He was getting blown already.

The fugitive put out his utmost efforts, but finding Cecil was decidedly gaining on him, Jerrold darted round an old broken-down fence, and, halting for a moment out of sight, tried desperately to get the writing-case open.

If he could only get at the will and destroy it! Twice already he had tried. The case was fastened with a strong brass lock, which refused to yield. He battered it with a stone, and tore frantically at the tough leather with his hands. Unless he were quick it would be too late.

"Is that little cad out of the gutter to have what uncle ought to have left to me, the old fool?" he muttered savagely, pounding the lock under his heel. "Only let me get at the will, and I'll tear it—chew it—swallow it, rather than the brat should have a farthing! Old Neville won't live to make another!"

He swore savagely at the case, but it defied all his efforts. If only there were a brick-kiln handy, where he could burn the whole thing up! But there was none.

He looked round the fence. Cecil was hardly a hundred yards away.

there was none.

He looked round the fence. Cecil was hardly a hundred yards away. Jerrold snatched up the case and ran for it again. He had got his wind back, and for a little while he kept ahead, hugging the case in front of him.

for it again. He had got his wind back, and for a little while he kept ahead, hugging the case in front of him.

"Stop, you cad! You've got to give it up! I'll slaughter you if you don't!" cried Cecil furiously.

Jerrold snarled back at him over his shoulder, and kept straight on. They had run right out of the tract of building plots, and were now in the open waste land just beyond Boltham. In front was a stretch of slag-heaps and rubbish, at the edge of a scrubby little wood. Into the latter Jerrold dived like a rabbit.

Cecil, dashing after him, was left out of sight for a moment or two, and took the wrong turning—a narrow path through the thickets. He stopped, and heard the crackle and rustle of the twigs away to his right. Turning quickly, he followed the sound, and came out into a large clearing, where a dirty-looking pond gleamed in a muddy quagmire. Just beyond it Jerrold was running on as fast as his failing breath would let him.

The chase was a short one now. Jerrold was all but exhausted, labouring and panting heavily. He threw an ugly glance back at his cousin, but said nothing. He was beyond speech. A couple of hundred yards further, at the very end of the wood, Cecil caught up with him. Jerrold turned, and the next moment they had grappled, and were struggling violently.

"Give it up!" panted Cecil, forcing him back. "I never thought you were a thief, Jerry, well as I know you! Give that thing up, for heaven's sake! Where is it?"

A cry escaped him as he realised that the writing-case was gone. Jerrold no longer had it about him, nor was it anywhere on the ground. "What have you done with it?" shouted Cecil, gripping his arms. "Answer me?"

"Done with what?" snarled his cousin:

"The thing you stole! The case that holds the will!" Cecil, grabbing

"Done with what?" snarled his cousin:

"The thing you stole! The case that holds the will!" Cecil, grabbing him with one hand, passed his other swiftly over Jerrold to find where the case was concealed, but in vain. It was a bulky thing, and could not have been hidden on him.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I never touched the will."

"What's the use of lying to me? I saw you with it! What were you running away for if you hadn't taken

it?" cried Cecil fiercely. His cousin's denial enraged him. "It's no use

it?" cried Cecil fiercely. His cousin's denial enraged him. "It's no use telling you to act honestly and own up, but if you don't tell me what you've done with it I won't shield you! Give it up!"

They grappled again, and, slipping on the muddy grass, went down heavily, Cecil underneath. He tried to struggle to his feet, still gripping Jerrold fast. Then—whether it was accident or design he never knew—a boot-toe struck Cecil with sickening force on the temple. The strength seemed to go out of him, a great light flashed before his eyes, and he sank back, clapping his hands to his head. Jerrold, muttering to himself, took to flight again, very white in the face. Cecil Latimer, feeling quite dazed and sick, got slowly on to his feet and leaned against a tree. Blood was trickling from a cut in his forehead, and it was some minutes before he could pull himself together and remember what had happened. Jerrold was out of sight. He saw somebody running towards him down the path. To his amazement it was Sam Olroyd. "You!" cried Cecil. "How did you get here, Sam?"

"Ah wasn't two minutes behind thee all t' way," panted the halftimer. "Why, thy head's coot open!" he exclaimed. "Was it that tyke Jerrold that did it?" Sam's eyes blazed fiercely. "Which way did he go?" "The cut's nothing. It's no good chasing him. Let him go." Cecil

blazed fiercely. Which way danged?"

"The cut's nothing. It's no good chasing him. Let him go." Cecil gave a gulp. "Sam, that case with the will in it is lost! We've got to find it. The—the chap who had it must have thrown it away somewhere. Help me to search."

"Blow t' will!" exclaimed Sam.

"It's made more trouble a'ready than t' fire itself! If it's on my account—"

"I tell you we must find it!" said Cecil, quivering with impatience. "I don't gain anything by it, but it is my uncle's dying wish, and I'll see it's carried out! If you won't do it for yourself, do it for me!"

Sam, seeing that Cecil was wrought up to fever heat over the matter, at once threw himself into the search, and gave all the help he could. They retraced their steps through the wood, ransacking every thicket and hollow into which the writing-case could possibly have been flung. It was quite clear to Cecil that Jerrold must have thrown it away when he found he could not escape. The wood was not a difficult place to search, nor were there many spots where anything could be hidden for long. Yet there was no sign of the case.

The boys walked back across the open as far as the fence where Jerrold had bolted. They covered every inch of the ground, then back to the wood again, where Sam even climbed up a hollow tree-trunk to see if the case could possibly have been tossed inside. It was not there. The boys began to despair.

"Ah reckon that's gone for good," said Sam, shaking his head. "Most like it's destroyed."

"And you robbed of everything that ought to be yours!" cried Cecil. "I won't believe it! There must be— Ah!" He suddenly turned and ran back through the wood. "Why didn't I think of it before? The pond! He came right past it!" In a few moments the boys were beside the muddy pool in the clearing. Cecil's face fell as he looked at it.

"It might as well be burnt as in there! We shall never get it!" he said gloomily. "They say the pond's almost bottomless."

"Nay, Ah never believe all Ah hears. Let's try," said Sam, whipping out his knife and cutting down a long, thin birch sapling. He tied a spiky branch across the end of it with cord, and in a few moments had made a very handy rake. Cecil was soon supplied with another, and with new hope they began to dredge out the pool vigorously.

Like a good many fables, the story of the pond being bottomless was nonsense. It was hardly six feet deep. Mud, dead

"THE 6th CHAPTER.
Partners.
"ELL done!" cried 'ecil,
snatching up the case.
"I was afraid it was
gone for good. Sam, old chap, I'd
have given a year of my life rather

than lost it!" He could not find words to express his gratitude. "Good heavens! It would have been the most awful thing that ever hap-pened!"

pened!"
Sam threw down his rake.
"If thou's pleased that's enow for me," he said with a slight smile, and Cecil wrung his hand. Then suddenly, without any warning, Cecil Latimer sank on to a fallen tree-trunk, and, covering his face with his hands, began to sob painfully, his eyes dry, but his body shaking from head to foot. Sam was beside him in a moment.

his hands, began to sob painfully, his eyes dry, but his body shaking from head to foot. Sam was beside him in a moment.

"It's hard! My heaven, it's hard!" groaned Cecil, his voice hoarse and dry. "My own cousin—a thief and a felon! That I should have to say it! He's of the same blood as me—one of the family. I never liked him, but I've always tried not to let him see it, and be decent to him. He isn't my sort. But to think he should come down to this! The disgrace of it—and uncle on his death-bed!"

"Nay, don't take on, lad!" said Sam, for his friend's grief cut him to the heart. "T' harm isn't done—here's t' will. Seein' what Ah have o' Jerrold's, it's no surprise he acted as he did. He was sore tempted. Thou fears t' disgrace. Why, there's only you an' me knows! We can keep it to ourselves, can't we?"

Cecil sprang up.

"You mean it?" he cried.

"Ay! Ah'll help thee to hush it up, lad! What's t' good o' raisin' a row? Ah'd like to poonch Jerrold's head, but Ah don't want him jailed."

"Will you swear that you'll never say a word about what's happened," cried Cecil eagerly, "if I do the same?"

"Ay, here's my hand on it!"

"By George, you're the biggest brick that ever lived, Sam!" said Cecil, gripping the mill-boy's hand. "He's my cousin after all."

"So he is, worse luck. Is that a kick on thy forehead? Ah'll be sworn no fist did it."

"It's nothing," said Cecil, reddening.

"Ah count that a dirtier trick than stealin' yon hit o' paper." returned

"It's bothing," said Cecil, readening.

"Ah count that a dirtier trick than stealin' yon bit o' paper," returned Sam grimly, packing up the writing-case and leading Cecil away with an arm through his.

"That bit of paper will make you a millionaire—"

"Stow it, lad!" said Sam shortly.
"Ah divin't want to hear about that, wi' t' breath not out o' yon kind owd man's body. Wish Ah could burn t' will an' let him live by it!"

"You're right," said Cecil, with a gulp. "I don't know what I'll do when he's gone. Till I met you, Uncle Noville and my sister were the only folk I cared for. I've no parents."

"Nor me, neither," said Sam, as they cleared the wood.

"All the same, I'd have been forced to tell all I knew, if the will had been lost. Keeping a secret like that would be as bad as stealing. Thank goodness it's found. Give it to me, Sam—it's in my charge."

"Happen t' lawyer chap'll be glad to see it back," added Sam. "Though it's in a gey mess."

"Good heavens! I hope the paper isn't spoiled," said Cecil, in consternation, hurrying forward, "or we'll be as badly off as before."

The thought kept him on tenter-hooks till they neared the cottage again. Before they reached it the lawyer came hurrying out to meet them. He gave a cry of joy when he saw they had the case, and hurried them into the parlour of the cottage, where he shut the door and windows.

"You have recovered it, then. Well done!" he exclaimed, seizing the case. "Why, it is soaked with mud! What does this mean?"

"It has been in the water, sir. We couldn't help it. Is the will spoiled?"

With trembling hands, Mr. Fawcett unlocked the case. No great amount of water had got inside among the papers. The will was wet and stained, but quite sound and legible.

"Thank the powers for that!" exclaimed the lawyer, with a deep sigh of relief.

Then became silent, and looked straight before him, his brows knitted thoughtfully, and his face

ery grim.
"Who was it that stole this will?"

"Who was it that stole this will?" he said.

"We found it in a pond near the brickfields, sir," said Cecil quietly.

"I asked you who stole it!" said the lawyer sternly. And he added, with a searching look: "Where is Jerrold Vane?"

"I don't know, sir," said Cecil doggedly; and it was the truth.

"You mean you will not tell me."

"Mr. Fawcett," said Cecil, looking.

"THE BLACK CANYON," a Grand New Serial Tale of

BUFFALO BILL.

Commences Next Tuesday in

him in the face, "Sam Olroyd and I both think that this had best be left a mystery. We don't want to answer any questions. And we hope you'll think the same."

Mr. Fawcett's face changed. He walked up and down the room, looking very agitated and troubled. He had guessed at the truth.

"This would be a terrible thing to happen in a good family," he said, in a low voice. "It would be a dreadful scandal against an honest name. After all, the will is here, and nobody is wronged. I am not responsible for the boy; I shall be doing no harm if I hush it up. Give him another chance." He turned to Cecil. "You did not see this will stolen with your own eyes?" he asked anxiously.

"No, sir," said Cecil shortly. "I didn't see it taken."

"That is well," replied the lawyer hastily. "Then let us forget this terrible affair. No more need be said about it. I agree with you both." He locked the will in the case again. "I hope that young scoundrel will be kept out of my sight," he muttered. "And now, the sooner I put this document in a place of safety the better; we have had a narrow escape."

"My uncle, sir!" said Cecil, in a low voice. "How is he now?"

"He is still sleeping," returned Mr. Fawcett quietly; "the doctor is with him. Cecil Latimer, please remember that you have my deepest sympathy. And you, too, Olroyd, for I see that you are losing a guardian and friend who can never be replaced."

Mr. Fawcett took his leave sadly, and soon the doctor came in. He said that there was no change. When the nover danger.

be replaced."
Mr. Fawcett took his leave sadly, and soon the doctor came in. He said that there was no change.
When the next day dawned, Mr. Neville Latimer's soul had departed to a brighter sphere. The kindly old mill-owner had passed peacefully away in his sleep, never regaining consciousness.

away in his sleep, never regaining consciousness.

They laid him to rest in Amberley Churchyard, under the shadow of the Hall, four days later. Cecil Latimer, his sister Grace, and Sam Olroyd were among those who followed the coffin to its last resting-place.

were among those who followed the coffin to its last resting-place.

It was a fortnight afterwards that Cecil heard the first news of his cousin. Jerrold Vane had gone to London on the very day following Mr. Latimer's death, and was staying there with an aunt of his, Miss Agatha Vane. He had refused to go North again, or to attend the funeral, or appear at Amberley Hall, and his aunt, who had been on bad terms with Neville Latimer all her life, did not insist on his going, and let him have his own way. What explanation Jerrold made to her is unknown, but she was a bitter enemy of the Latimers, and believed him. Cecil and Sam had spent the past two weeks quietly at Amberley, nor did Sam once go into Boltham, though he heard that a tremendous sensation had been made about the part he had played at the fire. Sam felt he did not want to see Boltham till that was all over; he could not forget it was that disaster which was the cause of Mr. Latimer's death.

It is not natural for youth to be downcast by grief for long. Grace Latimer had suffered most, and the doctor ordered her to leave Amberley and its sad associations for a time, and go to the seaside. The old housekeeper of Amberley engaged rooms at a big hotel at Scarborough for Grace, and the boys went with her. At the end of ten days they had all recovered health and spirits, and returned to Amberley; three better chums did not exist in Lancashire.

Then came the proving of Mr. Latimer's will. This was done in Lancashire.

Lancashire.

Then came the proving of Mr.
Latimer's will. This was done in
London, and little news of it reached
Boltham, except to those concerned.
The old lawyer, who was now the
trustee of the boys, paid several
visits to Amberley, and there were a
great many matters of business to be
seen to. It was on the very morning
when the will passed through the
Court of Probate, confirming Sam
Olroyd's right to a full half-share in
Latimer & Co.'s mills, that a letter
came to Cecil from Jerrold Vane. It
contained only a few words, and ran
as follows:

"I will never set foot in Amberley Hall as long as that cad from Boltham lives there.
"JERROLD VANE."

Cecil sprang up, crushing the note in his fist.
"The nerve of the fellow!" he "The nerve of the fellow!" he cried hotly. "He won't come to Amberley, won't he? No, I'll bet he doesn't, if I've got anything to say about it!"

"And I, too!" said Grace Latimer, her eyes flashing. "Amberley is mine now, and it's free to my brother and to you, Sam." She gave her hand to Sam Olroyd. "I would go into the streets and beg before I would let him come here. I know how he treated you, Sam, and how the mill was fired, though Cecil didn't tell me. You've done more for us all than anybody ever did. You deserve all you've got, and more. You're a brick, Sam!"

"Only two days more, and then Canterfield again," said Cecil a few minutes later. "Still, it's pretty hot stuff at the college, I can tell you. Not so bad when you're there. We shall see some sport."

"Seems rum—a chap like me at Canterfield College!" said Sam, chuckling. "When Ah was at t' Wilde Street School we used to hate they fellows in top-hats. Still, it must be fine to go to a school like that."

He paused and thought for a minute, looking rather solemn.

"Cecil."

"Well?" "And I, too!" said Grace Latimer,

"Cecil."
"Well?"
"D'ye think they'll be down on me—they rich chaps? Ah'm a poor man's son, an' come from a poor school. Even now, Ah've nowt but what's paid for my schoolin'. They don't like mill-boys. S'pose they make it hot for me?"
"They'd better try it!" said Cecil fiercely.

"They'd better try it!" said Cecul fiercely.

"Surely the boys there aren't such cads, Cecil!" cried Grace.

"I don't know," growled Cecil.
"Some are all right. But a good many are the most poisonous set of beasts you could find anywhere. They may do what you say—perhaps they will. If they do, I'll stick by you, and be hanged to the lot of them is Shake on it!" he cried, holding out his hand.

"Thou'll stand by me!" cried Sam.

"Thou'll stand by me!" cried Sam.

"To the giddy finish! By gum, we'll make things hum at Canterfield!" said Cecil gleefully, as they exchanged a grip. "I've a pal or two there I can count on. The chap who stopped the fire at Latimer's Mills isn't going to be set on by a lot of pups in Eton jackets!"

"Ah'm in for a hôt time," said Sam grinning.

Sam Olroyd was right. But he never dreamed how hot a time it was really going to be when, forty-eight hours later, the gates of Amberley Hall closed behind the two boys, and the dogcart whirled them off to Canterfield College.

THE 7th CHAPTER.

The Ordeal by Water.

W, porter, take that bag to the Royal Hotel!"

It was Jerrold Vane who stepped out of a first-class carriage as the express from London drew up as the express from London drew up at the main platform in Boltham, on the evening before the first day of the term. The porter touched his hat, and carried the kit-bag across the street to the great hotel. Jerrold himself walked out, and bought himself a large box of cigarettes. There was a very gloomy expression on his sallow face. "Canterfield!" he said to himself

sallow face.

"Canterfield!" he said to himself bitterly. "To-morrow I've got to go back. I needn't if I don't like. Who's to make me? Shall I chuck it?"

it?"
He flung a match into the gutter.
"No, by Jove! I'd go back to
Canterfield if it were slavery. It's
my one chance to queer that dirty
little cad Olroyd, and I'll take it!"
He laughed savagely. "I'm not
beaten yet. They can't prove anything about that writing-case now;
nobody'd believe 'em if they did. I'll
make the beast wish he'd never been
born! I've got the power to do it
now!"

now!"

Jerrold stalked into the hotel, and ordered dinner and a pint bottle of wine. He felt rather sleepy after it, and retired to a small smoking-room on the first floor, where he dropped into a heavy slumber. How long he remained there he hardly knew, but a waiter woke him with a massage.

knew, but a waiter woke him with a message.

"Beg pardon, sir, is your name Mr. Jerrold Vane?"

"Yes," grunted Jerrold. "Why?"

"There's a man downstairs, sir, would like to see you privately. He wouldn't give his name."

Jerrold looked rather alarmed.

"All right," he said after a pause, "show him up here."

The visitor was ushered in. It was Elim Stott, the head overlooker from Latimer's Mills. Jerrold stared at him, trying to remember where he had seen that fat, white face, and those cunning little eyes before.

"Good evenin', sir!" said Stott

softly, closing the door. "Thou remembers me—as showed thee round t' mill that day t' fire happened? Thou hasn't seen me since, but Ah've seen thee."

but Ah've seen thee."
"Indeed! Where?" said Jerrold

but Ah've seen thee."

"Indeed! Where?" said Jerrold haughtily.

"Outside t' cottage in t' brickfields," said the overlooker softly; "when thou ran off wi' a bit' of a writin'-case that was on t' windowsill while owd Latimer was dyin."

Jerrold started, and turned pale.

"What do you mean? It's not true!" he said quickly.

"Don't thou mind my knowin', sir?" said the overlooker with a wink. "That's my cottage, an' Ah saw thee. Ah wunnered what thou was oop to, then. But Ah've seen a copy o' Neville Latimer's will since it's been sworn, and Ah reckon thou did a very sensible thing. Pity they got t' will back from thee."

Jerrold felt very uncomfortable. He realised that this man knew how he stood, and that he had made a futile attempt to destroy the will.

"I don't admit it," said Jerrold hoarsely, "but if so, what then?"

"Why, thou's lost thy share in t' Latimer Mill. It goes to that cub Sam Olroyd. That's bad hearin' for me. Ah've leathered that young beggar worse than anyone in t' mill, an' if there's a man alive he hates, it's me. Now he is half boss, an' Cecil Latimer, who owns t'other half, is his greatest friend. Sam Olroyd'll get me sacked!"

Jerrold sat up. He began to see how the land lay.

"Ah looked to be t' under-

him between us—he shall nivver come in for t' Latimer Mills! Elim Stott'll show thee t' way!"

"By gum, I'm with you!" exclaimed Jerrold. "Shake on it! You're as 'big a rascal as I am, Stott, and you've a lot more experience. We need each other's help, as you say. What's your price? You want to be manager of Latimer's?"

"Not me! Ah'll take a half-partnership wi' thee—thy share between us two. £10,000 a year each."

Jerrold hesitated. There was no help for it. He must go shares with the man, for Stott knew too much already."

"Very well," he said; "half and half. You deal with Olroyd here, I'll deal with him at the school. We've an easy job; we only have to get him disgraced. You'll be ready to give me any help I need, if I send for you?"

"Ah'll be at thy beck an' call,"

A window was thrown open over-head, and a voice shouted down: "I say, come up, you chaps! The giddy school's going to pieces! An awful thing's happened. Come up, all of you!"

There was a general rush through

awful thing's happened. Come up, all of you!"

There was a general rush through the hall and up the staircase. The boys burst into a long, lofty room, called the common-room, which all the senior Forms used out of school hours. There was an excited assembly of quite twenty boys, all thronging round Jerrold Vane, who was perched on a form and holding forth at the top of his voice.

"It's perfectly true, I tell you!" he cried. "You can believe it or not, as you like. They're sending a low cad out of the cotton mills here—a fellow who can't talk English, and has lived in the Boltham slums all his life. A Board-school chap!" There was a general howl of unbelief.

belief.

belief.

"You're pulling our leg, Vane! The Head wouldn't allow it!"

"He jolly well has allowed it! The beast will be here soon. He belongs to that gang of cads in Wilde Street—he's one of the lot who ambushed our waggonette just before Christmas."

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed Larson. "You don't mean it, Vane!"

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed Larson. "You don't mean it, Vane!"

The door was flung open, and Holme-Tracey, a tall, supercilious-looking boy who was Jerrold's study chum, strode in.

"It's quite true," he cried. "I've seen the animal—he's downstairs now, with young Latimer. He's everything Jerry says, and worse. I've heard him speak—he talks like a cad out of the cotton mills." He mimicked Sam's Lancashire accent. "You never saw such a holy terror in your life! And this fellow's coming here—among gentlemen!" Holme-Tracey's father had made his money from a patent baby-food, but Holme-Tracey was very particular about his acquaintances. So were his especial friends, and those of Jerrold, who made up nearly the whole company in the room.

There was a pause of stupefaction.

"How on earth has it happened?"

There was a pause of stupefaction.

"How on earth has it happened?"

"Ill tell you!" cried Jerrold.

"This bounder—he calls himself
Sam Olroyd—humbugged my uncle
into believing he'd done him a
service. The little cad was a half
timer, or whatever they call it, in
our cotton mill. He wormed and
sneaked himself into my uncle's
confidence before he died, and got
him to promise he'd send Olroyd
here, and pay for his schooling."

"What for?"

"The little beast wants to pass
himself off as a gentleman!"
Jerrold gave a savage laugh. "He
wants to be one of us. He's done
me out of some money already.
Now he's going to make you take
him for a pal!"

"Is he? By gum, we won't have
him here at all!" cried Larson
furiously. "We'll pitch him out,
even if the Head himself backs
him!"

"Hands up everybody who's for
turning out the Board-school
bounder!" cried Holme-Tracey.

A forest of hands shot up, and in

"Hands up everybody who's for turning out the Board-school bounder!" cried Holme-Tracey.

A forest of hands shot up, and in the midst of it the door swung open. In walked Cecil Latimer and Sam Olroyd, arm-in-arm.

"Hallo, you fellows!" cried Cecil cheerily. "What are you all up to? I say, here's a new chap—Sam Olroyd! The best kid going—a real rattling good sort!"

A dead silence fell on the company,

A dead silence fell on the company.
Everybody stood aloof and stared haughtily; not a word was said.
Cecil looked at them, stopped, and flushed red to the ears.
Before he could speak the door opened again, and a prefect put his head in.

head in.
"Is Latimer here? Latimer, the doctor wishes to see you in his study!

doctor wishes to see you in his study! Come at once!"
Cecil had to go; there was no help for it. When the doctor summoned a boy there was nothing else to be done but obey.
"Hold on, old chap!" he cried to Sam, as he darted off with the prefect. "I'll be back in two minutes!"
The door closed, and Sam found himself alone with the collegers. Their silence had astonished him. But now he thought they looked dangerous. They stared at Sam as if he were some slimy and disgusting reptile.
"Ah'm glad to see thee!" said

"Ah'm glad to see thee!" said Sam, not knowing quite what to say. The assembly shuddered. Larson stepped forward with a glittering eye.
"Are you the person from the

(Continued at foot of the next page.)



With their hastily-constructed rakes, Sam and Cecil dragged about in the slimy pond, but at first no trace could they find of the missing portfolio.

manager there soon, an' manager later," said Stott; "an' to make a fat thing out o' it. But even if Ah'm not sacked, they two chaps'll never trust me. Now, thou's as sharp a young gent as ivver walked on this earth, an' Ah'll mak' a bargain wi' thee."

"Go on," said Jerrold, "I'm listening."

"In owd Latimer's will," said Stott in a whisper, "it says that if Sam Olroyd ivver disgraces himself, at school or out of it, he'll be turned off, an' t' share in t' mills goes to Latimer's next-o'-kin, who's t' next-o'-kin, after young Cecil an' his sister, who've already got their shares? Why, thee! T' mill goes back to thee!"

"Are you sure?" cried Jerrold eagerly.

"Ah've been to two lawyers, an'

back to thee!"

"Are you sure?" cried Jerrold eagerly.

"Ah've been to two lawyers, an' made certain!" said Stott. "What thou has to do is to make young Olroyd come to grief—only once—an' t' mill's thine! Thou'll have an equal share then wi' Cecil Latimer. Ah'll help thee to do it—at a price."

Jerrold leaped to his feet, and began to pace up and down the room.

"By Jove, it can be done!" he muttered.

"Now thou sees why Ah said nothing about what Ah'd seen at t'cottage," said Stott cunningly. "Ah'm on thy side. Thou's no ordinary youngster — ther's plenty o' brains in thy skull. Thou can't get on wi'out my help, an' Ah can't get on wi'out thine. So let's join together. Thou tackle Sam Olroyd in that school o' thine, an' get him broke or expelled, an' Ah'll tackle him out o' t' school. We'll do for

streets. "There's nothing like making a splash, and this turn-out'll show them I've plenty of the ready. After all, there's nobody else in the school who's got the run of £1,000 a year. I ought to have things all my own way."

After all, there's nobody else in the school who's got the run of £1,000 a year. I ought to have things all my own way."

One or two motor-cars and a waggonette were just coming out, when Jerrold arrived. His brougham swept up the drive, and he alighted at the wide front doors. A knot of carefully-dressed boys were chatting on the steps.

"Hallo, Vane!" they chorused. "Where'd you raise that one-horse pill-box? Where's Cissy Latimer? Isn't he with you?"

"You look pale, my infant," said Hering, of the Upper Fourth, a boy with a sharp, lengthy nose and dark red hair. "Is it true that the Latimer Mills are burnt down, and that you're going to earn your bread by the sweat of your giddy brow?"

"No, it isn't," said Jerrold oftily. "A Vane does not demean himself by labour. I could buy up any three of you at this moment, and have enough change left to keep myself in cigarettes. I'll talk to you fellows later. Where's Holme-Tracey?"

"Gone up to your study. I say,

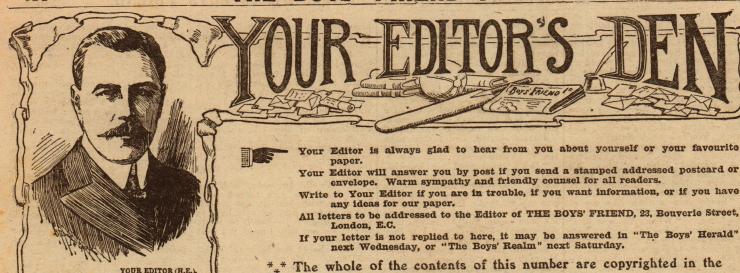
myself in cigarettes. I'll talk to you fellows later. Where's Holme-Tracey?"

"Gone up to your study. I say, Vane— Here, stop a bit—"

They all seemed eager for a word with Jerrold, but he escaped and hurried on into the School House.

"It's a rum thing his coming without Latimer," said Laison, of the Third. "I say, you chaps, did you hear that old Latimer's dead? He must have left those two chaps a lot of money—that's why Vane's set up a brougham."

THE BOYS' FRIEND. "THE BLACK CANYON," Commences Next a Grand New BUFFALO BILL, Tuesday in Serial Tale of



Grand New Sea and Adventure Story Next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. BUFFALO BILL NEXT TUESDAY

IN "THE BOYS' FRIEND."

Controller or THE BOYS' FRIEND—Tuesday. THE BOYS' HERALD—Wednesda, 7HE BOYS' REALM—Saturday,

N next Tuesday's grand number of THE BOYS' FRIEND I shall be starting what promises to be one of our most popular serial stories, a tale dealing with the King of Scouts—Buffalo Bill.

"The Black Canyon," as my splendid new serial is called, has been specially written by Mr. Clive R. Fenn, the youngest son of the late Mr. George Manville Fenn, and it will be a deep humaninterest story dealing with the interest story dealing with the adventures of a party of Scots settlers in Canada, as well as with the inimitable Colonel Cody him-

self.

Buffalo Bill appears in the long, opening instalment, and will figure right through the yarn, and I can promise you that "The Black Canyon," besides being the very best story of this Prince of the Plains will also be the finest tale of emigration and life in the Colonies you have ever read.

you have ever read.

The illustrations will be by Mr.
T. W. Holmes, who has made a special study of Indian costumes, manners, and poses, and of the wild prairie country in which our new serial is placed.

Do not forget that "The Black Canyon" commences next Tuesday.

Canyon" commences next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND, and make sure of your copy by ordering it in advance from your newsagent.

SNOWSHOE SCOUTING.

As you all know, I am always delighted to hear from my chums beyond the seas, and THE Boys' FRIEND is increasing its popularity in all our British Colonies, thanks

partly to its own excellence, but in no small measure to the kindly personal recommendation of its readers, and to my home-living chums posting copies to their friends abroad.

The following most interesting epistle has just reached me from Canada, and as I am sure you will all enjoy reading it, I am printing it in full:

"788A, Alma Street, Mile End,
"Montreal, Canada.
"Dear Editor,—I have been a reader of The Boys' Friend for a long time, and I think it better than any other paper or book I have ever read. I am a Dane, and I can say that it is mostly through The Boys' Friend that I have learned to speak and read English in the four years I have been in this country.
"I belong to the Highland Cadet Corps of this city, and we are about to form a Scout troop for next summer. Just now the Canadian winter sports are in full swing, and a few other lads and I have decided to start scouting on snowshoes and skis; by so doing we shall be a little in advance of the others when they start.
"Wiching you and Thin Down

"Wishing you and THE Boys' FRIEND a Happy New Year,—Yours truly, O. CHRISTENSEN."

Very many thanks indeed for your cheery letter, O. Christensen. I should dearly like to join you in your scouting amid the snows of Canada, and I can well imagine the good fun you will have. I hope you will write to me again before very long, and that you will be able to get me some new readers in the Land of the Maple Leaf.

ARE SWEEPSTAKES GAMBLING?

"Do you think that a sweepstake held in a factory is a form of gamb-ling? One of my chums and I have had an argument on this subject—I holding that it is gambling, and he

United States of America.

saying that it is not. I decided to ask you, believing that you will rightly inform us."

The above occurs in a very cheery missive from T. H., of Leicester, and, in reply, a sweepstake is without a doubt a form of gambling. It is the staking of a small sum of money against the chance of winning a large one, and is on exactly the same lines as betting.

As you all know, I am not by any means a narrow-minded man, and I am as fond of sport as any one of my boys, but, at the same time, I do not hold with sweepstakes. It is not that they do harm in every case, but now and again a boy will win a large sum of money, and the spirit of gambling will come upon him so irresistibly that, instead of being able to throw it off, it will become stronger and stronger, till eventually he becomes a confirmed gambler.

I hope all my boys will avoid sweepstakes for this reason. "Lead us not into temptation" we pray each day, and I should be sorry to see one of my boys going out to meet temptation in this way, where it is an easy matter to avoid it.

UNHAPPY AT HOME.

V. M. is one of my chums who is unhappy at home, and I have read his letter with great sorrow. This poor lad—he is eighteen years of age—is being very badly treated, and I sympathise with him whole-heartedly, for at his age he wants all the influence of a happy home life and surroundings to mould and make his character.

From what my reader tells me, he is made the butt of the family. Although he earns ten shillings a week, his people say it is not enough to keep him, and when he returns home in the evening they taunt him and make sarcastic remarks. No wonder my reader wants to become a cabin-boy, or run away to sea.

I am deeply sorry to hear of V. M.'s case, and yet without understanding the full circumstances, I hardly know what will be the best advice I can give. Certainly I do not advise my reader to run away to sea—the days when a boy could do that and get on in the world are over. No, I think V. M. wants to tell the relatives with whom he lives—I am sure they cannot be his parents, though he does not enlighten me on that point—that he has had enough of the bad treatment, and that he is going to strike out for himself.

With his ten shillings a week—he

himself.

With his ten shillings a week—he may be earning more soon, I trust—he should be able to take some humble lodgings near his work, and in this way, by careful expenditure and great effort, manage to paddle his own canoe.

In the meantime, he can keep in touch with relatives, and by following my plan he will be able to lead a happier life, and at the same time not cut himself adrift from his people.

It is my genuine wish that my how

people.

It is my genuine wish that my boy may soon find a solution to the difficulty, and be able to lead a happier and brighter life. I hope he will write and let me know exactly how he gets on.

DOES WATER HARM THE HAIR?

From a Bristol chum I have received an interesting letter, in which he asks me the above question. In reply to my friend, I may tell him that water used simply to damp the hair will do no harm, except in those cases where a boy's hair is inclined to be dry and brittle. In this case, it is advisable to use a litle oil instead of water. Toilet paraffin or vaseline is good, and so is bay rum.

Carbonate of soda is one of the finest and cheapest articles for cleaning the teeth, my friend. Put a little

on your tooth-brush night and morning.

Your letter has interested me very much, and I am particularly glad to hear that you are enjoying our serial stories. I hope you will like David Goodwin's "School and Mill."

SAILOR OR ENGINEER?

F. W., of Wrexham, is one of my boys who has the opportunity of becoming a sailor or a locomotive engineer, and appeals to me to decide the momentous question for him.

It is a pity he does not tell me in what capacity he can go to sea, but if it is merely to go "before the mast," as we say in the case of ordinary deck-hands, then let him become a locomotive engineer, for the latter is a calling with the better prospect.

On the other hand, supposing my

On the other hand, supposing my chum can go to sea as an engineer, or apprentice, that will be quite another matter, for prospects will be more level, and if F. W. prefers the sea to the land, he will, I have no doubt, do better on board ship.

I hope my chum will meet with every success.

GENTLEMAN'S SERVANT.

"Loyal Reader" is one of my Reading chums who wishes to become a gentleman's servant. He is seventeen years of age, and of good physique, and feels that he would like the work.

A gentleman's servant.

A gentleman's servant, whether in the capacity of valet, or footman, usually leads quite a good life, with plenty of the best food, fair wages, and allowance for clothes, and other advantages. On the other side of the scale there is the lack of freedom, uncertainty and length of working hours, and such matters to be considered.

However, for those who like such

However, for those who like such work, there are very many worse callings, and the top rung of the ladder is usually a position as head butler, which post entails a considerable responsibility and good wages.

"Loyal Reader" should endeavour to meet with one or two gentlemen's servants, and have a chat with them about the work, and he should then apply for a post of a lowly nature as a commencement. Having got a good start, and by doing his best to please his master, he ought to make progress. I certainly hope that he may do so.

CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE.

"A Reader" of THE BOYS' FRIEND asks me to tell him how he can join the Canadian Mounted Police. He says that at the present time he is seventeen years of age.

My friend who asks this question is, I fear to young to join the Canadian

My friend who asks this question is, I fear, too young to join the Canadian Mounted Police. Another fact which I have to mention may disappoint his hopes—this is that recruiting is not in force at present in this country. My young friend can, however, obtain full particulars on this point from the High Commissioner for Canada, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

************* SCHOOL AND MILL. (Continued from the previous page.) **非关系系统系统系统系统系统系统系统系统**

"Ay," said Sam; "that's me!"
"You are, are you?" exclaimed
Larson fiercely. "Do you think we're
going to stand a sweep like you
amongst us?"

Wilde Street Board-school?" he

Sam turned pink. His lips tight-

board. "Hold him tight, you beggars!"

"If you don't clear out of here in ten minutes, we'll make you wish you'd never been born!" said Larson.

"How can I?" asked Sam, in amazement. "Ah'm sent here—"

"How can you? Send your resignation up to the doctor, sling your box in a cart, and get out of this once and for all! We don't care how you go, as long as you do go! Now then, are you going or not?"

Sam flushed crimson, and his eyes flashed.

"Nay, not for thee, nor twenty like thee!" he said sharply.

"Nab him, you fellows! Let him have it!"

The collegers made a rush at Sam. He sprang back, and hitting out with all his might, sent Holme-Tracey rolling on the floor, and landed Lar
"You beggars!"

Swish—whack came the knots across Sam's back, lashing through his thin shirt with cruel force. He struggled vainly; there were a dozen to hold him.

"Will you go, you Board School bounder, or won't you?" Swish—whack! "Will you go?"

"No!" cried Sam hoarsely.

"Lay it on, Larson! We'll take a turn when you're tired!" cried Holme-Tracey. "Hi! Keep that chap out!" he added, rushing to the door, as Cecil Latimer opened it. Only one glance did Cecil catch for what was going on, for four boys charged straight at him, and hurled him back into the passage, locking the door in his face.

"You besats! You cads! Let him half, and five or six of the raggers bowled clean over, Sam among them. He leaped up again the door furiously. It withstood all his efforts, and the row inside told.

"Beasts!" roared the raggers fried the locked door, and running into the locked door, and running into the locked door, and running into the locked they are dozen to hold him.

"Come on!" he said. "I'm a man of peace, but a pal! sa pal! Catch hold of this in the middle! Chart-rege!"

Holding the form between them, end out all sake him a lone!" cried Lecil catch of what was going on, for four boys charged straight at him, and hurled him back into the passage, locking the locked door, and running into the dozen.

"The collegers made a rush at Sam. He

son a stinging blow under the ear. He was marvellously quick with his fists, but they were upon him in a body before se could do more.

Sam struggled furiously, and yelps of pain rose out of the scrimmage; but they were too many for him, and he was overpowered.

Holding him fast, the Canterfieldians stripped off his coat and waistcoat, and two of them hauled him face downwards over a desk.

"Now!" cried Larson, coming up with a bunch of knotted box ropes that he had brought from a cupboard. "Hold him tight, you beggars!"

Swish—whack came the knots

him how things were going with

Sam.

In a frenzy Cecil rushed off for help, and by good luck ran into his study chum Shane Cospatrick at the end of the passage.

"Come—quick—common - room!" gasped Cecil. "Awful row!"

"I'm a man of peace," said Cospatrick. "What's the trouble?"

"They've got a pal of mine in there—Tracey's lot—new chap—ragging him! Locked the door!"

Without another word Shane

ragging him! Locked the door! Without another word Shane darted along the passage, tried the locked door, and running into the class-room opposite, picked up a bench. "Come on!" he said. "I'm a man of peace, but a pal is a pal! Catch hold of this in the middle! Char-rege!"

them! All right, young Latimer!
You want some, do you?"
Flinging the form down, Cecil and
Shane, with Sam between them,
rushed to the end of the room, where
a semi-circle of desks stood before

the wall.

They fairly flew over those, Cecil hauling one of them across to make the barrier complete. It gave them a fortress to defend, and they turned to face the foe.

"Come on!" shouted Holme-Tracey to his followers, and a rush was made at the barricade.

The three defenders fought like Trojans, but they were too few to hold out, even with the help of the barrier.

Trojans, but they were too few to hold out, even with the help of the barrier.

Suddenly Sam caught sight of a hose hanging on the wall beside a hydrant.

It had never been used since Canterfield had been built, though every big room had a fire-hose in it. Nobody else would have thought of it, but all Sam's brigade training leaped to the fore in a moment, and he fairly flung himself on the hose.

"Keep 'em back!" he yelled.

With incredible swiftness and dexterity Sam whipped the hose off its peg, screwed out the nozzle, and smashing the glass cover that shielded the hydrant, turned it on. Then, just as the besiegers were carrying the barricade with a final rush he faced them with the gleaming brass nozzle. Swish! Wash! Whizz!

A two-inch stream of water with a

terrific pressure behind it caught Jerrold Vane under the chin, and knocked him clean off the desk on to which he had leaped, in a cloud of spray. Holme-Tracey was driven, yelling, into the centre of the room. The jet of water, sweeping to and fro, sent the attackers flying. A roar of laughter came from Cecil and Cospatrick.

"Hooray! Give it 'em! Wash their giddy necks!"

The besiegers, rabid with fury, rallied and tried to see the room of the control of the room of the control of the room of

their giddy necks!"

The besiegers, rabid with fury, rallied and tried a second attack, but the hose, in Sam's unerring hands, scattered them in all directions.

The room was in an appalling mess; the maps were nearly washed off the walls.

Cecil and his chum were weak and helpless with laughter. The uproar was terrific.

was terrific.
"Look out! Stalker!" cried Cecil

"Look out! Stalker!" cried Cecil suddenly.

The door was thrown open, and a master in cap and gown rushed in. It was Mr. Stalker, the Fourth Formmaster.

"What is the meaning—" he cried furiously. "Oo-oosh!"

There was a horrified gasp. The jet from Sam Olroyd's hose caught Mr. Stalker full in the mouth with a splash like a breaking wave, and he staggered back, yelling and spluttering.

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

"THE BLACK CANYON," a Grand New Serial Tale of

BUFFALO

Commences Next Tuesday in



OUR STIRRING NEW COAL-MINE SERIAL. DON'T MISS A LINE OF IT!

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Mother, mother, I've won it! Isn't it

"Mother, nother, I ve wan a beauty?"
Donald Anderson, a poor pitboy, who lives with his mother in Silversanton, holds up the splendid silver cup he has won in a local shooting contest. In addition to the trophy, he has also won a money prize of five pounds.

Later, Don journeys down to the village on a shopping expedition, and meets his great chum, Archie Hope. Archie is also a pitboy in the Silversanton Colliery.

The Red-boarded Stranger.

The Red-bearded Stranger.

The Red-bearded Stranger.

On his return, Don finds a strange man in the house conversing with his mother. This person makes a hurried departure on Don's arrival, and when his mother has gone to bed, Don discovers, to his amazement and doubt, that three of his five pounds have disappeared. It is obvious that his mother must have given them to the red-bearded stranger. But why? To this mental query the lad can find no answer, and his mother does not seek to enlighten him.

The following day, on going to work at the mine, Don is the victim of a terrible explosion, the origin of which is a mystery. To his horror, on recovering consciousness. Don finds that he is stone blind—that he has lost his precious sight.

A specialist is called down from London, but can do nothing but substantiate the fact that the pitboy will never see again.

Weeks drift by, and slowly Don cultivates the sixth sense—the sense of acute instinctive location of things and recognition of people, the sense which only blind people possess. Money is getting very low in the Anderson home, and Don, determined to do something to aid his mother, applies for and gets a job in the mine again as trapper-boy, his job being to open and shut the doors behind the coal-waggons. Some weeks later Silversanton is swept by a deluge of rain, and the colliery is flooded. Don, Mr. Wray, the underground manager, and several miners, are caught by the rush of water, and are cut off from the shaft, and imprisoned hurdreds of feet down in the bowels of the earth, shut in like rats in a trap.

Several of the passages cave in. The water risas with lower.

of tee, days in the lowers of the earth, since in like rats in a frap.

Several of the passages cave in. The water rises with alarming swiftness, and the imprisoned men are swept off their feet by the sudden inrush. It seems that their last moment has come.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Search that Failed—Lost, and Alone in a Dark Tomb.

"ASY, lads—easy!" cried Mr. Wray. "It isn't as bad as it sounds. Get hold of the lamps and everything else you've got. I think that's the worst of it."

Iamps and everything else you've got. I think that's the worst of it."

The terrifying noises rolled away, and they could hear their own tense breathing, and then the clink, clink of the underground manager's flint and steel. Now and again came a faint splash. Perhaps, after all, the manager was right. In the confined, water-logged galleries, the slightest noise would be magnified.

"Now, Deakin, we'll go and investigate," said Mr. Wray. "You other fellows can wait; amuse yourselves by putting an extra prop up."

Bob and Mr. Wray went squelching through the water, which did not rise above their ankles. The timbering looked sound enough until they were several hundred yards away from the workings. Then Bob pointed to a bulging crosspiece that threatened another cave.

"Humph! We'll go no further,

workings. Then Bob pointed to a bulging crosspiece that threatened another cave.

"Humph! We'll go no further, or we may not be able to get back," said Mr. Wrav.. "There has been a big fall, my lad, and I don't mind telling you so."

"We'll, we'll not be tryin' to deceive ourselves, sir," said Bob. "There'll be no gettin' out this way, no matter 'ow they pump, I'm thinkin'."

"Then we must try the Loop, or

no matter 'ow they pump, I'm thinkin'."

"Then we must try the Loop, or they must try it. We're men, and we can face stern facts, Deakin, but I tell you again, I wish young Anderson was out of it."

"Happen he'll face it just as brave as the boldest of us, sir," said the tall miner. "I know summat about that lad, and nothin' that ain't good."

"Wasn't there a lot of fresh timbers sent down to the Loop recently? I seem to remember signing the order for it a few days since. But of course you would not know anything about that, and it does not particularly matter. We shall not be washed out of our refuge yet, that's

The startling subsidences of the roof seemed to have ceased. In the workings the men were fixing the extra support.

"Where's Anderson?"
Mr. Wray had missed Don, and the owl was also missing. None of them had noticed the boy go, and the manager frowned.

"Don will be all right, sir," said Bob Deakin, anxious himself; "as safe as we are—which don't mean a lot. 'Ammer the thing oop, Shuttleworth."

The support was swiftly put in its place. Don did not return. The prisoners gathered in the far end of the working, where the ground was dry, and cleared away the loose coal to obtain some miserable share of comfort.

Mr. Wray spoke a few words to them.

to obtain some miserable share of comfort.

Mr. Wray spoke a few words to them.

"My lads," he said, "we've done our best. Strong hands and brave hearts are doing their best for us. Our comrades have not forgotten us, and everything that human pluck and courage can do they are doing and will do. If you can sleep, sleep. It's the wisest thing."

"The Loop's open, and is like to keep open," added Long Bob Deakin. "If they can't pump that sup o' water out it'll astonish me."

But what was on his lips was not in his mind. It was only natural, once the roll-call had been read, that they would attempt to pump the mine by the Number 1 Shaft. Naturally an attempt would be made by the rescue parties to reach them by way of the Loop. If the cave had blocked up the gallery, as seemed certain by the deafening uproar, all the pumping in the world would be in vain, for even if they pumped the gallery as dry as a bone, a great barrier that could only be removed by pick and shovel would still remain between the prisoners and liberty. Some of them managed to fall into a restless slumber, but the manager was not one of them, nor was Long Bob Deakin. At last Mr. Wray touched Bob on the arm. Bob yawned to signify that he was awake. "I'm going to look for the boy,"

in an undertone. "I didn't speak afore, but I shouldn't think Donny was like to go towards the shaft. He knew it was choked up to the roof, and if he'd got some mad idea o' tryin' to swim through like he had, he'd ne'er 'ave took his owl, sir, that's a moral."

"Then we'll go the other way."

On they walked, the miserable safety-lamp shining little brighter than a glowworm in the vast and heavy darkness. In the Loop there seemed no danger of caving or subsidence, and once more the lamp threw its pale gleam on the dusty water.

"Where her the lad gone?" still

water.

"Where has the lad gone?" said the manager in a despairing voice.

"Can we have passed him? Can he have been hiding in one of the manholes?"

better movin' than sittin' 'ore. Not heat I'm much afeared for Donny Anderson neither. He'll come back safe enow."

"Wait till I light another lamp, then, and then come with me. I fancy I know which way he's gone." Again they splashed through the water. When they reached the bulging prop both halted. They were in the danger zone, and it was folly to go beyond it.

"Shout, Deakin."

"Donny!" bellowed Bob, with his hands to his mouth. "Are you down yonder, lad? Holler oop! We're wantin', you special! Halloa, Donny!" bellowed Bob, with his hands to his mouth. "Are you down yonder, lad? Holler oop! We're wantin', you special! Halloa, Donny!" bellowed Halloa, Donny!" bellowed Bob, with his hands to his mouth. "Are you down yonder, lad? Holler oop! We're wantin', you special! Halloa, Donny!" bellowed Bob, with his hands to his mouth. "Are you down yonder, lad? Holler oop! We're wantin', you special! Halloa, Donny!" bellowed Bob, with his hands to his mouth. "Are you down yonder, lad? Holler oop! We're wantin', you special! Halloa, Donny!" bellowed the water wantin' have been fancy in the skin!" said Mr. Wray. "I've dashed back to escape the threatened fall.

"Whew! That has wet me to the skin!" said Mr. Wray. "I've splashed myself up to the ears with the flith. You guess why I came this way?"

"Because Donny told us he'd 'eard fittle Archie 'Ope shoutin', wasn't it, sir? I suppose I'm not very faroff the mark."

"You are dead on the mark. Tell me candidly, Deakin, what your opinion is. Surely the boy was delusioned or dreaming? What do you say?"

"Only that I can't understand it nohow, sir, and I pray from the bottom of my soul that he was aclusioned and dreamin'. It must 'ave been fancy. The lad's upset and distraught, and no wonder at that, for many a strong man would be the same. We're flesh and blood, not iron, and death is an ugly thing to face." We're flesh and blood, not iron, and death is an ugly thing to face. "You're getting anxious now, aren't you, Deakin?"

"You're getting anxious now, aren't you, Deakin?

us, Fluff, and he waited too long. But he wasn't drowned, so there's a little bit of comfort. And it's not likely to cave in there with all that brickwork and iron girders. I'm glad!"

If Archie could shout he was cer-

likely to cave in there with all that brickwork and iron girders. I'm glad!"

If Archie could shout he was certainly alive, and in a much securer position than themselves. And Donhad heard the ponies whinnying, too. Of that he was equally certain. If the ponies were alive it was not likely that Archie would be dead, for Archie was a little cleverer than a pony, and would know how to look after himself. The thought comforted Don, for he had grown very fond of his chum the pony-driver.

He had passed the workings again twenty minutes before Mr. Wray and Bob Deakin came out in search of him. Don had no particular aim in his mind. He could not rest, that was all, and darkness or light were the same to him. He cried a little now and then; not that he feared for himself, but for the aching heart at home.

Doubtless they had called the roll long before this—long, long before. She would know that he was lost; they could not keep it from her. It would break his mother's heart; she was not strong enough to bear the terrible suspense. And how brave she had been, how patient, loving, and good!

The chill feel of the water at his

she had been, how parter, and good!

The chill feel of the water at his feet brought him to a stand, and he knew he must be in the Loop. No sound reached him. Once more Don turned back. Instinct seemed to guide him, for he had no stick. He did not care where he went. He was heartsick. Then again he felt the

heartsick. Then again he felt the chill of the water.

Don awoke from his gloomy reveries with a start. He touched each of the walls of the gallery in turn, and stood puzzled.

"Fluff," he said, "I believe we're lost!"

Then Don laughed and Fluff gave

Then Don laughed and Fluff gave a hoot. It was a mirthless sort of laugh on Don's part, but the idea of losing himself in the mine he knew so well amused him. And yet the whole surroundings of the place seemed to unfamiliar.

For some time he remained without stirring.

"It must be that flaw in the Grey Tunnel," he thought. "My hat! What a round I've made! If it is the water can't be a foot deep. Let's see. I go across, turn to the left, and get back into the top end of the Loop. Am I right? Of course; I can't be anything else. Here goes!"

Don took one step forward. With a scream the owl flapped away. The icy water closed over Don's head, and his feet struck the bottom six feet below.

He rose to the surface, gasping and breathless. Now he was lost. Spitting the vile scum out of his mouth, he paddled gently to keep himself afloat while he could think. And he thought clearly and swiftly. He could only be a yard or two away from solid ground, but he could not tell in which direction it lay. A few strokes would settle that. If he did not find ground in three or four strokes he would be going the wrong way.

"Br-r-r-! It's cold!" he panted.

not find ground in three or four strokes he would be going the wrong way.

"Br-r-r-! It's cold!" he panted.

"Where's Fluff? Poor Fluff can't swim, and if I've gone and drowned the old darling I shall regret it all my life."

"Tu-whit!" sounded the distant hoot of the owl.

Five strokes, ten strokes, twenty strokes, and then Don's fingers touched what he felt to be the side of the gallery. To make sure he pressed his feet against it and thrust out. His fingers found the opposite wall. Even then he did not know whether to turn to the right or the left. The water was freezing him. Then his knee touched what he thought was the bottom, and at the same moment his hands found something else.

It was a dislodged prop, and jutted out slantwise. Don took hold of it, and standing knee-deep, had another think.

He was not standing on the true bottom, but on an accumulation of rubble that had fallen—on a little submerged island. He shuddered at the idea of having to enter the water again; it was so intensely cold. Another fear took hold of him. The fall may not have been complete, and the next might bury him: He must swim for it again.

"Tu-whit, tu-whoo! Tu-whoo, tu-whoo!" hooted the owl.

Where was the bird? Neither to the right nor to the left, and the gallery ran right and left, for his back was against the wall.

The hooting seemed to come from



Warning Don to lie still, Archie set the raft in motion again, and punted it slowly down the

BLACK CANYON."

a Grand New Serial Tale of

BUFFALO BILL,

Commences Next Tuesday in

somewhere above and behind him. The owl was not in flight, for the sounds were regular and the notes even, but they were not close at

His refuge suddenly crumbled under his weight, and Don threw out his hands. He had turned round to listen. His hands encountered a smooth sloping ledge, and the next moment he was high and dry.

The hooting of the owl was louder and clearer as he rose to his feet. He followed the sound, and the owl came winging towards him and perched on his shoulder. Then Don stood still again, puzzled, mystified, astounded.

Where was he? What gallery could it be that was raised five or six feet above the flooded gallery he had escaped from? He knew of no such place. He was as lost as if he had dropped from a balloon into the very centre of some pathless tropical forest. And where were the props, where were the rails?

More mystified and startled than before, he ran his hands along the wall for twenty yards or more. The wall was rough and uneven, but there was no vestige of a prop.

Away winged the owl, hooting joyously, not up and down, as he generally flew, but round and round Don's head. Where was he? What was this unknown place? Afraid to advance or retreat, Don pressed his hand to his forehead.

"It's some working they've closed down; it must be that. They got too high above the seam, and that prop breaking away has opened it up again. But what part of the mine am I in? Oh, for a lamp and my eyes now! I ought to go back, but I daren't face that awful water again, and I don't know the way back! I thought I knew everything, and—and I'm a fool! Anyhow, if I got here, Bob and Mr. Wray can do the same!"

Never did Don feel the loss of his sight more bitterly, forgetting that without a lamp his sight would have been of no avail. On familiar ground he was afraid of nothing, but this place might be riddled with pitfalls and death-traps. But he was too cold to remain idle. After stamping his feet and swinging his arms, he made a cautious advance, counting his feet and swinging his arms, he made a cautious advance, counting his feet and swinging his arms, he made a cautious advance, counting his feet and swinging his arms, he made

take a month to cut through if there the opening had closed or he had missed it.

Round he went once more, but again failed to find the entrance. The horrible dread that it had closed became a ghastly reality. Once more he made the journey. He reached the obstacle and sat down on it, burying his face in his hands. He was lost, lost, lost l—and alone in a vast, dark tomb.

How Archie Hope Went Afloat in the Gloom, and the Astonishing Things That Came of it.

OMPARED with the other unhappy ones who had been imprisoned by the flooding of Silversand Colliery, Archie Hope was in the lap of luxury. The manger was quite a comportable couch, and the ponies were some sort of companionship. The noises scared him almost out of his senses, as is only natural, as they came bellowing and rumbling down the gallery, but when they subsided Archie's fears also subsided. He had plenty of light. After a short sleep he made another journey to the lamp-room and then to the signal-room. In each place he was lucky enough to discover a basket of snap.

"I mustn't eat too much at a time," he thought, "for I don't relish a day wi'out starvin'. The water than I'm forced. I can live on this lot a day wi'out starvin'. The water than I'm forced. I can live on this lot a day wi'out starvin'. The water than I'm forced. I can live on this lot a day wi'out starvin'. The water for even the most intrepid swimmer would not have ventured such a swim in the darkness.

tended for his own breakfast, and then made an attempt to go to sleep

again.

The ponies were not so restive now them them them

The ponies were not so restive now, but seemed to have resigned themselves to their fate. Archie managed to sleep for an hour or so, and then became very wakeful.

The notion that he was in any real danger he had dismissed from his mind. The rescuers would soon appear. But Archie did not care for lying there thinking and staring at the whitewashed rafters. It was lonely work.

"If I'd only a boat," he thought,

the whitewashed rafters. It was lonely work.

"If I'd only a boat," he thought, "I'd go and look for 'em. I reckon it would puzzle me to build a boat like those chaps who get wrecked on desert islands do. Whoosh! That's done it! I've got the brains! Whoosh! I'll do it now!"

Archie hopped nimbly out of the manger in a state of great excitement. It was a glorious idea, and even if he did not carry it out fully, it was better than doing nothing. He went from stall to stall collecting halters and tackle. His idea was to build a raft, and in less than ten minutes he had dug up a screw-driver, and was taking down the door of the lamp-room.

There was plenty of timber. He lashed and strapped the props together as a foundation, and placed the door on top as a deck. It took him a long time, and was hard work and wet work. Then he looked round for a pole to punt his raft with. The only one he could find was only six feet long, and he could find no other suitable piece to splice to it.

"Happen I can paddle her along wi' a shovel if the water gets too deep," he reflected. "My, I 'ope I ain't made t' thing too 'eavy after all this trouble!"

The raft floated well. He pushed it before him down to the stables, and took another sparing meal, for his labours had made him hungry. Then, taking four lamps, a pitchfork, and a shovel with him, he boarded his rough craft and pushed out. The raft proved to be remarkably solid and steady. Archiegained confidence as he advanced. And then he was within an ace of going overboard headlong, as the pole failed to touch the bottom.

"More ways o' killin' a cat than by ticklin' it to death," he said. "My, that nearly done it! "Ow about this style o' navigation underground?"

By digging the prongs of the pitchfork against the wall of the gallery he found that he could propel his raft. But the adventurous voyage soon came to an end. There was a bump. The gallery was choked to the very roof. Archie shook his head dismally, and voyaged back slowly towards the shaft.

"Happen the ceucle prope his

"What—what was that?" he gasped, his hair bristling. "What—what was it? Happen it was a ghost!"

Archie shivered, really frightened at last, and his eyes were round and glassy. And then came an echo that made him shiver again.

The sound was only a splash, but it sounded horrible and eerie, and Archie's nerves were strained to the breaking-point just then. The next moment he was half crying and half laughing at the same time. The sound that followed the splash was familiar, and the boy's relief was intense.

laughing at the same time. The sound that followed the splash was familiar, and the boy's relief was intense.

"Tu-whit, tu-whoo! Tu-whit, tu-whoo! Tu-whit!"

"Only poor owd Don's owl!" he said. "Fancy bein' scared at that! Fluff! Fluff! Come 'ere, you owd rogue, and let me wring your neck!"

"Archie ! Archie!"

Archie forgot his huskiness, and gave a mighty yell. It was Donny Anderson's voice.

"I'm comin', Donny—I'm comin'!" bellowed Archie Hope, frantic with joy. "Sing out again, my owd champion of the world! I'm comin', Donny, in my new yacht! Cheer-o! I can't get much steam on her, but I'm arrivin'! Whoosh! That's done it! Sing up, Donny! I'm arrivin', owd sport!"

The owl swept back, and went on with another hoot, as if to guide the rescuer. Then the plucky mariner stopped his vessel in perplexity and doubt.

"Where 'ave you gone and hidden yourself, Don?" he called. "I can 'ear you, but I can't see you. Are yeu on the roof or up the chimney? Sing out, owd warrior!"

Standing up in his gallant craft, Archie Hope raised one of the lamps, and uttered a low whistle. Don Anderson was kneeling a little above him, his head and shoulders protruding from a hole in the wall of the flooded gallery, and on Don's left shoulder was perched the bright-eyed owk.

"Well, you're the limit!" said Archie drawing his breath "One

www. "Well, you're the limit!" said Archie, drawing his breath. "'Ow did you get into that rabbit-'ole, and 'ow did you get into the East Drift at all?"

ow did you get into the East Drift at all?"

"I don't know. Oh, Archie, it's splendid to hear your voice! I'd given up—given everything up! Is this the East Drift? It can't be! You've made a mistake, surely?"

"That's the name painted cop at t' corner, lad, and I can just read a little bit," said Archie. "I ain't goin' to argue now I've found you. I'm on a raft, and I guess it'll float the two of us if we're careful, and we shall 'ave to be mighty careful!" He felt the depth with the pitch-fork, which he had recovered. "Nay, it's all right! Come down backward, and come gently! You'll 'ave to go into the water, but it's shallow just under you. Wait till I push clear, or you'll shipwreck the ironclad!"

Don lowered himself, and waited for further instructions. It was rather a difficult problem, for Archie had not built the raft to carry passengers.

"Stick this lamp in the 'ole for a start, Don," he said, "for we might 'ave a spill and lose t' others. Good owd-lad! Now lean forrard a bit while I 'old her steady. That's done it! Get your arms right o'er, and try and lie on her easy! Whoosh! There goes a lamp! Now pull yourself across, and lie steady!"

One lamp rolled into the water, but it was no loss. Warning Don again to lie still—for they were heavily laden—Archie set the raft in motion. It was not a comfortable position for Don, but his heart was full of thankfulness, and Archie was beaming. And Don was wondering and wondering.

"Are you sure this is the East Drift, Archie? Are you certain of it? Is it possible?"

"I'll show it you written oop in about ten minutes, if you can wriggle your face round to look wi'out capsizin' the Dreadnought, Don!' replied Archie.

"But I was in the workings with Bob Deakin and Mr. Wray and the others! How could I have got into the East Drift from there?"

"You couldn't, Don! It couldn't be done, lad! Do you mean to tell me you were in the workings, or aren't you quite well?"

"But I was in the workings, or aren't you quite well?"

"But I was in the workings, or aren't you quit

as sure as we're on this raft! And you 'eard me yellin', did you? Well, I was yellin'. I yelled till I was sick, and then did a bit o' blubberin', and a bit o' singin'. If you were in the workings, there must be a way through that nobody ever knowed of. No, I'me wrong. There is a way through, and owd Rube Ross knowed it. He took you round the East Drift that time he went mad, and we couldn't find you. Don, there's a way through, and you've tumbled on it. We'll build a bigger raft, and find it to-morrow. Donny, you'll save the lot of us!"

"I can't believe it even yet," said Don. "The East Drift. And I can't remember which way I came. I was thinking and thinking about mother, and you and Miss Hope, and net about where I was going. If it's true, it's splendid, for if I have come through, there must be some way of getting back."

The voyage ended, and a glorious voyage it had been. Archie made

true, it's splendid, for if I have come through, there must be some way of getting back."

The voyage ended, and a glorious voyage it had been. Archie made Don strip at once, and found him a couple of warm pony-rugs, while he went in quest of a suit of blue overalls, which were kept to protect the clothes of visitors and others who inspected the mine. It was only then that Archie discovered the instrument-room, which was raised and was quite cosy and dry underfoot, and that there was ample room for two to sleep there.

"I should 'ave stuck to the stable if you 'adn't turned up, Don," he said, "just for company, but it's fine in here. I'll get some rugs for beddin', and we'll be fine. Happen you understand those telephone and telegraph things? I'm afraid to touch 'em, for fear of gettin' a shock. Happen they ain't all bust."

Don tried the telephone without obtaining a reply, and his attempt to ring up the engineer ended in the same way. If they could only have told their loved ones that they were safe, they could have borne misery and privation with braver hearts. But the instruments were dumb, and the pumps had stopped working.

"Have you been to the shaft, Arch?"

"You bet, and it's all choked up wi' rubbish. They were pumpin',

"Have you been to the shate, Arch?"

"You bet, and it's all choked up wi' rubbish. They were pumpin', and somethin' went wi' a smash that nigh made me jump out o' my skin. I ain't noticed 'ow much corn and 'ay there is, but I shall be feedin' t' ponies while it lasts out. I 'ope there's a lot, for the sake o' the poor brutes. It's bad enough to 'ave to soak your feet in water, wi'out 'avin' to do it on an empty stomach. I ain't measured, but I think the water's droppin' a bit, which makes me remember I'd better shift the raft lower down, for we shall want her tomorrow, and if she grounds we'll find 'er a 'eavy lump to shift for two of us, lad."

It was a sensible thought, for un-

It was a sensible thought, for unless the water receded at a miraculous rate, they could only reach the mysterious cavern by the aid of the raft.

lous rate, they could only reach the mysterious cavern by the aid of the raft.

"Well, that's done!" said Archie, when he returned. "I 'eard a chunk o' roof come down a thumper just now, Donny. This owd mine is done wi' and bust."

"I trust not," said Don. "What shall we do if it is? Perhaps it isn't as bad as it seems. What are you doing now, old son!"

"Fixin' you up a bed. It's ten minutes to ten by the clock, but whether mornin' or night I don't know. I'll wind the beggar, anyhow, for luck, and we'll get oop at six by it, and feed t' ponies for a start. It's like we'll be eatin' one of 'em afore we finish. But I ain't scared now. It shouldn't take 'em long to clear the rubbish out of the shaft. Pity we can't tell' auntie and your mother we're merry an' bright, as owd Moss says. Fluff, you frightened me proper! Here's a bit o' snap, Don, for you must be fair famished. Eat it oop, lad, for I've had all I want."

Don was not hungry, but he ate a little. Long after Archie was snoring, Don lay wide awake. Yes, they were safe. He felt sure of that now. The miracle of his wanderings had assured it. They would find the way back to the workings, and guide 'the others. The choked shaft would yield in time. If his mother only knew that he was alive! He breathed a prayer that she might be told—that some message of hope might reach the widow and soothe her aching heart. And then, with the tears wet on his cheeks, Don slept and forget.

"Six o'clock, Donny. Don't get oop if you don't like, for we're out o' regular work," cried Archie cheerily. "I've fed all them poor brutes. There's a main lot of fodder, but the lot at the bottom is wet and no good. Thank goodness we ain't short of oil

—there's lashin's o' that! 'Ow do you feel?'

"Pretty stiff and raw," said Don.
"Have you been to the shaft yet?'

"Went fust thing, but I couldn't 'ear a sound. I'd make a fire to warm us if I though it was safe, and do a bit o' cookin'."

"Cook what?"

"Why, maize—Indian corn. I found a sack o' that. But I'll wait till I get Mr. Wray and Bob. Water's bad, but firedamp is wuss, and I'm not takin' any."

Archie divided their meagre store of food equally. The water had receded several inches, leaving the floor of the stables in a disgusting mess. Archie's heart was good, and he pitied the ponies, and the task of cleaning out the wet sawdust was too great to face. Moreover, they had to look after their comrades in peril.

Without pausing to consider the danger of the undertaking, the two lads filled their lamps and launched the raft.

They had made it considerably stronger and sturdier, and taken an extra pitchfork in case of accidents. Fluff had remained behind, fast asleep—a pretty sure sign that it was day, not night—but they had left the door open, so that the bird could follow them if it chose to do so.

"Make the raft fast, Arch," said Don. "There's no current, but we daren't take risks. Shall I go off now? Am I right?"

"Right as a trivet! I've got her fast. Take the lamps wi' you when you're oop. If there's a way in, there's a way out, if it's only the same way."

He scrambled up behind Don, and, holding Don by the hand, began to

He scrambled up behind Don, and, holding Don by the hand, began to examine the place.

The lamps were not strong enough to reveal the roof—it was too high for that. The walls did not show any marks of tools. It was a natural cave—probably at one time a reservoir, out of which the water had gradually drained into the sump when the shafts were sunk. But the place seemed to have only one outlet and entrance. They began to lose heart.

"Don, we're on the wrong track, ad," said Archie. "'Ow did you swim when you tumbled in? That's what, I want to be gettin' at?"

"Perhaps three yards, perhaps six, but I'm certain not ten. I couldn't have swum ten. Let me think again. No, nothing like ten. I'd stake my life on it."

"That does it!" said Archie.

"That does it!" said Archie.
"That does it!" said Archie.
"There's more'n two 'undred yards o'
water above you, and more'n 'alf a
mile below. You couldn't 'ave swum
the 'alf mile, and there's a whackin'
great difference between ten yards and
two 'undred when you're swimmin'.
I can't tumble to it nohow, Donny.
It's a blessed owd mystery!"
"Don't give up! Go round again!"
pleaded Don. "There must be another way, unless the water has risen
since. I couldn't have come in that
way."

That's about what it is, Don. The

since. I couldn't have come in that way."

"That's about what it is, Don. The water—"

"But I came from the workings. I must be right. Look round again, and look carefully. Oh, if I had my eyes—if I had my eyes! Arch, don't you believe me?"

"Of course I do! I'm only tryin' to work it out, owd lad," answered Archie rather hopelessly. "You came from the workings. There ought to be a million tons of rock betwixt this and where our shift works by rights. I'll 'ave another look. You've got the ears, so listen sharp."

He tapped the floor and walls of the cave as he moved slowly along, and he grew more hopeless and heavy-hearted at every step.

"There—there!" cried Don exultantly. "It's hollow there! Don't you see the opening? Down lower, at you feet! Isn't it there?"

"Never a ghost of it, Donny. There's only a whoppin' big stone."

"But it must be there!" Don was down on his knees. "It must be! It's hollow, I know! Oh, if I had my eyes—if I had my—'"

Archie flung an arm round him just in time, and dragged him back as the great stone sank through the earth. There was a tremendous splash, and through the hole that the stone had covered the water was dashed up in a shower.

"You never came through there—not in your life, Donny," said the pony-driver, "unless— That's done it! You did—you did! I can see where the owd boulder slid down and covered the 'ole arter you'd come through! Whoosh! We're on the track at last! I'll go down and explore!"

(Another powerful long instalment of this splendid yarn will appear next w

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"THE BLACK CANYON,"

a Grand New

BUFFALO BILL,

Commences Next Tuesday in

THE BOYS' FR



LAGUE take that rascally chapman who said 'twas only two hours' tramp to e hostelry! 'Tis black as pitch, and the hostelry! not a sign of a house-roof anywhere! I fear me I must sleep under the sky

I fear me I must sleep under the sky to-night, with wolves for company!"

The speaker was a lad of fifteen, dressed in jerkin and hose of blue cloth, a shabby velvet cap on his black hair, and his shoes worn and thin from much walking.

He carried a staff in his hand, and into his leather girdle was thrust a dagger in a velvet sheath, his only weapon, in times when wayfarers went well armed and cared not to travel alone, even in broad daylight. He limped, for his feet were sore, and sometimes he stumbled, the road being little more than a rutty track, scarce wide enough for two horsemen to ride abreast, full of holes at that, like the boy's shoes, and crossed here and there by a tree-root, well calculated to trip any unfortunate wight who chanced to fare along it after dark.

He was a bold lad, though fortune had used him ill, but every now and

here and there by a tree-root, well calculated to trip any unfortunate wight who chanced to fare along it after dark.

He was a bold lad, though fortune had used him ill, but every now and then he looked backwards over his shoulder lest any should be following, and many were the glances he cast into the belt of woodland that hemmed in the road on either side.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed Walter Fitz-Ralph. "Tis plain I have taken the wrong path at the ford yonder; but since that is three leagues behind, I might as well go on as go back. I can see that my sleep to-night will be astride an oak-bough, with the bats for bedfellow."

He had scarce said these words than his eye caught the glimmer of a light among the tree-trunks, and since a light meant the presence of human beings, he came to a halt with a quicker beat of the heart, and something that was more like hope than he had felt since high noon.

It might be a woodman's hut, it might be a robber's fire, and it was necessary to approach it with extreme caution, for, though he had only one tiny copper in his poach, he had no mind to a knife in his ribs for the sake of it.

It was a hot summer night, and very still—one of those nights when sound travels far, and the snap of a twig beneath the foot might betray his coming.

For quite ten minutes he crept on, leaving the road for the soft turf beside it, and straying some distance out of his way—an easy thing to do in a dark wood, where tree-trunks often hid the glimmer altogether.

Once he lost it for several minutes, and hot tears of disappointment rolled down his tired cheeks, but at last it suddenly flashed out right in front of him, and he knew that all his frouble had been for naught.

At one side of a forest clearing stood the inn he sought—lights in every window on the ground floor, and laughter and the hum of voices borne loudly to his cars on the breeze that came rustling through the canopy of leaves.

"The good brothers of the abbey always told me I was a fool, and I begin to believe them," said Walter FitzRalp

A run.

Nevertheless, it was no fool who came into the torchlight at the inn door, but a handsome, well-built boy with a pair of keen black eyes—albeit

A STIRRING STORY OF ROBIN HOOD. 1 MORTON PIKE BUFFALO BILL

Next Tuesday.

at elbows, and white with ead to heel.

re traveflers at the inn, in, and they spoke among in a foreign tongue as foreign tongu

he was out at elbows, and white with dust from head to heel.

There were travellers at the inn, many of them, and they spoke among themselves in a foreign tongue as they ate and drank, and kept mine host and his two menservants very

they ate and drank, and kept mine host and his two menservants very busy.

It was "Ho, there; more wine, catiff!" for they were burly, blustering folk, being indeed a party of fat Flemish merchants, with well-lined purses and appetites to match.

The innkeeper was just returning from the cellar with his arms full, when he saw the tired lad peering through the door.

"Well, young sir, and what may your pleasure be?" said the man, who was a good-humoured fellow at all times, even if his new guests had not been sufficient to put any innkeeper in the best of tempers.

"Food and shelter for the night, good host," said Walter, "and on the morrow to be put on the road to Nottingham."

"Hast thee wherewithal to pay for these several items?" inquired the innkeeper, taking stock of the speaker.

"I have this groat, and no more," said Walter, producing the coin, and colouring with shame.

"Nay, lad, I want it not," said the good man. "Thou art not one to eat me out of house and home, I trow, and thou shalt have a bite and a sup and a truss of clean straw in the loft, and welcome! Coming, masters—coming!"

And he hurried into the long room,

and thou shalt have a bite and a sup and a truss of clean straw in the loft, and welcome! Coming, masters—coming!"

And he hurried into the long room, in response to angry shouts from the company, bidding Walter follow him with a beckon of his head.

Walter doffed his cap as he entered, though a glance was sufficient to show him that the Flemings were only sleek traders, full of loud talk and coarse jests, and he took his place in a corner.

There were seven merchants, and each had a serving-man with him, making fourteen in all, and after one well-fed look at the new-comer, they continued their talk without taking any further heed of him.

Presently the landlord, who seemed to have forgotten his existence, came and placed the remains of a venison pasty and a bottle of ale in front of him, with a great manchet of bread.

"Eat. young sir," he said, lowering his voice. "I see thou has not always been in so poor a case as at present, but that is not my business; and as for Nottingham, thou hadst best go with these worthy men on the morrow, for 'tis ten leagues, and through the wild forest where the cutlaws are thick as berries on a Christmas holly."

"They would scarce touch me, kind fellow," said Walter, smiling, "for if rumour lies not, Robin Hood is the poor man's friend."

"Hush, not so loud!" cautioned mine host, glancing round. "Tis not safe to speak of Robin Good fellow in the presence of travellers such as these—it turns their stomachs against good wine to the undoing of we taverners. Besides, there be one or two here to-night that I know not—yonder silent man by the fire, for example, who has said no word since he came at sunset. In truth, I like not his looks!"

Walter regarded the solitary man carefully, and saw nothing awry with him, save that he kept himself aloff.

he came at sunset. In truth, I like not his looks!"

Walter regarded the solitary man carefully, and saw nothing awry with him, save that he kept himself aloof from the rest; but he went on with his own supper, right thankful to have fallen upon so kind a friend.

Once he thought the silent man seemed to look at him with a twinkle in his eye, but it might have been fancy.

He was dressed in hodden-grey, with a hood thrown back from his neck, and brown hair hiding a weather-tanned visage, and he had a stout staff reared against the wall beside him.

The good meal and welcome ale

saying: "Stay

"Stay a moment, sir knave! Where gottest thou this?"
Without so much as a "by your leave," the man had plucked Walter's dagger from its sheath, and said something in Flemish to his dagger from its sheath, and said something in Flemish to his companions.

A hot flush came into the lad's

cheeks.

"Your pardon, messire, but that belonged to my father—the saints rest his bones!—I pray you give it back to me."

his bones!—I pray you give to me."

"Not so fast!" returned the man, with a laugh. "Come now, wouldst not sooner have a silver crown than this bit of armourer's work?"

The others were bending forward and examining the white stone that ornamented the handle, and they were evidently excited about something, for they talked altogether, and very fast.

ornamented the handle, and they were evidently excited about something, for they talked altogether, and very fast.

"Tis not for sale, sir," replied Walter proudly. "I pray you hand it back to me."

"Hark to the beggarly rogue who refuseth good money while the wind whistlest through the holes in his dirty jerkin!" cried the man in English.

"Two crowns, then, and there they are, sir proudling!"

And he tossed the coins on to the table.

"Give me my dagger!" exclaimed Walter, turning red and white by turns, as he saw the merchant's men crowding round. "Twas my father's last gift to me, and part with it I will not!"

"Soft, cockerel; thou crowest somewhat loud, methinks!" said another of the Flemings. "And who was thy father, pray?"

"Sir Ralph FitzRalph, who has not been six months cold in his grave," replied Walter, the tears starting into his eyes.

"We have but thy bare word, varlet," said the man who had snatched the weapon, "and that we doubt. A ragged rogue like thee can scarce have rome by this honestly! Take thy crowns and begone; the dagger is mine by right of purchase!"

A roar of laughter greeted his words, but it was interrupted by a deep voice from the fireplace.

"Give the lad his weapon, thou Flemish hog!" said the man in hodden-grey. "There is still justice in this fair England of ours to protect the weak against robbers of thy kind!"

For a moment the Fleming turned pale, and there was silence; but, see-

in this fair England of ours to protect the weak against robbers of thy kind!"

For a moment the Fleming turned pale, and there was silence; but, seeing only one, he burst into a coarse laugh.

"Out with yonder meddler! Souse him in the pond, men!" he cried.

"We have a way with tongue waggers of thy sort in our country! Put them both forth, for if ever my nose smelt knaves that doth it now! Faugh! The very air reeks of robbery!" bery!"
True, and small wonder," said-

the man in grey, leaping up, staff in hand, "when knaves such as thou are allowed to overrun our land! Give the lad his weapon, or I will crack thy pate, Master Fleming!"

Every eye was turned to the speaker, who now showed a brownbearded face flushed with wrath; but the merchants, finding the stone in the hilt of the dagger to be a diamond of great value, large as a pigeon's egg, were not to be shamed by one man alone.

All sprang to their feet save one, who was an old man and very corpulent, and in a twinkling there were swords drawn, and every sign of a fierce, unequal combat, which must inevitably have ended in the death of the boy and his brave champion.

Walter FitzRalph aimed a quick

death of the boy and champion.
Walter FitzRalph aimed a quick blow at the man who had robbed him, but the Fleminig's sword cut the cudgel in twain, though not before the bully had received its weight on his forearm, and the silent stranger realised that escape was the only

realised that escape was the only course.

With a twirl of his staff, which was shod with iron at one end, he laid three of the merchants' men upon their backs, and then shouted to Walter to run.

"Fly, lad—fly!" he cried; and as Walter passed him, he added in—a lower voice: "Wait me at the pond on the green; I am a friend."

The poor lad sped from the room, pursued by the foreigners; but the man in hodden-grey kept the door with his quarter-staff, and, having clipped one knave over the ear and blinded another, and, judging that by that time the fugitive would be at safe distance, he slipped deftly aside, and vanished in the darkness of the night.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. How Dickon Got the Dagger.

OW, Walter FitzRalph, while he heard his new friend's injunction.

junction to fly, mis altogether the words he spoke as missed ran past him, and instead of making his way to the pond on the green, fled

his way to the pond on the green, fled as fast as his legs could carry him.

It was all very well as long as he was in the clearing, but when he came to the forest trees again he was tripped up several times, plunged into a holly which tore him severely, bruised himself against a hornbeam, nearly knocked his brains out on the stem of a giant beech, and at last, panting and exhausted, he fell headlong on a strip of greensward and lay there.

He had not a friend in the world, unless it were the Sheriff of Nottingham. And now he had lost the precious dagger that was to be his introduction to that important personage.

sonage.
"Oh, that I had been a grown man!" he thought. "That scurvy knave would not have robbed me then!"

But the sleep of exhaustion came his aid, and poor Walter lost

onsciousness.

In vain the man in hodden-grey, after a circuit to avoid pursuit, returned to the bushes that fringed the forest pool.

The lad was not there, and though

The lad was not there, and though he waited some time, watching the light of the inn, he at last picked up his good quarter-staff and turned his face to the woods.

"By my halidom," he muttered, as he threaded his way with the ease of a true forester, "those dirty dogs shall pay for this night's work, and that foul theft! Gramercy! Old England is overrun with these rogues!"

Every now and then he would stop and call aloud the lad's name, but there was no reply, and he did not know that he had passed within a bowshot of the sleeping boy.

Meanwhile, the merchants' retainers, who had not gone very far

from the inn, had returned with the news that the boy had escaped, and they found their masters gloating over their prize.

"'Tis worth a monarch's ransom," said one, flashing the stone in the torchlight.

"Marry, that it is!" said Beltram of Bruges, he who had appropriated it in the first instance. "I trow King John hath not its equal, nor yet any noble in the land!"

Beltram of Bruges was a goldsmith by trade, and knew what he was talking about.

"Well, companions," said he, "I, for one, am going to bed, for we must be up betimes if we are to reach Nottingham at noon."

And somewhat unsteady from the immense quantity of wine they had taken, the merchants rose, and bade mine host light them to the Solar, or upper chamber, where they were to sleep.

Now, the innkeeper's servants had gazed at the flashing gem as it was passed from hand to hand, and when the fire had been banked up—for it burned summer and winter alike—and all the torches but one extinguished, and the merchant's servants had lain them down among the rushes on the floor, the two serving-men went across to the bara, where they had their quarters, and held a whispered conversation.

"Heard you what those knaves said, Dickon?" whispered Hugh of the Squint. "It seemeth a pity that such a treasure should remain in the hands of those foreign thieves!"

"Gramercy, Hugh," replied his cempanion, "I am of the same mind! Hast stomach for an adventure that might make rich men of us both? The dogs will sleep sound with all that Burgundy under their belts. There is a ladder in the hay yonder; master's horse will carry the pair of us to Nottingham, and our fortunes would be made!"

They were ill-favoured-looking fellows. Dickon, whose black locks would have been all the better for a

us to Nottingham, and our fortunes would be made!"

They were ill-favoured-looking fellows. Dickon, whose black locks would have been all the better for a comb, could not have been much more than eighteen, while Hugh of the Squint was perhaps three or four years his senior.

Both were strong knaves, with easy consciences, and for the next half hour they schemed out the details of their plan.

There was no moon, and a light mist lay along the margin of the pool, for it was a hot, steamy night.

"I warrant me the rogue sleeps in his jerkin," whispered Hugh of the Squint, "for I did see him slip the dagger into a secret pocket within the left breast. The trouble will be to pick him out of the seven."

squint, for I and see him sip the dagger into a secret pocket within the left breast. The trouble will be to pick him out of the seven."

"Nay, that is easy enough," replied Dickon, "for when I lit them to bed I had this thing in my mind, and I marked that he chose the second couch from the far end. His head is not a hand's span from yonder thurlehole." And he pointed upwards in the darkness to one of the windows.

As a rule, they were closed by wooden shutters, but the night being very sultry, and a storm brewing with low grumblings of thunder which could be heard beyond the tree-tops, the shutters had been set open, and the leather curtains drawn aside.

Hugh of the Squint gave a low chuckle.

"Well done, lad!" he said. "Bear me a hand with the ladder, and when we have set it in place saddle thou the horse. I shall not be gone long, and when I come down again it will be with the prize."

"But should he chance to wake?" suggested Dickon, as they lifted the ladder out of the hay, and carried it through the barn-door.

"Then," said Hugh of the Squint, "I have something in my belt that shall put him to sleep for ever."

Dickon waited at the foot of the ladder as long as he could see the black form of his confederate against the sky, but when he had reached the window and was merged in the universal blackness of the night, Dickon stole away to the stable, and proceeded to clap the clumsy saddle on the back of the innkeeper's broken-kneed mare.

Several times he peered through the door and listened, but before he had fastened the rope-bridle Hugh of the Squint came stealing back.

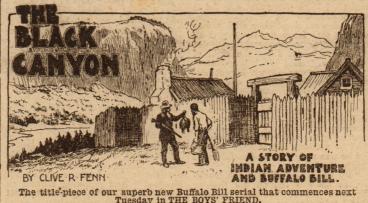
"I have it!" he whispered. "Now, let us lead the horse softly until we are out of earshot, and then we will take Long Man's Path, and so come in sight of Nottingham town at sunrise."

"Didst slay him?" whispered Dickon.

Didst slay him?" whispered

Dickon.

"Nay, there was no need," replied the other. "Every man lieth flat upon his back, and their snores are like unto a pig-market. I trow they have bad dreams, one and all of them."



BUFFALO

Commences Next Tuesday in

THE BOYS' FRIEND.

"THE BLACK CANYON,"

a Grand New Serial Tale of

Next Tuesday in the "B. F."

One must have had sharp eyes to have detected the two rogues as they made their way past the hostelry to the other side of the clearing, but they knew their way well, and in a few minutes Dickon had mounted behind Hugh of the Squint, and they were riding at a shambling trot into the heart of the silent forest.

Why it was called Long Man's Path I know not—unless, indeed, it was that it was the longest possible way that a man might take, for it wound up hill and down dale, made unnecessary detours for no apparent object, swung back again in loops almost to the spot from whence it had started, and was altogether the most provoking bridle-road to be found anywhere.

Still I doubt if Robin Hood him.

where.
Still, I doubt if Robin Hood himself could have made a bee-line
self could have made a where.
Still, I doubt if Robin Hood himself could have made a bee-line through the trees that night, and so the two thieves bent and wound their serpentine course until just before midnight, when the broken-kneed mare went lame, and all they could do by cudgelling her ribs was to make her hop forward on three legs.
"Twere quicker work on foot!" said Hugh of the Squint, dismounting, to find the poor beast had picked up a huge flint-stone, which he extracted from her hoof with difficulty.
"Let us rest a while," said Dickon. "I am shaken to a jelly as it is. Perhaps by then she will be fit to carry us once more." And down they sat under a mighty oak, Dickon's eyes closing, and his head sinking forward on to his chest, for he was not a little weary.

Then an idea flashed into the crafty.

closing, and his head sinking forward on to his chest, for he was not a little weary.

Then an idea flashed into the crafty mind of Hugh of the Squint as Dickon began to snore softly. Why should he not have all the plunder? he thought. Why should he share it with the sleeping man?

So far he had taken all the dangers upon himself, and as the mare began to crop the grass he rose without noise, led her a little distance away, and was much relieved to find that her lameness had improved.

He listened to the deep breathing, punctuated by an occasional snore, and swung himself into the saddle.

He had not seen the furtive eye that opened every now and, then, or else this story had ended very differently, but as Hugh of the Squint smote the mare a heavy blow over her counter, Dickon leapt noiselessly up, and was at his stirrup in a moment.

"Whither away?" said the young rogue, gripping him by the ankle and stooping in the nick of time as Hugh of the Squint made a tremendous swipe at his head.

"Where thou wilt not follow, pig!" said the squint-eyed man. And he tried to wrench the mare round and overthrow his partner in iniquity.

"So-ho! "Tis that way, is t?" said Dickon, with a savage chuckle. And there rose amid the silence of the trees a snarling shriek, ending in a great gasp, as Hugh of the Squint rolled forward over the saddle-bow, for Dickon had planted his whittle in his back. "That serves thee right, for trying to play me false," he muttered, dragging the knave down to the ground. "Now the stone is mine!" And passing his hand into the dead man's doublet, he found the jewelled dagger, and transferred it to his own person.

That was the third time Walter FitzRalph's weapon had changed

until it shot out red and green rays such as he had never seen in his life. "'Twere wiser perchance to carry it to London, where there are great mer-chants who would give me a better price!"

onans who would give more price!"

But even as the idea came to him, there followed on its heels the fact that London was many days' journey.

He had no money at all, and the way would be beset with many perils in any case. Nottingham was but a few leagues away, and thither he must go.

go.

A drink at a trickling rill, a plunge of his face in the cold water, and a shake of his black locks—that was breakfast and toilette sufficient for the nonce—and Dickon set out at a quick pace to gain the highway.

He had not gone far when he slackened his speed as another, and an alarming thought came to his crafty brain.

alarming thought came to his crafty brain.

The Flemings were going to Nottingham; the stone was too valuable to be sold quietly, and would be talked about; there was also its rightful owner, who would be certain to seek the sheriff and lay his wrongs before that all-powerful magistrate.

No, he must not offer the diamond there, after all, unless he would risk some very awkward questions, and perhaps be haled before the sheriff, with all manner of dreadful possibilities in the way of dungeons and whippings and tortures to make him speak.

Already his ill-gotten prize was beginning to burn his fingers, and he

to me to be a thing of great worth! 'Tis of right Damascus steel—and, by my halidom, the gem is fit for a king's crown! Name thy price, lad! How say thee? I will fill thy cap with silver coins, and save thee from the bargaining Jews!" "Good, sir!" cried Dickon. "My mother and I will pray for thee night and morning for thy kindness to the widow and fatherless!" And he held up his cap in both hands, after punching it with his fist to make it hold the more.

ing it with his fist to make it hold the more.

The horseman untied the strings of the bag that dengled at his saddle-bow, and, plunging in his hand, fulfilled his bargain to the letter, adding a last handful when the cap was full to the brim, so that some of the coins rolled on to the grass.

"Now, get thee back to thy mother," said the worthy man; "and, take my word for it, thou hast there well-nigh twice the sum that Absolom of Nottingham would have given thee!" Then, with a farewell wave of his hand, he rode on, leaving Dickon speechless with his good fortune.

And so the dagger changed hands for the fourth time!

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Outlaws' Ambush.

OW, the man in hodden grey, who had risked his own life to save that of the unfortunate Walter, was none other than Robin

When he awoke at the touch of Will Scarlet's hand the pale grey light of dawn was filtering through the glade, and in just as much time as it took those hardy foresters to pick up bow and staff, and snatch a crust from the hollow tree that served them as larder, they were off and away.

Friar Tuck lingered a moment, as was his wont, to break his fast with a draught of nut-brown ale, and then, wiping his huge mouth on the back of his leg-of-mutton fist, he overtook his party as they dipped out of sight into the low grounds.

Robin had elected to watch Black Wood, so that the Long Man's Path fell to the friar and his party; and after an hour's brisk tramp through the bracken that came knee-high, they reached a little hillock at the foot of which the path joined the high road.

Had they been ten minutes earlier they would have witnessed the meeting of rogue Dickon and the wealthy traveller, but things happen oddly in this life, and the traveller had already gone his way, and Dickon, having disposed of his money about his person, was following him slowly, with the intention of buying a horse, if he could not steal one, and seeking his fortunes in far-off London town.

He had abandoned his late master's grey mare as too lame to carry him, and too conspicuous to be safe.

"Keep an eye on the road, Alan," said Friar Tuck, settling his broad back between a couple of saplings that supported him very comfortably.

of Bruge's arm ached woefully from Walter's cudgel.

"'Tis they right enough," whispered the friar to Alan-a-Dale. "And they look solemn enough for a funeral cortege."

The worthy man was right, for, what with the wine-cup overnight, the mysterious disappearance of the stolen dagger, and the finding in the forest of Hugh of the Squint with a knife in his back, the Flemings were heavy of heart, and eager to exchange the loneliness of the woodland way for the bustle of Nottingham town.

On a sudden a shout of "Hold, knaves!" broke the stillness, and as they instinctively pulled upon the bridle, there rose a semicircle of figures barring the road—figures in Lincoln green with bent bows, the morning sun glinting on their arrowheads, and with them, towering a good head and shoulders above the rest, Friar Tuck in his brown robe, his little eyes twinkling with delight at the prospect of the fray, as he held his gigantic quarter-staff by the middle, and set his shaven pate on one side.

"How now, dogs, who be ye, and where go ye?" cried the friar. "And what have you gotten in those fat saddle-bags? Come now, dismount, every man-jack of ye, and pay your toll to the forest lords!"

The Flemish burghers were not wanting in courage, and, although the unexpected ambush disconcerted them for a moment, they drew their swords, and, calling upon their attendants to stand firm, showed a bold front.

The first glance told Friar Tuck that they had no bows with them, and rolling up the wide sleeves of his robe he advanced to meet the horsemen.

"Now, Master Beltram of Bruges, thou with the red head, my business

robe he advanced to meet the horsemen.

"Now, Master Beltram of Bruges, thou with the red head, my business is in chief with thee," said the friar. "Hand me the dagger that thou stolest last night from an unarmed boy, thou very thief—thou roll of pig's flesh! Out with it, before I pound thee to a jelly!"

The stout burgher of Bruges changed countenance, and a look of terror came into the faces of his companions, such of them as could speak our tongue.

changed countenance, and a look of terror came into the faces of his companions, such of them as could speak our tongue.

"I have no dagger, save mine own," said Beltram of Bruges.

"Bah" ejaculated Friar Tuck, his deep voice vibrating like the string of a bass viol. "That we will see for ourselves if we strip thee to the skin. Out of your saddles, knaves!"

But Master Beltram, who in his younger days had been a right hefty rogue and leader of half the faction fights in his native city, suddenly rammed spurs into his horse and leapt full at the friar, thinking to take him unawares.

Alas! the intention was good enough, but he knew not the man he was attacking.

One clip with the quarter-staff under the horse's jaw, and the brutereared up in the air, and bringing the other end of his formidable weapon down upon the merchant's paunch, Master Beltram turned a heavy somersault out of the saddle and rolled upon the turf, gasping for breath with that agonised sound that one gives when one has had all the wind knocked out of one.

It is a terrible feeling, and the bully was quite a long time before his bellows filled again, and meanwhile the rest of the party dismounted humbly enough, all except two of the menservants, who tried to escape into the forest again, and were shot by Leoffric of Leicester and Ulf, who had been posted to cut off any retreat.

"Strip him of his doublet," said the friar, when Beltram had recovered his breath. And, in spite of his struggles, the laughing outlaws eased him of his robe, his doublet, and his shirt, but failed to find the thing they sought.

All the merchants were treated in the same fashion, except one old man, but though they ransacked every pouch and pocket, and the bulging bags that hung to the saddles, no trace of the dagger was discovered for a very obvious reason.

"Now," said Friar Tuck, frowning, "the truth, or thy life! You

discovered for a very obvious reason.

"Now," said Friar Tuck, frowning, "the truth, or thy life! You robbed a poor boy yesternight, like the coward thou art! Where is the spoil?"

Beltram of Bruges, cowed and humble now, protested by all the saints that he had it not, told of the dead man they had found in the wood, and how the dagger had been stolen while he slept.

"Well, that being the case, thy

Quick as thought Robin plucked an arrow from his sheath, fitted it to the string, and feathered it between Dickon's shoulder bones.

back. "That serves thee right, for trying to play me false," he muttered, dragging the knave down to the ground. "Now the stone is mine!" And passing his hand into the dead man's doublet, he found the jewelled dagger, and transferred it to his own person.

That was the third time Walter FitzRalph's, weapon had changed owners that night, and its adventures were by no means finished.

Dickon felt carefully over his late companion's clothes without finding anything of value, and leaving him where he lay, he climbed into the saddle and rode on alone.

When he had placed a league between himself and the body, he drew rein to wait for daylight, and, tethering the mare, sat down and dozed fitfully, ever and anon lifting up his head to listen, for there were wolves in the forest, and he was in no mind to be eaten.

After a while a heavy dew began to fall, the drops pattering like rain upon the leaves above him. And after the dew came the dawn, stealing greyly into the tangled woodland.

Then a bird began to chirp somewhere—and another—and another. "Tis a great mistake to suppose that the lark is the earliest riser of the feathered tribe.

Dickon stood up and stretched himself, and the first thing he did was to draw out the dagger and look with a gloating eye upon the precious stone that had excited the Flemings' cupidity.

"Gramercy!" he cried, flashing it

Hood himself, as you may possibly have guessed by this time, and when Robin failed to discover the lad's hiding-place, he made the best of his way to the camp of the outlaws, which was some eight leagues distant, and in the very heart of Sherwood.

and in the very heart of Sherwood.

As ill-luck would have it, their numbers were fewer than usual that summer, for thirty had gone south under Little John, several were sick, and from one cause or another there were not more than twenty bold hearts round the camp-fire that night.

"Pardie!" exclaimed Robin, as they awoke at the sound of his voice.

"Here is a pretty kettle of fish, and no mistake!" And he told them what had happened.

Friar Tuck rubbed his hands glee-

Friar Tuck rubbed his hands gleefully.

fully.

"Well, honest Robin," he chuckled,
"there are but two ways by which
the knaves may reach Nottingham
from Gaffer Simon's hostelry—the
Long Man's Path, and the lane that
drops through Black Wood towards
Merly. Take you half the boys, and
I will take the rest. 'Tis ages since I
flogged a fat Fleming, and my hand
is right horny the while.'

Robin laughed.

"So be it, friar. 'Twas precisely

"So be it, friar. 'Twas precisely what I had in my mind. 'Twill be daylight in four hours, so here's for slumber.' And pillowing himself on a pile of dry leaves, the outlaw chief fell into a dreamless slumber.

"And thou, Ulf, son of Gammel Goosefoot, have an ear to Robin's signal, if they should chance to go that way. 'Twill be two blasts on a bugle-horn.' And folding his hands across his enormous paunch, the worthy friar closed his eyes, muttering, as he fell asleep: "The-lazy dogs-will-lie-long abed-I warrant-me!"

His companions smiled among themselves.

ing, as he fell asseep: Interlazy dogs-will-lie-long abed I warrant-me!"

His companions smiled among themselves.

"Who is to hear the horn if he snores?" said Ulf, chewing a blade of grass as he lay on his elbows, and then they waited, and it was two hours before anything happened to disturb the watching band.

Then Ulf, so well skilled in woodcraft, said suddenly:

"Methinks they come. I see the birds flying up yonder; there is someone on the path."

And they woke the friar, who was on his feet at a bound with marvellous agility for so huge a man. And when they had told him what Ulf had seen the little band of ten stole softly down the hillock, and took each his post among the bushes at its foot.

Presently a horse neighed somewhere among the trees, and the murmur as of voices grew louder on the ear, and at last a cavalcade wound into view, the seven merchants and their seven serving-men.

The heads of three of the latter were bound up, and Messire Beltram

punishment will be doubly severe," said Friar Tuck; "for not only will thou and thy companions be well whipped for the theft, but also have ye lost the thing ye stole. Come, boys, gather each of you a handful of yonder hazel-twigs, and we will teach these fat foreigners a lesson in rough justice!"

rough justice!"

In vain they pleaded; in vain they cried for mercy. Robbed of everything they possessed, masters and men alike were soundly scourged until the forest rang with their yells. And at last, when the bold outlaws could scarce lift an arm for laughing, Friar Tuck pointed to the "Gather up"

"Gather up your shirts and get you gone," he said sternly, "before we are in the mind to have at thee again!"

again!"

Blubbering with pain and terror, the cowardly rogues took up their clothing and scrambling with terrified haste into their saddles, streamed away along the road, pursued by the uproarious laughter of Friar Tuck's band.

away along uproarious laughter of Friends and.

"I warrant me," he said, wiping his eyes, "those knaves would pass a silver crown lying in the highway without daring to touch it. Look at the sun on their fat backs!" And he laughed again until his sides

the sun on their fat backs! And he laughed again until his sides ached.

The last of the fugitives had scarcely disappeared, when through the bushes burst a lad in a shabby blue jerkin, crying:

"Good outlaws, hast thou seen aught of a party of merchants riding this way?"

It was Walter FitzRalph, his clothes torn by the brambles, for he had come through the trackless forest, and when they learned who he was, and told him what had happened, the poor lad burst into a flood of passionate tears.

"Nay, nay, boy," said the friar, clapping him on the shoulder, "we may be able to help thee yet! Come thou with us to Robin, our chief. He it was who befriended thee last night, and I promise thee he will not rest until this thing is found; so rare a stone cannot lie hid for long. And though we are but rough foresters, loving the freedom of the woodland, rather than the stench of the town, many are the things we know. So be of good heart; it is little more than two leagues to our camp, where a slice of good venison broiled on the embers and a draught of my own brewing shall make a different man of thee."

Gathering up the spoil, those hardy lads in Lincoln green set out for their camping-place, whistling blitthely, and not a little glad that the Flemish rogues had chosen the Long Man's Path instead of the road by Blackwood and Merly.

THE 4th CHAPTER How the Dagger Again Changed Hands.

OR a good league Beltram of Bruges and his companions rode as if for their lives. They were sore in soul and body, and, as the others reflected that to lay complaint before the sheriff

lay complaint before the sheriff would mean to expose their own mean theft, they turned on Beltram and abused him soundly.

"Oh, peace, peace!" said the burgher of Bruges. "Are we not all in the same case? Let us draw aside here and put on our garments, for a pretty rabble should we look an we chanced to meet any respectable wayfarers."

The idea was a good one, and riding their horses up a low bank beyond which was a hollow in the wood, the unfortunate rogues put on their shirts, not without many a wince and a cringe, for the hazeltwigs had cut deep.

wince and a cringe, for the hazeltwigs had cut deep.

They drank greedily at a little
spring, and while they were doing
so one of the serving-men whispered:

"Hist! Someone cometh along
the road!"

Peeping over the bank-top with no
little trepidation, they spied a
solitary horseman riding a sorrel
nag; the same traveller who had
met with Dickon and paid him so
handsomely.

met with Dickon and paid him so handsomely.

He had turned aside to rest him in the cool of the forest and to gloat over his purchase, which he was still examining as he rode along.

Beltram's eye caught the flash of the sun on the diamond, and to his profound astonishment recognised the dagger in the traveller's hands.

Nor was he the only one that did so, for the knave Dickon, alarmed by the sound of their galloping, had climbed up into the branches of the very oak-tree under which they now crouched.

"Pardie!" whispered Beltram of Bruges. "Here is good fortune indeed. We will recover our treasure, for are we not fourteen men to one?"

The solitary traveller, who was singing softly to himself, mightily pleased with his purchase, was suddenly brought roughly to his senses, as a dozen men jumped down the bank and instantly surrounded him.

"That dagger is mine!" said Beltram of Bruges, plucking the weapon from the man's hand. "How came you by it, sir thief?"

"Thief, thyself!" expostulated the traveller. "I bought it honestly for a cap full of silver not two hours ago, from a poor lad who is even now comforting the soul of his widowed mother with my hard-earned money." mother,,

mother with my hard-earned money."

"That is as may be," laughed Beltram scornfully. "Thee had best get thee on thy way, and be more careful in future when thou buyest anything at sight. This was stolen from me last night."

"Gramerey, sir!" said the traveller, very crestfallen, and not venturing to doubt the truth of Beltram's words. "Then do I lose the price I gave the whelp."

"Ay, that you do," replied Beltram; "unless indeed you can come up with him. What manner of knave was he?"

laughed uproariously, jumped about like a mad thing, and then he dug a hole with his knife under a forked root, laid his ill-gotten wealth within it; keeping only a few small coins, and covering it carefully up, he set off down a forester's path, which would bring him to the outskirts of Nottingham much sooner than they who went by the road.

It is said that walls have ears. Surely the brave old Forest of Sherwood must have had ears and eyes too, for directly Dickon had departed there came a lad in Lincoln green out of the underwood, where he had been watching the rogue's strange antics.

It was Ulf, son of Gammel Goosefoot, who, on their return to the camp, had spied the slot of a red buck, and, following it up with bent bow, had come unexpectedly upon the scene.

"La-la!" said Ulf, grinning all

bow, had come unexpectedly upon the scene.

"La-la!" said Ulf, grinning all over his weather-beaten face. "When one digs a hole it is to hide some-thing therein. What have we here?" And scattering the heap of dead leaves with his foot, he disclosed the freshly-turned earth, burrowed with his whittle, and revealed the silver

when he had pouched them he laid a handful of beech-nuts in their place, piled the leaves over the hole again, and went down the green glade whistling.

dagger-proof panel, and, after a short parley, were admitted.

In the courtyard of the house, whither the venerable Israelite conducted them, and where a fountain sparkled under the shade of an awning in the Eastern fashion, they found Absolom's brother Jacob, his long silver beard falling over the front of his gabardine considerably below his girdle.

"You have something to sell me, messires," said Absolom, when he had bade them be seated, and Beltram produced the weapon in silence.

had bade them be seated, and Beltram produced the weapon in silence.

The moment Absolom set eyes upon the diamond, he held up his thin hands in astonishment, his eyes sparkling as he and his brother took the dagger and spoke together in the Hebrew tongue.

Beltram of Bruges bestowed a wink upon his companions, as much as to say, "You see we were right. These foreign dogs will give us any price we choose to ask." And then silence fell upon the courtyard, broken only by the muttering of the two Jews and the cooing of the pigeons somewhere overhead.

They turned and twisted the stone, examining it minutely. They carried it out into the sunlight, and bent their ancient heads very close together, wagging their beards and making all manner of strange gestures.

knave was he?"
"A black-haired lad with eyes set

Stooping down, Dickon passed his hand into the dead man's doublet, found the jewelled dagger, and transferred it to his own person.

somewhat close together. As for his dress, I did not mark it."

Beltram of Bruges turned to his companions.

"Did we not pass such an one hurrying along the road scarce an hour since?"

And the merchants all cried with one voice:

And the merchants all cried with one voice:

"True, true! Make haste, messire, and spare him not!"

Quite unsuspecting, the unfortunate man, turned his horse and galloped back along the road; while Dickon, in the tree, had much ado to restrain his laughter at the trick.

"Now, companions," said Beltram of Bruges, "there is much mystery about this dagger, and methinks it is bewitched. Let us hurry to Nottingham and dispose of it lest worse befall. It should be worth ten thousand crowns, and so shall we repay ourselves in some part for our losses."

They got to horse, and rode off at

losses."

They got to horse, and rode off at a fast trot. And when they were out of sight, Dickon dropped from the tree, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I will bury my money in a safe spot," he said, half aloud. "And who is to say me nay if I follow those rogues to the town, and claim the dagger for its price."

The idea so excited him that he

Beltram of Bruges and his companions, their beaten backs very sore, and their saddles burning them as though they had been red-hot, reached Nottingham about eleven o'clock of the forenoon.

They had ridden hard under a blazing sun, and their horses were white with lather.

white with lather.

True, they had lost heavily by their encounter with the outlaws, but they hoped to regain that and more by the sale of the stolen dagger.

I think they would have taken it to London and disposed of it there, but for one very important consideration; not one coin of any description could they muster among them, and they rode into the courtyard of the inn with considerable misgivings.

They carried matters with

misgivings.

They carried matters with a high hand, however—engaged beds for the night, saw that their horses were stabled—and when they had slaked their thirst, and ordered a dinner to be got ready, Beltram of Bruges and four of his comrades hied them on foot to the house of Absolom the Jew, which you may remember was not far from the dwelling of Master Nicholas, the flesher, who lived in the market-place.

They knocked at the door in the lane, were carefully examined through the little grille in the

"Well," said Beltram at last,
"how much?"
Absolom looked at him for a
moment before he replied.
"It is not given to a man to be
buyer and seller at the same time,"
said the worthy Israelite. "How
much do you want?"
"Two hundred thousand crowns,"
said Beltram of Bruges as bold as
brass.

brass.

"That is a very great deal of money, my friend," said Absolom.
"I do not say the stone is not worth it; it is fit for an emperor's crown. But two hundred thousands crowns! Where shall I get so much money?"

"That is the price," said Beltram, in a decided tone. "Take it or leave it. Thou wilt never see a gem like it again."

it again.

"The gem is magnificent," said Absolom, "but I can give you no more than a hundred thousand; and then I must know how it came into your possession."

your possession."
"Insolent hound!" cried Beltram.

"Insolent hound!" cried Beltram.
"Do you doubt my honesty? If
thou wert not so old I would pluck
thee by the beard!"
The Jews were a persecuted race
in those days, and Absolom cringed,
waving his hands in a deprecating

"We do not know thee, Master Beltram," said Jacob; "but we do Next Tuesday in the "B.F."

know that this jewel must have come from a king's treasury."
"Thou art right," said the Fleming. "It was taken from Saladin himself."
The explanation tallied with the Eastern character of the weapon, and the two brothers talked together again for some time.

Eastern character of the weapon, and the two brothers talked together again for some time.

"A hundred thousand crowns we will give you," said Absolom at last. And after looking at his companions, Beltram of Bruges was about to conclude the bargain, when a singular interruption took place, and a young man who had been listening behind an Oriental hauging that covered a doorway into the courtyard, stepped forward.

"That money is mine, Jew," he said boldly. "The dagger was my father's, and these fat hogs robbed me of it not many hours since in the forest. I am Walter, son of tho good knight Ralph FitzRalph."

It was Dickon the innkeeper's lad who spoke, and he had gained admittance by affirming that he was a servant of the Flemish merchant, and must have instant speech with his master.

"Hark to the lying whelp!" cried

a servant of the Flemish merchant, and must have instant speech with his master.

"Hark to the lying whelp!" cried Beltram, laying his hand upon his sword.

"No bloodshed, messires!" exclaimed Absolom. "Put up your weapon, or I will summon my servants. The noble FitzAlwyn, our sheriff, must decide this matter. We had our doubts it had been stolen."

"Give it back to me, Jew!" said Beltram, putting out his hand.

"Not so," said Master Absolom, blowing upon a silver whistle, and instantly there hurried into the courtyard half a dozen men armed with spears.

One of them whispered something in Absolom's ear, and the old man nodded his head quickly.

"Come, master merchants," he said to Beltram of Bruges. "There is nothing unreasonable in what I propose. The sheriff is a just man. Whether thou art the rightful owner of this thing, or this lad here, he shall decide, and my brother and I will buy the gem from he to whom FitzAlwyn awards it."

The man who had whispered to Master Absolom returned at this moment, followed by a stalwart soldier, who was, in fact, chief of the sheriff's men-at-arms, a band of whom had chanced to be marching past the house on their way to the hall where the sheriff was judging prisoners.

"Good-morrow, Master Absolom,"

past the house on their way to the hall where the sheriff was judging prisoners.

"Good-morrow, Master Absolom," said the captain of the guard, casting his keen eye upon Dickon and the merchants. "What want you with me?" For albeit that he was a member of the persecuted race, Absolom the Jew was honest in all his dealings, and justly respected in the good town of Nottingham.

"It is a little matter for the sheriff to decide," said Absolom. "These gentlemen wish to be conducted to his lordship's presence."

There was a slight twinkle in his eye as he looked at the Flemish merchants, who were obliged to fall in with his words.

As for Dickon, he wished the earth would open and let him through, but it did not, and he had to file along behind the others, cudgelling his crafty brains as to how he could best save his skin, only thankful that the Flemings had not recognised him.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
Rough Justice.

N a spacious hall through whose long windows the sun poured, sat Alwyn FitzAlwyn, the sheriff of Nottingham, administering rough justice in the manner of those rough times.

rough times.

His carved faldstool, or chair of state, was in the centre of a raised platform, and in front of him stretched a long table, at which sat several scribes and clerks, with pens and inkhorns and strips of vellum, on which from time to time they wrote.

on which from time wrote.

At one end of the table were the prosecutors, several women among them, and at the other end a knot of prisoners, wretched-looking beings, prisoners, wretched-looking beings, them, heavily chained. most of them heavily chained.

A guard was posted over them,

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

was her cow, and since heither 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 tilled one of the King's deer.

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 shoriff

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."

was on my way hither to your fordship 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

ing 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

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

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.

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

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.

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, Fitz-Alwyn," 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.



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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.

cumstances.

"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-

who came into the hall escorted by the men arms.

"How now, what have we here?" he said.

"Greeting, Master Absolom!"

"Greeting, my lord!" said the old man, howing 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.

and a half smile played about his hips as he examined it.

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

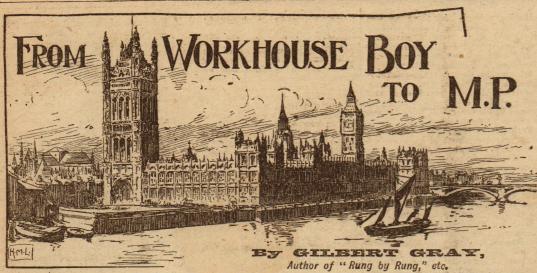
Beltram of Bruges, the drops of perspiration raining from his forehead on to the sweetsmelling rushes that strewed the floor, told a very plausible story of how he and his companions had been minded to carry the diamond to the King, but falling in by ill-chance with the outlaws in the forest, and robbed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

The sheriff listened, with an immovable face,

"THE BLACK CANYON,"

a Grand New Serial Tale of BUFFALO BILL.

Commences Next Tuesday in



Fatheriess, 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 with 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.

town.

The same day Will falls foul of VICTOR ROXBY, Sir Clement's caddish young son. Victor is illtreating 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 back to consciousness, and they part on friendly terms.

The following day the blow falls.

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

ing General Election gives him plenty or 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 Daniel Doon, 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.

Mr. Reece has been kidnapped, and kept captive by Daniel Doone and another scoundrel named Otto Kurski. Thanks to Will and Fred Jayner, the ironmaster is released, and Doone and his comrade in rime take to flight and leave Blackfield.

Mr. Reece is determined that the two rufflans shall be punished, and journeys to London with Will and Fred, where he is certain that Doone and Kurski have gone. On their first night in the great city Mr. Reece and the two lads enter a café in the foreign quarter, and recognise Kurski there disguised as a waiter. The foreigner, knowing that his disguise has been penetrated, utters a shout of warning, and in an instant Mr. Reece and the two lads are hemmed in by a crowd of evilooking men.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

(Now read this week's instalment.)

TILL BRIGGS had had some experience of timb but this was the tightest he had ever been in.

but this was the tightest he had ever been in.

He recognised that in a moment. Whatever swift hope of help from that mixed assembly which he might have had was quickly dispelled by one glance around.

Not only was the attitude of the uniformed attendants threatening, not only were the looks of the waiters and the proprietor forbidding, but even the customers became instantaneously a body of enemies. Everybody was upon his feet, every face worked in excitement, every eye shone with wrath.

Just for a moment alarm had mixed with anger—alarm for their own safety. The visitors might be spies—might be connected with the police. Their presence there might herald danger to the band of foreign Anarchists gathered there.

But one quick word from Otto Kurski had sprung from lip to lip to

known it, proprietors, waiters, attendants, and customers were all banded together in the name of

attendants, and customers were all banded together in the name of Anarchy.

A few moments of suspense and silence which followed Will Brigg's recognition of Otto Kurski was at length broken by the Anarchist himself.

"So it's you, is it?" he exclaimed, advancing with a livid face, while he had fumbled in his pocket for a revolver. "Why have you come here?"

"Why, to be candid," exclaimed Mr. Reece, "we came here to look for you—though we hardly expected to find you."

Kurski went white to the lips, as, half-turning away from Will, he faced Mr. Reece.

"You came to find me, did you?" he hissed, between his clenched teeth.
"And why?"

"Surely you know why!" retorted the ironmaster. "You are to be punished for your crimes! I need not enumerate them. It is sufficient if I name the last—that of yaylaying me, and committing a violent assault on Whimford Heath."

Kurski ground his teeth.
"How did you ever get away from there?" he growled beneath his breath.
"Not through any fault of yours!"

breath.

"Not through any fault of yours!"
Mr. Reece answered bitterly. "Had you had your way, I should never have left that place alive!"
Kurski scowled. It was quite plain from the look upon his face that his intentions towards Mr. Reece had been even as the latter had stated.
But now a growing murmur among the assembled company showed that their patience was becoming exhausted. their patience hausted.

The proprietor, coming round from behind the bar, whispered to Otto Kurski. The latter, in turn, passed a word to the other waiters in attend-

Kurski. The latter, in turn, passed a word to the other waiters in attendance.

They advanced threateningly towards Mr. Reece.

"What are you going to do?" demanded the latter.

"To put you in a place of safety," retorted Kurski.

"But this is infamous! Do you know what you're doing? This is a most serious thing! Here, I come into a public restaurant, and—"

Further words on his part were prevented by something happening.

From behind him one of the big uniformed attendants sprang forward. With a growl, he fixed his big hands upon the ironmaster's throat, and, bearing him back, choked all further utterance.

This was too much for Will. He realised the weak state in which Mr. Reece was, and saw in a moment that he was incapable of offering any but the most feeble resistance.

With a cry, therefore, he leapt forward. With fists clenched, he drove first one and then the other full upon the attendant's face.

The blow sent him staggering back, and caused him to release his hold in a moment.

But, seeing the peril of his con-

and caused him to release his hold in a moment.

But, seeing the peril of his confrere, another commissionaire made a leap forward at Will.

Again the young fellow doubled his fists. With a swing, behind which was the whole weight and force of his body, his right fist pounded thump into the man's ribs.

With a groan, the attendant, big,

This is Where the New Readers 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 with 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 to waive the point, and it is decided that

The Hole in the Wall,

HEN Will came to, it was to find himself in utter darkness. For a minute or two he found himself lying upon his back,

staring upward into pitchy blackness.
Darkness is confusing to the brain at the best of times, and it is little wonder that Will was unable for a few minutes to remember what had hap-

wonder that Will was unable for a few minutes to remember what had happened.

Gradually, however, recollection returned. He remembered the meeting with Otto Kurski in the beergarden, he remembered the ominous scowls of the people assembled there, and then the affray in which he had had his senses beaten out of him. What had happened afterwards? What had been the fate of Mr. Reece and Fred Jayner? Had they, too, been beaten senseless? If so, where were they? Had they, like him, been thrust into that dark cellar?

He could test that question at once, and he did so.

"Mr. Reece!" he called out. "Fred—Fred! Anyone here?"

Perhaps they were still unconscious. He would make certain whether they were in that place or not.

He rose first to his knees, then to his feet, and stretched his cramped limbs.

It startled him a little to find how

It startled him a little to find how small the apartment was in which he

was imprisoned. He could touch the ceiling easily with his hands, and with outstretched arms could nearly reach across the narrow breadth of the place. Two or three steps this way and that, and he knew that the cellar held no one but himself.

His heart sank as he speculated on the possible fate of Mr. Reece and Fred.

Better if they'd all been together, he thought; their chance of escape might then have been improved.

Still, it was no use worrying about

Mgnt then have been improved. Still, it was no use worrying about what might have been. He was a prisoner there, and the first thing he had to do was to try and make good his escane.

had to do was to try the his escape.

He moved carefully across. His outstretched hands touched a damp, slimy wall. He slid them along until they encountered clammy wood. He dropped again to his knees, tracing the wood with his finger-tips to the floor.

dropped again to his knees, tracing the wood with his finger-tips to the floor.

"It's the door," he exclaimed to himself—"the door by which I entered! Ah, and here's the keyhole! I wonder if I can see anything?"

He applied his eye to the little aperture in the door. A draught of keen air blowing into his eye told him that the keyhole was unobscured.

For a moment, indeed, it seemed as if he were looking into a well of pitch. Presently, however, a thin, pale streak of light struck upwards from the floor from a point some distance away from him.

The light was faint enough, but enabled him to make out his situation after a minute or two.

The cellar into which he had been cast did not open out into another room. It simply gave on to a narrow passage, some six or eight yards long, at the further end of which was another door.

It was from beneath this second

at the further end of which was another door.

It was from beneath this second door that the streak of light came.

"I'm pretty well cut off from the rest of the house," Will said to himself. "Well, perhaps it's all the better, in one way. They won't hear me if I try to escape?

But how to escape? Even if he could open that door, and the other door beyond, it would only lead to recapture.

recapture.
Was there any other way out of the place?

As he asked himself this question, his hands, wandering up the mildewed wall, encountered a little shelf. His fingers involuntarily closed on something that rattled as he moved his hand.

Matches!

His heart gave a great jump. What a find! Nothing could have been luckier!

luckier!

He opened the box and struck a

match.

And then he could have cried out for very joy, for, hanging from a rusty hook a foot or two above his head, was a lantern with a half-burnt candle in it.

He took the lantern down from the hook and lighted it. He raised it

above his head, and gazed about as the yellow flare lit up the chamber.

It was a coal-cellar. Even now a small heap of black fuel lay in one corner. Otherwise, the place was empty—and not only empty, but void of any other door than the one through which he had entered. Of window there was none, nor did a cursory inspection of the place reveal any possible way of escape, for the walls were solid, and the floor apparently of concrete.

As Will looked round, reason told him that escape by any other way than that of the door was altogether out of the question.

Yet in the mind or soul of manthere is something more powerful than reason. Call it what you will, there is some subtle instinct that bids a man hope where there seems to be no room for hope—that makes a man do things which reason would declare to be foolish.

Why Will did what he did he could not have said, but certain it is that, after an inspection of the walls, he found himself kneeling down upon the heap of coals, and with the aid of a shovel which he found there shifting the fuel away from the place where it lay.

We repeat that he could not have

lay.

We repeat that he could not have said why he did it, yet from the eager way in which he toiled at his self-imposed task anyone who might have looked on would certainly have declared that he had a specific object in viola.

in view.

And so it seemed, though what the object was Will himself could not have said.

Yet, with the floor partly cleared, there he was, searching among the coal-dust with his fingers, as if for some precious jewel.

Was it a jewel he touched? It sounded metallic.

A ring—a ring of steel, of a diameter sufficient to allow of the insertion of two fingers. A ring of steel, fastened to a staple set in a block of wood cunningly let into the concrete floor, right at the very base of the floor.

"I wonder what made me look for this?" Will gasped. "Somehow I thought I should find something, but what made me think of it? I wonder what the ring's for? I'll soon find that out."

what the ring's for? I'll soon find that out."

He hooked his fingers into the ring, and gave a sharp tug. Something moved somewhere inside the wall. He could feel it lift, and then slide back like a sash-weight in a groove.

He set his teeth, and gripping the ring again, tugged hard at it.

The wedge of wood set in the floor sild up an inch or two telescopically. At the same moment Will felt a jerk upon his wrist as a heavy weight seemed to roll in a crescent groove somewhere low down in the wall.

With a dull, heavy sound the weight seemed to drop into a socket. As it did so the wedge of wood to which (Continued on the next page.)

(Continued on the next page.)



Mr. Wigram grabbed the square of linoleum, and snatched it back, revealing a black, grim hand protruding through a narrow slit in the floor.

RUFFAIO

Commences Next Tuesday in

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the ring was attached slid automatically back into its place. Simultaneously a section of the wall, measuring nearly two feet square, revolved on a silent and invisible axis, and, falling inwards without noise, revealed a square, gaping hole, revealed a square, gaping hole, through which a man might easily

Instinct had led to the discovery, and it had come about gradually. Yet Will found himself staring hard at the aperture, with such an expression on his face as showed he could harly credit the evidence of his own evesight.

Yet there were the indisputable facts—there was the gaping hole plain to the eye.

plain to the eye.

Will reached for the lantern, and, throwing himself flat upon his stomach, lay with his head in the hole, and the light held straight in front of him.

What he saw was sufficiently startling.

A low, long narrow tunnel, running as far as the eye could reach, revealed itself. It resembled nothing so much as a baker's oven, the dimensions of which it matched, except that it was longer.

"This is precious queer!" Will muttered to himself. "Reminds me of things I've read about, but I've never seen anything like it before. Looks uncommonly like a long oven, but it, isn't an oven, because there's no bottom to it. Seems to twist round at the end there. I wonder where it leads to?"

It occurred to him immediately that he might as well investigate. The worst part of imprisonment, next to darkness, is having nothing to do. Here was something to be done—this tunnel to be explored.

It fired his brain with a sudden excitement. He resolved to explore at

with a view to husbanding his resources as well as for convenience, he blew out the candle, and, carrying the extinguished lantern in his hand, dropped to his knees, and crawled into the oven-like aperture.

He proceeded cautiously, for he

He proceeded cautiously, for he could not forget that he was on a queer venture. In three or four minutes, however, a sudden gust of air blowing from his right hand told him that he had arrived at a turn in the tunnel. He moved a pace or two further forward out of the draught, struck a match, and lighted his candle again.

again.

An exclamation of surprise and joy escaped him as he found that the passage in which he now was was much larger than that through which he had come. It was hereabouts fully six feet wide, and more than that in height. It ran to the right and left, and was formed of natural earth, lined as to the walls by dull, drab bricks, that shone with mildew and reeked of the damp earth.

But the damp and cold didn't

But the damp and cold didn't matter now to Will, since he could move along the tunnel in an upright position.

position.

His general sense of wonder as to the meaning of this underground passage gave place to a particular exclamation of surprise at beholding a carpenter's basket.

There it was, hanging from a big nail in the wall, and bulging with tools

Will lifted it down and examined its contents by the light of the lantern. It was really quite a well-stocked basket, but the preponderance of files and chisels suggested a thought to Will.

A burglar's outfit rather than that of an honest artisan. And surely such a place as this tunnel was a likely shelter for a thief, and a likely place for him to keep his tools.

for him to keep his tools.

"Well, I'll borrow some, anyway," murmured Will. "I don't know where I'm going, or quite what's going to happen, but a hammer may be useful, and a file and a gimlet, and a brace and bit. With those and this jemmy I shall be an idiot if I can't break out of whatever place I'm in. Now, I wonder which way I ought to go—to the left or right?"

There was nothing to guide him in

There was nothing to guide him in his choice. Mere guesswork, whatever he did.

"Well," he exclaimed, "I shall

"Well," he exclaimed, "I shall count myself lucky if I don't have time to explore both ways. So here's to a jaunt to the right first!"

failed to get into Parliament, and he was mighty wrathful about it.

Come to think about it, it is annoy

about it.

Come to think about it, it is annoying for a gentleman of his sort to be suddenly deprived of the privileges of the "finest club in London" simply because a majority of his constituents are wooden-headed enough to vote for somebody else.

So far as Parliamentary work was concerned, so far as doing any particular good for his constituents or for his country, Sir Clement Roxby didn't care a rap.

He never regarded being sent to Parliament as a reason why he should do any good to anybody. He simply regarded it as an honour due to himself, and looked upon the House of Commons as a place where he might pass a great deal of time agreeably, and meet day by day friends whom he had known for a great number of years. Incidentally, he would vote for something or other, or against something or other—he really didn't know which, or what it was all about, and generally didn't care. All he did was to vote just as his leaders told him to.

So that now suddenly to find him-

him to.

So that now suddenly to find himself out of Parliament was annoying. It would be so difficult to know what to do with his time—so confoundedly humiliating not to be able to put those magic letters "M.P." after his name.

name.

But there the thing was, and it had to be borne.

To add to his annoyance there one morning arrived a letter. It was postmarked "London, W.," and it was typewritten on a sheet of business

thanked Lohdon, W., and it was typewritten on a sheet of business paper.

It was a demand for money—for a large sum of money for services rendered in connection with the recent election. And the letter came from Mr. Warrington Wigram, solicitor, of 33A, Winchester Row, London, W.

How Sir Clement Roxby frowned over that letter to be sure! Really, anybody would have thought that the two thousand pounds it demanded was more than Sir Clement could muster. It spoilt his appetite for breakfast completely, and he thrust his devilled kidneys away from him petulantly, as if he had been a school-boy, and the kidneys had been a dosof cod-liver oil.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, in

Confound it!" he exclaimed, in so savage a tone as to make his son and heir, Victor Roxby, look up from the sporting paper he was reading. "Why, what's up, guv'nor?" de-manded his son, now aged about

"Why, what's up, guv'nor?" demanded his son, now aged about twenty.

He was dressed in rather extravagant fashion, and wore a monocle in his right eye.

"They want more money!" groaned Sir Clement. "It's the London lawyer this time—the fellow who engineered Liggersby's appearance."

"Awful mess he made of it, too!" said Victor Roxby with a drawl and a vacuous grin. "Pon my word, I could have worked things better myself! He didn't do much, and he oughtn't to expect much."

"He's asking for two thousand pounds, anyway," returned the baronet gloomily. "This election looks like costing me the best part of ten thousand, all told."

"And then you haven't got a seat after all! Jolly shame, I call it! Why can't a fellow plank down his money—say ten thousand—and have a seat for life? That's a way to put an end to these beastly, worrying elections, and that's the way to keep the riff-raff out of the House of Commons."

His father looked across at him. "What a wonderful idea of yours!" he said sarcastically.

"Think so, guv'nor?" returned the young man, unconscious of the sarcasm. "Do you know, I thought of that quite suddenly the other day."

"H'm!" commented his father.

"H' aver you go into Parliament I.

I often get jolly smart ideas of that sort."

"H'm!" commented his father.
"If ever you go into Parliament I can see you getting into the Cabinet in no time. But look here! I must go to London to-day' to see this solicitor fellow. If you like you can go with me."

"By Jove, I'll come to town—rather! I've got a most important appointment."
"With whom?"
"With whom?"
"With whom?"
"So it happened that Sir Clement Roxby and his son Victor journeyed together to London that day.
In the Euston Road they separated. Both had calls to make, and it was arranged that they should meet at Mr. Warrington Wigram's offices two or three hours later.

Having wrangled for three-quarters of an hour over the kind of buttons he should have upon a particular waistcoat, young Victor Roxby duly hailed a taxicab, which presently set him down in Winchester Row.

Winchester Row was a quiet byplace to the north of Oxford Street. The houses in the row were old and high-rented. From topmost storey to ground floors the rooms were let out as offices to professional men.

Perhaps for cheapness, or perhaps as perpetual evidence of his mole-like propensity to burrow, Mr, Warrington Wigram occupied offices in the basement. In olden days, when it was the fashion to call a spade a spade, his office would probably have been called "the cellar." In these days the offices were dignified with the title of "lower ground floor."

With his eyeglass in his eye and his silk hat set jauntily forward on his forehead, and with the handle of his gold-mounted cane playing the part of sugar-atick, young Victor Roxby presented himself at the outer office.

A perky-looking office-boy, with a smudgy face, asked him what he

A perky-looking office-boy, with a smudgy face, asked him what he wanted.

"I want to see Mr. Warrington

BUFFALO BILL

Next Tuesday in the "B. F."

Wigram at once," said young

Wigram at once," said young Roxby.

"Oh, you does, does you?" returned Mickser, the office-boy.

"Then I 'opes that 'ere eyeglass o' yours have got one o' them double, treble, convex, concave million-power magnifyin' lenses."

"What do you mean—insolence?"

"That ain't my name; but you don't know no better. What I means is, if you want to see the boss at once, you've got to be able to see through ninety-three brick walls, seventeen rows of 'ouses, round fiftyone corners, and I don't know how many other things. You see the boss have gone down to the Law Courts, and I don't suppose he'll be back for a bit yet."

"Oh, well, I'll wait for him! My

and I don't suppose he'll be back for a bit yet."

"Oh, well, I'll wait for him! My father, Sir Clement Roxby, has an appointment with him, don't you know, and I arranged to meet him here. I'll sit down."

And young Victor, passing through into the inner office, sat down at the solicitor's table.

He leant back in the swivel chair with his feet sprawled out under the table, while he read the sporting page of the daily paper which he found upon the solicitor's desk.

"I say," he murmured to himself as he glanced down the racing programme, "Silver Sickle looks good in this two-mile hurdle race. Only 10st. 7lbs. to carry, and that's 7lbs. less than he won under at Gatwick the other—Hallo! What the dickens—"

He broke off suddenly, withdraw-

dickens—"

He broke off suddenly, withdrawing his feet hastily from under the table, and springing erect.

"I—I say," he yelled out, in so loud a tone as to bring Mickser, the office-boy, to the door. "What the dickens is the matter with the floor there?"

there?"

"The floor?" repeated the office-boy. "There ain't nothing the matter with that."

"But I tell you there is," protested Victor Roxby; "the linoleum seemed to move while I was sitting there. Seemed to regular lift up. And look there, it's moving now!"

sitting there. Seemed to regular lift up. And look there, it's moving now!"

"Why, so it is!" gasped Mickser. "It actocally is a-movin'. Now, it can't be the wibbly-wobbly pattern of the floorcloth a-causin' a hoptical elusion, can it? And it can't be on account of my havin' a heavy night last night, 'cos I didn't 'ave one. Me eyes can't be a-deceivin' me?"

"Of course they're not!" cried Victor Roxby, going very pale, and beginning to tremble. "I-I saw the linoleum move—move quite distinctly. And there it is again—it's all—all—all quivering."

"B-r-r-!" shivered Mickser, eyeing the floorcloth which was heaving in a gentle and most mysterious fashion. "It—it can't be the draught, can it? Because it only seems to wobble about in that one place. What—what can it be?"

"I—I don't know," Victor Roxby answered, swallowing hard, and retreating carefully backwards without ever taking his eyes off the moving linoleum. "I—I suppose you—you never heard of—of this

you?"

"Haunted!" echoed Mickser, aghast. "Never heard of it; but this 'ouse is very old, one o' the oldest anywhere about this part o' London, and—and I have heard say that in King James's time, when he had a bit o' trouble with a nevvy o' his, the Dook of—Dook of Monmouth, I think it was—I have heard say as how some o' the dook's pals, some o' the conspirootionists lived 'ere, and—and anything might 'appen in a place where conspirootionists live, mightn't it?"

"Something is happening now,"

"Something is happening now," groaned Victor Roxby, mopping his brow. "Look at that linoleum—it's positively all of a quiver. So am I, for that matter—this really is most unnerving. Who's that?"

A heavy footstep was heard in the outer office.

Mickser darted to the middle door.

"It's Mr. Oldwinch," he ex-laimed. "Oh, thank 'evins you've ome, Mr. Oldwinch!" "Why, what's the matter?" said stout, middle-aged man—the olicitor's solitary clerk—entering t that moment.

solicitor's solitary clerk—entering at that moment.

"The linoleum's quivering like a jelly-fish, Mr. Oldwinch. Somebody's a-movin' of it or somethin'."

"Ugh!" commented the clerk.

"Not the only article of furniture as is likely to me moved if the rent ain't paid pretty smart. Hallo! I beg pardon; didn't know there was anybody here. A client, sir, I suppose?"

pose?"

"Yes, at least my father, Sir. Clement Roxby is, and I'm waiting for him here," returned Victor. "But—but I can only think of one thing just now, and that's the linoleum there. It keeps shifting about in most unaccountable fashion."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Oldwinch, eyeing the spot at which young Roxby was pointing. "That's very—very curious! I don't think I ever— Oh, dear me! Oh! Oh!

Oh!"

He sprang back a yard, scared nearly out of his wits by a sudden lifting of the floor covering.

His cry reached the ears of other people who had just entered the outer office. Two people, two men—Sir Clement Roxby, and Mr. Warrington Wigram, no other than the man who had visited Blackfield under the name of Mr. Grabfee!

"Why, what's all this fuss about?" the solicitor demanded, bustling into the inner room. "Oldwinch, what are you doing here, and you, Mickser?"

The office-boy made no reply. It

The office-boy made no reply. It is difficult to speak with your mouth full of ebony ruler. And that was what Mickser had at that moment. He had literally armed himself to the teeth, while he grasped a poker in his right hand and a shovel in his left

But if he could vouchsafe no ex-planation, Mr. Oldwinch and Victor Roxby could. Between them, with much stammering and many shudders, they pointed out to the new-comers what had been happen-ing.

But by this time it was happening longer. The linoleum, whatever

place being-being haunted, did the cause of its recent strange move

Mr. Warrington Wigram was incredulous.

credulous.

"I don't think you're quite yourself, Mr. Oldwinch," he said severely; "too much of something that didn't agree with you at lunch

"No, indeed, sir," protested the clerk; "not a drop for three weeks, sir. I've had to be careful owing to a threatened attack of gout. I assure you I saw the floorcloth move, sir; besides, Mr. Roxby here will corroborate—"

"The thing needs no corrobora-tion," burst out Sir Clement sud-denly; "the thing is moving. Look at it—look at it!"

Every eye glanced at the spot be-neath the table. The linoleum was wobbling in a most unaccountable fashion.

"Good gracious me!" gasped the solicitor. "Oh, what was that?" Something sounded, sharp and clear, as if a chunk of wood had

"This is really most strange," Sir Clement Roxby cried, going very white; "but there is nothing to be frightened at. Mr. Warrington Wigram, kindly pull the floorcloth away, will you? There's nothing to be frightened at."

"No, no, of course not," said the solicitor, shaking like a jelly. "Of course there isn't. Oldwinch, drag that floorcloth away, will you? We must find out what this stupid thing means."

"Yes—yes, of course—of course," cried the clerk tremulously; "it—it can't be anything serious. Here, Mickser, just move that linoleum, will you?"

Mickser shook his head, breathing hard, and tightened his grip on poker and shovel.

"Perhaps you, Mr. Victor," suggested the solicitor, "would not mind just pulling the floor covering back a little?"

But Victor Roxby obviously did mind. He turned pale at the bare thought of his stooping to touch the quivering linoleum.

-that

man."

But Mr. Warrington Wigram wouldn't do that He took his courage in both hands. He also took the square of linoleum in both hands, and with a sudden jerk snatched it back.

snatched it back.

If the party had been frightened before, they were scared out of their wits now. Five distinct cries sprang from five different throats, the ruler falling from Mickser's trembling jaws to allow his scream to find full yent.

Five awestricken people gazed at that spot upon the floor!

What did they see?

Merely a narrow slit in the wooden floor, which had been cut, or rather bored away, and through the slit a protruding hand—a hand all grimed and blackened.

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No. 6.—SWIFT AND SURE; Or, Tom Rogers' Reward.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

An Important Mission.

H E telephone-bell rang sharply in the board-room at the headquarters in St. Martin's Lane, and the superintendent went to the receiver.

dent went to the receiver.

"Hallo! Yes, we are the District Mesengers, sir. Yes?" And the lad's eyebrows lifted as he listened.

"Certainly, sir," he replied; "if you will hold the wire a moment, the manager will speak to you himself." And he went quickly through the inner room to the general manager of fice. "Please sir a gentleger's office. "Please, sir, a gentle-man wants to know if we can send a messenger to South Africa by to-night's boat."

The general manager went to the telephone.

It was one of those profitable commissions that are a fine advertisement for the company.

"Oh, yes, we can do it; but, as you say the boat leaves Southampton at nine o'clock, there's very little time! You'll come round at once? Good. That will be the best plan. I shall be here, Mr. Rottenstein. One moment; your address, please. Thank you! Good-bye!"

The general manager retired into his sanctum, and for the next quarter of an hour he and his assistant were busy with the London Directory, the time-table, and the sailing-list, and then Mr. Adolf Rottenstein was announced.

He was a German of the approved pattern, expensively dressed, and apparently well-to-do.

He laid his cheque-book upon the table, and drew off his motor-gloves to show his diamond rings, to which he immediately called the manager's attention.

"I am the London partner of

he immediately called the manager's attention.

"I am the London partner of Isaac & Vardy, of Kimberley," he said. "We deal in these things, you know." And he pointed carelessly to the magnificent stones that gleamed and glistened on his fat finger. "Now to pis'ness. I want this letter delivering." And he produced a stout envelope sealed with many seals. "The messenger must bring back an answer. Can you trust your boys?"

The manager smiled.

"We should not employ them, sir, if they were not to be trusted."

"Very well. Now, what are you going to charge me?"

The manager went into details, and as Mr. Rottenstein expressed himself perfectly satisfied, he rang the bell.

"Send Rogers to me," he said.
"No doubt you would like to see the

"Send Rogers to me," he said.
"No doubt you would like to see the

"No doubt you would like to see the boy?"

And Mr. Rottenstein nodded.
In a few minutes a round-cheeked, fair-haired lad of sixteen entered the room and removed his cap.
"Rogers," said the manager, "would you like to go to South Africa for this gentleman, and bring back an answer to this letter?"

"Yes, sir!" was the prompt reply, and every inch of his frame seemed to quiver and glow with pleasurable excitement.
"Have you any instructions to give him, sir—any guidance of any sort?"
"No," said the customer—"none

"No," said the customer—"none at all. You will go straight to Kimberley and come straight back. If you are smart, I shall reward you handsomely."

"That will do, Rogers; report yourself to me in ten minutes."

In less than an hour from the receipt of the first call, Messenger Rogers, the letter in his pocket, an overcoat on his arm and a Gladstone bag in his hand, was whirling in a taxi to Waterloo, one of the happiest lads in London town.

It was the "pill-box" that did it, as the Kildonan Castle spurned the Channel foam from her bows the first morning out, and Tom stood looking over the side at the heaving waters which the sunrise painted with all the colours of the rainbow. "And what on earth are you doing here, my lad?" said a pleasant thrust in the pockets of a blue serge that thrust in the pockets of a blue serge that thrust in the pockets of a blue serge that thrust in the pockets of a blue serge suit, as he scanned a notice pasted on the end of a corrugated iron shed.

The notice offered the reward of five hundred pounds for any information that would lead to the recovery of a stolen diamond of four hundred carats. There was a rough drawing of the stone in its uncut

voice behind him, and Tom saluted a brown-faced, military-looking gentleman, who had the collar of his ulster turned up to his ears.

"It's quite refreshing to see that old cap again," he said. "I wore one for twenty years, but they gave us a German thing with a peak before I left the Lancers." And leaning his arms on the taffrail he chatted with the lad, evidently taken by his enterprise and the pluck with which he was travelling those thousand of miles alone.

Captain Ormond had retired after the war, and was ostrich-farming near the Modder River, and scarce a morning passed but he and the messenger boy were to be seen pacing backwards and forwards while the captain told him stories of the fighting.

It was not until the steamer entered Table Bay that Tom Rogers got an inkling of the real nature of his mission.

"Can you tell me, sir," he asked, "how I shall find Messrs. Isaac & Vardy, the great diamond merchants?" And taking his pipe out of his mouth, the captain laughed a strange laugh.

"Merchants, you call them?" he said. "Do you know what I. D. B. stands for?"

"No, sir."

"Well, it means Illicit Diamond Buyers, and that's what Isaac & Vardy are. One of these days they are certain to be bowled out. They may be employing you to run stones out of the country; and though your uniform will give you a certain amount of protection, I strongly advise you to look out for squalls. I know Mr. Rottenstein very well, and Africa's too hot to hold him."

Tom was conscious of a very uncomfortable feeling that all at once took possession of him, and the captain's face grew grave.

"I know what you're thinking, my boy," said his new friend; "you've a sort of idea that you've betrayed your trust in some way, by telling me this thing; but I can assure you, you have not. It is not my gafair, but I should like to know how you get on. See, here is my card; it might be useful—you never know."

Tom Rogers took it, and read thereon "Captain J. R. Ormond, Janspan, Modder River."

Tom was sound asleep when he felt a hand shake him

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
True to His Trust.
HEN Messenger Rogers left
the train at Kimberley, he asked the first man he countered where he should find the offices of Messrs. Isaac & Vardy, and he could not have made a worse choice of a guide if he had tried his hardest.

He was a broken-nosed man, with a slight squint, and his hands were thrust in the pockets of a blue serge

state, and the notice was three months old.

"Isaac & Vardy," said the man.
"Go straight along that road there, and you'll find their show at the corner of the third turning on the left." And then, as Tom's uniform—familiar enough to the loafer when he had been in London—touched a chord of memory, he called after the lad; but Tom paid no heed to him, and went on his way.

He found Mr. Isaac in his office, and barring the fact that he was in his shirtsleeves, he might have been the twin brother of Mr. Adolf Rottenstein.

"Oh, you've come, have you?" he

his shirtsleeves, he might have been the twin brother of Mr. Adolf Rottenstein.

"Oh, you've come, have you?" he said, snatching the message greedily. "You sit down there." And going to the other end of the room he opened the letter, first of all speaking into a telephone-tube.

A dark-complexioned young man came in, and nodded pleasantly to the boy.

"Do you understand German?" demanded Mr. Isaac.

"No, sir," replied Tom.

"That's a good job!" was the ungracious comment, and then the pair began to talk in that language.

At the end of half an hour the two partners had apparently come to some understanding, for Mr. Isaac turned round and looked at the messenger.

"You are going back to-morrow," he said in his uncouth manner, "with our reply. Ferdinand, don't you let this boy out of your sight."

Mr. Vardy made up in some sort for his partner's brusqueness.

"You shall have some breakfast," he said, and he led the way to the hotel where he lived.

Tom Rogers saw the man with the broken nose following them at some little distance, with another clean-shaven individual, and from the window of the room, where he was soon eating, as only a healthy boy can, he saw the couple apparently watching the hotel.

Mr. Vardy took him for a stroll afterwards and showed him the outside of the splendid offices of the De Beers' Company, the huge iron searchlight towers, which play every night on the clay heaps lest anyone should be hunting for diamonds there, "Long Cecil," the gum made during the seige, and a great many other interesting objects; but all the while they were shadowed by the broken-nosed man and his companion, and Tom began to wonder why.

Tom slept in Mr. Vardy's room that night, and when they went across to the office after breakfast Mr. Isaac was already there, and very excited.

Mr. Isaac was already there, and very excited.

"Quick!" he said, thrusting an irregular-shaped parcel into the messenger's wallet, the parcel securely tied with a sealed ribbon.

"You will hand that to Mr. Rottenstein, just as it is; if you lose it, I will have you skinned alive. See him into the train, Vardy; you've only just time."

A quick glance passed between the

A quick glance passed between the two partners, and the rest seemed like some rapid dream, for before he realised that he was off again, he was sitting in the railway carriage and Mr. Vardy slipping a sovereign into his hand as the train got under way.

into his hand as the train got under way.

Tom's joyful surprise at this unexpected liberality was blotted out a little later, as one of his fellow-passengers laid down a newspaper he had been absorbed in, and Tom's heart sank within him as he saw it was the man with the broken nose.

The boy sat tight and looked out of the window, feeling tolerably safe as long as it was daylight, and there were other passengers about; but the conviction grew in his mind that Captain Ormond had been right—that the packet he carried contained diamonds, and that the two ruffians knew it.

The landscape grew greener as the train approached the Modder River, and at Younkerspruit who should he see passing along the train but Captain Ormond.

"Hallo, young man! I never thought we should meet again so soon!" was the captain's greeting. "I'm called down to Cape Town unexpectedly."

Tom made a sign unseen by the two men, and the captain said:

"Come along with me; we'll find a more comfortable seat somewhere."

When they were settled Tom whis-

a more comfortable seat somewhere."

When they were settled Tom whispered what had happened, and the captain grew thoughtful.

"They are certainly taking the sporting chance, these Isaac & Vardy people," he said. "Of course, you know what you've got in your pocket? The point is, are these two men who are following you detectives, or are they diamond thieves themselves? We sha'n't know that till we get to Cape Town. I say, conductor, bring me a couple of envelopes and some writing-paper, will you?"

Several times during the long journey one or other of the two men walked past with apparent unconcern, and by the time they had written two notes, one of which he gave to Tom Rogers, bidding him hand it to his chief when he reached London, the other he placed in his own pocket.

"It is just as well that I should be on the safe side," he said, and whatever his own urgent business had been he never left the boy till he had seen him safely on the big

liner, and stood on the quay waving his hat in farewell.

As he turned away, he found the two men beside him.

"We'd like a word with you, captain," said the broken-nosed individual; "we didn't know that you were in the I. D. B. line. What will you give us to hold our tongues?"

The ex-lancer shot out his left and right, and the two scoundrels rolled over like rabbits.

"Hi, constable!" he called to one of the dock-police, but the rascals were tearing away for the town before the guardian of the law answered to the summons.

"It's all right," said the captain smiling, "they 'bought a pup' this time." And he went forthwith to the telegraph-office and sent a long cablegram to St. Martin's Lane.

When the pilot came on board the

time." And he went forthwith to the telegraph-office and sent a long cablegram to St. Martin's Lane.

When the pilot came on board the liner as she ran into the Solent, a representative of Scotland Yard came with him, and after a word with the captain, called Tom Rogers into that officer's state-room.

"I want to have a look at that packet you've got in your wallet, Rogers," said the detective.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Tom, "but my orders are only to give it up to the gentleman to whom it is addressed."

"Good boy!" said the detective smiling. "Perhaps you had better read this." And he gave him a letter from the general manager at headquarters. "You'll find that all right," said the man, still smiling, and he took the packet which the manager's letter had authorised Tom to hand over.

He did not open it, but merely weighed it in his hand, measured it, compared the subscription with some writing he took out of his pocket-book, and then gave it back to its custodian.

"Here you are. You are going to deliver it after all; and now"—opening a bag he had brought with him—"take off your uniform and put these clothes on; and if you see Mr. Rottenstein at Southampton, remember, you don't know him. You are Master Willie Edmondson, son of a Cape millionaire, on your way to Cambridge University."

It all became clear as daylight to Tom Rogers, and in ten minutes the transformation was complete.

"Have you heard from Captain Ormond?" he said.

The detective nodded.

Mr. Adolf Rottenstein stood at the gangway and inspected every passenger that left the liner, and his brow grew blacker than usual.

He went along the train, but the lad he sought was not there.

His motor was waiting at Water-loo, and in an angry frame of mind he was driven to St. Martin's Lane, unconscious of the taxi that followed in his wake.

"Well, this is a pretty thing!" he said, storming into the general maneral contents and the general maneral contents and the sought was not there.

"We have vour heard for the general maneral contents and the general ma

unconscious of the taxi that followed in his wake.

"Well, this is a pretty thing!" he said, storming into the general manager's room. "My partner's cabled that your messenger left by the Kinfauns Castle. I met her, and he's not there!"

"You came from Waterloo in your own car, I presume?" said the manager; but a sharp step and a tap on the glazed door interrupted him, and Tom Rogers, once more attired in his uniform, stepped in and saluted, and handed his precious packet to the astounded man.

attred in his uniform, stepped in and saluted, and handed his precious packet to the astounded man.

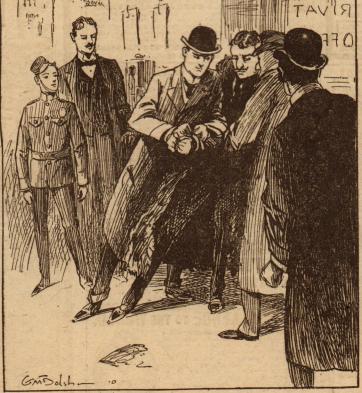
"Well, this is wonderful!" he exclaimed, and turning his back, he ripped the packet open and examined its contents. "Marvellous, my boy!" he cried. "But how on earth did you leave the ship?"

"Never mind that, Barney Marks," said a strange voice, and, knowing their man, a brace of detectives flung themselves upon him without ceremony, snapping the handcuffs on his wrists.

"If it's any consolation to you to know it, Barney, we've just had a cipher cable from Kimberley telling us that your partners are safe in gaol on our information," said one of the men. "As for you, laddie, you'll get that £500 reward safe enough!" And he took the semitransparent pebble which the general manager had picked up as it rolled under his table.

It was the stolen diamond!

They made Tom Rogers sergeant on the spot, and if you should see a bright-faced district messenger boy wearing a fine gold medal, which was presented to him by the De Beers' Company—well, you'll know who he is; but you'll have to be quick, for they tell me at headquarters that he is going back to Africa again very soon to learn ostrich-farming with his good friend Captain Ormond, and I'm sure we all wish him luck.



The two detectives flung themselves on Rottenstein without any ceremony, and snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

a Grand New Serial Tale of BUFFALO BILL.

Commences Next Tuesday in

THE BOYS' FRIEND.

"THE BLACK CANYON,"

DISTRICT MESSENGER BOY. THE

His Work and Its Rewards.

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

VERYONE knows the District
Messenger Boy by sight, for
one meets him everywhere
in his neat dark blue uniform, with
the great "nill boy" set jauntily 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 trusted 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.

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 sorgeant, 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, 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.

and the use of an excellent reading-

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 Saxe-Coburg, 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.











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"THE BLACK CANYON,"

Serial Tale of

BUFFALO BILL.

Gommences Next THE BOYS' FRIEND Tuesday in



NEW READERS START HERE.

NEW READERS START HERE.

RALPH ROYLE, the hero of this powerful new human interest story, with its novel music-hall setting, is a young trick cyclist of no mean ability, and for many years past has been keeping his good-fornothing uncle on his scanty earnings. In return for this, HORATIUS VANDALEUR treats the lad like a dog.

Vandaleur, in reality, has no-claim over Ralph at all, for he had stolen the lad many years previously from a Hindu named Chunder Rao, who had in turn stolen the child from a British officer in India.

Ralph falls in with an American who is in the same line as himself. He is a member of the Dakota Duo of trick cyclists, and, struck by Ralph's evident cleverness, offers him a billet with them.

Ralph accepts this offer, and immediately starts for Blackpool, where Budd Barker and Johnnie Barr are due to appear that night.

Meanwhile, Vandaleur, left behind in London, falls in with Chunder Rao, and is terrified out of his life. Learning, however, that there is a reward of a thousand pounds offered for the return of Ralph to his real parents, he sets out for Blackpool to, if possible, get the lad back into his clutches.

to, if possible, get the lad back into his clutches.

There Vandaleur falls in with a man named Mowbray, who seems to take more than a passing interest in Ralph. These two put their heads together, and the conference results in Vandaleur journeying to Manchester, where he gets a job at the Apollo Theatre, knowing that the Dakota Duo have secured an engagement there.

A few days later Budd Barker loses his valuable diamond ring, and the missing article is found in the liming of Ralph's coat.

Appearances are all against the lad, and Budd turns him out into the street, reviling him for a thief.

In Bolton Ralph falls in with a merry

Budd turns him out into the street, reviling him for a thief.

In Bolton Ralph falls in with a merry band of students, who befriend him in many ways. In return they ask Ralph to give a trick-cycling exhibition at a skating carnival they are giving. Ralph accepts, but on the day of the carnival he receives a letter from the committee informing him that is services are not required. Ralph guesses that some enemy of his has spread about the story of the stolen diamond ring. Determined to clear himself of this false charge, he turns up at the rink that night, aided by his student friends, and boldly confronts the committee. To his amazement, among them he sees an old enemy of his, the mysterious man named Roger Mowbray.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Ralph Finds His Accuser.

ALPH ROYLE swung round and faced Roger Mowbray, his eyes blazing. For a moment his anger almost choked him, but he controlled himself with an effort.

an effort.

He hardly heard the fierce murmur that rose from his student friends behind him at the man's cruel words. A flood of suspicion had swept suddenly over him. If he only had one word of proof!

It was nearly a minute before he

word of proof!

It was nearly a minute before he spoke, and Roger Mowbray returned his look with an ill attempt at disdain, though his eyelids flickered uneasily before the other's steady glance.

"So," said Ralph at last, "yours is the tongue that has been busy spreading this vile slander behind my back!"

Roger Mowbray attain.

is the tongue that has been busy spreading this vile slander behind my back!"

Roger Mowbray started, and his face flushed at the taunt. But Ralph turned from him to the circle of perplexed faces of the hospital authorities. A few only of them knew really what lay behind the words. The others only realised that they were the unwilling witnesses to a disagreeable scene.

"Gentlemen," said Ralph quietly, "this morning, for the first time, I learnt that a cruel accusation had been made against my honour, and an ugly story circulated behind my back by an unknown tongue. I came here to-night to learn the name of my traducer. I have now learnt it."

"The truth is no slander, Mr. Royle!" snarled Mowbray; but Ralph ignored him.

"By the action of the Carnival Committee in erasing my name from their bills a wanton injury, too, has been done to my professional reputation. But of that I say nothing. My honour is more to me than my profession!"

A murmur went round which

A murmur went round which almost rose to a shout of approval

from the students, but Ralph checked

it.

"I am accused by Mr. Mowbray," he continued steadily, "of stealing from one of my employers a diamond ring. I deny that foul charge! And to prove to you that there are those who believe me innocent, the second of my employers, Mr. John Barr, has since placed me in a position of trust, in the entire control, in fact, of a business undertaking which he owns."

With a sneering laugh Roger Moveray thrust himself suddenly fo

With a sneering laugh Roger Mowbray thrust himself suddenly forward.

"Tut, tut! Gentlemen," he cried, with a well-feigned show of impatience, "surely you cannot wish to listen to more of this kind of thing! You have heard enough to see how extremely undesirable Mr. Royle's presence is upon this occasion. I suggest that Mr. Robson orders the attendants to show him the door."

An angry growl went up from the students, and O'Dade cried truculently:

"Arrah, thin, 'twill need to be a

"Arrah, thin, 'twill need to be a daisy of a doore, I'm thinkin', for 'twill have to accommodate the lot of us at one toime!"

The covert threat had an obviously disconcerting effect on Mowbray. He changed colour, and surveyed the crowd of stalwart students uneasily.

But the last thing Ralph wished for was an open resort to force. He turned quickly to the tall stranger, whose eyes, half perplexed, half troubled in their expression, had never left the lad's face. Ralph had not the slightest idea who he might be, but it was evident that the other members of the Board of Governors treated him with marked deference.

"I ask you, sir," he said quietly, "for your permission to say one word more. After that, if you so wish, I am ready to withdraw. I have only come that I might have the opportunity of denying in public

what has been cruelly charged against me in secret."

The tall stranger turned to the others, but it was plain that their sympathies at least were with Ralph.

"Very well, Mr. Royle," he said simply. "It is only just to give you the opportunity to clear yourself."

Ralph bowed. Then, with head held high, and in ringing tones that could be heard by all, he cried:

"Gentlemen, I am accused of theft! A ring was missed, and was found in the lining of my coat. That coat, while I went through my performance on the stage of the Apollo Theatre, I laid in the wings. Before I took it off, I am certain that the lining was sound and had no tear. The man who first suggested that the ring was where it was found, and the man who, I firmly believe, alone knows how the ring was put there, is Mr. Roger Mowbray."

With extended arm Ralph swung round and faced Mowbray as he finished. His words rang loud and defiant. That they were as a shaft shot at a desperate venture, he well knew. But his position made him desperate.

Even he, however, was hardly prepared for their effect on Mowbray.



District Messenger's Medal (see p. 634).

The man stood transfixed. Hatred, fury, and fear shone in his eyes. The veins upon his forehead stood out like knotted cords. His nails dug deeply into the palms of his clenched hands, and he swayed unsteadily as if he would fall.

The astounded group surged forward with half stifled cries of amazement, and one or two hands were held out to support him.

For half a minute Mowbray's lips moved inarticulately; he glared frenziedly at Ralph, but the lad met his look with head erect and unheightened colour, and slowly the anger died from the man's eyes, and left only fear and hatred the mastery.

anger died from and hatred the left only fear and hatred the mastery."

With a supreme effort he controlled his voice.

"You young scoundrel!" he cried thickly, between his clenched teeth.
"By heaven, you shall pay for this! You shall live to regret the day you let your lying tongue wag so fast! You shall—"

His utterance choked him. His fingers plucked aimlessly at his collar, and for a moment he stood swaying. Then, with one clenched fist raised impotently in the air, he turned suddenly, and without another word strode across the rink, and vanished among the gaily-dressed throng.

Roger Mowbray Plays His Last
Card.

OGER MOWBRAY jostled
and thrust his way headlong
through the crowd of masqueraders.

A scattered volley of hand-clapping sounded in his ears as the onlookers gave vent to their impatience at the delay of the programme. Many were the curious glances directed at him, but Roger Mowbray heeded nothing.

nothing.

Hatred dimmed his vision, and a biting fear leant him wings. He alone of all the hundreds there knew of the secret locked in the breast of one man in the little group he had

left.

A breath, a whisper, a look even, and that secret might be revealed.

Roger Mowbray had not a moment to lose. The time had come for him to play the last desperate stroke in the game. Honour and fortune were the stakes, and Roger Mowbray played for fortune.

A motor-car waited for him, and a startled attendant helped him into his coat, and closed the door of the car.

car.

A few minutes sufficed to bring him to his hotel, and with a curt command to his chauffeur to wait, he hurried, looking neither to right nor left, up the great staircase and along the corridor that led to his

(Continued on the next page.)



Our Splendid New Series, Telling of a Boy's Life on a Small Holding in England.

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to turn in my slumbers. The hammock not only tried to turn, but actually succeeded in doing so, and there was I, deposited in sticky concrete that had not had time to dry.

After some time I managed to struggle back to my hammock, but I had not been asleep ten minutes before I was disturbed again, and tried to sit up, in quite a fright. There was a footstep—a loud one, too—in the carthouse next to the barn in which we slept. Naturally, in our lonely small holding, we did not expect visitors in the early hours of the morning. On going to look into the matter, however, we found the intruder was only the village policeman, who had no idea we were sleeping on the premises, and was almost as astonished as ourselves.

We slept in those hammocks for close upon six weeks, and during that time father and I worked our hardest to get the farm in going order, and I can remember the hoeing I had to do to keep the weeds in check.

Our small holding, you know, had been arable land for some time before we took it, and you can imagine that when old stubble is ploughed and sown with other seed there are bound to be a lot of weeds. Well,

there were some weeds, I can tell you—every sort of weed that grows, I should think. Hoeing is hard work, for you have to keep pegging away all the time, and even after a long morning's toil you look round and do not seem to have made a great deal of progress on a large-sized plot.

By the time July came round I was getting quite used to the work, and I must say I liked it more and more. Though father and I worked almost as long as it was light, I did not get tired so easily, and I found that I was getting stronger, and could take on harder jobs. Towards the end of July our house was finished, and then we had stabling for Beauty, the big cart mare, and houses for cows.

We had two cows to commence

we had two cows to commence with, and, of course, it was a great day when they were first driven into our yard. I had never had anything to do with such animals, but it was not very long before I got used to them. Just at first all I could do was to clean up their stalls in the morning and drive them to and fro at milking-time. I used to watch my father pretty closely, however, and now and again he would let me try my hand at milking, just to get the knack.

Milking is a much more difficult

Milking is a much more difficult mixing is a much more dimensi-job than some of you town boys would fancy. You have to balance yourself on a three-legged stool, hold the can in a tilted position with your knees, and milk with both hands, drawing with one hand after the other.

other.

Sometimes you will get hold of a restive cow, who will kick both you and the bucket to the other end of the stall if she gets the chance, and in the summer-time when the flies are about in swarms a cow's tail is swishing about in all directions, and a smack in the face from a big tufted tail is no joke, I can tell you.

Then, again, if you do not milk a cow to the last drop, you stand a very good chance of souring the supply at the next milking, and if a cow is not milked exactly to time the poor thing will be in pain.

All these matters about cows I had to learn bit by bit, and though we do not make butter at our farm, we have a complete dairy, and I quite understand the work in this department.

ment.

Now, when I tell you that father relies upon our cows for the greater part of his income, you will see how important this section is, so I did my best to thoroughly master it, and now I not only help to milk morning and evening, but also take the milk into Grantham with the horse and cart, and go the "round"—that is, wait upon our customers.

But I must not hurry on too fast

But I must not hurry on too fast with my story, and I have a lot to get in before I was able to look after cows and the milk round. In the first place, I must tell you that as soon as the house was ready, my mother, my step-sisters, and my brother came from Grimsby. "Daily Mail" Farm began to be like home then.

Qur First "Harvest Home."

When mother arrived we started poultry-keeping, and though she looks after the birds entirely, I knew that if I was to be a real farmer's boy I must understand all kinds of poultry, and if I did not do much else for them, I certainly cleaned out their roosting-places, and when we had any stubble I would chivvy them down to it for a good feed.

I enjoyed the harvesting as much

I enjoyed the harvesting as much as anything during our first summer at Grantham. It was "up in the morning early, boys," with a vengeance, and soon after it was light father would be at work with his scythe, sweeping down the golden

corn with big, swinging strokes. It is very hard, back-aching work "scything," and I am not quite old enough or strong enough to tackle this tool.

this tool.

There was plenty of work for me, however. I followed behind father, making the sheaves. On a big farm, where there are many horses and all kinds of costly machinery, the sheaves are thrown from the reaping machine all done up, but when you have only a small holding like ours you have to do things in a much more simple way.

do things in a much more simple way.

To make the sheaves I had first of all to pick up in my arms enough corn. This I put across my knee, and with the free hand picked up four or five lengths of straw with which to bind and tie the sheaf. The sheaves must not be bound too tightly nor yet too loosely, and there is quite an art even in this simple matter. When I had enough sheaves made I had to stand them up in "stooks." A stook, you know, is a number of sheaves—usually from seven to tenstood up on end and leaning against one another.

The object of these stooks is to dry

stood up on end and leaning against one another.

The object of these stooks is to dry the straw thoroughly, and when the weather is good you leave the stooks for two or three days, so that they may get into the best of condition.

The carting of the corn harvest was a job in which I helped a good deal, and with the aid of Beauty we soon had our harvest stacked in the farmyard. Father built up the stack, whilst I passed the sheaves to him with a pitchfork from the cart, and when all the stooks had been brought in and stacked, the stack itself had to be thatched, a task that takes a lot of understanding, and one that I have not yet tried to manage, though I hope to do so soon.

(Another of these interesting articles next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

In this novel and interesting series of articles Dick Garnham is telling of his life as a farmer's boy. In his first instalment in last week's Boys' FRIEND he explained that he was born a town boy, and knew nothing of country ways till his stepfather became the tenant of "Daily Mail" Farm, Grantham. I Learn to Milk a Cow.

YOUR EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

AST week in my article I telling you how my stepfather and I slept in the barn in hammocks till our own house was finished, so as to save our long trudge to and from Grantham, for our farm is over a mile from the town.

I do not know whether you have ever slept in a hammock or not, but it is a very queer resting-place till you are quite used to it, and I can well remember on the first or second night we occupied our barn I tried

a Grand New

Serial Tale of

BUFFALO BILL.

Commences Next Tuesday in

His key turned in the lock, and he stepped across the threshold of his handsome sitting-room.

A man lay sleeping in the depths of an arm-chair, and the light from the great electrolier fell upon the features of Horatius Vandaleur.

A sigh, almost of relief broke from Mowbray's lips, and he crossed the room and roughly shook the sleeper by the shoulder.

"Well," he snapped savagely, "you've come? Wake up, you foo!! What news now? Wake, you dol!" Vandaleur responded heavily to the rough handling, and sitting up, rubbed his eyes in a half-dazed fashion.

He became aware slowly where he

fashion.

He became aware slowly where he was, and something in the glance of the man at his side quickened him suddenly into life.

"What—what's happened, governor?" he asked, in alarm as he rose to his feet, and supported himself unsteadily by the table.

Mowbray flung open his coat, as if the air of the room stifled him, and took two or three turns up and down the floor.

took two or three turns up and down the floor. "Answer me!" he jerked suddenly. "What occurred after you got yourself into this fool's hole with Wilberforce? You telephoned me at the theatre. I was out, but I heard you rang me up. Well, what have you done? Speak, and quickly!" Vandaleur gulped down the half-finished contents of a glass that stood upon the table, and, with head thrust forward, eyed the other anxiously.

thrust forward, eyed the other anxiously.

"There's nothing particular happened," he replied. "The proprietor chap of the 'all got on to the story about him prigging the ring. I saw to that—as you said. The students were there, though, and of course they sided with the brat. They came and filled the hall for 'im next night, and Ralph paid all the rent owin' by Wilberforce and all 'is debts, and made a bit into the bargain. They're still in Bolton—all three of 'em. I found out their digs. as you told me to. I know where they're livin'. Waite stops with friends, and Ralph and the nigger stops together. I just found it out afore I got your wire, an' then I come on 'ere."

Mowbray listened to the recital, his hands clenched nervously, ignoring the troubled curiosity on the face of his spy.

"Listen!" he said, as the other finished. "Ralph is not in Bolton. He's here! At the carnival. By Harry, I'd ha' given my hand to have prevented it. When I saw the bills with his name, I lost no time in spreading the yarn about the ring among the committee. It frightened them, of course, and they scratched him. I thought the thing was done. But, by Heaven, the little cub turned up, forced his way into the rink, and demanded an explanation! By Harry, if I'd ha' thought it, I'd have killed him first!"

Horatius Vandaleur stared at the man in astonishment. He could make neither head nor tail of what Mowbray was driving at, and he wished vaguely that his head was a little clearer at that moment.

"Does it matter his bein' at the carnival, then?" he asked sullenly. A curious gleam shot into Mowbray's eyes at the question. He looked at Vandaleur with contempt.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it matters. The ring business is blown on; it won't act again. He's got wind of it somehow—goodness know how, but he has. It's forced our hand."

"Don't see it," replied Vandaleur, frowning heavily at the carpet.

"Yo, but your head'll be clearer in the morning." Mowbray brought his hand heavily down on the table. "To night!" he were on savagely. "We're

"But," he gasped in stifled tones, "he-he'll kill me! He tried it in the hall! He knows, I tell you-he knows!"

"But," he gasped in stifled tones,
"he-he'll kill me! He tried it in
the hall! He knows, I tell you—he
knows!"

"Tush! You fool! Are you
afraid of a greasy negro? Listen.
There'll be no trouble. I'll buy the
things at his own price. It's worth
it; and I never knew a nigger yet
who wouldn't part for ready money.
You leave it to me. But you'll come
with me, just to prove who I am."

He turned and vanished through
the door, and Vandaleur buried his
face in his hands.

The memory of the mad terror of
his flight through the hall with
Chunder Rao at his heels returned to
him in a rush.

The lightning stab downwards of
the Hindu's knife as he lay half concealed among the wreckage of the
stage, the gleam of vengeance in the
dark eyes had told him unmistakably
that Chunder Rao knew, and had
known all along, that he and he alone
was the stealer of the child on that
night among the tents.

The shock of realisation had nigh
cost him his life then, and now, at
the bidding of this desperate man,
he was to thrust his head again into
the lion's jaws.

He gulped down a glass of spirits
which he poured from the ready
decanter, and then, treading softly as
a cat, he stole to the door. A touch
of the handle showed him the truth—
Mowbray had locked it!

A bitter growl fell from his lips,
and he regained his place beside the
table, trembling, just as Mowbray,
clad in a travelling suit, returned
through the door.

He eyed the frightened face of his
confederate with undisguised contempt.

"Here," he said sharply, "take
that, and pull yourself together!
Perhaps it'll put some heart into
you."

He laid a revolver on the table as he
spoke, and Vandaleur, disregarding

Perhaps it'll put some heart into you."

He laid a revolver on the table as he spoke, and Vandaleur, disregarding the other's sneer, seized it eagerly, and thrust it into his breast-pocket.

The feel of it against his breast contrived to give him a little courage, and then, gulping down yet another glass of spirits, he followed Mowbray to the door.

The crisp air of the night as they sat together in the big tonneau swept over Vandaleur's brow, and by degrees his bemused brain grew clearer.

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They sped through the quietened streets of the city, and reached the grimy stretch of open country, dotted on every hand with factory chimneys, and broken by huge blotchy phantoms of buildings that stood in gaunt silhouettes against the overcast sky.

Mowbray sat, his eyes staring straight before him, motionless and silent, and Vandaleur, with furtive glances at him, began to think out the sudden change in their situation.

By degrees his terror of the man they were going to meet receded as his old cunning of mind returned to him.

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Why were they flying thus through the night? The question brought with it the sudden startling realisation that something wholly unlooked for and serious must have occurred to upset all Mowbray's plans at a blow.

This desperate dash to secure the secret that lay in the papers held by Chunder Rao showed a new and sinister development in the game they were playing.

Vandaleur looked at the moody face of his companion, and a sudden sharp sense of distrust swept over him. Something had happened at the carnival—something that Roger Mowbray was keeping back. What?

The story of the ring was nothing. That in itself would not suffice to send them speeding through the night on this strange errand.

A sharp pang of resentful suspicion shot through him, and it was on the tip of his tongue to tax the other with treachery, when Mowbray's hand fell upon his knee, and he began to speak in quick, low tones.

Vandaleur listened, obedient to the other's masterful will, as, detail by detail, he laid his plan before his accomplice, and gave him his orders how to act.

Eleven was striking as they left the car before a small garage in a quiet thoroughfare, and, with orders to the chauffeur to await him in readiness to drive back at a moment's notice, Mowbray, with a curt gesture, motioned to Vandaleur to lead the way.

The streets at that late hour were well-nigh deserted, and Horatius, though his limbs trembled with apprehension, lost no time in conducting Mowbray to the house where Ralph and Chunder had hired a modest room.

The door stood open, for it was a common stair, used equally by all the occupants of the various floors.

"Good!" muttered Mowbray between his teeth. "No awkward questions. There's no lights in the lower floors either; the people are in bed or out of doors. Our luck's in! It's as well to have the place to ourselves in case he cuts up rough."

Vandaleur cleared his throat, and his limbs almost gave under him, but at a muttered oath from the other he pulled himself together with an effort, and softly mounted the stairs.

A gleam of light showed beneath

enort, and softly mounted the stairs.

A gleam of light showed beneath a door on the top floor at the back of the house, and the pair stopped, listening intently.

A low, wailing note that rose and fell in weird cadence rose from the other side, and Mowbray started in astonishment.

"He's relativity to the stairs and the stairs are the stairs and mounted the stairs and mounted the stairs and mounted the stairs and stairs are the stairs are the stairs and stairs are the stairs are

astonishment.

"He's playin' to his beastly snakes, that's all," whispered Vandaleur.

"Ah, the better for us, then! Go on; you'll take him by surprise."

With a stifled groan Vandaleur turned the handle of the door, and as Mowbray drew back into the shadows he opened it and stepped into the room, half closing it behind him.

into the room, half closing it behind him.

A single gas-jet illuminated the room. It was almost bare of furniture, save for a couple of low beds, a table, and a chair, and on the tattered hearthrug Chunder Rao squatted before a dull fire. The round basket was before him, and the head of a serpent swayed gently from its open lid.

Vandaleur stood motionless, and

moistening his lips uneasily. "When we were in London, I mean."

"Yes, I know. What you mean?"

"Well, I've had a bit o' luck. I've come across the old man's agent quite by accident. It appears they're still lookin' for the boy. They'd be glad to get news of him at any price. His father's never lost hope, so they say. I—I thought I'd tell you, Chunder. Now's your chance if you want your money. I can tell you where the chap is if—if you make it worth my while, of course."

He stopped speaking, and eyed the Hindu furtively.

Chunder Rao's face was immobile; it betrayed nothing. But the Hindu's mind was active, none the less. He was thinking hard with all the lightning-like cunning he could command.

Vandaleur's ill-concelled uneasiness, his halting speech and nervous manner were not lost upon him.

His cunning brain sought to find the truth they hid. Why had Vandaleur come to him at this hour of the night? What was the motive for this sudden interest in his welfare?

"I know who and where the sahib's agent is," he said quietly; "I do not need you to tell me. What is it you want with me, Joe Crooche?"

A sudden threatening gleam shot into his eyes, and he took a step forward. Vandaleur started back fearfully.

"It's all right, Chunder, ol' fellow," he said. "Don't get ratty. I only come to tell you the man's in Manchester."

The Hindu laughed scornfully, and

The Hindu laughed scornfully and



"He looked at the strange, dusky figure on the ambulance, and started back, muttering a curious Indian name," (See next week's instalment.)

The Hindu's eyes lit up with cunning suspicion.
"Ohey!" he said softly. "You come to see me? What you want with me, Joe Crooche?"
"It's—it's about the boy, of course. I've had a bit of luck."
Chunder Rao thrust his head forward intently. This was hardly what he had expected.
"You know what you said about the reward," went on the other,

the reed pipe fell from the Hindu's fingers.
For a full minute neither spoke. Chunder Rao's muscles stiffened tensely, as if he were gathering himself for a spring, and the strange fire leapt from his eyes as he gazed in amazement at his unlooked-for visitor.

For once his stoical Oriental calm was completely shaken, and he stared at the other spellbound.
For a moment Chunder Rao feared at the other spellbound.
For a moment Chunder Rao feared at they out a glance at Vandaleur's empty hands reassured him. His quick intuition told him that if his enemy meditated treachery there was at least to be a parley beforehand.
With the marvellous control of his features that he possessed, it was easy for him to dissemble his surprise.
He rose to his feet with an amused air of unconcern, and without advancing further into the centre of the room, said nonchalarly:

"Ohey! Joe Crooche! You come for Ralph Royle? He is not here."
Vandaleur drow a breath of relief.

"No, Chunder, ol' fellow," he said with a lame attempt at pleasantry, "I—well, in fact, I've come to see you."

The Hindu's eyes lit up with cunning suspicion.

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But suddenly the door was flung wide, and with a snarl of fury Roger Mowbray sprang into the room.

So lightning-like had been the Oriental's attack, that from Vandaleur's first cry barely a second had passed.

Mowbray saw his confederate drop to the floor like a log, and the next instant he had flung himself on the Hindu.

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But Chunder Rao fought like a panther. One brown hand gripped Mowbray's throat, while the other was held high in a grasp that he could not break.

Mowbray, however, was the stronger man, and the advantage the Hindu held in agrility was compensated for by his weight in a hand-to-hand tussle. He knew how to use his advantage.

Suddenly he gave the other's wrist a wrench that nearly broke it. With a guttural cry of rage, Chunder's fingers relaxed, and the weapon clattered to the ground.

Then Mowbray's arms closed round the yellow body in a bear-like hug, and the next instant he lifted the man off his feet, and with a crash that shook the whole room the two fell to the floor.

The Chairman of the Governors.

OR a moment there was dead silence among the startled group as Mowbray made his sudden exit. Even to Ralph, convinced in his own heart as he was, the man's duplicity, the effect of his words were amazing.

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As for the students, after the first shock of astonishment, an angry yell broke from one and all, and they darted forward in pursuit of the flying figure.

But Ralph was quick to see that an ugly "rag" must be prevented. "Stop!" he cried. "Blackstone, O'Dade! Let him go, I say! I shall deal with him as he deserves myself, I promise you."

Several of the governors of the hospital were quick to aid Ralph in his endeavour to prevent a riot. "Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" they called. "Control your feelings! This is no place for such a disgraceful scene!"

called. "Control your feelings! This is no place for such a disgrace-ful scene!"

The young fellows hesitated. If the truth must be told, they did not care much for what the governors thought about it, but they were ready and willing to follow Ralph. "Well, it's your affair, of course!" said Blackstone, with a vengeful glance at Mowbray now disappearing through the crowd. "If you want it, we'll let him go. But only say the word, and we'll tear the beggar up for you in two shakes."

The group of students returned a little disappointedly to Ralph's side, and the lad, with an exultant look in his eyes, faced the bewildered officials of the hospital again. "Gentlemen," he said quietly, "I can only thank you for giving me a chance to defend myself against this sinder. This has been an unpleasant scene, and I am ready to withdraw. Your audience is getting impatient."

The scattered volley of hand-clapping had risen to a fretful roar, and Robson, the secretary, who was responsible for the management of the Carnival, looked anxiously around him.

"I—I think, Sir Raymond," he

Sponsible for the management of the management o

the retort that rose to the secretary slips.

"If Mr. Royle will oblige us," he said quietly, "I am sure the committee will be grateful if he will give us his performance."

It was a complete triumph for Ralph. But, though his eyes lit up, he merely bowed.

The little group broke up, the governors going back to their seats, while the students skated hilariously to one side, leaving Ralph and Blackstone alone in the centre of the floor.

floor.

Instantly, as the medical students massed at either end of the hall, saw their favourite mount his machine, a deafening roar of cheering went up.

(Another splendid long instalment next week)

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