

GRAND COMPLETE STORIES AND NEW SERIALS.

TELESCOPE COUPON

No. 2.

See Page 78.

THE BOYS' FRIEND 1^d

EVERY TUESDAY.

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

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ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING JULY 2, 1910.]



THE LANGDALE HUNT

Singling the Headmaster out as their special quarry, the yelping swarm of dogs flung themselves upon him and tore his coat bodily from his back.
(See the splendid long, complete school story inside.)

A Grand, Complete, Long Story of Frank Norman and His Merry Chums.



THE FUNNIEST LANGDALE STORY EVER PENNED.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

Frank Norman—Master of Hounds.

"I SAY, I've just been up chewing the rag with old Nap, and what do you think his latest wheeze is?"

"Oh, blow old Nap and you, too! Can't you see I'm busy swotting Euclid!" was Frank Norman's vicious response.

"Yes; but this is a really good egg. You ought to hear it," said Tony Wise breathlessly.

"Hear it! How can I hear an egg, you fathead?" snapped Frank.

"Well, you could if it hummed enough, I suppose," giggled his fat chum complacently, until the captain of the Fourth began to grope in the corner for a cricket-stump; then he thought it wiser to skip out of range and conduct further conversation from the safe side of the door.

"Drivelling rotter!" said Frank, scathingly, flinging the stump back into the heap with a crash. "Well, you've upset my work completely, barging in on me like this, so you'd better out with what you've got to say. What is this wheeze of Nap's about an egg?"

"It isn't about an egg," retorted Frank.

"No I didn't—at least, I believe I did, now I came to think of it," replied Tony Wise, correcting himself. "Only I didn't mean an egg, of course. When I said 'egg'—or, rather, a 'good egg' was the exact phrase I used, if I remember right—when I said a 'good egg,' I meant, of course, not an egg at all, but—"

"Great thunder, why can't you cut it short and get on with it, you giddy old windbag!" bellowed Frank, losing his patience. "Do you think I care two pickled onions whether you said 'eggs' or 'good eggs,' if you didn't mean 'em. I want to know what this wheeze of Nap's is. Out with it! What is it?"

"Why, otters," replied Tony.

"Hunting otters," yelped Frank. "Great jumbles, are you cracked, the pair of you! Wherever are you going to find otters round Langdale?"

"Why, in the river, of course." Frank burst into a roar of laughter at the notion.

"Oh, you two benighted fat-heads!" he scoffed at last. "Why, you couldn't find an otter in the length and breadth of the river not if you searched from now till Doomsday."

"Well, I don't know. Nap thinks different, and he's a naturalist, you must admit."

"Rats! I'm telling you what I know to be the case. It's five years, at least, since an otter was seen in these parts," replied Frank.

"Well, then, don't you think that proves Nap's theory that it's jolly well time they were seen again?" said Tony.

"Oh, fudge!" said Frank disgustedly, returning to his Euclid problem.

"Well, I ask you, don't you think it would be jolly good fun to go and hunt for them?"

"Even supposing we jolly well know they don't exist, eh?" said Frank.

"Yes, even supposing that," agreed Tony, anxious to conciliate. "I think Nap's notion is a positively ripping one—an absolute spiff, in fact."

"How's he going to hunt for them? With a microscope or a tin of Keating's, or what?" asked Frank cruelly.

Tony looked at him meditatively for a moment.

"No, with hounds—otter hounds," he replied at last. "That's Nap's notion. A real slap-up pack of otter hounds, to be owned and hunted by the school, and—"

"And what?" persisted Frank.

"Well, we had a suggestion to make; but, of course, if you are going to chuck cold water on the scheme in this fashion—"

"And what?" demanded Frank, again reaching for the cricket-stump.

"Why, the idea was to make you Master of the pack. You know, M.O.H.—Master of Otter Hounds. How does it strike you?"

It struck Frank with considerable force, as Tony was delighted to see.

"I dunno. The master part of it doesn't appeal to me much, but now I come to think it over, I don't believe the notion of a pack of hounds is at all a bad idea," he said deliberately.

"And if we really found there were no otters to hunt, we could easily turn 'em into harriers or beagles," urged Tony anxiously.

"Quite so," said Frank dreamily.

"I don't know, though, that just at first it would be advisable to run it officially as the school pack. We'd have to get the Head's permission, and all the rest of it for that."

"Well, make it a Thorpe's House affair pure and simple for the start, until we've had a trial run or two," said Tony, only too ready to agree to any modification so long as the scheme as a whole went through.

At this moment Napoleon Barker himself burst in upon them, hotly pursued by Fred Goss and the Honourable Billy White, who had marked him down for a merry rag.

A vigorous counter attack by Frank and Tony soon rid the naturalist of his persecutors, however. The door was slammed and locked, and Nap was dumped down into a chair, and told to pull his wits together and be prepared to answer the questions put to him.

"The first thing is, what do you know of otters, Nap?" said Frank, after explaining that Tony had already taken him into his confidence.

"Nothing," replied Nap frankly—"that is to say, only what I have read on the second page of the article in my Natural History Book. The first, with the picture on it, has been torn out by some meddlesome creature. Perhaps, though, you know what they look like?"

"I say they've got horns," chimed in Tony. "I believe I remember seeing one stuffed somewhere, and it was about as big as an elephant, though not so long in the legs. It had two horns—at least, one of them was really only a wart on its nose. It also had four legs and a tail, I am sure of that!" he wound up, with great decision.

"Quite sure you're not mixing it up in your muddle head with a rhinoceros?" suggested Frank.

Tony stared at him for quite a long while.

"By Jove! I believe I am," he murmured, with a guilty blush.

"Ah!" grunted Frank. "Well, I'll tell you now what an otter really looks like. It is something between an enormous water-rat and a monster stoat. It's long in the body and short in the legs, and has a thumping thick tail. That's an otter, and they hunt it with dogs, and the men carry poles to jump ditches with, and then—well, what happens then, I don't know."

"Why, when the hounds have tracked their quarry down by its scent," said Nap, taking up the story, "they pin the otter and kill it, and the huntsmen dash into the water and capture the carcass before the

dogs tear it to pieces. All that part of it is on the second page of my book. What I didn't know was what the beast itself looked like. It would have been silly to go chasing something, and then find it wasn't an otter at all, but only a weasel, perhaps, or a rabbit."

The other lads burst into a loud laugh at this notion, and promptly fell to discussing the possibilities of the scheme.

Tony was obviously a little disappointed to hear that their future quarry had no horns and weighed no more than an average dog, but the excitement of the chase soon got hold of him again, and he suggested right off the reel two hounds which he thought eligible for the pack.

There was Munney's black-and-tan mongrel for one.

"What! Old Fido? He's blind in one eye, and so fat he'd die of apoplexy after the first twenty-five yards," was Frank's comment.

"Well, never mind if he does; that's his look out," said Tony comfortably. "Anyway, he's a hound of sorts, so we'll shove him down. Then there's Bonsor's retriever. What price him?"

Mr. Bonsor was the butcher up the High Street, and the retriever an animal as cross in temper as his master.

"Yes, he'd do to hunt elephants with," agreed Frank; "the only thing is how you're going to induce him to lend his assistance in chasing the humble otter. He's not a tyke to monkey with, I warn you."

"Oh, I don't know," said Tony drily. "It can all be worked by kindness, I reckon. Nap will have to make friends with him, and if he won't come any other way, he'll just have to trot on ahead with a mutton chop on the end of a string. I guess that would fetch him."

Napoleon did not seem to relish the notion very keenly, but decided to reserve any objection until the scheme was well under weigh.

"Of course," said Frank Norman, dipping his pen in the ink and tearing out a clean sheet of paper from an exercise book, "otter hounds are really a distinct breed of dog, but I believe they do mix up other animals in the pack. There's that greyhound of old Spiggot's, for instance; you know Spiggot, the landlord of the Bull and Grapes."

"THE BLOT."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Watch for MAXWELL SCOTT'S Superb New School Serial in

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THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Dogs that Were.

THE trade in catsmeat that Tuesday afternoon was simply phenomenal. Each member of the Langdale College Otter Hunt—and there were eight of

"And Mrs. Turnbull's pug," suggested Napoleon. "He can't run for nuts, I know, but somebody could carry him until we found our quarry, and then turn him loose."

"What do you mean by 'found our quarry.' I thought you said otters lived in rivers, not chalkpits?" queried Tony peevishly.

"I mean by 'quarry' our 'prey,'" said Napoleon, fixing the fat youth with a look of mild rebuke. "I say, when we have brought our otter to bay, we could drop the pug, and then shoot at him, so to speak."

"What about having a perambulator to carry all the cripples?" suggested Frank ironically, scratching down canine candidates of his own as fast as he could remember them.

"Well, I don't know," replied Napoleon reflectively, quite unconscious that his leg was being pulled.

"It sounds eminently practical; I admit, but the difficulties of pushing a perambulator full of dogs along a river-bank, with ditches and other obstructions to be negotiated, would prove so great, I fear, that the progress of the hunt would be seriously retarded."

"Ha, ha!" roared Frank, so overcome with the humour of the notion that he almost rolled off his chair.

"Why, you silly old juggins, you didn't really think I was serious, did you? But there you are," he added, slapping the list down on the table.

"There are twenty-five tykes I've jotted down—mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound and cur of low degree. They'll do as the nucleus of the Langdale College Otter Hounds, and if anybody can think of any others, why, the more the merrier."

The twenty-five dogs thus honoured comprised a large portion of the canine population of the neighbourhood. Among them were ten terriers of all sorts, from Yorkshires to Skyes, three dachshunds, a Dalmation, a couple of collies; and as for the rest, Frank bracketed them in one class as "tripehounds."

The next thing was the membership itself. Only the Fourth Form, they decided, were to be eligible in the early stages, and the first rule was that, under terrible pains and penalties, the existence of the Hunt was on no account to be revealed to any soul outside the chosen few.

Frank Norman was elected as Master of the Hounds pro tem. Tony Wise was made chief huntsman, Hatfield, Hans Engelbert, and Bryant, whippers-in, and Napoleon Barker general adviser on natural history, as well as veterinary doctor to the pack.

It was agreed that all these officers were to share in the arduous labour of collecting the chosen hounds the evening before the hunt, and secreting them in a certain lonely barn where it was hoped their midnight howlings might escape detection.

This done, the only thing left was to fix the date of the opening meet, and the following Wednesday was unanimously chosen.

Tapley Grammar School were coming over to play Langdale College on that afternoon, and as it was sure to be a great match, very few stragglers would be afield to tail on to the hunt and annoy them with their gibes and jeers.

"Yes, we'll have to keep it dark until we've licked the thing into shape, I can see," said Frank, reviewing his notes of the various arrangements. "If Goss and Billy White, and that mob, for instance, got wind of the affair, they'd be sure to make a rag of it and bosh the whole thing up. We must keep it dark from them at all costs."

Unfortunately, the ear of the said Fred Goss was applied at that very moment to the keyhole of the study, and, indeed, had been glued to it throughout the whole of the discussion.

"Gee whizz!" breathed Goss, grabbing the Hon. Billy's arm and racing him round the bend of the passage when the shuffling of feet within told him that the meeting had adjourned, and it was time to be gone.

"Billy, my beamish boy," he gloated when at last they could talk in safety. "Did you hear what those cuckoos were talking about inside?"

The Hon. Billy shook his head.

"Then come along to my den, and I'll tell you. But first let's collect O'Leary. He's got to be in this, for it's just going to be the richest, ripest, rippingest rag of our lives."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Dogs that Were.

THE trade in catsmeat that Tuesday afternoon was simply phenomenal. Each member of the Langdale College Otter Hunt—and there were eight of

them—had to make himself responsible for kidnapping three "hounds," at least, and decoying them to a lonely hut on a lonely stretch of meadow by the river Langbrook.

It seemed a simple enough task, until they came to set about it. But after Bryant had lost the best part of a pair of trousers in an attempt to ingratiate himself with the butcher's retriever, and Tony had been bitten almost through the finger by Mrs. Turnbull's pug dog, which he was inveigling into a sack, it was seen that quite apart from the stealth with which it had to be carried out, the work was not without difficulty and danger.

It was then that the bright idea struck Frank Norman to try the alluring charm of prime catsmeat.

The success of the scheme was instantaneous. In half an hour they had so many dogs frisking at their heels that the difficulty was to make a selection of the fittest for the morrow's fray, and incidentally to induce the disappointed candidates to go home to their masters.

The despised and rejected seemed to regard the hut in which their more lucky brethren were now imprisoned, as a sort of catsmeat paradise, and the howling they set up when they found they could not get admission threatened to attract the attention of the whole countryside.

In vain Napoleon tried the mesmeric effect of the human eye on the ill-conditioned brutes, and equally in vain did Tony Wise and Hatfield heave brickbats at them for half an hour in an endeavour to drive them away.

The only thing to do was to leave them to come to their senses and trust to luck that no chance passer-by would have his attention attracted by the barking, and be moved to inquire the cause.

No sooner had the members of the hunt regained the school by devious ways than new possibilities in the matter of trouble began to be revealed to them.

Mr. Bunn had missed his faithful Fido, the black-and-tan nondescript with the wall-eye, and was raising dust round the school in his endeavour to trace the truant beast.

In vain he hunted high and low, accusing everyone from Griff, the Langdale raven, to Harold Guard, the captain of the School, of abducting his mangy pet.

At ten o'clock he was so upset by his loss that he made his way to the residence of P.-c. Sizzors, only to find that old Mrs. Armstrong of the millinery shop and several other female owners of canine pets were there before him, clamouring for the machinery of the law to be set in motion at once for their recovery.

"Go away, can't you?" roared the irate policeman from the doorstep. "I ain't got your dogs, I tell you, so what's the use of keeping on worriting me?"

"I believe you 'ave," squeaked Mrs. Turnbull, seized with a bright idea. "Yes, I believe he has. He's a monster, that's what he is. He's stolen all them dogs, and took the collars off them, and then he's going to summon us for letting the poor dears run loose without having our names engraved on them. Oh, you bad man—you unscrupulous reprobate! Go in and hide your head in shame!"

P.-c. Sizzors swelled like a bull-frog at the notion of such perfidy being charged against him.

"Yes, and like as not we'll never see our poor dear darlings again!" wailed Mrs. Cummings, the proud owner of a spotted Dalmation, which had early fallen into the clutches of Frank Norman's press gang. "I believe I smell something cookin' in his back kitchen now. He's turned cannonball—that's what he's done, and is a-eatin' of 'em. Wow—boo-boo!"

Such a shriek of indignation arose at this suggestion that P.-c. Sizzors fairly quailed.

"I tell you agin and agin," he protested desperately, "that I've got all your names on my list—"

"Not mine, you 'aven't," sung out the porter of Langdale College, elbowing his way through the group. "My Fido's gone and disappeared."

"Ooray!" cheered Mrs. Cummings hysterically at the good news.

"What, Jimmie, you don't mean to say you've lost your dawg, too!" gasped the policeman, feeling that this was the last straw of all.

"Yes, I have, Sizzors," retorted Mr. Bunn grimly. "You seem a bit surprised-like, I notice, at the noos. P'raps what these ladies says is true. P'raps you thought as the only people as ever lost dogs was poor forlorn females what couldn't

stick up for themselves. P'raps you wasn't careful enough in your pickin' and choosin'."

"Me!" yelled the policeman. "What do you mean by that—huh? What are you daring to insinuate agin me, I'd like to know!"

"Oh, I don't insinuate nothing!" laughed Mr. Bunn viciously. "All I says is that I'll find my dawg Fido—or what's left of him—even if I have to hunt the whole world upside down."

"And when I've found the thief, Mr. Sizzers—and I says this to you man to man and eye to eye—I says that when I've found the thief, Mr. Sizzers," roared the irate Bunn, shaking his fist under the policeman's nose, "I'll wring his fat neck for him, even if he is wearing a policeman's uniform, and is plastered all over with pewter buttons from the crown of his head to the soles of his heels!"

And leaving his erstwhile crony time to digest this fearful threat, Mr. Bunn turned on his heel and marched away, with the little drove of fellow-mourners following at his heels.

Overcome with surprise and indignation, P.-c. Sizzers sank back against his doorpost. What on earth could have come over all the dogs in the town?

"Ave they all emigrated—gone to Canady to make their fortunes?" he asked himself blankly. "Or is it these Germans agin, commanderin' 'em for grub, 'cause they're gettin' ready to invade old England."

"Or is it them Langdale boys?" he cried, as a sudden thought flashed upon him. "Is it them unsquashable little warmints up to some of their little larks agin? Are they getting up a dog show, or a coursing match—or what?"

Considering that P.-c. Sizzers was by no means a Sherlock Holmes, he was amazingly near the mark in his conjecture.

"At any rate, I'll keep my eye on 'em to-morrow, wallop me if I don't!" he said, taking down his helmet from the natrack and preparing to sally forth on his nightly round of duty.

Fortunately, his beat on this evening took him far afield from the temporary kennels of the L.C.O.H., otherwise there would have been an end to all sport on the morrow.

Wednesday opened with a hazy dawn and mist on the water-meadows as far as eye could see up the valley of the Langbrook.

Fine meadows these were, too, and the likeliest place in the world for otters, in spite of anything Frank might say.

If there was any one reason why the animals did not flourish amid the maze of drains and ditches and watercress beds, it was because Squire Noyes's water-bailiffs kept too sharp a look-out for them.

The squire was a keen fisherman, and the Langbrook was as fine a trout-stream as any in the south country.

Now, a pair of otters will play more havoc in a river than a hundred anglers, catching the plumpest fish, and then only taking a nip out of the shoulder to satisfy their dainty appetites.

Here and there you will find a fine fish, mauled in this fashion, left upon the bank, but unless you lie in ambush in absolute silence at dawn or dusk you may go a hundred years and never catch a glimpse of the otter himself.

Dogs, however, will soon pick up his trail and track him to his burrow in the bank. Then, with game little terriers to go in and bolt him from his lair, and the bigger hounds to tackle him as he makes a dive and a dash for freedom, the grizzled old marauder may, with luck, be laid by the heels.

It is exciting sport, as may easily be imagined, and Frank and his chums were looking forward to it with rare anticipation.

It occurred to him just as they were setting out for the fray that it would have been wise perhaps to have written to Squire Noyes for permission to hunt his meadows, but on second thoughts he concluded that perhaps it was just as well they hadn't, for the snuffy old chap would be almost certain to refuse them point-blank.

Away they tramped, therefore, all with light hearts, and some few with broomsticks to use as leaping-poles in crossing drains and ditches.

They met Fred Goss and Fergus O'Leary on the way out of the gate, but these young gentlemen apparently saw nothing suspicious about their get-up. They merely nodded genially and passed on.

Had Frank but looked sharply round, however, his suspicions might have been awakened somewhat by the mysterious seizure which overpowered the pair as soon as their backs were turned.

All unconscious of these ominous signs, the otter-hunters marched forward along the lane, which led ultimately to the meadows where stood the temporary kennel of the "pack."

A long-drawn yowl and a mournful yap or two told them that the hounds were still imprisoned within.

"Evidently no one has been along this way this morning, or if he has he's had the sense not to shove his nose into what doesn't concern him," said Frank, well satisfied.

"It wouldn't be old Wicks, the head-keeper, anyway, for he's in bed with rheumatiz," replied Tony cheerfully.

"And Spurrell, the under man, has gone to the sessions at Gulham Market about a poaching case," chimed in Bryant.

"And Square Noyes is up in London, so I heard," added Napoleon.

"Then we've got the field absolutely to ourselves—eh?—with not a soul to disturb us," laughed Frank joyously.

"Now for it!" he cried, leaping the last ditch and making for the door of the hut.

The hideous chorus of barks and howls which greeted his footsteps made him hesitate ere he unbarred it.

"Don't you think we'd better all climb on the roof first before you let 'em out," suggested Tony anxiously. "I expect they're pretty hungry by now."

"And you're afraid they may want to breakfast off your fat calves—eh?" laughed Frank. "Well, I don't know that it's a bad idea. Drop your parcel of catsmeat just outside, Nap, then shin up on the tiles, all of you, and I'll knock the pin out of the staple with my pole."

When all were safely out of reach of famished jaws the door was opened, and out streamed the yelping pack.

The butcher's retriever was the first to nose out the toothsome parcel, and in a trice the brown paper was torn open and the catsmeat scattered and devoured.

"I think they look safe enough now—don't you?" said Frank, eyeing the mongrel pack critically. "What do you say, Tony? You're the one likely to suffer most."

Tony decided that even he might trust his plump person among them now, and down they leapt, the dogs frisking about them in the friendliest fashion possible.

"That's all right," laughed Frank. "Now for those otters of Tony's with horns on their heads and warts on their noses. Forward the Light Brigade!"

And so, with a whoop and a cry to the dogs to "Sick 'em!" away they sped to the river bank.

In and out the fringe of reeds they crashed, beating the undergrowth with their poles, and generally disporting themselves in the way they imagined true otter-hunters should do.

The first find was a water-rat, which Bunny's old black-and-tan accounted for in a single snap. Two frogs and a butterfly next contributed to the excitement of the chase, but of otters there was never a smell.

Probably not a mongrel in all that yapping, snuffing pack would have known the scent of one if they had crossed it.

Thus half a mile of river bank was beaten and hunted, and now they were approaching the little weir-pool, Squire Noyes's favourite fishing-ground.

Here Mrs. Cumming's spotted Dalmation suddenly gave tongue, and away went dogs and huntsmen at a merry scamper.

"Yoicks! Tally-ho! Gone away!" hallooed Frank, taking a short cut and clearing a nine-foot ditch in his stride. Tony came next, wielding his broomstick for a pole-jump.

With a whoop of triumph he planted his pole and sprung outwards. There was a crack, a smothered howl, and down he plumped on his back into the duckweed and rich, black mud.

"Ouch-oo-ah! Grrr!" he sputtered, as he bobbed up and struggled to the bank.

A merry shout of derision was all the sympathy he got. The spotted Dalmation and Mrs. Turnbull's apologetic pug were in full cry over something, and there was no time or need really to stop and lend him a helping hand.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Squire and the Otter Hounds.

ON they raced round the river bend, and then the cause of the canine excitement stood revealed to them.

There, in the middle of the stream, in waders, with a huge fish-creel slung about his shoulders, and a hat on his head festooned with gut-casts and stuck all over with trout-flies, stood the dreaded Squire Noyes, the absolute picture of stupefaction and indignant rage.

Well might he look amazed at the sight of such a rag-tag lot of mongrels scampering along the bank of his beloved stream, pursued by a mob of madcap youngsters, hallooing like fiends, and scaring every trout within a mile into hysterics.

Not that the Langdale boys hallooed much once they caught sight of that bristling figure and mulberry countenance.

"Gosh! Now we've done it!" panted Frank, pulling up dead in dismay. "I thought you said the squire was not at home, Nap, you idiot!"

"Well, neither he was, but he must have come back this morning," answered Napoleon, beginning to shake with fright. "But, hark! I seem to think he is addressing some remarks to us."

Nap was right. The squire had evidently found a few words to say on the situation, but what they were

off, or he'll drown the old chap!" shouted Frank, suiting the action to the word by leaping into the water, which was scarcely more than waist-deep at this point.

The anguished retriever was now almost abreast of him, but with three or four desperate strokes Frank headed it off, and dodging its snapping teeth, whipped out his knife and cut the line.

This gave the unfortunate squire a chance of recovering his legs and ultimately his breath.

"You villains! You murderous young hooligans!" he sputtered, rubbing duckweed out of his eyes and mud out of his hair. "You did this on purpose. You set those dogs on me deliberately."

"Excuse me, sir," remonstrated Frank. "We did nothing of the kind. We were simply hunting otters."

"Otters!" bawled the squire, who had been helped out on the bank by this time and divested of his "drowned" waders. "I'll teach you to come hunting otters in my water without permission. You're Langdale boys, I can see that. I'll get you all expelled first and gaoled afterwards, see if I don't."

"I hope you won't, sir," said Napoleon Barker humbly. "At least, not all of us. It was I who suggested this idea. From my small knowledge of natural history, I thought that it was extremely likely that there would be otters in this

squire. "Then that accounts for it. They're after my pigs."

The squire was right; there was not a doubt of it. Only pigs in dire distress could kick up such din as that. By the sound of it, a hundred porkers at least were in process of being torn to pieces by the infuriated "hounds" of Langdale.

What could have possessed the brutes to dash off suddenly on a hog hunt in this fashion was more than Frank could fathom. He remembered now how the spotted Dalmatian had suddenly given tongue, and led the field at a rare pace to the river where the squire was fishing.

Now they seemed to have darted off on a new scent, straight for the pig-styes. What havoc they were working there he trembled to think, but as master of the hounds the least he could do was to go and find out.

The squire, who was an enthusiastic breeder of prize pork, was already showing a clean pair of heels in the direction of his beloved piggery.

Frank tailed after him, his wet trousers flopping about his ankles, and his soaking boots squish-squashing at every stride.

Up the hill they puffed and blew, the barking and squealing growing louder and louder.

A couple of yokels came flying to meet them at sight of their employer.

"Mad dawgs! Mad dawgs!" Dozens of 'em! they were howling. "They're a-chewing of the pigs, and a-eating of 'em up, master. Don't 'ee go near 'em, or they'll sarve 'ee the same, sure."

The squire's reply to this was to catch them both by the neck and crack their heads together. Meantime, Frank Norman and his whip-yard were in shot ahead, vaulted the farm-yard gate, and charged into the midst of the pandemonium.

If the Langdale pack had not distinguished itself so far in the pursuit of otters, they were certainly betraying remarkable capabilities in tackling pigs.

No fewer than three mongrels had fastened on to the ears of one old boar, who was responsible for most of the fiendish din, while desperate hand-to-hand encounters were being waged in various styes, in which the spotted Dalmation, the greyhound, and the two collies were conspicuous for desperate gallantry.

Of farm hands there was not a sign. Like the two yokels now left in a ditch, holding their splitting heads in their hands, everyone seemed to have taken to his heels. Even the dairymaids could be seen scattering over the fields for dear life, shrieking the warning cry, "Mad dog! Mad dog!"

How to get the four-footed antagonists apart was a problem. Here the leaping-poles came in useful, however, while the rest scattered to find pitchforks and rails of water.

Nevertheless, the work was desperate and even dangerous, for both pigs and dogs seemed beside themselves with frenzy. In fact, the old boar nearly fixed his teeth in Frank's leg before he could clamber out of his sty—and a pig's bite is a very bad one indeed.

As for Hans Engelbert, a fine fat sow backed him into a corner, and solemnly sat upon him, flattening him like a pancake.

The task of rescuing him proved so exciting that the jolly huntsmen had no eyes for anything else. When at last they had fished him out, breathless and filthy, they realised that an uncanny calm had fallen on the battlefield. Not a sign of a "hound" was to be seen anywhere. It was like waking from a nightmare.

The boys stared at one another in blank bewilderment, and then from far away a chorus of sharp yappings brought them to their senses. Lured on as by some mysterious spell, the demented pack with one accord had bolted off on a new scent.

"Great snakes! What hanky-panky are they up to now? Follow, you chaps! After them!" cried Frank, vaulting the yard gate again, and flying in pursuit. Loyal the rest sprinted at his heels.

From the hill-top they could see the mongrel pack streaking clear away from the river in the direction of some nursery-gardens on the outskirts of the little town.

A couple of acres at least of this land was devoted to the new intensive method of vegetable culture. Hundreds of bell-shaped glass shades were dotted about, sheltering young plants, and Frank's heart leapt into his mouth as he realised what damage his bewitched hounds must do if they stamped through these.

Yet such was obviously their intention. With noses laid to the ground



Frantic with terror, P.-c. Sizzers hammered and kicked at the door, and the next instant the yelping pack of curs was swarming around him.

no one could possibly hear for the hideous barking of the dogs.

As much carried away as their masters by the excitement of the chase, the whole pack scampered into the shallows at the tail of the weir-pool and made for the irate owner.

"You young scoundrels! How dare you come trespassing on my land—eh? Call your wretched curs off—do you hear? Call 'em off!" roared Squire Noyes, making terrific cuts at the dogs with his fishing-rod—a performance which only made them more keen to get to grips than ever.

"Hi, Fido!" "Down, Spot, you brute!" "Nero, come to heel!" "Scats!" yelled all the otter-hunters in chorus, for the situation was really growing serious.

By this time the squire's rod was broken in half a dozen pieces, and the line tangled about his neck and arms. It was a strong flax line, and at the end was a spinner stuck all over with hooks.

This fearsome article came adrift at last, and lashing into the pack, harpooned the butcher's retriever securely in the tail.

There was a wild howl of pain, the pack scattered as if a shell had burst in its midst, and the next the boys saw was the squire sousing head over heels, and being towed downstream at ten knots an hour by the panic-stricken tyke.

Away went the other dogs after him in full cry, some along the bank, and some swimming.

"Into the river. Head the brute

river, and I quite imagined that by hunting them we could not possibly do any harm, and, in fact, might even be doing you some small service."

"Me!" yelped the squire in a fresh frenzy. "Doing me a good turn—coming here with all the mangy curs in the neighbourhood, breaking down my banks between you, and scaring every fish in the river to death! And then, on top of that, you set the brutes on me, and knock me down, and all bit down me, and— Jumping Jehoshaphat! What ever is that? Listen!"

There was no need to strain their ears to listen. From the squire's home-farm just over the hill, some quarter of a mile away, resounded such squeals and anguished shrieks as surely were never heard outside of a lunatic asylum.

"Great Jupiter, the dogs! Where ever are they?" exclaimed Frank, in blank alarm.

It was a pretty confession for a master of hounds to have to make, that in the middle of a hunt he had not the least idea where in the world his pack had gone to.

"Why, they've gone—they've bolted!" cried Tony, his chief whipper-in.

"Yes, you idiot, but where—which way?" snapped Frank, clambering out on the bank in hot haste.

"Now I do come to dink of it," chimed in Hans Engelbert stolidly. "I did see de dogs all go dot vaf oop de hill vife minutes ago, as if der teufel was choompin at dere heels." "Great Jemima!" roared the

and tails hoisted in the air, they swept forward on a bee-line straight for the patch where the glass shades stood thickest.

In vain, half a dozen gardeners ran whooping to head them off. The dogs never swerved a single inch from the magic scent. On they went, bowling off the bell-glasses, which shivered each other to atoms as they collided.

Bryant and one or two other faint hearts were for giving up the chase then, and slinking out of view, but Frank regarded this as rank cowardice, and told them so to their teeth. So did Tony and the mild-eyed Napoleon even. They had started the chase, and it was their intention to see it through to the bitter end.

And an extremely bitter end it was likely to be, too, before they were finished with it. Poor Hans, trundling along far in rear, sick, and so blown he could hardly set one foot in front of the other, ran slap into the arms of an enraged nurseryman, who first drubbed him soundly, then held him hostage for the damage done.

Frank had some idea of going back and effecting his rescue by main force. It would have been too late, however, and, besides, the runaway pack was now circling round to the main road, and by taking a short cut there was just a chance of heading them off.

If only a few bold spirits had barred their path, and whipped the mongrels back to their senses, the stampede might have been checked. But apparently the one wild desire of every living soul within a mile of their devastating course was to get behind bolts and bars.

"Mad dog! Mad dog!" ran the cry through the country-side, and at the shout carters tumbled headlong from their wagons, and ploughmen abandoned their teams and dived for shelter.

The Cabbage Stump, a small beer-house on the direct line of a route, was a convenient haven of refuge, and here was jammed such a mob of refugees as threatened to burst the walls outwards.

One of the last to try and fight his way inside the tap-room was P.-c. Sizzers. All the morning he had been out scouring the countryside for news of the six-and-twenty canine pets reported missing from the town, and he had just bent his steps in the direction of the water-meadows, when suddenly he saw the whole of the "lost, stolen, or strayed" bearing down on him like a herd of buffaloes.

Pugs and collies, dachshunds and Dalmatians, there they were all complete, making a bee-line to greet him, as it seemed.

Then suddenly the cry, "Mad dog!" smote his ears. P.-c. Sizzers grasped the situation in a flash. With a yelp of terror, he turned about and made for the Cabbage Stump as fast as he could lay heels to the ground.

At sight of him, the pack let out a howl which froze the policeman to the marrow. Yet he stumbled on. He reached the beerhouse door at last, and hurled his weight against it. To his horror, it was barred and bolted. Through the little window at the top excited faces peered out, gesticulating to him to take himself off.

"Mad dog! For love of mercy, let me in!" he roared, smashing out the glass with his elbow in his frenzy, for by this time the yelping pack was only some fifty yards away.

"Mad dog! Can't you 'ear?" he yelled again to the huddled mob within, for still no one had offered to draw the bolt.

"Yes, we hear right enough," replied the landlord of the Cabbage Stump coolly.

"Well, why don't you let me in, then?" appealed the constable.

"Cause it's your duty to stop outside and tackle it!" was the stern reply. "Go on. Don't be nervous. 'Til it with your truncheon; it'll be all right."

"All right!" shrieked the policeman now in the last stages of terror. To the left was the mongrel pack sweeping down on him, with bared fangs and foam-flecked jaws; to the right lay the long, straight road to Langdale Town. There was nothing else to be done but make a bolt for it.

THE 4th CHAPTER. A Hot Finish.

THE sight of the constable's rotund figure galloping down the road just ahead of them seemed to put fresh heart and strength into the Langdale College Otter Hounds.

The sprint, unfortunately, just foiled Frank Norman's plucky attempt to intercept them, and by the time he tumbled through the hedge into the road, it was a stern chase once more.

Past the Cabbage Stump they swept in full cry, and now that the crowd of fugitives within saw a handful of mere boys in plucky pursuit, they took courage to join in the chase, whooping "Mad dog! Out of the way!" as loud as their lungs could roar.

It was scarcely an inspiring cry for P.-c. Sizzers stumbling along in front, cheeks distended, eyes bulging, his flat feet growing more and more leaden at every stride.

"Merciful 'evings! My 'our 'as come! I can run no more. I'll 'ave to give up!" he groaned, and with that tumbled flat on his nose.

With a joyous yelp, the pack streamed over him, pausing just long enough to worry a few square feet of cloth out of his garments, and then forsaking him as Frank Norman and his whippers-in got in amongst them with their staves.

In a flash they were off again, and the Langdale boys, too, leaving the policeman to the tender mercies of those in rear.

And now the hunt was drawing near the outskirts of the town. The gables and red chimney-stacks of the college rose above the trees. From the cricket-field a cheer came echoing, acclaiming some mighty hit or the fall of some stubborn wicket.

Frank heard it dizzily, for even he was almost run off his legs. Another quarter of a mile would see him done for.

All he prayed for now was that the yelping pack would steer clear of the college gates. If once it passed those safely, he would give up, he decided, and leave the curs to run to Jericho if they pleased. He at least had done his best.

But, alas! the college gates were the very goal the demented pack were making for. In vain, Mr. Bunn, alarmed by the shouts of the pursuers, sprang to close them.

In two shakes he was swept off his legs, and rolled on his back, kicking and yelling in terror. Even his own Faithful Fido scampered over his face, and generally treated him like dirt.

Up the drive, and straight for the cricket-field the runaways now headed, noses still to the ground, and howling like wolves. Behind them came Frank and Tony, all that were left of the members of the Langdale Otter Hunt. The rest had suc-

cumbed long ago to stitch and general exhaustion.

But if a few had dropped out, many had taken their places in the hue-and-cry. The contingent from the Cabbage Stump had been augmented considerably en route, and even Mrs. Cummings, owner of the spotted Dalmatian, had gathered up her petticoats and joined in the chase.

"Mad dog!" The cry, as well it might, spread consternation among the crowd of boys and masters grouped about the cricket-field. One look at that mongrel drove sweeping on to the field was enough.

Those within reach of trees jumped for them, regardless of other people's heads and knuckles, while the rest scattered for refuge as hard as they could make.

In two ticks the little scoring hut was jammed as tight as a box of sardines, while so many forced themselves into the dressing-tent that the bulging canvas split at last, and down it fell, fluttering to the ground.

To add to the pandemonium, Bunn, the porter, rushing back into his lodge, emerged again with a double-barrelled gun, and tripping over his door-scraper, pulled both triggers at once, knocking himself head-over-heels, and all but shooting dead a trapload of pursuers then entering the gates.

Seated in this vehicle were the squire, the head-nurseryman, and P.-c. Sizzers, whose dilapidated person they had collected in their gallop.

Up went the horse, first on its heels and then on its head, and then away it flew at a gallop across the cricket-field, to scatter fresh panic in the hearts of the fugitives.

Meantime, true to the magic scent they were following, the dogs ran careering round the field, at last making a bee-line for the huddled group of cricketers standing at bay in the centre.

Among these was the Head himself, garbed in the long white coat of an umpire. That he was their next victim seemed only too evident.

Gallantly Wickley, of the Sixth, and other seniors rallied to his protection, armed with cricket-stumps and bats.

The butcher's retriever fled yelping under a well-directed clump on the side of the head, and Mrs. Cummings's spotted Dalmatian also retired hurt from a swipe with a cricket-bat, but the agile terriers were not to be denied.

The head-master was the quarry they were after, though why it was impossible to say. In a trice they had pinned him by the long flapping tails of his calico coat. Fifteen dogs at least were leaping round him, as if bent on tearing him to pieces.

At that moment Frank Norman stumbled up, and heroically flung himself at their throats. Over he went, and over rolled the head-master, too, shaken out of his senses and scared out of his wits.

There was a last triumphant yelp of delight, a ripping of calico; the umpire's coat was torn bodily from his back, and immediately became the centre of a fighting, snarling mob.

Out of this the greyhound emerged victorious, and with head high, eyeballs glaring, and teeth glistening, away he flew, the garment streaming in the wind, and the ridiculous pack after him in full cry.

In three seconds they were out of the gate again and gone.

The head-master sat looking at Frank, and Frank at the Head. The faces of both were a picture of blank bewilderment. Luckily, neither had suffered bite nor scratch in the scuffle.

"What, in the name of wonder—"

gasped the Head, and then checked himself, for a guilty look had stolen into Frank's eye, which he was quick to detect.

"Norman!" he rapped.

"Sir?" answered Frank ruefully.

"Do you know anything of this?"

"These dogs, sir? Yes, sir; I'm afraid I do!" answered Frank.

"Oh!" grunted the Head acidly. "And where do they come from, and why have they attacked me, may I ask?"

"That I can't say, sir, but they're just dogs out of the town," answered the Fourth-Former miserably. "You see, sir, we—I mean, I, sir—thought it would be a good idea to start a pack of otter hounds in the school."

"Otter hounds indeed! And who gave you permission to do anything of the sort, forsooth?" quoth the Head.

"Nobody, sir. But this was just a trial run, you see, and if it had been a success, we would then have come to you," replied Frank.

The humour of the situation was irresistible. Reaction after the panic had already begun to set in. The surrounding crowd of boys began first to titter, and then to laugh outright.

Even old Squire Noyes, who had come there at a gallop to make it just as hot for the otter hunters as he knew how, had to let the fires of his wrath be quenched in the general mirth.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Head at last, trying vainly to keep a straight face. "So I may assume, I suppose, that as you and your precious otter hounds have come to me—or, rather, for me—your trial run has been a complete success—eh?"

"No, sir; not exactly," answered Frank, gaining heart. "We certainly struck a strong scent of some sort, but what it could be—"

He happened to catch Fred Goss's eye at that moment, and saw there such an imploring look that his mouth shut involuntarily.

The truth of the mystery suddenly dawned upon him then. This was a little joke of his rival's. Goss must have overheard them making their plans for the hunt and gone over the ground beforehand, laying a trail with some strong-smelling stuff which no dog, even a spotted Dalmatian, could resist.

"By George!" breathed Frank, under his breath, and registered a vow there and then to be even with Master Goss before nightfall.

"Come, Norman, proceed with what you were going to say, if you please! You certainly struck a strong scent of something or other. What, then?" prompted the head-master.

"That's all, sir; there's nothing else!" answered Frank bluntly.

"Humph!" grunted the Head, knowing perfectly well from his tone that Frank was shielding somebody, and that this was all the information he was likely to get.

"Very good, then," he resumed, after first the head-nurseryman and then P.-c. Sizzers had taken him aside for a few moments' conversation. "By the way, how many members of your Hunt are there?" he inquired.

"Nine, sir," stammered Frank, wondering what was coming.

"Ah!" said the Head. "And the subscription?"

"We haven't fixed that yet, sir."

"Well, then, perhaps you had better let me make a suggestion as to the amount," said the Head sweetly. "The little bill for damages, so far as I have received, amounts to seven pounds fourteen shillings. We'll say nine guineas to be on the safe side. Nine into nine guineas is how much apiece, Norman?"

"One guinea," answered Frank dolefully.

"Well, we'll make that the amount of the Hunt sub., shall we?" suggested the Head. "No doubt it seems a little stiff, considering that to-day's run is the first, and—ahem!—also the last. But no matter. If you will provide me with a list of members, I can save you further trouble by stopping the sum out of your several pocket-menties! You can go!"

That evening after prep, the members of the Langdale College Otter Hunt marched in force into Goss's study. There they found the Jekor-in-Chief, likewise Fergus O'Leary, and the Honourable Billy White.

The trio made but a poor show of resistance. Indeed, they were too grateful to Frank not to make a clean breast of the affair and offer their apologies.

They had laid a "drag" scent, as he had suspected, but what the mixture was which had driven the pack half-crazy only O'Leary knew, and he flatly refused to divulge the secret of its manufacture.

It was told him, he said, in strictest secrecy by an old huntsman of his father's in Ireland; and the marvelous thing about it was that it was absolutely odourless to the human nostrils.

The proof of this was that the piece of meat impregnated with the stuff had been lying in the pocket of the umpire's coat all the afternoon without ever the Head detecting its presence.

That he would suddenly elect to umpire and don the garment they had never anticipated for a moment. But once it was on his back they dared not attempt to pick his pockets, and so had to leave the rest to luck.

"Very well, then, gentlemen," said Frank to his brother-members when the narrative was completed, "as Master of the Langdale College Otter Hunt, I have very much pleasure in proposing our esteemed friends Goss, the Honourable Billy White, and Fergus O'Leary as members of the Hunt."

The others gasped in astonishment, not grasping for the moment what he was driving at.

"But look here," expostulated Goss, "I never said I wanted to join! What do you mean?"

"It's we who want you to join," answered Frank sweetly. "In fact, we're simply pining to welcome you into our midst—all three of you!"

"But why? The Hunt's smashed up. You heard the Head say so this afternoon," said the Honourable Billy.

"Can't you guess?" inquired Frank, in a voice sweet as sugar.

"You mean to rope us in for a share in the beastly damages, I suppose?" growled Goss.

"Exactly! Who could have a better right to share in settling that little bill than you? Why, we should be acting meanly if we did otherwise than elect you at once full-blown members of the Hunt at the now reduced subscription of fifteen-and-ninety pence! Gentlemen," he added, turning to his chums before Goss could find words to reply, "you have heard the proposition. Those in favour kindly signify in the usual way! Carried unanimously! And now," he said, addressing the dismal-looking trio again, "shall I include your names in the list going up to the Head, or would you prefer to pay the sub. to me direct?"

"To you direct, and be hanged to you!" was Goss's ungracious response.

And they paid up, right enough; so did the rest. The Head saw to that.

THE END.

CYCLE CAMPING.

A Healthful and Jolly Way of Spending a Week's Holiday.

GIVEN good weather, there are few more enjoyable holidays than those spent a wheel. Apart from the constant change of scenery and the fresh air, the exercise of cycling is most beneficial, provided you do not attempt to ride too far.

I have always found the chief bugbear of cycle touring among boys to be the question of where they shall put up at night. Even a room in a modest shanty, is not always obtainable, and accommodation at hotels is likely to prove an expensive matter.

A very enjoyable solution of the difficulty is to take a camping tour, and, with a little forethought and organisation, this should be by no

means a difficult matter. First of all, you will want to make up your party, and in this matter you will, of course, invite only your best chums, pals who you know will do their utmost

to make the tour a success.

Four is a splendid number, and by having so many, the question of carrying the equipment will be largely overcome.

Having made up your party, the next matter is to decide the date, fix the route, work out the expenses, and generally make arrangements. Each one of you will need a spare shirt and change of socks, &c., and you must take all that you will require for your personal comfort in the matter of brushes, night clothes—

including a rug or blanket—and so on.

Then you will require cooking utensils, a portable, methylated spirit stove—to be handled with great care on account of fire—a waterproof-sheet for the bottom of the tent, and the tent itself. You will be able to arrange for food supplies as you go along, and one of your number should be appointed "quartermaster" for each day.

The tent should be in the nature of the popular boy scouts' shelter, which is easily portable, and which folds into such small compass that it may be carried on a bicycle. There is no need to buy a tent, and you will always find in the neighbourhood of a big town some firm of athletic outfitters that lets out tents on hire for quite a modest sum. Messrs. A. W. Gamage, Ltd., of Holborn, London, E.C., make a speciality of supplying suitable tents on hire.

Where to Camp.

It is against the law to camp on the side of the road in most parts of the country, so you must, first of all, get permission from a farmer or landowner for the use of a corner of a field or wood before you settle down for the night. In any case, always pitch your tent on a fairly high place, so that in the event of rain you will not be swamped.

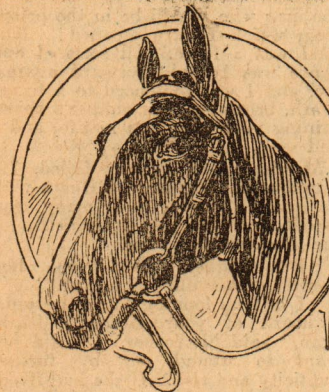
Food and drink are both important to the cyclist tourist, and need to be selected with very great care. You will always find that when you feel stale and flat on the machine it is not the muscles that are at fault, but the stomach. This organ, indeed, is the bugbear of all athletes; keep your digestive apparatus right, and you will not find much else go wrong.

Make a point of eating only plain, nourishing food, avoiding pastry and rich, indigestible items. Do not ride immediately after a meal,

nor yet sit down to food directly you dismount, perhaps hot and tired. Eggs, bread and milk, chops and steaks, are all good dishes for cyclists. Chocolate is sustaining and feeding, but avoid tobacco when riding, and also all gassy drinks.

It is a good plan to take a bath or swim at the close of a long day's ride when possible, and if you cannot obtain a proper dip, at least wash over your feet and legs. Whatever you do, do not get overtired—to ride till you are completely worn-out is only to do yourself harm; and instead of a pleasant holiday trip benefiting you, you will reach home a physical wreck. Take my advice, and ride neither too far nor too fast.

By the way, your Editor has asked me to tell you that he will always be pleased to look up routes for readers who wish to go for cycling tours. A stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed with the inquiry. (More splendid articles next Tuesday.)



The Odds Against Him

Another Grand Instalment

This Week.

By MALCOLM DAYLE.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

The opening of our story finds STANLEY GRANT, a sturdy lad of fifteen, in mourning for his mother. For some years the two had been living in reduced circumstances in the little Sussex village of Jarvis Oak, and now the lad's best friend had passed away. In all senses of the word, Stan is an orphan, for his father is a convict at Dartmoor Prison.

Stan sets out to walk to London, but having a great love for horses, and being a smart little rider, he decides instead to make his way to Epsom, where the races are in full swing, and endeavour to get a situation as stable-lad in some training stable. It is his ambition to one day be

a famous jockey.

Stan, arriving at Epsom, mingles with the crowds on the course and witnesses the race for the Great Metropolitan Stakes. By a lucky accident he falls in the way of doing a considerable favour for the Marquis of Blancheville, a big owner of racehorses. Learning of Stan's ambition, the marquis sends the lad down to his racing-stables at Stanton Dale, in Yorkshire, with an eye to future apprenticeship.

The New Stable-boy.

Stan soon shows Mr. Belcher, the trainer, that he is an unusually good little horse-man, and the latter applies to the Jockey Club for a licence for Stan that he may ride at the next Newmarket meeting.

Cook, the head lad at Stanton Dale, is in league with Bill Squires, a cunning racing tout, and Mark Darke, a millionaire owner of racehorses. Darke bribes Cook to drug Black Dean, one of the marquis's thoroughbreds, so that the animal will be unable to run at Newmarket. This Cook consents to do, but the same evening he is caught in the act, and is discharged.

The Race for the Hunt Cup.

Stanley obtains his jockey's licence, and rides his first winner at Newmarket.

He also rides the winner of the Derby and several other important races, and his name springs magically into prominence as a famous little jockey.

Some weeks later, returning to the stables at Stanton Dale after a ride, Stan sees a man crawl into a clump of shrubbery by the back gate.

On cantering over, he discovers to his dumbfounded amazement that it is none other than his unfortunate father, who has managed to make his escape from Dartmoor.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Father and Son—Anxious Hours.

"FATHER!" The boy's startled cry brought the man from the shrubbery. For a moment he stood trembling in every limb, his eyes fixed on the youngster's pale, excited face, then, with a convulsive sob, he leapt forward and drew him to him.

"Stan," he cried hoarsely, "my little Stan! Tell me that you believe me to be innocent, Stan, as your poor mother trusted in me until—until the last."

"No one would make me believe anything against you, father, and when I've got on I'm going to prove your innocence; but how did you escape, and—"

"There's a lot I have to tell you, Stan," said the white-faced man, starting at the word "escape" and drawing back. "I can't tell you here, my boy. We must not be seen together. I heard that you were making a name as a jockey, and my first thought was to find you. I—Someone may come at any moment, Stan. You will be at Newmarket in a week or so. I will write to you. I call myself Grayling. Kiss me, boy, in case I do not see you again."

"What do you mean, father?" asked the boy in a strained voice.

"That I'm not safe yet, Stan, and that I won't go back to the living grave again!"

Then before the boy could fully realise the meaning of the sinister words, or, indeed, that he had again seen his father, he was gone, and Stanley, with his head in a whirl, led Demon into the yard and unsaddled him.

As he rubbed the horse down he tried to collect his thoughts. Vaguely he realised that his father must have incurred great risks in order to see him for those few precious moments,

and it seemed to him must be taking even greater ones in going to Newmarket. How had he escaped? How had he got money to come North? What was he going to do?

Then, as he finished with Demon, Stanley realised with a shock that he had forgotten in the excitement of meeting his father that Violet Belcher lay ill, and he had not been to the house to inquire what the doctor had said.

He slipped on his coat and hurried out into the yard. Little Pitcher was filling up a barrow with straw near the green gate leading to the trainer's house, and Stanley promptly made for him.

"Have you heard how Miss Violet is?" he asked anxiously.

"Rare bad, I reckon," answered the little Cockney, with none of the usual impudence in his voice. "Saw the doctor go off just now lookin' about as cheerful as I feel, an' the gov'nor, who followed 'im out, looked as though 'e needed a sawbones 'imself."

Stanley's heart sank. "I'm going to find out," he said. "I'm afraid to ask," said Pitcher; "supposin'—supposin'—"

He did not complete the sentence, but sticking his fork vigorously into the straw, he walked rapidly away with the barrow, whilst Stanley with a heavy heart passed through the green gates and strode towards the trainer's house.

Then as he neared the house he saw Mr. Belcher advancing towards him. The trainer's face was pale and worried, but his eyes brightened a little when he saw the boy, and he came up and put his hand heavily on his shoulder.

"Grant," he said, in a husky voice, "Violet recovered consciousness soon after you had left, and told me of all that occurred this afternoon. I can never thank you enough, lad. George Belcher is not a man to forget a good turn, and if ever you are in need of a friend, Grant, come to me."

"You've been a very good friend to me already, sir," said Stanley, blushing like a schoolboy. "I only did what anyone would have done. But how is Miss Violet, sir? What did the doctor say?"

"He hopes to pull her round all right," said the trainer, trying to speak with a cheerfulness that he did not feel, "but we're anxious, lad—very anxious. If anything should happen to—There! I'm going for a walk. Grant, I can't stand hanging about here, unable to do anything for her, simply having to wait—and wait."

He strode off quickly, and Stanley, seeing his emotion, followed slowly, joined Bates and Williams, and forgetting that he had not had tea, started to do his evening stable-work before going to the lads' room for supper.

There was an air of depression in the usually cheerful room that night, for, of course, everyone had heard of Violet Belcher's sudden illness, and each lad was anxious and subdued. Little Pitcher startled everyone just as the meal had commenced by suddenly breaking into a mixture of howls and sobs, and saying that he knew something unlucky would befall the Stanton Dale stable because Jacolat had shed a shoe at exercise that morning.

Bailey had told him not to be a fool, though it was noticed that he, too, was pale, and off his appetite himself. Certainly no one, not even Stanley Grant, had a greater love and respect for George Belcher than had this lad whom the trainer had brought up in his own way and promoted to be his right-hand man.

Then half-way through the meal the elderly woman who looked after the lads' needs came into the room, her eyes red with weeping.

"There's bad news," she said, standing at the door and twisting her apron in her hands; "the doctor's just been again, an' the

cook tells me 'e says that the poor girl's taken a turn for the worse, an' 'e's doubtful if she'll see the night out."

With a sob she went from the room, leaving the lads staring at each other, or else avoiding each other's looks in absolute silence. Several of them were rough-and-ready lads, unable to frame a speech of sympathy, others, unused to the shadow of death, were awed into silence. Little Pitcher, cheeky, mischievous Pitcher, it was who was the first to speak.

"I—it's bloomin' sad, lads," he stammered, keeping back his tears by a great effort. "I—I'd give every penny I've got to keep Miss Violet alive!"

"We'll lynch the doctor if he doesn't save her!" said Williams savagely.

"Don't talk rot, Williams," said Bailey, standing up in his place at the head of the table, with a look on his face that none of the lads had ever seen before. "Look here, lads, I ain't goin' to talk of what the gov'nor and Mrs. Belcher have done for us, lads—everyone knows it; and we know what sort of cheering angel Miss Violet's been to some of us when we've been queer or down on our luck. I'm not a preacher, and I ain't been to church or chapel for longer than I care to think of, but instead of looking at this as though the doctor or any other man alone can save the girl's life, remember that there's someone above doctors, an'—that's all, lads."

He pushed his chair back noisily, and stumbled from the room. Stanley, with a choking sensation in his throat, and a short but earnest prayer on his lips, rose also, and passed out of the room. Food seemed to choke him. He could not remain indoors. Rules would be broken to-night, there would be no important early-morning rides, and—

"Can I come with you, Grant?"

He wheeled round to see Bates at his side, and nodded, and both boys began to pace up and down the yard in silence. To Stanley it seemed im-

possible that the girl to whom he had chatted that afternoon on the cliffs, the girl who, with her cheery laugh and her dogs jumping around her, had been one of the first to welcome him to Stanton Dale, should be lying at death's door. Then his thoughts went back to his father. Where was he now? What a terrible risk he had taken! Stanton Dale was a small place, and the appearance of a stranger created a stir.

The two boys were standing at the entrance to the stables from the main road, and Stanley, full of anxiety about his father, went pale to the lips when he saw the village constable coming towards them. Had his father been rearrested, and was the man coming to tell him of it?

But as he hit his lips and pulled himself together to face the shock he knew his fears were groundless. The constable had heard of the illness of the trainer's daughter, and only wanted to know how she was progressing.

"Sad!" he said, when Bates told him the bad news. "I lost a young 'un myself last year, and it does give you a blow. The missis ain't got over it yet."

He moved on, and Stanley stared unseeingly after him. He was thinking of those sad days at Jarvis Oak, when he had lost his mother.

"Let's go to the front of the house," said Bates suddenly; "the doctor's just driven in."

Mechanically Stanley accompanied him through the familiar green gate, and they paced up and down the lawn for what seemed hours, every now and then turning their gaze to the lighted window in the front of the house, where occasionally a faint shadow showed on the blind.

The horse in the doctor's dogcart, anxious to get back to its stable after a hard day's work, pawed impatiently on the gravel, and the groom yawned sleepily as he every now and then gave a pull at the reins to check the animal's restlessness.

The front door opened and the doctor came out.

"Good-night, Belcher!" he said. "I'll look up after breakfast."

The trainer said something in a choking voice, and then closed the door hurriedly.

Stanley was beside the dogcart as the doctor jumped up.

"How is she, sir?" he asked.

The doctor looked down at the small face showing up white in the light of the carriage lamp.

"Hallo! It's the special messenger, is it?" And then noticing the anxiety in the boy's face, he added in a changed voice: "The crisis is passed, boy; the girl will live through it."

Stanley stumbled across to Bates, told him the news, and then very quietly and with full hearts they walked back to the lads' room.

A Goodwood Trial—The Tempter.

THE Stanton Dale stable was itself again. Violet Belcher, thanks to a good constitution, was rapidly throwing off the effects of the illness which had nearly ended so fatally about a fortnight ago. Work was going on as usual again. Jacolat and Queen Bess were leaving to fulfil engagements at Newmarket the next day, whilst the whole of the stable from Mr. Belcher downwards were greatly concerned as to which was the better of their pair entered for the Stewards' Cup, to be run at Goodwood in a fortnight's time.

It was nine o'clock at night, and Stanley, sitting in a deserted part of the lad's room was reading a short note for about the twelfth time. He had received it by the evening post, and had great difficulty in keeping his excitement from his friends.

"Hear you are riding at Newmarket to-morrow. Shall be at wood on Limekilns between six and seven in the evening, wearing short black wig. See you are not followed. Destroy this."

Stanley saw that his father had been afraid to write more in case of the note falling into wrong hands, and its very brevity added to his longing to see his father again and hear the story of the wonderful escape, and what his plans were now that he was free. It was a long time before he got to sleep that night, though he tried hard, as he had a busy day before him on the morrow.

At six he had to ride Bantam Boy in a trial, at ten, in company with Mr. Belcher and Williams, he was leaving with the two horses for Newmarket, and then in the evening he was to see his father, the man who in the eyes of the world was a criminal and escaped gaolbird.

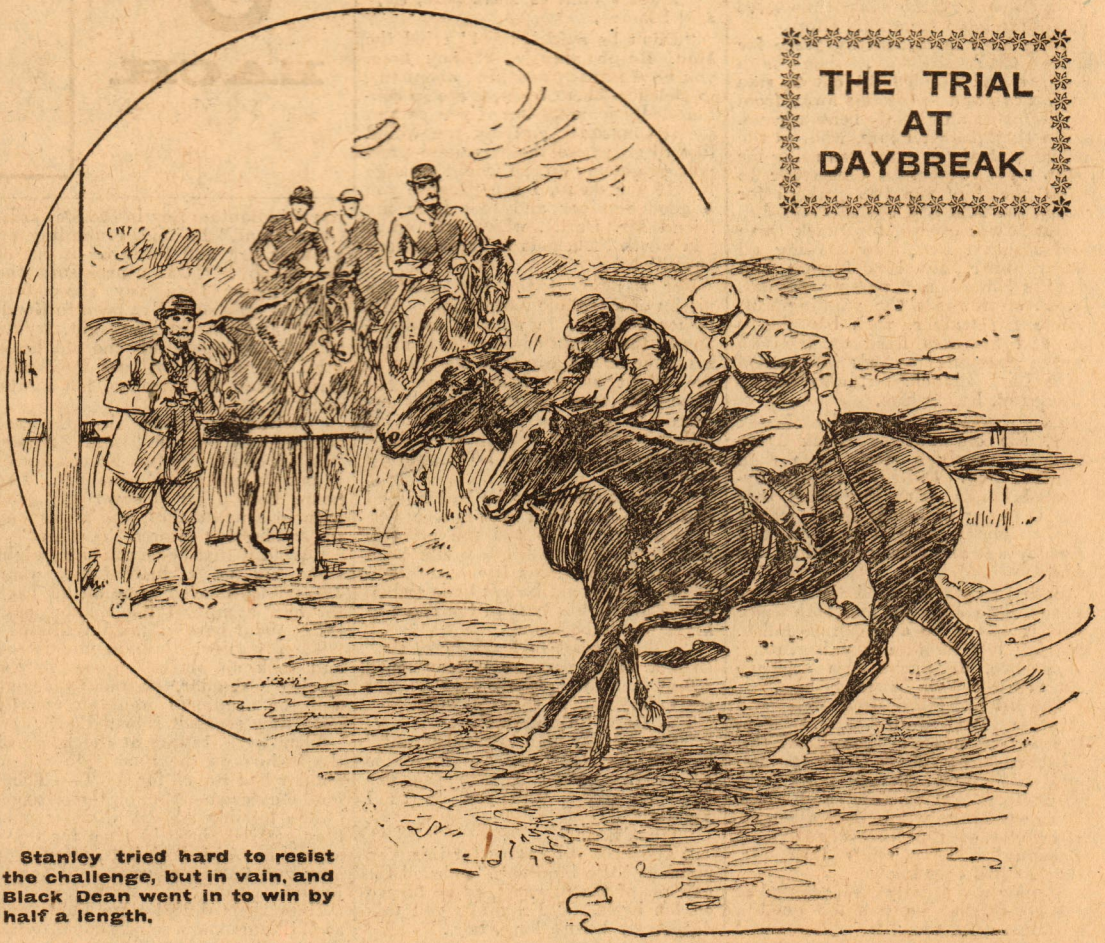
At last he fell into a troubled sleep, and did not wake until Williams deftly landed a sopping wet sponge on his face.

"Come, buck up, you sleeping beauty; you'll hear something if you keep Dan waiting. He's got another trial to ride near Doncaster before going on to Newmarket."

Stanley threw back the wet sponge, and had the satisfaction of landing Williams on the side of the head. Then he hurried into his riding-breeches and silk jacket, pulled on a light overcoat, and followed the others down to the stableyard.

Dan Daltrey, the famous jockey, in his colours, and as usual muffled up in a heavy overcoat, despite the fact that it was a fairly warm morning, was talking to Mr. Belcher, who was standing beside his hack. Little Pitcher was holding Black Dean, whom the great jockey was to ride, while Sam Pears and Williams were

(Continued on the next page.)



Stanley tried hard to resist the challenge, but in vain, and Black Dean went in to win by half a length.

THE TRIAL AT DAYBREAK.

THE ODDS AGAINST HIM.

(Continued from the previous page.)

already mounted. Bates led Jacolat and Bantam Boy out, the trainer handed him the saddles which he had weighted himself just previously, and then Stanley got on Bantam Boy and Bates on the other horse.

Then they rode out to the starting gate on the moor where Bailey was already arranging the tapes, Mr. Belcher turning off and riding down to the winning-post, to be joined by the Marquis of Blancheville, the Hon. Ralph Stanton, and Lady Phyllis a few minutes later.

The horses walked up to the starting-gate, and the scene looked much like the start at a race-meeting, for all the riders were in colours—Daltrey carrying the marquis's regulation jacket; Stanley in a similar jacket, with a black crossbelt, his lordship's second colours, worn when he had two horses running in the same race, to denote what was regarded as his second string. Pears, Williams, and Bates wore different colours to enable the owner and trainer sitting on their horses by the winning-post to follow the race.

Everyone knew this to be a most important trial, and Stanley was desperately keen on winning it with Bantam Boy, for should Black Dean win, it was thought that the marquis would scratch his other candidate, and let the stable be represented by the Dean alone.

Bailey had taken up his station at the gate, and stood with his hand on the lever, keenly watching the horses.

"On the inside, please, Mr. Daltrey," he said. "Bates, two; Grant, three; Pears, four; and Williams on the outside."

Daltrey, with a slight elevation of his eyebrows at having been given the best position on this varied and somewhat difficult course, pulled Black Dean over; and Bates, with the nervousness of a stable-boy finding himself beside a crack jockey, followed him. Stanley, with some of the elder jockey's confidence, and quiet, masterful manner, held Bantam Boy back until both Pears and Williams were in position, and then rode slowly up to the tapes. Daltrey, noting the manoeuvre, smiled, for just as Stanley reached the gate, Bailey, seeing the horses in a straight line, pulled down the lever, the tapes shot up, and the next instant the horses were off, Stanley practically securing a walking start.

Pears on Queen Bess and Bates on Jacolat were lightly weighted to make the pace a good one, and they succeeded so well that Daltrey and Stanley, hanging close together, were hard put to keep within a reasonable distance and at the same time have enough in hand for a final effort.

They kept their lead by grace for more than half-way, then both Daltrey and Stanley set out to ride in earnest, and they came away from Williams on an already beaten horse. Then they passed Pears, who, in the excitement of the race, was using his whip in a desperate endeavour to keep ahead of the two jockeys for whom the trial had been arranged.

But it was useless, for Black Dean and Bantam Boy, now making all the running, left him further and further behind, and passing Jacolat, swept on towards the winning-post, where the trainer, with his glasses up and his eyes fixed on the two horses sweeping towards him, stood with Lord Blancheville, also deeply interested, beside him.

They were going neck-and-neck now, the old warrior Black Dean carrying nearly a stone more than Bantam Boy. Daltrey's beautifully-shaped hands, with the touch that was the envy of nearly every jockey in the country, were at him now, and Stanley was also riding for all he was worth.

Both jockeys loosened their whips at the same moment, and both knew that it was to be a desperate finish. Stanley felt Bantam Boy beginning to swerve, and gave him a sharp cut with the whip to steady him.

The cut had the desired effect, and Bantam Boy drew clear. Then Daltrey put in one of those wonderful finishes of his. Black Dean drew up and challenged. Stanley tried hard to resist it, but in vain, and Black Dean went in to win by half a length, after one of the fastest and most desperately-riden trials that Mr. Belcher had ever known.

Stanley was greatly disappointed at the result, but he was too good a sportsman to show it. He eased

Bantam Boy up, and rode back beside Daltrey to the little group standing by the winning-post.

"A near thing," said Daltrey. "I reckon that if you hadn't swerved, Grant, you would have won. The Dean was dead beat on the post. Belcher made the pace too hot. The trial only shows that both horses are good for the Cup."

"A slower pace would suit the Dean better than Bantam Boy, wouldn't it?" said Stanley.

"I'm not so sure," said the jockey.

And then they pulled up to have their mounts critically observed by the owner and trainer. Stanley noticed, too, that the Hon. Ralph Stanton left the side of Lady Phyllis, and rode up close to where his uncle and Mr. Belcher were standing. He also took a keen interest in the appearance of the horses after their grueling contest.

"What had you in hand, Dan?" asked the trainer, in a low voice.

"Nothing," said Daltrey shortly.

Belcher turned to the marquis, and they conferred together for a few moments, then Stanley heard the marquis say:

"I'm not satisfied as to which is the better yet, Belcher. I shall leave them in the race for the present, and I may run them both."

Then he turned away, and the string of horses, at a nod from the trainer, moved back in the direction of the stables.

Stanley, after changing, came out into the yard to try and find Bailey, and hear what he thought of the trial, for the head-lad was far more communicative than the trainer, and the boy was eager to hear if there was any chance of his riding Bantam Boy for the Stewards' Cup at the pretty Sussex course, known to sporting society as "Glorious Goodwood."

To his surprise, the Hon. Ralph Stanton came out of a stable opposite just as he entered the empty stable-yard.

"Ah, Grant!" he cried. "Hard luck to be beaten on the post. You're not getting enough riding, my boy. Jockeys aren't made in stable gallops, and half a dozen races are equal to a score of trials. You're wasted here."

Stanley flushed slightly at the praise.

"I'm very happy here, sir," he said quietly.

"But you're missing your chance of a successful career," said Stanton. "My uncle's one of the old brigade in racing. If he had not happened to be wonderfully lucky in having three or four really good horses among his half-dozen or so, he would count for nothing on the Turf to-day. With Daltrey and Pears taking some of the mounts, you're little more than a stable-lad. Look here, I take an interest in you, youngster, and I can put you in the way of making a thousand to a couple of thousand a year."

"I don't want to leave here, sir," said Stanley.

"Don't be a fool, boy!" cried the Hon. Ralph angrily. "Look here, you need not say anything about this to Belcher—these trainers are so confidently jealous—but if you go and see the marquis, and say you would like to go where there is more prospect of getting on, he would arrange it. If you do so, I can promise you a good retainer and fees from my friend Mr. Darke, which will make you worth thousands in three or four years."

For a moment the boy was the victim of a terrible temptation. His father might be in want of money—money that might enable him to clear his name, and again take his place in the world as an honest man, yet almost as soon as the thought occurred to him, he realised that his father would not wish him to do a dishonest action and to lie to gain his own ends.

To desert the man who had trained and made him what he was would be a mean trick. To tell the marquis that he wished to leave would be a lie, for he loved his life at Stanton Dale in the clean, honest little stable, where all that is best in the sport of kings was to be found.

"I don't want to leave here, sir," he said, in the very quiet, determined voice that told plainly that he was not to be tempted from his duty.

The Hon. Ralph scowled.

"I'm an ugly man to cross, Grant," he said harshly, "and I wish you to do as I suggest! I give you one more chance. Will you do as I suggest?"

"I can't, sir."

"Then you'll be sorry for this, you precious little innocent!" snarled the nephew of the marquis, as he turned on his heels. "I'll make you talk differently before long, boy!"

Then he was gone, and Stanley walked across the stableyard, utterly mystified by the strange words, but feeling that he had made a powerful enemy, though he could not in the least understand why.

Off to Newmarket—A Secret Meeting.

THE horsebox was attached to the 10.15 a.m. train to York with the usual fuss at Carby Station. There was the pompous stationmaster, the fussy little shunting engine, the clatter of hoofs, shutting up of doors, and then a whistle, and the little Yorkshire village was being left behind as the train rattled southwards.

There was little crush on the special from York, for racing did not commence at Newmarket until the next day, and the train principally consisted of horseboxes. Stanley rode with Williams in the box containing Queen Bess and Jacolat, despite the fact that Mr. Belcher had dropped a hint that he would be glad to have him in the first-class smoker.

For the moment, however, he wished to avoid the trainer, for he had no desire to make mischief, and had therefore determined to say nothing about the Hon. Ralph Stanton's offer and strange threat that morning. On a long journey, when conversation is apt to lull, it might be difficult to keep this resolution.

Williams was full of the trial in which they both had taken part that morning, and as they ate their sandwiches as the train branched off on to the Great Eastern Company's line soon after leaving Doncaster, he discussed it from every point of view.

"I wouldn't mind betting you that

in Newmarket, and wanted to pay them a visit, Stanley had no difficulty in getting off about the time his father had mentioned for the walk across the heath to the meadows known as the Limekilns.

His heart was beating quickly as he approached a small wood in which he felt certain his father was waiting, and then to his joy he saw the tall, well-set-up figure emerge and stand waiting for him.

"Father!" he cried, as he ran up.

Mortimer Grant had more control over himself now, and with the usual British dislike for scenes of emotion, or what schoolboys call "slobber," he merely took his son's hand in a warm clasp, and silently looked at him, noting the well-built figure, the bronzed, frank face, and the clear, honest eyes of the boy before him.

For a moment their hands were in a tight grip, and neither spoke a word. Then the silence was broken by the escaped convict.

"Stanley," he said, "I've a lot to say to you, and very little time to say it in. I can tell you things now that you would not have understood at—at the time the crash came—things that your poor mother had to bear the knowledge of all alone. My boy, I am going to prove my innocence to the world, and send the scoundrel who ruined me to the place where for years I have endured torture."

"Let me help you, father!" cried Stanley eagerly.

Mortimer Grant smiled faintly.

"Perhaps you will be able to help me greatly, Stan, but hear my story first. You will remember the time that we lived at Newmarket. I was a rich man then, and owned race-horses of my own, but I was a fool,

the man who should be in the prison from which I have escaped! The trial was a farce. All sorts of evidence was brought forward against me, and I was sentenced to a living death, breaking your mother's heart, ruining your prospects in life, and—

—and—
Mortimer Grant's voice failed. He stared across Newmarket Heath with its many happy and many sad recollections, as though forgetful of the presence of his son.

"But, father," cried the boy eagerly, "how did you escape?"

"I had no longing to escape until I heard of your mother's death, Stan," said his father. "I did not want to wound her by further publicity and risk. If she had lived, I would have stopped at Dartmoor. Then Lord Blancheville, who in the old days was a friend of mine, wrote to me soon after I had heard of her death, and told me that you were with him, and gave promise of being a good jockey. I felt that no one would associate you with a felon at Dartmoor, and I longed to see you."

"There was a convict in the next cell to me who worked on the same outside gang, and, of course, we talked despite the official regulation against it. This man had made elaborate arrangements with a friend to escape. Then a week after he had arrived, a convict who had attempted to escape was flogged, and he had to witness it. That broke his spirit, and when I decided to take the risk he had only a year more to serve, and on my promising him ten pounds when he came out, he told me of his plan."

Mortimer Grant paused. A rustling of the trees in the wind behind him made him start round, then he pulled himself together, and went on:

"This man had arranged with a friend to hide a suit of clothes, some food, and a sufficient sum of money to get him to town in a natural cave near a wood within a few miles of the prison. He was what is known as an 'old lag,' and was up to every dodge. Well, as I tell you, he sold me the way of escape for ten pounds, to be paid to him at a place in London on his release. I waited my opportunity, and then, taking advantage of one of the frequent mists that sweep over the moor, I escaped, and having in my work outside the prison got a good idea of the direction, set off for the wood."

"It was a terrible time, Stan, whilst I hunted for that cave, but at last I found it, changed into respectable clothes, buried my felon's garb, and eating the food as I went, I walked as quickly as I could away from the moor."

"The disguise—an old suit and battered soft felt hat—was good, for anyone would take me for a tramp. Near the edge of the moor I climbed up behind a motor that was going slowly up a hill, and got into a little village before the hue-and-cry was fairly raised. From there I booked to Exeter, changed from the one railway line to the other, and rebooked to London, and sought out an old friend whom I know I could trust."

"Years ago I had an idea for a patent horseshoe, and under the name of Grayling I am perfecting it for a company who are keen on the idea, my friend Brownlow advancing me money for the present."

Stanley was dazzled by the dramatic story told so simply by the man who had suffered so much.

"But why is Mark Darke your enemy?" he asked.

"I don't know, Stan. The whole thing is a mystery to me, but I know that I was sent to imprisonment by his clever scheming and false swearing; and with the money I shall obtain for my patent I mean to learn the secret and to set the scales of justice right, to clear our name so that we may be happy together."

"Lord Blancheville," said Stanley, "knows that—"

"Yes," said Mortimer Grant quickly, "but I dare not go to him yet. He must not know that you have seen me. He would prefer that I had worked my sentence out, as I sometimes wish I had, then he would have been the good friend that he always was to me years ago. He knows the secret of my life and yours, Stan, and he tells me that his trainer knows also, and—"

"One other, Mr. Convict Grant!" The man, white and trembling, the boy, dazed and speechless, swung round, to confront a man in evening-dress, with a cigarette between his lips, on which hovered a smile of triumph.

It was the Hon. Ralph Stanton!
(Another powerful long instalment next week.)

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you ride Bantam Boy in the Stewards' Cup, Grant," he said, crumpling up a paper bag and throwing it out of the window. "Our course suits the Dean better than any racecourse, unless it's Epsom. I've been to Goodwood, and the dead straight, trying Cup course won't suit the old horse a bit. I reckon that both Pears and Bates made the pace too hot at the start."

"It was far quicker than the race is likely to be run," said Stanley, "unless one of the two French horses is out to make the pace hot. I've heard Belle D'Or is never any good without a pacemaker, and that's why the stable have entered the other."

"Well, if that horse can carry eight stone six at a better pace than Jacolat with seven stone on his back for half a mile, I don't know anything about horses!" said Williams.

Then Stanley, who now understood and took an active interest in the Racing Calendar, started to argue, and the argument went on merrily until they reached Newmarket.

They were staying at the house of the trainer on the Bury side where Stanley had stayed for the Two Thousand Guineas meeting on the occasion of the terrible railway disaster, and they arrived there in time for tea—a meal to which both lads, after their long and tedious journey, did ample justice.

Here their duties were light, and as Williams knew some people living

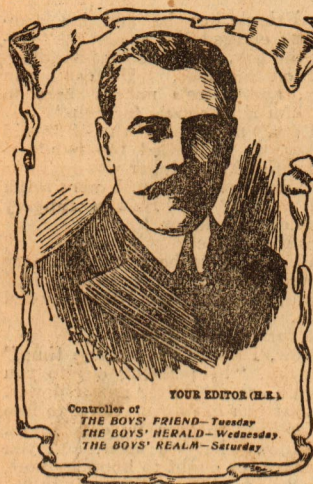
Stan, and I tell you so frankly, so that you shall see what folly leads to. One year I was out of luck. My horses ran badly, and instead of waiting, as I could easily have afforded to wait, I started to gamble heavily to try to get back the expenses of the horses I was running with a good profit. Plunge followed plunge. I got deeper in the mire, and at the end of the year I found myself on the verge of ruin."

Stanley noticed the twitching of his father's face, and knew how much the confession cost him, but he wanted to hear the whole story, and did not interrupt during the short pause.

"Then," resumed his father, "when I was driven to desperation, a man who, for some reason of his own, had until then treated me as an enemy came forward and offered me a directorship of a company he was forming, and took me under his wing. Fool that I was, I believed in him, accepted his offer, and one thing followed another, and I was in the whirl of City life that I did not understand. I signed papers when I was told, I was the tool of rogues, and at last I was accused of forging the name of the man who had placed me in the position—Mark Darke, the then promising financier!"

"Mark Darke!" gasped Stanley, pale to the lips.

"Yes, boy; that is the name of the man who has made me what I am—



YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

I want all my boys to look upon me as their firm friend and adviser. There are few men who know boys as well as I do, and there are no little trials and troubles, perplexities and anxieties, in which I cannot help and assist my readers.

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of THE BOYS' FRIEND. All boys who write to me, and who enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply.

All letters should be addressed: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, 23, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.

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"THE BLOT," AND A NEW RAILWAY SERIAL.

THE week before last in "Your Editor's Den," I told you that I had stored up for my boys two remarkable serial stories, and that I was in a quandary as to which was the better, and which I should announce first. You will all be delighted to hear, I am sure, that I have arranged, after many difficulties, to commence these

Two Grand New Serials

in the same number.

It is not often that I have been able to give my boys such a remarkable treat as two new serial stories in the same number, yet I am sure the enterprise and effort necessary to arrange for this will be keenly appreciated by all my chums.

The first of these superb tales is a school yarn, entitled

"The Blot,"

and it has been written by the popular Maxwell Scott. That it is the very best school serial I have ever handled I have no doubt whatever, and I want all my boys to try and work out in their own minds the very good reason our gifted author has for such a strange title.

The second superb new serial will be a

Railway Yarn by Patrick Morris.

and it will be a serial full of grip from its very first chapters, a tale in which the characters seem to live, and one that will hold all my boys enthralled and deeply interested from first to last.

Both these superb new serials will commence very shortly in the pages of THE BOYS' FRIEND, and next Tuesday I shall have much pleasure in positively announcing the date when they will begin.

In the meantime, will you all please tell your chums of the good things in store?

MY TRIP TO THE COUNTRY.

I have often claimed in these pages that there is no man who understands boys better than I do, and I think the huge success of my many boys' journals is sufficient to prove that fact. It has always been my aim and ambition to keep in close touch with my boys, to understand their trials and troubles, and to feel their pleasures just as they do themselves.

To put it plainly, I have always tried to be a boy myself, and I think it is to this that I owe my great power among the lads of the British Empire.

And now I will let you into a little secret. I have just returned from a tour of the country, in which I have been paying visits to as many of my boys as was possible during the few days I could spare from my office. I have been travelling about making the personal acquaintance of those who know me in the ordinary way through these pages, and I only state the truth when I say how gratified I feel at the results of my trip.

I have been to Glasgow, where I spent much time in the Gallowgate district, afterwards visiting Partick, Govan, Clydebank, and many other parts of the great Scottish city. I have been to Manchester, to Bolton, to Burnley, to Rochdale, and other Lancashire towns. Going east to Yorkshire, I spent some time in Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, and Huddersfield, and south, I have been to Leicester and other centres.

I CHAT WITH MY BOYS.

In each of these great districts I introduced myself to as many of my boys as I could find. In several cases I met them in the streets reading the "Green 'Un," sometimes I discovered them in newsagents' and other shops. Many boys whom I stopped in the streets and introduced myself to have been keen readers of THE BOYS' FRIEND, and I gladly shook them by the hand and chatted with them, talking about themselves, about their favourite paper, and about our stories.

And now that I have returned to

London I feel like a giant refreshed. I personally met representatives of my boys in other cities and towns, and from my chats with them I have got still more closely in touch with them, got to know what they are most interested in, learned even better than I knew before the kind of tale they like best.

I can hardly tell you how bucked-up I feel when I think of the loyal reception my boys gave me. I did not appear with any flourish of trumpets or previous announcement; I just visited the centres where I have so many readers, and chatted with them as a great friend might do.

For their part, I am sure my boys were delighted to see me and to discuss their favourite journal, and I can assure all those whom it was my pleasure to meet that I am proud to number them among my friends.

That I shall be able to make the old "B. F." better and better I have no doubt, for my personal meeting with so many of my boys has given me hosts of fresh ideas, and so pleased am I with my visit to the provinces that I am thinking seriously of setting out again to meet the lads of other districts.

HE LACKS SELF-CONFIDENCE.

"A Worried Reader" tells me he is sure I shall give him some sympathetic advice, so he wisely comes to me in his trouble. The fact of the matter is he is a clerk with very responsible work to do, and it worries him so much that sometimes he seems to have hardly any confidence in himself. Indeed, he is continually fancying he will make mistakes, and this has greatly upset his nerves, particularly as he sees his fellow-clerks doing their work without the least fluster or worry.

In reply to "A Worried Reader," I am sorry, indeed, to hear of his lack of self-confidence, but he should not be downhearted about it, for I have not the slightest doubt but what he will grow out of the trouble in a very short space of time.

I can remember quite well how when I first assumed the full responsibility of editorship, I was very

nervous and worried, and it was a continual nerve strain for some little time till I found I was making headway, when full confidence came to me, and I am glad to say I have never lacked nerve since.

I can quite understand my reader's trouble, therefore, and can assure him that the battles of clerks and others with responsible work to do are not one whit less brave than the deeds of derring-do in the more strenuous walks of life.

My chum's great point should be to keep himself in perfect health, so that he is always up to concert-pitch. Then he should not permit his work to worry him during his leisure moments. When at work he should work his very hardest and his very best; but at the close of the day's toil he should forget its anxieties by throwing himself heart and soul into his favourite form of recreation. When at work, let him work his best; when at play, let him play his best.

"A Worried Reader" should also get as much sleep as he possibly can, and by keeping good hours, and taking care of himself as I suggest, I am confident he will soon leave his troubles behind him.

HAS PICKED UP A LETTER.

J. T., of Gorton, near Manchester, like so many other readers of the "B. F.," is a "Terrier," and whilst recently in camp on Salisbury Plain he picked up a letter written by a girl to her sweetheart.

My chum has kept the letter, as he does not know what he ought to do with it, and now he has decided to ask for my advice in the matter.

In reply to J. T., as he cannot obtain the address of the "Terrier" to whom the letter was directed, he should without a doubt return it at once to the young lady who wrote it, explaining how he came to find the missive.

This would be the most gentlemanly course for J. T. to take.

TOO MUCH TO DO AT HOME.

"Willie" is a Belfast chum of mine, who thinks he is being very badly treated. Though he has two sisters, his father insists upon his getting up first in the morning, lighting the kitchen fire when it is required, cleaning the boots and knives, and, if necessary, chopping wood.

"Willie" tells me that his chums do not have to do such work, and can lie in bed till breakfast-time, and he feels very aggrieved that his father should be so stern and set him such tasks.

Now, my dear "Willie," I am a good deal older than you, and I know I have seen far more of the world, so I want you to take my advice just as though it came from an elder brother whom you love dearly, and whom you can thoroughly trust. Certainly the advice is meant for your good, and if you take it in the right spirit, you will not go far wrong.

In the first place, if your father wants you to do these things, you should do them with a light heart. They are not tasks that will do you

the least harm, they are not unmanly, they are not degrading. By-and-by, when you grow up you will look back upon the daily duties with a feeling of pride more than with one of shame, and if your father is spared to you, you will thank him for his sternness, and agree with him that by imposing these tasks upon you, he was only moulding your future character to a very helpful extent.

Be a man, "Willie," and do as your father asks—he has your welfare keenly at heart—and you will never regret doing his bidding.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

A keen reader of the "B. F.," W. Geldard, 1,621 Quadra Street, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with fellow-readers in the Mother Country. George Johnston, of 1, Campsie Avenue, Omagh, Tyrone, Ireland, wishes to exchange postcards with readers of the "B. F." in all parts of the world.

I hope both of these chums will secure many correspondents through this notice.

CHANGING HIS NOSE.

"Constant Reader"—the old, old penname—is a chum who wants to change the shape of his nose, and asks for my advice in the matter of "nose moulds" that can convert an ugly nasal appendage into a graceful one.

In reply to my chum, I am afraid I do not know of the address of such an institution as he requires, and if I did, I am afraid I should not have much faith in its powers.

"Constant Reader" should be content with the nose that Nature has given him, and if he takes my advice he will not think seriously of such things as "nose moulds" and similar contrivances.

A WOULD-BE DRAUGHTSMAN.

John M., is a Bolton reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND, and he tells me that his desire is to become a draughtsman in the drawing office of some factory, but he is not certain in his own mind how to set about accomplishing his ambition. My reader tells me that he already possesses a certain amount of skill in drawing.

So far so good. Drawing, of course, is essential to him, but there is another thing quite as important, and this is a knowledge of the methods employed in engineering works. To obtain this, my reader will have to pass through the works as an apprentice, spending a short time in each of the shops and learning how things are done.

Furthermore, he will want to know something about the cost and strength of materials. These, of course, experience, aided by textbooks, will teach him. Perhaps the best way in which he can achieve his ambition is to go as an apprentice or as an improver in the pattern and drawing office of a factory, and in this way he will be able to learn all the things necessary to qualify him as a draughtsman.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

SOME USEFUL SPY-GLASSES,

And How to Make Them.

AT one time or another every boy longs to possess a spy-glass or a pair of field-glasses, but is often unable to get what he wants owing to the high price of these articles. However, with a little trouble, and the expenditure of a few pence, a very good substitute of a low-power glass can easily be made. All who are fond of going into the fields to observe the habits of the birds or field animals will find such a glass very useful, as one need not approach near enough to frighten them away.

First of all, obtain a few inches of stout copper wire, and several inches of some good deal thinner—at any rate, this must be thin enough to roll into a loose conical spiral. A single spy-glass is most easily made. At an optician's a couple of glasses must be obtained—

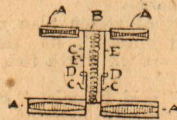
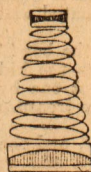
an ordinary eye-glass

about an inch in diameter, and a convex object glass somewhat larger. These will only cost a few pence. When buying these, put the eyeglass in your eye, and hold the object glass an inch or two away, but perfectly parallel with that in your eye. Look through both glasses at the houses opposite to be seen through the door, and pur-

chase a pair which, when held a few inches apart, enable you to see these perfectly plainly.

In order to make a neat and presentable instrument, you must make a couple of cardboard tubes just large enough to contain the lenses. This may be done by winding strips of pasted brown paper round a ruler of the required thickness. Cut a long strip of brown paper an inch wide, wrap a piece of paper loosely round the ruler so that the pasted paper will not stick, and then roll one thickness of the strip round the ruler, pasting the outside, continuing to roll and paste until you have several thicknesses, when it must be put aside to dry. If you have nothing large enough for the bigger lens, you can roll loose strips of paper round the ruler until you have the required size, only pasting the last few layers. Then when this is dry, make the large tube round the ruler enlarged by the paper, carefully wrapping one or two thicknesses of dry paper round first so that the two will not stick together. The lens may be kept in place either by a small split ring of the stout wire on either side of it, or you can cut off the end of a paper tube the right size a couple of thin rings to fit on either side of the glass.

Having done this, your next care is to fit two glasses together. Roll one end of the thinner copper wire tightly round the side of the smaller tube, twisting it so that it will not slip off. Then twist it into a conical spiral until the spiral is large enough to go round the tube containing the larger lens. The length of this spiral depends upon the glasses themselves, but it should not be too long. Wind it tightly round the tube containing the lens, and your glass is ready for use. To finish it off nicely you can cover the spiral with a piece of black silk or cloth, or other material, pasting it on to the cardboard tubes at each end, and either



SIMPLE DIAGRAMS WHICH WILL SERVE TO EXPLAIN THE ABOVE CLEVER ARTICLE FOR MAKING SPY-GLASSES.

sewing or pasting the material in the middle. It must be properly cut to shape if you want to make a neat job of it. To use the glass you must keep both lenses parallel to one another, which you can do by holding the smaller end to your eye with one hand and grasping the larger lens with the other, extending the spiral until you get the right focus. If this is well made, the smaller tube will shut down into the larger one, the spiral folding inside so that it may easily be carried in the pocket.

A pair of double opera-glasses can be made in a very similar manner, but they will be a little more elaborate and more expensive. In the first place, four glasses will be required, and each pair must be exactly alike and of the same focus. The two smaller top lenses must first of all be fitted into their paper tubes, and then be attached to a piece of stout

larger bottom lenses, as when the two pairs are laid on top of one another, the top pair must be exactly in the middle of the bottom pair.

Next cut four pieces of wire about 4in. in length. Attach two of these to the frame of the bottom or larger lenses by twisting it round the bar close to the inner side of the lens. This will stick up straight, and the top end must be bent over at right angles and

twisted into a loop

just sufficiently large to insert another piece of wire. Then the remaining two pieces of wire must be attached to the bar of the wire joining the two smaller lenses in such a place that when they are held exactly over the centre of the bottom ones the wires go through the loops previously made.

Between these wires attach an ordinary loosely-made spring to the top and bottom bars joining the lenses, and when you press the two frames together to get the focus the wires slide easily through the loops. This makes a better and more rigid framework, and you can always be sure that the lenses will be exactly opposite the centres of each, but it will be a little awkward to carry. Of course, a more simple pair may be made by merely attaching the spring to the top and bottom frameworks, depending upon manipulation for getting them in the centre.

(More splendid instructive articles shortly.)

THE GOLDEN QUEST.

A TALE OF
NELSON LEE AND NIPPER,
WRITTEN BY
MAXWELL SCOTT.

NEW READERS START HERE.

On the death of his father, Ralph Welford is left practically penniless. In the lilt of an old sword which he purchases at an auction he discovers a fragment of parchment which turns out to be a plan to the hiding-place of fabulous treasure hidden many years before by Benito, the last of the pirates. Arrangements are made for Ralph, Jack Hartley, Nelson Lee, and Nipper to journey in Hartley's yacht, the Comet, in search of the treasure.

Unluckily, a copy of Benito's letter falls into the hands of Felix Brander, who sets out at once in his yacht, the Panther, for Jamaica, where the treasure is concealed.

Brander and his party reach Jamaica well in advance of Jack and Ralph, only to discover that one-half of the treasure has already been found, while an ivory crucifix, within which is hidden a chart giving instructions as to finding the other half, is in the possession of a Peruvian named Garcia, who has gone to Callao, in Peru.

Ultimately, Nelson Lee and his companions gain possession of the chart, after many thrilling adventures.

Brander & Co., baffled and raging, decide to journey in their yacht, the Panther, to Cocos Island, where they know the treasure to be hidden. Once there, they await the arrival of Nelson Lee and his companions, when they will at once attack them and gain possession of the all-important chart by force.

The Comet, on its arrival, drops anchor in the next bay to that occupied by the Panther. Nelson Lee and his party are under the impression that Brander & Co. have returned to England and given up the treasure hunt.

Nipper is kidnapped by Captain Pringle, and carried off to the Panther. Nelson Lee, worried as to the whereabouts of his assistant, goes ashore, accompanied by Jack and Ralph. A tremendous storm rises, and the Comet is compelled to stand well out to sea.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

In the Hands of the Enemy.

IN the meantime, certain events had occurred on board the Panther which were destined to exert an important influence on the future course of the fight for Benito's treasure.

It has already been related how Brander, Captain Pringle, and Sam Walker left the Panther and her crew in charge of Noel and Vadillo, and while they rowed round into the other bay to reconnoitre.

When almost two hours had elapsed without any sign of Brander's return, Noel Brander began to grow impatient.

"I hope nothing has gone wrong," he said to Vadillo. "They ought to be back by now."

About a quarter past ten they went up on deck again, where they found Gunning looking for them with a grave and anxious face.

"Ah, here you are!" said Gunning. "I've had news for you. There'll be no attack to-night."

"Why?" asked Noel. "Has the gun nor returned?"

"No," said Gunning. "I wish he had."

"Then how do you know there'll be no attack to-night? What do you mean? What has happened?"

"The barometer has suddenly started to fall, and is falling at an alarmingly rapid rate. We're going to have a hurricane, and before very long, too."

Noel knew nothing of seamanship and little of meteorology. As there was not a breath of wind stirring, and as the sea in the bay was as calm as the proverbial mill-pond, he found it hard to believe Gunning's gloomy prophecy. And he said so.

"Yes, it's calm enough now," said Gunning; "but it's the calm before the storm. I know these tropical hurricanes. They come with the suddenness of a thunderclap. One minute, all calm and serene; the next, the wind howling and the waves running mountains high."

Noel saw that he was serious.

"Do you think the storm is likely to come soon?" he asked.

"It'll certainly come before midnight," said Gunning. "That's why I said there'd be no attack to-night, even if Lee and his party have landed. In order to attack them, we should have to row round into the other bay, and no boats could live in such a gale as will be blowing before very long."

"Are we in any danger here?" asked Vadillo anxiously. "I mean, is there any danger of the Panther dragging her anchor, and drifting on to the rocks?"

"I don't think so," said Gunning. "We're as snug in this land-locked

bay as if we were in Portsmouth Harbour. But there are others who are, or may be, in danger."

"My father and Walker and Captain Pringle?" said Noel.

"Yes. I wish they were safely back. You see, there's no barometer in the boat, of course, so they won't know what's coming; and if the storm were to burst whilst they were rowing round the headland between the two bays, the boat would be swamped, and they would be drowned before you could say 'Jack Robinson!' Let's go into the bows, and see if we can see any sign of them."

They walked to the bows of the yacht, and strained their eyes in a vain attempt to penetrate the impenetrable darkness. For ten or fifteen minutes they watched in anxious silence; then suddenly Gunning uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Here they come!" he exclaimed. "I hear them! Listen!"

It was some little time before Noel and Vadillo, whose ears were not so sharp as the mate's, could hear the measured dip of the oars and the creaking of the rowlocks.

By this time the news that the boat was returning had spread like wildfire through the ship, and from all parts of the vessel men came running into the bows.

"There they are!" cried Gunning. "Boat ahoy! All serene?"

"All serene!" came back the answer in Pringle's voice. "Stand by to receive a passenger!"

"A passenger?" shouted Noel, in tones of bewildered surprise.

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Nipper!"

At first the men could scarcely believe their ears. They thought that Pringle was joking. As the boat drew alongside, however, and Gunning swung a lantern over the yacht's side, they perceived a youthful figure sitting on one of the thwarts, with his arms tightly bound to his sides, and a handkerchief tied round the lower part of his face.

It should here be explained that Nipper had recovered from the stunning effects of Pringle's blow soon after the boat had started on its return journey. Before, however, he had sufficiently regained his senses to call for help, Walker had bound and gagged him in the manner just described.

Amid a scene of indescribable excitement, he was hauled aboard the Panther. His face, save where it bore the mark of Pringle's brutal blow, was as white as death, but there was no trace of fear on it. In his eyes, as he gazed at the sea of ruffianly faces by which he was surrounded, was a gleam of mingled contempt and defiance.

A perfect babel of questions and remarks, some from Noel and Vadillo, some from the crew, greeted Pringle and his two companions as they stepped aboard.

When something like order had been restored, Pringle briefly related what had happened. How they had discovered that most of the Comet's crew had gone ashore to stretch their legs; how he, Pringle, had swarmed aboard the yacht, and had found that Nelson Lee, Captain Kemp, Hartley, Welford, Nipper, and Herr Hentig were in the saloon. How Nipper had sauntered up on deck, and had discovered the boat; how he, Pringle, had stunned him with the butt-end of his revolver before he could raise the alarm.

"I was for leaving him behind," he continued, "but Mr. Brander pointed out that if we left him behind he would tell the others what had happened when he came round, and then they would know that we were in the neighbourhood. So Mr. Brander suggested that I should drop him into the sea, and then they'd think he had accidentally fallen overboard, and been drowned."

Noel laughed derisively.

"Just the sort of rotten plan my father would propose!" he said. "But you knew a trick worth two of that, didn't you?"

"Walker did," said Pringle. "For my part, I should probably have carried out Mr. Brander's suggestion, and dropped the lad overboard, but Walker suggested we should bring him with us."

"Of course," said Noel. "I'm glad that one of you had some sense."

"Walker said," continued Pringle, "that the lad might come in useful to us later."

"Very useful!" said Noel.

"He said," continued Pringle, "that we might use him to bargain with—to make terms with Nelson Lee."

"F'rinstance," put in Walker, "we could send a chap with a flag of truce, an' we could offer to swap the lad for a share of the treasure. Nelson Lee would do anythin' to save Nipper's life, an' he'd gladly give us 'arf the treasure sooner than 'ave the lad shot."

Noel gazed at him with undisguised contempt.

"I take back what I said just now," he said. "I said I was glad to find you had some sense, but now I see you've no more sense than the others. Great Scott! Have none of you the brains to see that now we've captured Nipper, the treasure is as good as ours without any bargaining or swopping?"

"How do you make that out?" demanded Pringle; and the rest held their breath to catch Noel's answer.

"How do I make that out?" retorted Noel. "Easily enough!

He signed to two of the crew. "Take him down to the saloon," he said. "Come along, all of you, and hear me talk to the lad like a father!"

Nipper's Ordeal.

SAM WALKER and the bo'sun bore Nipper off to the saloon.

The rest of the crew flocked after them, and Pringle, Brander, Vadillo, and Noel were about to follow, when Gunning interposed.

"Before you go down to the saloon," he said to Pringle, "I ought to tell you that the glass has been falling rapidly since ten o'clock."

"How much?" asked Pringle. Gunning told him, and expressed the opinion that a storm was brewing—an opinion in which Pringle concurred.

"I suppose we're all right here," said Gunning. "No need to get out another anchor, or anything of that kind?"

"Oh, no," said Pringle. "We've nothing to fear in this snug little natural harbour."

"What about the Comet?" asked Noel. "The bay in which she lies, you say, is an open bay. What'll she do if a storm breaks out?"

"Stand out to sea," said Pringle.

"That's a bit of all right for us!" said Gunning. "If the Comet has



A thrilling incident from "The Whistling Buoy," next week's splendid long, complete story. Don't miss it!

Nelson Lee joined the Comet at Callao with Benito's map of the island in his pocket. He and Nipper have been together ever since until to-night. Then how many times do you suppose this lad has seen that map? How many times has he read the directions for finding the treasure?"

A low, excited murmur ran round the assembled sailors as Noel's meaning dawned on them.

"Now do you see what I'm driving at?" he continued. "Nipper has seen Benito's map. He has read the directions for finding the treasure, and has doubtless got them off by heart. He can tell us where the treasure is, and how to find it. Very well, then, all we've got to do is to make him tell us all he knows—to torture him, if necessary; to drag the truth out of him; to—"

The rest of the sentence was drowned by a chorus of excited and triumphant shouts.

"Bravo! Mister Noel's the boy!" "That's the ticket! Make the kid speak!" "Pull 'is teeth out one by one, till 'e tells us where the treasure is!"

Pringle glanced at Nipper, and the look on the boy's face told him as plainly as words that Noel was right—that Nipper knew where the treasure was hidden, and how to find it.

"Noel, you're a genius!" he said. "As you say, the treasure is as good as ours without any bargaining or swopping."

put out to sea and the storm lasts long enough, we ought to be able to find the treasure, and get it aboard the Panther before Nelson Lee & Co. return."

"But we don't yet know where the treasure is," said Brander.

"No; but we soon shall!" said Noel.

Brander shook his head.

"I've no faith in your plan," he said. "You'll never make Nipper speak."

"We'll try, at any rate," said Pringle grimly. "Come along!"

They descended to the saloon, where they found that Walker and the bo'sun had dumped Nipper down in one of the chairs. The youngster's face was still dead-white, but there was no trace of fear on it, though he knew he need expect no mercy from the scoundrels into whose power an unkind Fate had thrown him.

He resolved not to tell them what they wished to know, no matter what tortures they might inflict on him. At the same time, however, he had only too much reason to fear that they would find out all they wished to know, in spite of him.

For in the inside breast-pocket of his coat was Nelson Lee's copy of Benito's map, with all the directions translated into English.

And, of course, if once his captors found this map—as they were almost certain to do—Nipper's silence would be of no avail.

"Now then, stand back, my lads!"

said Pringle, as he and his companions entered the saloon. "Unbind the boy, and take that handkerchief off his face. He can't run away, and there's nobody here to hear him if he shouts for help."

"I don't mind takin' this off," said Walker, as he untied the handkerchief with which Nipper was gagged; "but, axin' yer pardon, I don't think we'll unbind 'im. He's a slippery customer, yer know."

Pringle laughed. "He'd have to be a very slippery customer to slip away from here," he said, glancing round the crowded saloon.

He turned to Nipper. "Now, I needn't waste any time," he began, "by pointing out to you that you are absolutely in our power, and that you have everything to lose and nothing to gain by defying us. You know what we want, and you also know, or ought to know by now, that when we want a thing we're not over squeamish as to the means we adopt for getting it."

"On the present occasion," he continued, "we want to know where Benito's treasure is hidden. We believe that you can tell us. If you can, and will, I pledge my word that no harm shall come to you. You will be kept a prisoner here until we have found the treasure and conveyed it aboard this vessel, but you will be well treated, and you will have everything you want except your liberty. When we are ready to sail, you will be put ashore with enough food to last you until your friends return. That's a fair offer, isn't it?"

Nipper did not answer.

"Come now, don't be sulky!" said Pringle. "You have seen Benito's map, haven't you? You have read what is written on it. If I provide you with a sheet of paper, will you draw me a copy of the map?"

"No," said Nipper, in a low but firm voice.

Pringle kept his temper with an effort. From the crew came angry mutterings, mingled with such remarks as:

"Flog 'im!" "Skin 'im alive!"

"String 'im up!"

"As I've already told you," said Pringle, "when we want a thing we're not over squeamish as to how we get it. If you won't tell us what we want to know, like a sensible fellow, we shall have to take means to make you. And they won't be pleasant means, I assure you."

Nipper did not speak.

"Come now!" said Pringle, in a wheedling voice. "I admire your pluck, and I don't want to harm you unless you force me, but by hook or crook I mean to know where the treasure is hidden. Will you tell me?"

"No," said Nipper again.

It was in vain that Pringle, and afterwards Brander, bullied, threatened, coaxed, and argued. Nothing they could say could alter Nipper's determination.

At last Pringle's patience gave out. Signing to the rest to follow him, and to bring Nipper with them, he strode up on deck, where he ordered a number of lanterns to be lighted, and a rope, with a running noose on one end, to be hitched over one of the yards.

When his orders had been carried out, Nipper, with his arms still tightly pinioned to his sides, was placed in a standing position underneath the yard. The noose was placed round his neck, and the other end of the rope was given to Walker.

Pringle planted himself in front of the boy, whilst the rest stood round in a circle, their faces illumined by the yellow light of the lanterns. "Once more," said Pringle, "will you tell us where the treasure is hidden?"

"I will not!" said Nipper.

Pringle signed to Walker. The rope grew taut, and the noose tightened round Nipper's neck.

"Will you tell us now?"

Nipper shook his head. The rope was strangling him. He could not speak.

Pringle crushed back a venomous imprecation.

"Up with him!" he snarled.

Walker hauled at the rope, and the next moment Nipper's feet were off the deck, and he was dangling in mid-air.

Nipper's Escape.

PRINGLE had not originally intended to go quite so far as this. He had not expected it would be necessary. He had never doubted that Nipper's resolution would break down when he found himself with the rope round his neck and his captors apparently about to

hang him if he did not tell them what they wished to know.

Needless to say, he did not leave the boy hanging long, for it was no part of his purpose to kill Nipper until every means had been adopted for wringing his secret from him. As a matter of fact, Nipper's feet had scarcely left the deck ere Pringle signed to Walker to lower him.

"That plan has failed!" he growled, when the noose had been loosened round Nipper's neck. "Now I'll try another!"

"What will you do?" asked Brander.

"Flog him!" said Pringle, between his clenched teeth. "Flog him till he consents to tell me all he knows! Give me that rope! Now strip him to the waist!"

Seeing that Nipper's arms were pinioned to his sides, it was impossible, of course, to strip him to the waist without first unbinding his arms. Accordingly, Walker and the bo'sun untied the rope by which his arms were bound, unbuttoned his coat, and were about to drag it off when suddenly, with a roar like thunder, the storm burst over the island.

In the bay on the other side of the hill, as we have seen, the effect of the storm was instantly to transform the bay into a boiling cauldron, whilst many of the trees ashore were either uprooted or blown down.

In the little landlocked bay in which the Panther lay the effects produced by the storm were much less violent, and were practically confined to a few big waves which came rolling in from the sea outside and which caused the Panther to pitch and toss and strain at her cable.

Although the Panther was thus sheltered from the full fury of the gale, however, the suddenness with which the hurricane burst over the island, the deafening roar of the wind overhead, the thunder of the sea outside—these things so startled the ruffians who formed the crew that for a moment they forgot about Nipper and bombarded Captain Pringle with anxious questions as to their safety.

This was Nipper's opportunity, not to escape—for he was surrounded by his captors—but to destroy the detective's copy of Benito's map before his captors discovered it.

Quickly, furtively, with his heart in his mouth, he slipped his hand into the inside breast-pocket of his unbuttoned coat. Everybody was gazing at Pringle; nobody noticed Nipper's action.

He crushed the sheet of paper between his fingers, and crumpled it up into a ball. Still nobody observed him.

He drew his hand from his pocket, and was in the act of raising his hand to his mouth, intending to chew the ball of paper into pulp, when suddenly Vadillo turned round and saw what he was doing.

"Hallo! What's that you've got in your hand?" he cried, leaping forward and grasping Nipper's wrist.

Quick as thought Nipper lashed out with his other fist and sent Vadillo staggering back. Ere he could thrust the paper into his mouth, however, Walker and four others flung themselves upon him and swept him off his feet.

Then, as he lay spreadeagled on deck, with one man kneeling on his chest, another sitting on his legs, and two men holding his arms, Pringle knelt down beside him, forced his fingers apart, and took possession of the map.

"He was going to swallow it!" said Vadillo excitedly. "It must be something important! Quick! Open it, and let's see what it is!"

By the light of one of the lanterns Pringle unfolded the crumpled ball, and smoothed out the creases. Then a whoop of triumph burst from his lips.

"It's a copy of Benito's map!" he cried. "With full directions for finding the treasure!"

Words fail to describe the scene of mad excitement which ensued. Cheers, shouts, yells of gloating triumph rang out from the crew. Like one man they crowded round Pringle to get a glimpse of the precious document. All thought of Nipper was again forgotten.

This was Nipper's second opportunity. Only one man—the bo'sun—had been left to guard him. With an eel-like wriggle he slipped out of the bo'sun's grasp and dashed towards the vessel's side.

"Elp! Elp! He's escapin'!" yelled the bo'sun. "After 'im! After 'im!"

But it was then too late. Ere his pursuers could overtake him, Nipper

leaped on to the bulwarks, raised his hands above his head, and dived into the sea.

"Lower a boat!" roared Walker. "Quick!"

"No, no!" shouted Pringle. "We've no further use for him now! We've got all we want! Leave him to the sharks!"

"But suppose he dodges the sharks and swims ashore?" said Brander.

"What odds?" said Pringle. "The Comet has gone. There's nobody on the island."

"But the Comet will return."

"Not while this gale lasts, and by the time the storm is over and it's safe for the Comet to return, the treasure will be on board the Panther."

"Then you think that map will enable us to find the treasure?"

"I do. It's evidently a copy of Benito's map, probably made by Nelson Lee, who has translated the directions into English for the benefit of Nipper."

"May I see it?" said Noel. "I've hardly had a glimpse of it yet."

"Some of us would like to 'ave a squint at it, too!" groaned the bo'sun. "We're all partners 'ere, remember, an' we've as much right as Mister Brander to see the map!"

"Ear, ear!" chorused several members of the crew, who, now that the treasure was almost in sight, were beginning to be infected by that spirit of suspicion which so often arises amongst men who are banded together for an evil purpose.

"Then what do you propose that we should do?" asked Brander.

"As we can't reach the mouth of the creek by sea until the storm abates," said Pringle, "and as we can't afford to wait till the storm abates, I propose that we should reach the creek by land. In other words, I propose that at daybreak to-morrow morning we should climb to the top of that hill where we established our look-out station, and from there make our way down to the shores of the other bay."

"All of us," said the bo'sun suspiciously. "We ain't, none of us, goin' to be left behind."

"Somebody will have to be left on board to attend to the fires and boilers," retorted Pringle.

"We could blow off steam," growled the bo'sun.

"We could, but we're not goin' to," said Pringle. "We're going to keep up steam, so as to be ready to sail as soon as we've got the stuff aboard—that is, of course, if the weather is favourable."

"How many men will it be necessary to leave aboard?" asked Brander.

"Three," said Pringle. "An engineer and a couple of firemen. The rest of us, as I said before, will go ashore at daybreak to-morrow morning and make our way overland to the mouth of the creek. We'll take a supply of sacks with us, and when we've found the cave and opened it, we'll load as much of the treasure into the sacks as we can

pandemonium which words are powerless to describe.

The three men were strangely silent. Nelson Lee was thinking of Nipper, whose body, for aught he knew, might then be tossing to and fro amongst the breakers. Jack and Ralph, having no words to comfort the detective, no hope to hold out to him, could only evince their sympathy by silence.

Slowly the long hours of the dark night passed. Shortly after midnight the violence of the gale abated a little, but with this abatement came a tropical deluge which quickly drenched the three men to the skin. It was a night which none of them ever forgot.

When the first faint streak of dawn illuminated the eastern sky, the detective rose to his feet.

"Come," he said, in a hollow voice, "let us search for Nipper."

"Where will you begin?" asked Jack.

The detective pointed to the foot of the cliffs on the north side of the bay.

"I have an idea," he said, "that if Nipper were trying to swim ashore last night, and were carried away by a current, it is in that direction he would be carried. Anyhow, that's where I'm going to start."

Slowly and with difficulty they made their way along the rocks which lay between the beach and the foot of the cliffs. Finding nothing to reward their search, they were

"What a fright you have given us, sonny!" he said. "What made you leave the ship last night?"

"I was kidnapped," said Nipper.

"Kidnapped!" gasped the three men in chorus.

Nipper nodded, and then, without any further beating about the bush, he told them all that happened.

The news that Brander and his confederates were in the bay on the other side of the hill filled the three men with dismay; and this dismay became despair when they learned that the scoundrels had secured the detective's copy of Benito's map.

"It's all up with the treasure now, so far as we're concerned," said Ralph gloomily. "With the aid of that map, they'll have no difficulty whatever in finding it. At the last moment, on the post, so to speak, they have beaten us."

"Not yet," said Nelson Lee. "Though I admit the odds are in their favour, unless this gale subsides very quickly and allows the Comet to return."

"Which it shows no signs of doing," said Jack.

"That's true," said Nelson Lee. He turned to Nipper.

"Do they know the Comet stood out to sea last night?" he asked.

"Yes," said Nipper. "At least, they didn't actually see her leave, but Pringle said that Captain Kemp would be sure to stand out to sea to prevent the Comet driving ashore. Of course they don't know that you were left behind. They think there's nobody on the island."

"Did you hear what steps they intend to take to secure the treasure?"

"No. You see I bolted just after they got the map, so I never heard what they said or decided to do after they had examined the map."

"Ah, well! It's easy to guess what they will do," said Nelson Lee.

"They'll set out at once to locate the cave and collar the treasure before the Comet returns. In fact, they are probably on their way to the creek already."

"But they couldn't row round from one bay to the other in a gale like this," objected Ralph.

"They won't try!" said Nelson Lee. "They'll come by the same route as Nipper, probably over this hill."

"And find us here!" said Jack.

"No, they mustn't find us here," said Nelson Lee.

"We must hide?" suggested Ralph.

"No," said Nelson Lee again, "not yet, at any rate."

"Then what must we do?"

"First of all we must find the treasure cave. I've got Benito's map in my pocket, but we sha'n't need it, for I take it that all of us have the figures and directions at our finger-ends."

"And when we've found the cave?" said Jack. "Remember, we have no iron bar, so we can't open the cave."

"I don't want to open it—not yet, at any rate. But if we can locate the cave before Brander & Co. arrive, it is just possible that we may be able to devise some scheme for keeping the scoundrels at bay, and preventing them looting the treasure until the Comet returns."

His two companions stared at him in incredulous surprise.

"Three men keep a whole ship's company at bay!" said Ralph.

"Four, if you please!" said Nipper.

"Four, then," said Ralph. "Four against over twenty! It's hopeless to think of such a thing."

"It may be," said Nelson Lee; "but I'm not going to take it for granted that it's hopeless till I've seen the place. There may be some convenient cover near the cave from which three resolute men, armed with revolvers, as we are, could keep a whole regiment at bay. Anyhow, there's no harm in going to see the place, is there?"

"None," said Ralph.

"Come along, then," said Nelson Lee, "or we shall have Brander & Co. appearing over the top of the hill before we're out of sight."

(Another splendid instalment next week.)



Vadillo leaped forward and grasped Nipper's wrist. Quick as thought the lad lashed out with his other fist, and sent the ruffian staggering back.

"You shall all see it," said Pringle, "but not here. It's too dark and windy. Come down to the saloon."

In the saloon he handed the map round, and when every man had examined it, he proceeded to expound his plans.

"As you see," he said, "the treasure is concealed in a cave some little distance inland from the shores of that bay on the other side of the hill. To find the cave, we've got to measure seventy fathoms along the bed of the stream which runs down the creek, starting at high-water mark. A hundred paces north by west will bring us to a heap of stones, and three hundred paces due west of that heap we shall find a rock with a smooth face like a wall. In that rock we shall find a cave, and in that cave we shall find the treasure. That's simple enough, isn't it?"

"Simple as A B C," said the bo'sun.

"Well, now," continued Pringle, "the easiest way would be to row round into the other bay to-morrow and land at the mouth of the creek. But we can't do that while this storm lasts. On the other hand, we can't afford to wait till the storm is over, for as soon as the storm is over the Comet will return. And we must have the stuff aboard before the Comet returns."

carry, and bring it aboard. And we'll repeat this operation as often as may be necessary until all the stuff has been brought away.

"That's my plan," he concluded. "If anybody has a better, now's his time to speak."

Nobody spoke.

"It is agreed, then, that we carry out Captain Pringle's plan," said Brander.

There was an answering roar of assent.

"That's settled, then," said Brander. "Now, steward, serve out double rations of rum, and we'll drink to the health of old Benito and success to our expedition."

Back from the Grave.

WHILST the steward was serving out double rations of rum on board the Panther, Nelson Lee and Jack Hartley and Ralph Welford were crouching in the shelter, such as it was, of an overhanging rock on the high ground at the mouth of the creek.

The hurricane was then at its height. The bay in front of them was a sheet of leaping foam, and the roar of the wind, the thunder of the breakers on the beach, the crash of falling trees, combined to make a

about to turn back when, from the hill above them, came a shout so faint that neither Jack nor Ralph heard it.

But Nelson Lee heard it, and in an instant his face was transformed. The deep lines of care disappeared, the death-like pallor vanished, the hopeless look died out of his eyes.

"Nipper!" he cried, trembling with joy and excitement. "He's calling to us! Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven! He's alive!"

"I didn't hear anybody calling," said Jack.

"Neither did I," said Ralph.

"But I did!" said Nelson Lee. "And I see him! See! There he is—coming down this hill."

It was as the detective said. Nipper, in the words of Brander, had "dodged the sharks and swum ashore." During the long watches of the night he had climbed up one side of the hill which divided the two bays, and now at dawn, his clothes in rags, with torn and bleeding hands, he was climbing down the other side.

"Don't come up!" he shouted, as they started to climb up to meet him. "Stay where you are. I'll be with you in a jiffy."

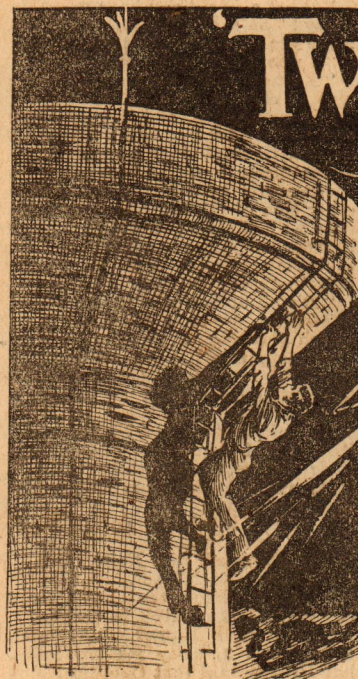
Impatiently they awaited his arrival. The moment he sprang down on to the rocks, the detective caught him in his arms,

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THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Merlin's Eggs—Tempted—A Terrible Leap.

"THAT'S it, Jack; just t'other side of that clump of rowan bushes, and under that spikey piece of limestone. There's a nest of merlin's eggs waiting to be taken. I watched the parent birds yesterday for an hour."

Jack Lemon cast a long gaze upwards. He was the finest climber in Jerome House School, he was the most ardent collector of birds' eggs, and certainly no fellow there could boast a steadier nerve and a cooler head than Jack Lemon. But climbing has its limits, and no boy of Jerome House had ever mastered this grim precipice of limestone rock known as Hanging Fell.

"You are sure of what you say, Worrall?" answered Jack wistfully. "Dead sure."

At this point Hilton major intervened.

"You shut up, Worrall!" he expostulated. "The idea of climbing the cliff is a mad one. Jack, do you want to be taken home in twelve chunks?"

There was a murmur of approbation from the four other fellows present.

"Lemon asked me to show him the spot," growled Worrall. "I don't advise him to climb—if he funks it."

Jack continued to stare up the worn and wrinkled face of the immense precipice. That mighty slab rose five hundred feet into upper air. The clump of bushes which Worrall had pointed out was about a hundred feet up. There were cracks and crannies in the cliff, with moss and ferns, rowan trees, and small shrubs. At the foot was a mass of stones and smashed boulders.

"I might do it," said Jack Lemon slowly, "but the risk isn't worth it. I'd like those hawks' eggs, though, awfully, and if only there was a little better foothold—"

"Ah, I thought it would daunt you!" interrupted a strange voice.

Everyone wheeled and looked into the face of a young man of about thirty. It was a white, sneering face, and Jack Lemon felt stung.

"I don't see what business it is of yours," he retorted.

"No?" said the other suavely. "And yet I would give something for those merlin's eggs. I'm a collector—like you. Now, I'll give you half-a-sovereign if you will secure them for me."

Jack's face changed. He wasn't in funds just then, and the offer tempted him.

"Don't think of it," advised Hilton quickly.

Jack shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"A sovereign, my lad!" said the stranger.

Jack stopped. Worrall whispered in his ear:

"He could buy 'em in the shops for less than that. It's the excitement of the thing that he's willing to pay for. Come away, old fellow."

"Three half-sovereigns," cried the man. He took a sovereign-case from his waistcoat pocket and spun the three golden coins one after the other.

"Come, my fine fellow, you are not going to lose such a chance, I'm sure!"

"There may be no eggs in the nest, after all," demurred Jack.

"Then you shall have a sovereign for the try. That's fair—eh?"

Jack Lemon began to take off his coat.

"It isn't fair to send him up that perpendicular cliff," said Hilton warmly.

"Need he go unless he wants to?" retorted the stranger.

By that time Jack had removed his waistcoat, collar, and tie. He rubbed his palms together, clambered over the broken masses of stone, got a grip of a projecting knob, and started on his perilous climb.

The boys watched him with tense faces and strongly-beating hearts. The challenger sat down on a platform of stone and commenced to roll a cigarette. His fingers were anything but steady, and every now and then he shot a look at the climber—a strange look that would have puzzled anyone who might have seen it.

Jack mounted twenty feet, and not finding a sure hold for his next upward move he managed to get a clasp knife from his trousers pockets and started to widen a fissure within his reach.

"Even if he falls now he will break his back," said a small boy.

"I call it murder," said Worrall.

"What's that?" suddenly shouted the challenger, and he started to his feet with such a glare at the speaker that Worrall involuntarily recoiled, and falling over a boulder, he sat down with a violence that rattled his teeth.

There was a half-hearted laugh. Then Hilton said:

"Lemon might do it in one of his sleep-walking turns, but his nerve won't take him so high in broad daylight."

Jack had re-started. Testing the strength of a rowan tree, he swung himself out into space. The sapling bent at a horrible inclination.

There was a gasp of fear, but Jack had lifted himself up and gained a higher ledge. He was now sixty feet up the face of the precipice, his body looking ridiculously small. A falcon swept past his head with an ugly rush as if it meant to attack the disturber of his airy realm.

"What's that you said about sleep-walking?" asked the stranger, blowing a ring of cigarette smoke. "Your schoolfellow is a somnambulist?"

"Yes," grunted Hilton.

"You have to keep a guard on him o' nights, do you?"

"He's better than he used to be," answered Hilton with a bad grace.

"I wouldn't have sent him up there if I had known," replied the man. "Cliff-climbing isn't good for a somnambulist. Why, he might get up one night and try to climb that old mill chimney which I noticed between here and your school!"

"He might, if any such nonsense was suggested to him," said Hilton curtly. "We take care—"

A sharp scream from one of the boys checked the sentence. It was echoed by a gasp of terror from the rest.

Jack Lemon had reached a height of nearly eighty feet on the almost sheer face of the cliff, and he had been feeling his way with the utmost caution along a narrow ledge of

limestone when part of it broke from under his feet and went clattering down the precipice. For a fraction of a second it was touch-and-go with the climber, for his body actually swayed backward a little. His groping hands, flung forward like a flash, closed upon a rounded protuberance in the face of the rock. With straining finger-tips Jack held on, and just saved his tottering balance.

But in a more fearful position he could scarcely be. His feet rested upon what remained of the ledge, but it was so narrow that the heels of the climber's boots were extended beyond it. His finger-hold was still more perilous, since it only consisted of a downward pressure of his finger-tips upon the smooth protuberance. Already he felt cramp threatening the backs of his hands; the finger-tips were becoming numbed under the strain, and the terrible realisation that he could not remain in that position for more than fifteen seconds burst upon the doomed climber.

Jack Lemon felt that his end had come. A cold perspiration broke upon his forehead, his heart was giving a succession of mad leaps; darkness descended over his eyes. He was about to fall backwards down Hanging Fell, and be crushed out of human shape upon the rocks at the foot.

The appalled groan that his companions uttered reached his ears.

Three or four of the fellows turned their heads away, and one small boy sank down in a half-faint. Only Hilton kept his head at that frightful moment. He perceived in an instant that no help could be given to the climber. To run for a rope and lower it from the top of the precipice would occupy quite half an hour, and Jack's term of life was within the limit of half a minute—not that. He must save himself, or be instantly killed.

Realising this, Hilton flashed a cool glance up the cliff, and he saw that, twenty feet beneath the climber, a sturdy rowan tree was jutting at an almost horizontal angle from a cranny in the cliff face. Instantly he recognised the chance of escape—though a truly desperate one. He made a trumpet of his hands and roared:

"There's a tree below you! Jump off!"

The words—far-off and faint—came to Jack's ears as if spoken from an immeasurable distance. The sound gave him the nerve he wanted. It was the helplessness of his position that had daunted him. He needed but a chance, however desperate, and his pluck rose to the occasion.

"I must spring off, and I must turn in mid-air," he told himself.

For a second he braced himself, then propelled himself out into the void, giving his body as much of a sideways push as he could to help him to twist round. The resistless air received his falling body; he felt the blast cut by his ears, he saw the far-down rocks, and in the nick of time he caught a glimpse of the rowan-tree. He struck it at the same moment.

Both outstretched arms fell across the slender trunk, almost breaking them; but his grip held good, for there was the tenacity of despair in that frantic clutch. The tree bent heavily, groaning under the strain, then it shot up as if determined to dislodge its burden; but Jack held on like grim death, and succeeded in drawing himself up across the trunk.

He remained in that position for some minutes while he recovered his breath and his shaken nerve. Abandoning any further thought of capturing the hawks' eggs, he made his way by slow stages down the Fell, and was received by his companions with cheers and handshakes. For the time no one thought of the stranger, and he was remembered only when he came forward with the remark:

"You're a game youngster, my lad, if ever there was one. You didn't get those eggs, but here's the three half-sovereigns, all the same."

Jack looked up, and he was quite startled to see how very white was the face that looked into his. If the speaker himself had brushed up against death as Jack Lemon had done he could not have looked paler, while the hand that held out the gold coins shook palpably.

A feeling of strong repulsion swept over Jack. He stepped aside with the words:

"I didn't get the eggs, so I won't touch the money."

"What! Come, don't be a little fool! You've earned it."

"Come along, you chaps!" said Jack, and the group moved away.

The man stared after them with a long look until they were out of sight. Then he drew a handkerchief over his damp forehead, and muttered to himself:

"All right, my young hero. We shall see!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Secret Meeting—"A Thousand Pounds!"

IT was noticed by several of the fellows at Jerome House next day that the strange visitor to the town hung about near to the school as if looking for someone.

"Perhaps he's a detective?" suggested Worrall.

"Sherlock Holmes or Sexton Blake," added Jack, with a grin.

"Whatever he is, I don't like the look of him," said Hilton. "And if he tries any more of his monkey tricks on the fellows there will be a collision between his nose and my fist."

"I saw him this afternoon at the foot of the old mill chimney," said the first speaker. "He was staring up the old shaft with a most intent expression on his face as if he saw a ghost at the top."

In the morning there was a letter for Jack Lemon in strange handwriting. He broke it open, and read as follows:

"Meet me after three to-day in the High Street. I have something very important to tell you. It will be to your advantage to burn this letter and say nothing about it. At any rate, wait until you have heard my scheme before you open your mouth.—A FRIEND."

Jack read and re-read this very unusual communication. He quickly thought of the mysterious stranger, and decided that he must be the sender of it. His first impulse was to make a confidant of Hilton; then he decided to grant the interview without saying anything to anyone lest he should spoil what began to look like a good mystery. There could be no harm in meeting the other in broad daylight in the High Street. The writer had probably discovered the fact that it was a half-school day, and that Jack would be at leisure.

So Jack Lemon managed to get away alone that afternoon, and made his way towards the town. He passed quite near to the mill chimney, and recalling yesterday's allusion to it, stopped a moment, and looked up at the towering shaft.

The great chimney stack—known as Blackbourne Mill Chimney—was a landmark for miles around. The mills had been closed a long time ago, and the stack, uncared-for, and exposed to all assaults of the weather, had fallen into a dangerous state. It had been condemned, and it was said locally that it was to come down within a month.

The chimney reared its enormous column to a height of two hundred feet. Its upper part was begrimed with smoke. A ladder of iron, bolted into the bricks at regular intervals, extended the full length of the stack. A cornice projected at the top of the chimney, the cornice of the parapet of stone that ran round the black and gapping hole of the shaft. When the ladder came to that cornice it stuck out from the tapering side.

Jack Lemon had once seen a workman mount the iron ladder. Before he reached the top his body was like that of a creeping bluebottle; and when the man reached where the ladder projected sharply outwards by reason of the cornice, the climber had gone up hand-over-hand, with his legs dangling two hundred feet above the stone yard!

Jack stopped only for a few seconds. The High Street of Blackbourne was a mile distant, and as he drew near to it he began to feel a curious sensation of impending trouble, a premonition of some nameless fear. He had half a mind to turn back. Well would it have been for him if he had done so!

He saw the stranger almost as he entered the High Street. He was standing at a corner. Every now and then he put a hand into a pocket, filled with walnuts and brought out one and cracked it between his teeth.

"So you got my letter?" said he. "Did you guess I sent it? I'm very glad you've come, and so will you be

presently. I hope you haven't been thinking too badly of me for sending you up Hanging Fell? I had a powerful reason for it, as I want to explain to you."

"That's all right," answered Jack, reassured by the cool way in which the man cracked his walnuts and shot the shells about.

"Come into that tuckshop across the road. We can't talk in the open."

Jack Lemon followed, not unwilling. The other gave a liberal order, and they sat down at a table in a corner.

"Let me introduce myself," commenced the man. "My name is Doggerson. I have come to Blackbourne on a secret mission. My first act was to find someone with a cool head, a strong pair of arms, and without nerves. Chance led me to Hanging Fell. You and your friends were talking about the possibility of climbing for those hawks' eggs. I looked at you and decided that you were the very fellow for the work I have in hand. I persuaded you to climb the cliff because I wanted to make sure that you had the nerve I believed you to possess. I was not mistaken. You showed grand pluck. What's your name?"

"Jack Lemon."

"Your hand, Jack. Never mind the jam on it. I admire you. You're the fellow for me." Doggerson lowered his voice as he leaned forward and whispered: "Do you want five hundred pounds?"

Jack was so startled that he knocked a glass of ginger-beer all over the other's trousers, but Doggerson paid no attention to the minor incident.

"Do you want five hundred pounds, boy?" he repeated.

At sight of the pale face so close to his, and the black eyes fixed upon him with an intent, excited expression, Jack felt his former premonition return. For a second he almost thought that his companion was trying to mesmerise him. He drew back hastily.

"What do you mean?" gasped Jack.

"First, your solemn promise not to breathe a word of what I am going to tell you."

"Not unless it's anything discreditable that ought to be told," stammered Jack, still under the spell of that fixed stare.

"It isn't."

"Then go ahead."

"You know Blackbourne Mill chimney?"

Jack started.

"Of course," he replied.

"I want someone who can climb it—after dark."

"Great Augustus! What for?"

"Listen. The mill before it shut down was the property of a man named Phineas Phelps, the miser. Do you know that?"

Jack shook his head.

"Well, it was. Phineas Phelps was, as I said, a miser. He never married, he owned no relations; he had not a friend in the world save one. I was that friend. Phineas died in my arms. His last words on earth were spoken to these ears, and I am going to tell you what they were. Have some more ginger-beer?"

"No, thanks," said Jack, intensely interested.

"The words which my poor friend whispered in my ears were these: 'Doggerson,' said he, 'I've a thousand pounds in golden sovereigns put away, and I want you to have them. You know, I never would trust a bank, and I always feared burglars. I put those sovereigns in a queer place, Doggerson. Once a month I used to climb the stack of my mill chimney, and place a score or so of pounds in a safe hiding-place at the top.'"

"Great Augustus!" cried Jack Lemon again.

"No one thought of looking there to rob a poor old man," went on my dying friend," continued Doggerson.

"You will find a thousand pounds there. They are in bags under the stone nearest the lightning-rod. I leave 'em all to you.' Having uttered those words, poor Phineas Phelps expired."

"Phew!" whistled Jack.

"Now, you see why I want your help, Jack," said Doggerson, watching the boy with his steadfast black eyes. "I can't make an open claim to them because there was no written will, and the law would have something to say about it."

"But why not go for them yourself?" said Jack Lemon.

"Why! I'll be frank with you, Jack. I haven't got the nerve to climb that awful stack even in daylight, let alone in the dark. I should

fall. But you—you're the very chap for the job. Go up and bring those sovereigns, and you shall have half, which you will richly deserve for the risk. Now, what do you say?"

"It wants a bit of thinking over," answered Jack hesitatingly.

"Certainly. I'll give you to-day and to-night. Let me know in the morning if you agree. But, of course, you will. You are not going to be such a fool as to chuck away a chance like this. Not you! In the meantime, don't forget your promise to keep mum."

They parted, and Jack Lemon went down the High Street utterly dazed by what he had heard and what was expected of him.

Doggerson stood looking after him. There was a strange expression in his white face; a glare, almost of menace, in his eyes.

"A thousand pounds!" he said suddenly. "Ha, ha!"

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

Jack Lemon is Missing—In Frightful Peril—A Crime that Recoiled.

At ten o'clock that night the bell rang for "Lights Out" at Jerome House School. In one of the dormitories, which contained five beds ranged round the walls, was Jack Lemon. Hilton and Worrall were also in this dormitory. Both noticed, and afterwards remarked on the fact, that Jack was very quiet that night, and that they could not get a word out of him.

For an hour he lay awake staring up at the ceiling, which he could not see. It was a sultry summer night, and every now and then the reflection of far-distant lightning flickered in the dark room, and was followed by the barely-audible mutter of thunder.

"Was Doggerson lying? If so, what can his motive be?"

These were the questions that Jack kept asking himself again and again as he lay motionless, wide-awake. The astonishing tale that had been told him in strict confidence, and the startling proposal which had been made to him, occupied his every thought.

"Why should I doubt him?" he murmured. "He may be mistaken about the money being actually there, but he must believe it is. Why should he want to send me up that chimney, otherwise? And yet, somehow I distrust that white face of his and those glittering eyes. Perhaps, after all, it was a cock-and-bull yarn which—"

"What are you growling about there?" came the voice of Hilton. "Go to sleep, and trouble not my slumbers with thy guilty mutterings to the Unseen."

"Hilton," answered Jack suddenly, "do you know who owned Blackbourne Mill before it closed?"

"What on earth— Yes, Phineas Phelps, the eccentric miser. Anything else I can oblige you with? Who owned Van Diemen's Land before Christopher Columbus discovered Timbuctoo? Go on."

But Jack Lemon asked no more questions. He said to himself:

"Doggerson spoke the truth there, that's clear. The point now is—can I, ought I, and shall I try to climb that rotten old chimney?"

He went to sleep with the matter unsettled in his mind.

About a couple of hours later Hilton awoke. He had a strangely uneasy sensation that something was wrong. He sat up in bed to clear his brain of what he told himself must be the effects of a bad dream. As he stared into the darkness, a blinding flash of lightning revealed every corner of the dormitory with the utmost distinctness. It was followed by one splitting crash of thunder.

That dazzling gleam had given Hilton a shock of surprise. He had seen Jack Lemon's bed empty, and the clothing flung aside in a heap. He called out:

"Are you there, Jack?"

"What's the matter?" answered Worrall's voice. "Did you hear the thunder? What a smasher!"

"I say, Jack Lemon's gone!" answered Hilton, alarmed, and springing out of bed. "And the window is wide open at the bottom."

"He must be at his old sleep-walking tricks again!" cried Worrall, equally concerned.

By that time every fellow in the dormitory was awake.

"I believe he climbed out of the window," said Hilton. "It's only a few feet to the level, and the ivy would give him the hold he wanted. We had better—"

He never completed the sentence.

A frightful lightning flash ran down the sky. For a second the occupants of the dormitory looked into each other's pale faces. A moment later it was followed by an appalling crash that shook the very foundations of the school. The ear-stunning uproar was scarcely over when a burst of thunder came as an echo. Then once more the lightning flamed out, and as Hilton turned towards the open window, he uttered a shout, almost of terror.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "The old mill chimney's down!"

Jack Lemon fell asleep thinking of the great Blackbourne shaft, and if he was capable of climbing that dizzy height. It was a thought that was continued in his dreams.

He had slumbered uneasily for an hour, when he lifted himself in bed, flung aside the clothes, and stepped out. He began to draw on his trousers and socks, then opened the window. It needed no experienced eye to see that he was acting under the influence of his feverish dream, that he was moving in his sleep.

He climbed over the sill, got a grip of the ivy, and lowered himself the short distance of seven feet to the ground. He went with a silent, gliding movement along the ash-path, opened the gate, and passed along the deserted high road. After walking for a quarter of a mile, he mounted a stile, and moved swiftly through field after field, until he stopped at the foot of the mill chimney.

The somnambulist had not left the school fifty yards behind him when a man's figure darted out from a disused barn, and followed the other with cautious tread. This man was Doggerson. He held his breath as he perceived the sleep-walker stop at the base of the shaft, and he could not restrain a gasp when he saw the boy begin to climb.

Small wonder that he uttered the exclamation. The storm was yet far distant, but the lightning flashes flickering in the south were enough

to reveal, from time to time, the immense height of the old shaft, which reared its grimy head into the black night.

With a sure grip Jack clutched the sides of the perpendicular iron stairway. His wide-open, fixed eyes stared only at the bricks in front of them. Step by step he mounted on the iron ladder, which seemed like two slender threads viewed from the ground.

He had reached mid-way when he paused. He was then a hundred feet above ground. A distant shriek from a railway-engine whistled past his senseless ears, and a glow of light showed where the train was moving as if it were a toy affair. A deep sigh came from the sleeper's lips, then he continued his ascent.

The lightning flashes were becoming more frequent, and followed by louder claps of thunder. Doggerson, watching below, saw with each dazzling gleam the tiny figure of the climber as it went higher and higher up the sides of the shaft.

Suddenly the somnambulist paused again. He had gained that topmost part of the chimney where the ladder abruptly projected, pushed out by the cornice.

Jack was two hundred feet above the sleeping earth.

He had reached that final stage of the climb which only nerves of steel could face. Daring climber as Jack Lemon was, he would probably have refused to go higher if he had been awake. The cornice stood out from the summit six feet. The ladder bent out to it, needing much longer hooks to grapple it against the shaft.

The somnambulist paused but three seconds, then his right hand moved up and grasped the first of the rungs on the projecting stage of the ladder. As he did so he relaxed the grip of his feet, and so swung out, his body hanging straight down, his face turned upwards as he put hand over hand, drawing himself higher and higher, suspended over that frightful abyss only by the grip of his fingers.

A slip of the hand, a false grasp, and he would drop like a thunderbolt, and lie crushed out of all shape upon the stone yard.

Higher and higher he climbed. The projecting ladder extended some way beyond the cornice. From the top a rope passed over and was secured to a rusty iron ring let into the parapet. Jack drew himself over and stood upon the summit of the shaft.

At that moment a deafening crash of thunder sounded in his ears. He shuddered violently, passed a hand over his eyes, and awoke.

For a second or two he did not realise that he was awake. Consciousness brought with it a dreadful sensation of helplessness. He felt as if he was falling through a gulf of infinite depth. Mechanically he flung out his arms, which encountered the lightning-rod, and to this he clung in a bewildered agony and nameless terror.

Slowly light broke in upon the horror. He perceived where he was; he realised that his old habit had reasserted itself—that he had climbed the great Blackbourne shaft in the fascination of a dream.

He sank down upon the stone parapet, shaking with fear. The parapet was four feet across, and then came the interior of the chimney—the yawning black hole of profound depth—which was eight feet across.

And while poor Jack crouched there, gazing with terror-struck eyes far out into the dark night, the storm was rapidly approaching, sending rippling flames of lightning down from the sky, and booming crashes through the dark.

Small wonder that Jack Lemon had to fight hard to keep his senses. There came to him, in one moment of unspeakable horror, an impulse to launch himself from the top of the shaft. He crushed the fatal thought, he struggled with his panic-stricken nerves and wildly-beating heart, and he began to get the mastery.

Great heights had never had any

terrors for him. His nerve was good, his eyes sure, his muscles strong; and he remembered this, and told himself that he had got to get down.

"I could stay here all night, for it is warm enough," he murmured, "but for the storm that's coming up. I cannot face that in such a place."

There was a moan in the suffocating air which spoke of coming wind. The shaft was rocking to and fro—as all tall shafts do in a wind. The motion would greatly increase if a gale was coming, and the danger of being blown from the summit was terribly real.

Jack Lemon rose to his feet. Any thought of the treasure which he had come in his sleep to find did not enter his mind. He approached the top of the ladder, set his teeth, and climbed over.

His descent of the Blackbourne shaft is a matter about which Jack never afterwards cared to talk. He always said that he didn't know how he got down; that again and again his nerve failed him; that several times he was obliged to stop for fresh strength and fresh resolution. But reach the bottom he did, and just as the storm broke in its full fury.

In an instant he was soaked by torrents of rain. He started to get back to the school, falling a dozen times, for when the ordeal was over all his strength went. The blaze of lightning that had appalled the wakened inmates of the dormitory gave Jack a moment's impression that he was blinded. He heard the frightful crash that ensued, and when he realised that the old shaft had been struck and gone down in one vast pile of ruin, he also collapsed and lay for a minute in a faint.

Before Jack Lemon reached the school the occupants of his dormitory had alarmed the House. The doctor himself turned out when he heard that one of his pupils was out in the wild night. A search-party was on the point of setting forth when Jack turned up, white as a ghost, saturated with rain, and shaking from head to foot.

He was given a hot dose and put to bed, from which he did not get up for a fortnight. For half that time poor Jack lay in a state of fever, howling out wild stories of how he climbed Blackbourne shaft.

Not the least mysterious part of the affair was that when workmen came to clear away the immense amount of debris of the fallen chimney, they discovered the body of a man under the ruin. The shaft had caught him in its fall, and killed him instantaneously.

The identity of the man was a puzzle for some days, though Hilton & Co. said they had seen him hanging about the neighbourhood, and they mentioned how he had persuaded Jack Lemon to climb Hanging Fell.

The police took the matter up, and an astonishing discovery was made soon after Jack regained his wits and was able to tell everything.

A letter from abroad was received by Jack, in which it was stated that an uncle in Burmah had died and left Jack Lemon a considerable sum of money. The police regarded this as a clue. Was it possible that the unknown dead man desired Jack's speedy end with a view to securing the legacy?

The suggestion proved to be a true one. Jack Lemon had but one relative—a cousin—in the world. This cousin had been the head-man on the Burmese estates of Jack's uncle. He had committed a grave offence, and been promptly disinherited in favour of his cousin at Jerome House.

Immediately following the death of Jack Lemon's uncle he had taken passage for England in a steamer which preceded the mail, and with the now obvious idea of getting rid of his young cousin.

As for his yarn concerning Phineas Phelps and a concealed treasure that was, as Hilton told Jack, bunkum pure and simple.

"He wanted to see you up the chimney after dark in the hope that you would come down quicker than you ascended," added Hilton. "I remember now that we happened to mention before him that you sometimes walked in your sleep. He may have reckoned on your doing so; but it's more likely that he hoped his tomfool yarn would make you agree to climb the shaft in any case. Anyway, he's dead now, so you can afford to forgive him, and I should say that such a cold-blooded villain is better off the earth!"

Jack Lemon was soon on his legs again and fit, but as a climber he was, from that terrible night, a hopeless failure.

THE END.



Jack felt the air whistling past his ears, saw the far down rocks, and in the nick of time caught a glimpse of the rowan-tree. The next instant he fell crashing through its branches.

THE FOOL OF THE COLLEGE



CLAUDE HEATHCOTE'S Grand School Serial.

PROLOGUE.

Athol House College and St. Cecilia's School are two rival scholastic establishments, the pupils of which are at daggers drawn with one another. Carew and Creswick, two Athol House boys, determine to try and patch up a peace between the two schools, and with this object in view write a letter to Sturgis, a senior at St. Cecilia's, who is, incidentally, the son of a millionaire. The letter is delivered to Sturgis in person by Wingrove, a little Athol House junior. Sturgis tears the letter up scornfully, and wreaks his spite on little Wingrove. Dragging the youngster off to a lonely barn, he ties him up hand and foot, and leaves him. There Carew and Creswick find him in a state of collapse, and their rage knows no bounds. They lie in wait for Sturgis, who returns to the barn later on, and, eager to avenge little Wingrove, they tie the millionaire's son up head downwards, swinging from a beam in the ceiling.

A short time later Sturgis is found lying unconscious on the ground. He is in a serious condition, and his life is almost despaired of.

He is removed to his father's house in London. The latter, determined to discover who is to blame for his son's serious injury, sends

PHIL CHESTER, a poor orphan lad, to Athol House College, to keep his eyes open and endeavour to learn all he can regarding young Sturgis's accident.

This Phil does. He journeys down to Athol House under the name of Philip Latham, and does his best to give everyone the impression that he is a perfect fool, so as not to arouse anyone's suspicions.

Phil chums up with Archie Wingrove, and incidentally learns a good deal from him, but nothing definite.

Carew sees Phil and Archie conversing together, and after the former has departed, he rushes up to Archie and demands to know what they have been talking about.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

A Masterpiece—The Fool Becomes Impatient—An Interesting Piece of Information.

FOR answer, Archie burst into tears. Carew had a boy's impatience with tears.

"Don't be a blubberer. You're getting awfully soft. It's only girls who do that sort of thing, you know."

"I know—I know; but I can't help myself," said Archie, drying his tears. "I feel rotten."

"Well, but what's happened. I know the fool's been hiding some-

thing. You've run against some of the Sillyuns—that's it, isn't it?"

Archie was obliged to confess that it was, and made a clean breast to Carew of all that had happened.

"The curs—the curs!" exclaimed Carew wrathfully, when Archie had ended. "They're trying to get back their own through you, a weak little chap. They dare not tackle the bigger fellows. The cowards—the cowards!"

Carew took a turn or two of the dormitory, then sat on the bed, and spoke in a softened tone:

"I was rather hard on you just now, Archie, when you blubbered; but I dare say I should have done the same had I gone through what you've gone through."

"It's kind of you to say so, Carew, but I know that if you tried ever so you couldn't be so soft as I am. You're built differently, you see. After all"—Archie's glance went quickly round the room, as though to make sure that they were quite alone, while his voice died away to a whisper—"I haven't gone through half what that other fellow went through—Sturgis, I mean."

"You will keep harping on that. Whatever happened to him, he brought it all on himself, and you may be sure he's pulling round or his people would be making a great deal more fuss about it than they have done. Anyhow, those fellows at St. Cecilia's aren't going to have it all their own way, just because Sturgis was ass enough to wriggle out of that rope, and come a cropper. They're not going to practice on the kids. If they want to make a start, let them start with some of us bigger chaps."

Carew, in his blunt, straightforward manner, was boiling with indignation. Archie's head was aching, but none the less he looked up to him with the admiration that a weaker nature always feels for a stronger.

"It doesn't matter. I've pulled through, all right, you see, thanks to the fool."

"Ah, yes, the fool! I was forgetting the part he played. My word! He's one of the oddest bundles I've ever struck. He seems to be always coming a cropper, but the moment after he's in the running again, stronger than ever. He does some of

the most idiotic things a fellow can do, yet, when he's doing them, seems to think he's doing the finest thing in the world; and when he's doing the finest thing, it doesn't count with him any more than his most idiotic trick. In his way, the fool's a masterpiece."

"That's just it—a masterpiece! If you'd seen the way he made for the Sillyuns in the barn; how he broke away from the scrum, I can't guess. All I know is, that—that he saved my life."

Archie's voice quivered. He seemed on the point of breaking down again, but with an effort he controlled himself.

"Tadpoling, he called it. Yes, the fool came out of it pretty well, but you came out of it best of all," said Carew, patting him on the shoulder. "The Sillyuns did their best to make you speak, but they couldn't make you give the show away."

A feeling of pride kindled in Archie's breast at Carew's words. They repaid him for the scorn he had expressed when he had broken into tears; and when he at length fell into a troubled sleep it was with Carew's words on his lips. "They couldn't make you give the show away."

The next morning Archie was slightly feverish. By the advice of the College doctor, he was placed in the sick-ward.

"He's a little out of sorts, but in a day or two will pull round," the doctor said.

At the news, Carew's indignation against the Cecilians waxed warmer. "The curs—the curs!" he constantly ejaculated.

In course of the morning Archie's clothes, perfectly dried, were returned from Pender's Folly, together with a brief note:

"To the Master of Athol House College.—Fiends of boys always get well again, so I suppose the boy whom I had to admit into the Folly, much against my inclination, is now quite himself, and getting up his strength for more fiendish tricks and mischief. If he happens to fall in the Bend again, tell him to land on the other side. There's a board against trespassers on the Folly grounds.—M. Pender.

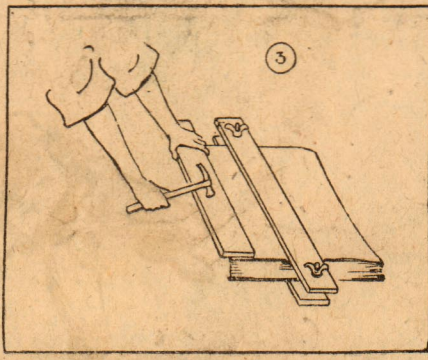


Fig. 3.—Compressing the Back of the Book.

inclusive. Place the copies evenly and corner for corner upon each other, with No. 417 at the top and No. 468 at the bottom. Any supplement plates given away with THE BOYS' FRIEND should be stuck in by pasting the back edge of the plate, then sticking it to the back of a leaf of the copy it was given with. Now fold both pieces of glossy paper in halves, and place one piece on top of your pile of books and the other underneath.

Take up the copies of THE BOYS' FRIEND, together with the pieces of glossy paper, and place the whole in the press, backs protruding, so that about four inches project from the press for working upon. See that every copy is absolutely in its place, and then screw down tightly.

Take the awl, and pierce six holes, each about an inch and a half apart, and nearly half an inch from the back. Thread twine through each hole twice, and draw the backs tightly together. To clearly explain the correct way of doing this, we will distinguish each hole with a letter, viz.—A, B, C, D, E, and F respectively. Begin by taking the twine up through the hole lettered A and down through B, up through hole C, and down through hole D, up hole E, and down hole F. Return to hole A by taking the twine up hole E, down hole D, up hole C, down hole B, and up hole A. (See Diagram 2.)

Brush gum over the backs of the copies, and then place a flat piece of board on the book, and hammer the backs of the copies down. Do not hit the backs of your books with the hammer itself, or your volume will be badly battered. This operation

"P.S.—Send back my servant's livery."

Mr. Gardner took little notice of the letter. He had received more than one similarly eccentric screed from the master of Pender's Folly, and they always found their way into the waste-paper basket. Besides, there was another matter of far greater interest and importance to the college. By that morning's post he had received a communication from a much more exalted person than the owner of Pender's Folly.

It was from a gentleman occupying a high official position in the India Office. The son of a subahdar (governor) of Bengal had been entrusted to his care. He had received an English training, and was thoroughly conversant with the English language, but had never been to an English college. He wished to mix with the boys of the college, and to be treated as one of them. The only difference he wished to make was that he did not care for the dormitory system, and would require a room of his own. The name of the Indian boy was Nana Nizam. "Money is no object," the letter concluded by saying.

Money no object! Twice within the month Mr. Gardner had received offers of pupils with the same intimation. The same thing had never happened before. As money had for some time past been a great object with the master of Athol House, it is needless to say that this final clause in the letter was extremely gratifying.

Athol House was beginning to rise in the social scale, it was beginning to command for itself the position it deserved in the scholastic world. It is needless to say that the Head promptly answered this letter from the high Indian official, expressing his willingness to receive as pupil Nana Nizam, and place at his service all the educational advantages of Athol House.

"We have pupils who enjoy the advantages of a private sanctum," Mr. Gardner concluded, with a flourish of the pen; "and shall be happy to accommodate Nana Nizam in the same way."

Needless to say that the news was soon circulated through the college.

"Great Christopher, we're going in for class now," remarked Hedder, "Fools and Indians."

"To say nothing of Amurricans!" laughed Creswick. "Do you fly, Heddy?"

"Shut up! Give it a rest! Waal, the Indian may be a novelty, but I reck'n he isn't half the novelty the fool is. We may get Lather'em to score a point or two off the Indian."

"And make up for the points you didn't score off him," remarked Lawler quietly.

Phil missed his little Form companion, and at the close of the afternoon's work at

once made for the sick ward. Archie's face lit up as Phil entered.

"So glad you've come," he said. "It's awfully lonely here."

"Feeling any better?" "Much better. I hope the Head hasn't written to mother and worried her. She's worried enough."

"Oh, no, he won't have done that. He's full of a smoky-coloured sort of chap that's coming here, doncherknow. So are all the other fellows."

"Smoky-coloured sort of chap. Who do you mean?" asked Archie wonderingly.

"Indians, don't they call them. Comes from the land of Hottentots, I think. Don't know much about it myself, because I was never great on geo—geo—geography."

"What's his name?" smiled Archie.

"Jam—something. No, it isn't jam—nor yet marmalade. Let me see, what the deuce is it?" Phil asked himself, rubbing his head. "It's something to do with goats."

"Wool!" suggested Archie.

"No, that isn't it."

"Mutton?"

"Whoever heard an Indian of the name of Mutton. No; Baba-ba—That's a bit like it, though it isn't Baba. Ah, now I've got it! Nana; that's it. Nana Nizam. He's coming here, and do you know, Archie, he must be as swagger as I am."

"Indeed!" smiled Archie. "How's that, Latham?"

"Well, he's going to have a room to himself, you see, so he must be. Wonder if he runs a motah?"

Archie did not answer. His thoughts had gone from the Indian. He was thinking of something far different—of the scene at Pender's Folly the night before, and the two strange occupants of that place. Phil respected his silence, and waited patiently till he broke it.

"Do you know what I was thinking about, Latham?"

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope?"

"No, and yet perhaps it was. I was thinking of the change that came over Mr. Pender's face when you told him my name last night. Do you know he looked so wild that I feared he would spring at me."

"Yes, he did look rather ratty, I must say. He's a little off the rockers, you see, like some people have the cheek to say that I am; and when a person's off the rockers you never know which way the wind's going to blow—whether in the east, the west, or the south, doncherknow. Perhaps your name's the name of someone he met with years ago before he turned balmy."

"I've been thinking the same thing, do you know. At any rate, he didn't seem to think much of it. He would have bundled me out then and there, could he have had his own way."

"Don't think any more about it. He served our turn, and I don't suppose we shall be knocking against him again."

Deftly Phil turned Archie to other things. He drew him on to speak of

(Continued on the next page.)

BE YOUR OWN BOOKBINDER.

A Splendid and Most Useful Article for the Handy Boy.

NO doubt a large majority of readers of THE BOYS' FRIEND would like to have their year's copies of the Green 'Un neatly bound, instead of seeing them carelessly scattered about, and perhaps lost or destroyed.

The work to some may seem rather tedious, but it makes a good and profitable hobby to those who care to take pains and interest themselves in it. Scrupulous care must be taken throughout, or the whole result will be spoilt.

You should be workmanlike, and get everything ready to hand before commencing operations. You will need a hammer, an awl, some thick twine; a yard of strong linen—at eightpence or ninepence per yard; two pieces of stout millboard or sheet cardboard, each measuring 15ins. in length and 10½ins. in width—costing fivepence or sevenpence a piece; two sheets of thick, glossy paper, each measuring 22ins. by

15½ins.—price three halfpence a sheet; a yard of dark blue linen, or any other colour you may fancy—price ninepence halfpenny per yard; a press, and a supply of paste.

The two latter you can easily make yourself. The press consists of two pieces of stout, hard wood 17 or 18 inches long and two inches in breadth, which should be made quite straight and smooth. Through each end fix a screw bolt, the nuts of which must be fastened securely in the wood so that they may not move round when screwing up—as shown in Diagram 1. Thumb-screws are the best for working, although it is not a great hindrance to screw a nut up with a bicycle spanner. The holes in the wood can be made with a carpenter's brace and bit, or even by means of a red-hot poker.

These bolts can be bought at any cycle repairing shop or ironmongery establishment for twopence or threepence each.

The following is a good recipe for making suitable paste: Water, one quart; alum, three-quarters of an ounce. Dissolve, and when cold add flour to make it of the consistency of cream. Now bring it to boil, stirring all the while. Preserve with a few drops of oil of cloves.

Now you are quite ready to begin the actual work of binding, and as fifty-two copies go to make a volume you will take say, Nos. 417 to 468

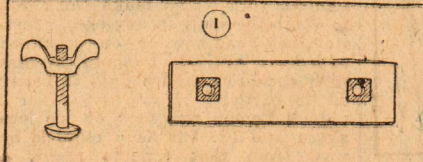


Fig. 1.—Showing Thumbscrew, and Method of Affixing.

will prevent the back of your book from becoming too bulgy, and is made clear in Diagram 3.

Here commences another part of the work. Cut a piece of linen six inches wide by fourteen and a half inches long, and glue it to the back so that it overlaps an inch or so. If the edges of the leaves are untidy, level them down with a very sharp knife, but do not cut away more than is necessary.

Now take another piece of linen, fourteen and a half inches long by eight or nine inches in width, and lay round the back of the book—do not glue it just yet. Cut your millboards exactly the same length as THE BOYS' FRIEND, but not so wide by a little over a quarter of an inch. Have ready some good glue, and stick the linen to the sides of the book—not the back. Place one piece of millboard on one side of the book, and glue it to the linen, and when dry treat the other side in the same manner.

All that is left to be done now is to cover the book with your linen. You may cover it with leatherette if you like, but linen is cheaper and easier to cover with.

Lay the material for covering flat upon a table, glue the back of the book, and then take it in both hands and place the back in the centre of the linen, pull it tightly, and place in the press until dry. Then paste the covering material to the millboards, turn the overlapping edges under in the same way as if you were covering a book with brown paper,

and glue to keep it in its place, and leave to dry.

If you lift up one side of the cover you will find two sheets of smooth paper, and the leaf nearer the cover should be pasted down so that the edges of the covering material which have been turned under are hidden. Treat the other side in the same way, and the book is complete.

Perhaps it would be as well to letter your completed volume, and I think the simplest and best way for a novice to do this is to neatly cut the heading from an old copy of THE BOYS' FRIEND, and paste it on the cover, then varnish it over with transparent varnish. Gilt lettering is far too difficult to attempt without having some experience of the work, to say nothing of the expensive dies required. But a good plan for the reader who is handy with the brush is to do the lettering about half an inch in height, with some good quality white paint, or better still, enamel, and afterwards to varnish it over.

THE END.

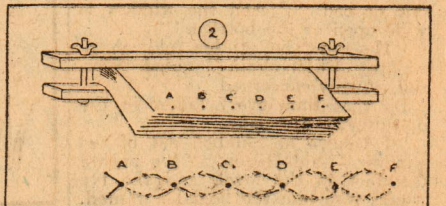


Fig. 2.—Method of Threading Twine Through the Papers.

his home, his father, his mother, and his sister Hilda. Archie's heart was so wrapped up in them, and he spoke of them so lovingly, that it did Phil good to hear him. It took him back to the time when his own mother was living, and he and Dodo were at home—three happy human beings, though the shadow of poverty was always present, and that other shadow—the father who had gone from them years ago to seek his fortune in a strange land.

When Phil returned to his room, he found, to his surprise, Carew awaiting him.

"Been sitting with Wingrove?"

Phil nodded.

"Jolly good of you." Then Carew added slowly: "He told me about all you did for him yesterday."

"Did for him?" repeated Phil vacantly. "Let me see, what was it I did for him? 'Pon my word, I can't remember a blessed thing. Wingrove's been selling you, or—I say, is it you trying to sell me? You, Creswick, and Hedder are jolly good at that sort of game. You're always scoring off me."

Carew felt flattered, though he had a vague idea that it was the other way about, and that the honours of the game had, so far, gone with Phil.

"I'm not trying to sell you this time. I'm quite serious. It was right-down plucky of you to go amongst the Sillyuns like you did yesterday, and pull Wingrove through. But what made you go there?"

"What was it? Let me see. Hanged if I haven't forgotten. That's the worst of having a noddle like a sieve; everything runs through it, you see. What was it? Oh, now I remember."

He broke into a loud laugh, holding both his sides.

"Well, get on," said Carew impatiently. "If it's so awfully funny, I might as well enjoy the joke. What was it took you to St. Cecilia's?"

"What was it? Hold me up! Ha, ha, ha! What was it? Ho, ho, ho! Well, I'd seen all the silly asses of Athol House, and I wanted to see if there was any difference between them and the silly asses of the other place—St. Cecilia's, I mean. Ho, ho, ho!"

"You'd be a pretty good judge. I'd back your opinion in deciding a nice point like that against any fellow's. And your verdict? Is there a difference?"

"Oh, yes; there is a difference—the Sillyuns can bray loudest, but they're not such a chuckle-headed lot as the 'Tholians. That's why I like you chaps. You're just my sort." And, making a trumpet of his hands, he tootled. "Th-o-o-l—Th-o-o-l—alla—alla—li-a-ty!"

"Was there ever such an idiot outside an asylum," thought Carew, as he regarded Phil in wonder. Still, he could not help liking him, fool though he was. There was a certain shrewdness even about his foolery, and there was always something refreshing in it, even though it happened to be against you. The fool was never quite the same. He was always breaking out in a fresh place.

"That's your opinion, is it? The fellows here ought to feel flattered. Tell me one thing more. Did you rub against a fellow up there named Ormerod?"

"Ormerod—Ormerod! Yes, of course, I did."

"And what did you think of him?"

"He brayed the loudest of the lot. Wants taking down a peg or two, I should say."

"You're right, Lather'em; you're right!" exclaimed Carew eagerly, bending forward. "Now you're speaking sense. You never said a more sensible thing in your life. Ormerod does want taking down a peg or two. He's cock of the walk at St. Cecilia's."

"Ass, I said," corrected Phil. "Cocks don't bray."

"Have it your own silly way," said Carew impatiently. "Call him what animal you please. I don't mind. Listen. I want you to follow me. Don't you think that getting poor little Wingrove to that barn was a mean business?"

"I'm with you—a mean business," answered Phil, bringing his fist down on the table to emphasise it.

"Sense again. You're getting on. There's hope for you yet."

"One moment—from what I could make out from Ormerod, he was trying to pay off an old score. It was this way—some of you chaps had scored off a Sillyun called Sturgis. Was that right, or only barney on Ormerod's part?"

It was now Phil's turn to listen

eagerly. Was he to hear the truth from Carew at last?

"Yes, they do say something of that sort, I believe," answered Carew, after a pause, "and there may be something in it."

"Is there—is there?" persisted Phil.

"How should I know?" answered Carew evasively. "I can no more answer for what goes on here than I can answer for what goes on at St. Cecilia's. That's not what I'm driving at. What I am driving at is that nothing which may have been done by us at any time can justify Ormerod and his crew in doing what they did to Wingrove. If he'd try to play me up, or Creswick, or any of the seniors, it would have been a fairer game; but it isn't playing the game to score off a little, harmless fellow like Wingrove."

Phil was disappointed with his answer. It carried him no further. He thought he was about to learn from Carew's own lips exactly what had happened in the barn on the evening of the accident to Ronald Sturgis, but just at the moment when Carew seemed on the point of speaking, he had evaded him, and retreated into his shell.

He could not help, however, giving his hearty assent to what had fallen from him.

"Not playing the game," he repeated, bringing his fist once more upon the table.

"Well, I'm going to show him how to play it. He's going to answer to me for what happened to Wingrove yesterday," said Carew firmly, rising from his chair.

"Answer to you!" exclaimed Phil, also rising. "More tricks—eh? You want me to help you—eh?"

"Tricks—no; your help—yes. It's going to be a straight run this time; no beating about the bush. I want you to take a challenge to Ormerod."

"A challenge to Ormerod. What for?"

"To fight him—a fight to a finish. That's straight enough, isn't it?"

"Quite straight. But why should you take him on," said Phil uneasily. "Why you in particular? Why shouldn't some of the other fellows—Creswick, or Hedder, or Lawler?"

"Oh, they can have a cut in if Ormerod knocks me out," answered Carew, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Now, I've chosen you for my messenger, because I've seen that though you're an idiot, you don't mind my saying so."

"Thanks so much," said Phil, bowing as though he had been paid the greatest compliment in the world.

"Though you're a chucklehead, you've got plenty of pluck, and you know how to use your mawlers. You know how to get yourself out of a tight corner, seems to me, as well as any fellow I've ever seen. I'm saying this because I want you to know there may be some danger in going to the Sillyuns."

"Danger! What danger can there be?"

"Well, once a messenger was sent on a similar errand—"

Carew pulled himself up suddenly as though he had said too much, and turning off at a tangent, went on: "You can never make out, you see, what those bounders at St. Cecilia's will get up to. You saw how they were serving Wingrove? They may try to serve you the same way. Do you care to risk it?"

Phil did not at once answer. He appeared to be gauging the risks.

"I'll risk it," he at length said. "When will the challenge be ready?"

"To-morrow evening."

"To-morrow evening. Right! I'll be ready for you." Then, as Carew turned to the door: "One minute. I think you told me a few days ago you weren't an orphan?" he gravely asked.

"What's the fool driving at now?" thought Carew; then aloud: "No; I'm not an orphan. I've a father and mother. They may be coming here some day; then I'll introduce you, if you get that challenge through all right."

"Thanks—so much. But you didn't tell me when I asked you whether there were any others in your family—brothers or sisters, I mean?"

"Do you know, Lather'em, you're awfully curious. I can't see what interest my family can have for you. It so happens that I haven't any brothers or sisters; I'm only son and heir to the family clothes prop; but the pater's just taken on a little girl, so I hear from the mater, as ward."

"As ward—yes? Who is she?" came the eager question.

"A girl called Dodo Chesney. Why are you so anxious to know?"

"Dodo Chesney—ho, ho! What a

funny name. Dodo—soho—goato—mono—moto—what-o—right-o! I only want to know—don'tcherknow—because you'd better make your will before you fight Ormerod, and leave the family clothes' prop to the next-of-kin. Moto—goato—Dodo! Getting a poet, ain't I, Carrie."

Carew rushed from the room with his fingers plugged in his ears.

"Dodo—Sister Dodo," said Phil, sinking into a chair. "That settles it. There's no doubt where Carew comes from now. He is the son of Mr. Paul Carew, father's old school-fellow; and I—what am I?—only a fool."

And he fell into a brown study, thinking out his position.

The Challenge—Bitter Words—Ormerod's Threat.

LOOK! You may as well read the challenge before I seal it up."

It was the evening following the events narrated in the last chapter. Phil had been awaiting the arrival of Carew in his room. At length he came with the challenge. Phil took it, and read:

"You're a cur! Only a cur could have acted as you have acted towards young Wingrove. You tackled him because you were afraid to tackle any one bigger. If not, I'm going to give you a chance of making me eat my words. I'm ready to fight you when and where you like. So that the fight shall be fair, I'll bring

By the by, what did happen to the messenger who took the last challenge?"

"There's no time to go into that now. I want that challenge to reach Ormerod as soon as possible."

Phil hesitated no longer, but ran off with the note.

"Wonder what Ormerod will have to say to it, and to my being the messenger?" he thought. "The challenge is straight enough, and I don't see how he can refuse to answer it this time."

His passport had been agreed on at St. Cecilia's. He had only to write on a slip of paper the one word, "Fool," and send it in by the porter. The porter took in the mystic word, and a few minutes later Ormerod came to him.

"It's as well you've come," he said angrily. "I've been waiting to hear from you."

"Hear from me about what?"

"Don't act the fool with me, as you do with the pauper crowd at Athol House. I'm not to be played with, I tell you. What did you mean by rushing into the barn the other night, and spoiling our game with young Wingrove. A minute more and we should have got from him all we wanted."

"A minute more and you might have had him raving. He was nearly beside himself as it was. Thank your lucky stars that he wasn't drowned; then there would have been a great outcry, and everything would have been gone into. The position of the



Two dusky, white-clad figures strode into the gymnasium, and, catching sight of Carew and his companions, they salaamed to the ground almost.

my own second, and you can bring yours. I'm also willing that a dozen fellows from each college shall come and see the fight. I'm so anxious that the fight shall come off that I'm open to any suggestion you may make.

"JACK CAREW.

"P.S.—Last time we sent a challenge to you, you ill-treated our messenger. You remember what happened after. Don't attempt any tricks with our messenger this time. He's not such a fool as he looks."

"Not such a fool as he looks—ha, ha!" laughed Phil. "That's smart, hanged if it ain't! All out of your own head, I suppose? Which would you rather be, Carrie—"

"Carew, please."

"Which would you rather be? As great a fool as you are, or as great a fool as you look—eh?"

"Don't ask me any of your asinine conundrums. Be serious for once. What do you think of the challenge?"

"It's all right, especially the P.S. That's what I like best of all."

"You know exactly what's in it, and what's likely to happen. I want to be quite fair to you. Are you still willing to take my challenge?"

"Of course I am. Stick it down. Don't you worry about what's going to happen to me. Think about what may happen to yourself. Ormerod's hot stuff."

"How do you know?"

"Everyone says so; and didn't I see something of him the other night.

strong, brutal nature of Ormerod there was a great deal of craft. For the first time it occurred to Phil that he had managed to keep a good deal in the background in the first scene that had taken place in the barn; that he had managed to keep out of the way till—the scene in which Sturgis had come to grief—the mischief had been done; and that then he had burked inquiry by keeping back information which he alone possessed.

"I don't know what you mean by playing the game a little better," answered Phil. "If what happened in the barn the other night is your way, then I don't think much of it, and I tell you plainly, it isn't the tack I'm going on, and you needn't expect much help from me."

"Is that it? You mean ratting against me, do you? You've got plenty of Mr. Sturgis's money, and now you've got swelled head, and think that you're going to work on your own go-as-you-please—eh? Is that it? Well, I'm very sorry to remind you of your true position. Have you already forgotten the letter I handed to you from Mr. Sturgis when you first came to Athol House?"

"What part have I forgotten?" Phil inquired a little uncomfortably.

"That you are under my orders; that so long as you are at Athol House, spending the millionaire's money, you're under my instructions."

"I remember the letter, every word of it, I think, but not that part of it."

"That is because it suits you to forget it. Do you remember this part—'Play your part well, and your fortune's made; play it ill, and you'll go back to the life from which you've come.'"

"Yes, I remember that part," Phil admitted.

"I'm glad to hear it. Then understand a word from me to Mr. Sturgis telling him that you are making a mess of things, and playing your part ill, and your life at Athol House will be over. Back you go to the gutter from which you came."

Ormerod flung out the words contemptuously.

Phil clenched his fists. He felt like knocking him down. He would have given anything to have been perfectly free at that moment; but he felt that there was a good deal of truth behind the bitter words of Ormerod. It was in his power to crush him. A word from him, and his life at Athol House might be brought to a speedy end, and all chance of the fortune that had seemed at his finger-ends might have been wrested from him. Powerless to answer him with his fists, he was equally powerless to retort with his tongue.

"Do we understand one another?" Ormerod went on, watching Phil narrowly to see the effect of his words. "Play the fool to those microbes at Athol House—the greater fool the better—but don't experiment on me."

Still Phil was dumb, though burning all over. Ormerod was on the point of turning on his heel, when Phil suddenly remembered the purpose which had brought him there.

"One minute; I've a letter for you."

"A letter for me?" questioned Ormerod facing him again.

Phil handed him Carew's challenge. Phil watched him as he read. The blood surged to his brow, the letter quivered in his hand.

"Do you know the fellow who sent this letter to me?" he asked, in a voice choking with suppressed rage.

"Of course I do. Quite well. Jack Carew."

"And you know what is in this letter?"

"He gave it to me to read before he closed it."

"Then you know that he calls me a cur, and that he challenges me to fight him?"

"Yes."

"Why did you act as his messenger, knowing what his message was?"

"He asked me, and it was only polite of me to oblige him. Besides, I thought I was doing you a good turn; and that you would be grateful to me, and only too ready to oblige him in return. I know I should if a fellow called me a cur, and a few of the other nice things in that letter. I should be bursting to get at him and do my best to make him eat his words."

"You would, would you!" answered Ormerod curiously. "You're a greater fire-eater than I took you for. You know how to use your fists, then?"

THE FOOL OF THE COLLEGE. (Continued from the previous page.)

"Well, I can just manage to look after myself when there's any milling about." Ormerod's wrath had cooled down. He was considering his answer. "I don't write to offal like this Carew seems to be," he presently said, with biting deliberation. "As you've been so obliging to bring his message to me, perhaps you'll take mine back to him. Tell him that I'll be waiting for him at the gravel pit next Wednesday at three o'clock, when I'll give to his insolent letter the answer it deserves."

couple of dusky figures in turbans stood in the doorway. A loose white mantle hung from their shoulders to their heels in true Eastern fashion. The turban of one, evidently the servitor, was quite plain; while the turban of the other, evidently the master, sparkled with jewels. "Salaam!" exclaimed the servitor. "The sahib, Nana Nizam." He salaamed to the ground as he spoke, first to Carew & Co., then with profound reverence to Nana. "My word, it's the young Indian nabob!" Creswick whispered. "Suppose we'd better follow suit."

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in the turban. Weight's turban, on the other hand, was perfectly plain, in keeping with his inferior rank. Before donning their disguise, they had arranged a number of presents, which had been placed in Carew's dormitory ready for presentation. Everything being in readiness for their scheme, they made their way unobserved to the gymnasium, where they knew that Carew and his companions would be found. Behind the gymnasium they had secreted a bundle. In this bundle were a couple of sheets. These they threw over their shoulders after the fashion of the natives of Bengal. Thus disguised, they had made their appearance in the manner we have described before the astonished boys in the gym. The success that had attended their little comedy delighted Phil and Weight. The appearance of the Head just after they had left the gym, was extremely disconcerting, however. "I don't think he's seen us. Quick!" said Phil, half dragging Weight behind the gym. But barely had they got to a position in which they were concealed from the observation of the master, when a cry of amazement came from the opposite direction. It was from Sprouts, the porter. Phil saw that there was nothing for it but to go on with the part he had intended dropping. "Salaam!" he gravely exclaimed, making his bow. "Eh? What! Who's he? Sarloom! Don't know him? Who are you? Blow me, you're the Indian covey we're hexpectin', ain't you?"

The Native from Bengal. ON the Monday following the events just recorded, Athol House was in a state of considerable excitement. Nana Nizam, the native from Bengal, was to arrive at the college. Carew was in the gym with Creswick, Hedder, and Lawler that same evening. He and Lawler were having a turn with the boxing-gloves. In view of his forthcoming engagement with Ormerod, Carew thought it as well to have a little practice. Just as Carew was sparring for an opening, there was a tap at the door, it opened, and to their amazement a

"Oh, hang it, I can't think of accepting it, sahib." "Boshee, boshee! Squashee, squashee! It is yours. I will hear no more. Diamonds are as dust in the country that I come from. Will you give me the names of your chummeys-chums?" Creswick introduced Carew, Hedder, and Lawley by name. "I'm from the land of stars and stripes—the spangled banner, the hub of the universe, my young nabob!" exclaimed Hedder proudly. "The land of tars and tripe—that is good. I am glad to meet you. Well, chummeys Engeleesch, Hassam, my servant, will place in your room some little token of a sahib's regard. I go to meetey the master sahib. Salaam!" He made another profound salaam, then gathering his mantle majestically round him, stepped with princely dignity through the door. Immediately closing it, he leaned against it, and did a strange thing. He gurgled with laughter, till it seemed as though the dusky face would burst with apoplexy. "Hold up, sahib!" said the servitor, coming to his assistance with difficulty, as he likewise appeared at the point of suffocation. "Pull yourself together, Latham. Here comes the Head." And Phil—for he it was—pulled

himself together, just as the master came towards them from the college. How Phil Escaped the Master and Scored off the Porter. HOW was it, the reader is asking himself, that Phil came to make his appearance in the gym in the extraordinary character he had assumed? Directly he gained information as to the time that the Bengalese boy was expected at the college, he at once determined to see if it was possible to play his part for the benefit of Carew, Creswick, & Co. In order to carry out his purpose, he took Weight, the slim boy with the remarkable appetite, into his confidence. Weight was to be his servitor. The time selected for the plot was an hour before that expected for the arrival of Nana Nizam. First of all, they staid their faces to a dusky hue; then they donned turbans, which Phil had skilfully manipulated from a couple of bath towels. The only difference between them was that Phil had stuck in his turban a quantity of paste jewellery which he had purchased for a few coppers, so that it appeared to be a glittering mass of diamonds. His fingers were also covered with an extraordinary assortment of rings, likewise set with diamonds of the same quality as those

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DICK ELTON, a plucky young page-boy in the employ of SIR GARNET ROYAL, a famous naval architect, who has just completed the plans of a new dreadnought—H.M.S. Mammoth—for the British Government. The enormous vessel is to be constructed at a big ship-building yard near Barking, on the Thames. CYRUS BRIANT, Sir Garnet's nephew, an underhand, unscrupulous fellow, who has managed to worm his way into his uncle's favour. Briant has taken a violent dislike to Dick Elton, and does all he can to spite the boy.

Sir Garnet Royal lives in a lonely mansion on the borders of Epping Forest. One evening the old baronet sets out for his usual walk, and when darkness falls he is still absent. Dick starts out to meet him, but Cyrus Briant orders him back, an act which rouses Dick's suspicions.

Later, Sir Garnet is discovered on the fringe of the forest, not many yards from his workshop, lying stunned and helpless. He has been the victim of

a vicious attack,

and some fiery spirit has been thrown in his face. A doctor and a detective are summoned, and to the sorrow of all the former announces that the old baronet has been rendered stone-blind. The detective brings to light the fact that the safe in Sir Garnet's workshop has been opened, and the plans of the new battleship have been stolen.

The following day, taking advantage of his temporary position as ruler of the house, Briant dismisses Dick Elton.

Dick makes his way to Ingelstone, where his widowed mother lives, and there falls in with an old chum of his, a blacksmith named Ben Mugget. The latter has just made up his mind to make his way to Barking and apply for employment on the construction of the new British dreadnought. Dick, struck by the idea, decides to accompany Ben.

The same night the two lads set out for Barking on foot, and on their way they witness

a mysterious interview

between Cyrus Briant and a certain Mr. Jelfer, the designer of the plans of a Chilean warship which is also being constructed at Barking.

Both Dick and Ben are successful in getting employment, the one as a messenger and the other as a blacksmith.

The house where the two lads obtain lodgings backs on to a narrow, sluggish canal, and on the further side is a mysterious Chinese opium den.

Dick falls in with Inspector Studgrave, the detective who had taken the case of Sir Garnet Royal in hand. His investigations bring him to the dockyards at Barking, and he tells Dick that he is slowly getting to the bottom of a treacherous and deeply-laid plot. Disguised as a sailor, Studgrave takes a room in the same house as the two lads, and tells them a strange tale in their room that night.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Broken Rivet.

"WHAT are you wondering about?" asked the inspector.

"Don't you think we ought to tell, Ben?" Dick said to his chum. And Ben nodded. "I was wondering, inspector, about something we saw the other night. A suspicious meeting between Mr. Cyrus Briant—"

"Sir Garnet's nephew who's in charge of the designs of the Mammoth? Yes, yes." The detective's tone was very eager. "A meeting between him and—"

"A man named Jelfer?"

"Jelfer? J. Jelfer?" gasped Studgrave. "J. J. J. as they call him, that Yankee who designed the warship Ogre for the Chilean Government? You mean to say that Cyrus Briant met him, that you witnessed the meeting?"

"Yes," Dick answered; and quickly told all he knew.

Studgrave paced the room, his brow furrowed in thought, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"This confirms my suspicions," he said. "I have felt for some time that there was treacherous work afoot. Why should Briant go to Jellow's Yard in disguise, and at such a time of night? Why should he be on secretly confidential terms with this Yankee? I tell you there

are traitors about—traitors to their country. What's that?"

He pointed to something lying on the table. Dick had placed it there on his first arrival home.

"Oh, that! It was that that burnt my hand to-day. That's a rivet—"

"Or part of one," muttered Studgrave, examining it through a lens which he drew from his pocket. "I say, Ben," he exclaimed suddenly, "you know something of this sort of thing. Ever see a rivet like that?"

"Different pattern from what we've been working with," Ben answered. "I said so to-day directly I saw it."

"Never mind the pattern; look at the core—supposed to be finest steel throughout. But look at the core, I say."

He had rubbed the end clear of dirt, and now passed the broken rivet, together with his lens, to Ben.

"Why, it ain't solid at all!" exclaimed the young smith. "It's only a thin tube of steel filled in with soft metal!"

"Yes," cried the detective; "you can tear the core with your nail."

"Lead! Nothing more than lead!" Ben panted, his usually placid face all excitement. "It would be treachery indeed to use such things on a ship's plate. But they wouldn't do it—they wouldn't do it!"

"Wouldn't they?" Studgrave said, with narrowing eyes and hardening mouth. "Well, it's my belief they are using them."

"Not on the Mammoth?"

"Yes, on the Mammoth!"

"But I know the rivets I've had anything to do with are all right."

"You may think so, and perhaps they are, but there are one or two squads of riveters on the nightshift who I can't quite make out. I don't know what nationality they belong to, but they're foreigners of some sort. That's a breach of the contract to begin with. None but Britishers are supposed to work on the Mammoth. I suppose the excuse would be that they can't get enough riveters."

"But even foreigners wouldn't do a thing like that," Ben said. "Why, it would be murder to rivet plates with things like this. The ship would fall to pieces in a rough sea, and as to standing a shot—well, I tell you it would be murder, and nothing else."

Inspector Studgrave had listened, but he had listened standing. He nodded only in answer, and raised a hand to signal silence.

Distinctly to the three listeners a sound came up out of the night. The swish of oars!

Studgrave craned his neck out of the window, his chin on the sill.

"A boat!" he whispered. "A rowing boat! Two men in it. They're stopping opposite."

On the Silent River.

THE dull rattle of rowlocks sounded as the oars were shipped. Silently Dick and Ben bent forward to the window, and peered out.

Low on the breast of the water lay a dark, lean-looking skiff. A man was standing up in her with a scull held aloft at arm's-length. The blade grated along the ledge of the window overhead as a signal to those within. In the stern, holding the rudder lines, another man sat. Dick peered at him through the darkness.

"It's Pyson," he said. Studgrave nodded, holding up his hand again to enjoin silence. Figures loomed at the window opposite. Two yellow hands, gripping a small sack by the neck, protruded over the sill. It was the Chinaman.

A rope was fastened to the sack by a hook. Without a word, the Chinaman and the other with him lowered the sack into the boat. The man below eased it down, stowing it away at the bottom. A second sack was lowered, and then a third.

The man in the boat sat down, waved adieu to those above, gripped the oars, and pulled steadily along the canal.

"They're going towards the river,

as I expected," whispered Studgrave. "Quick, we must be going. We must follow them."

They were fully dressed, and ready to go. Without a word, all three descended the stairs.

From the grey tower of Limehouse Church the hour of midnight boomed.

Studgrave seemed to have foreseen what was to happen. All his plans were apparently made. With scarcely a word, he led the way along the narrow street that ran parallel with the canal. In two or three minutes he turned. Before them loomed the old brick bridge which they had seen from their window. They approached it stealthily, and peered over the parapet. The boat was coming steadily along, one man sculling, and Pyson still holding the rudder lines.

It shot beneath the bridge. The three watchers saw it emerge on the other side. They stood where they were for a minute or two, then Studgrave whispered:

"This way. We must keep that boat in sight without being seen. We shall have to lose sight of her for a few minutes though, but we shall see her again presently."

He crossed the bridge, turned to the right, and then to the left. It was plain he was quite familiar with the neighbourhood. He traversed winding ways unerringly. Presently he dived down a narrow passage running between two towering warehouses, and all open to the grey sky.

A minute or two afterwards, and the broad, silent river came into view. Its broad expanse was broken by many moving barges, drifting along like tiny floating islands. Under the shadow of the warehouses, big cargo boats were here and there moored. Far as the eye could see, the river was flecked by red and yellow lights that blinked dully through the mist.

The three stood upon a sort of quay, from which a crumbling old jetty thrust itself out like a crooked arm.

Studgrave leapt on to a mud bank, the others followed. The jetty upon their right hand screened them from the view of anybody who might chance to be on the other side. Out towards the end Studgrave hurried. Suddenly he stopped, and gave a low, throaty cough.

As at a signal, a man moved out from the jetty's shadow.

"All right, Jadson," whispered Studgrave. "Everything ready?"

"Yes, sir. I've got the boat here, all ready to push off. I've seen nothing of 'em yet, though, sir."

"No, we're first. But they'll be along in a few minutes. Watch the canal mouth."

All moved to beneath the obscuring piles by which the jetty was supported. Amongst these at the very water's edge, the rowing-boat was drawn.

All eyes were turned up river. Across the stretch of mud bank bordering the river came once more the sound of oars in rowlocks. Round the end of a wharf fifty yards away something thrust itself like a black figure. It took more definite form as it heaved out into mid-channel.

It was the boat containing Pyson and the other man.

Keenly Studgrave and the others eyed it as it made down river. They let it get a start of two hundred yards, then Studgrave turned to Dick and Ben.

"Into the boat!" he ordered. "Sit together in the stern. One of you can steer."

He and the man addressed as Jadson bent low, and pushed the boat over the mud till she floated. Then they jumped aboard, and seized the oars.

They pulled out towards the middle of the river.

"Eyesight good, Dick?" queried Studgrave. "Can you see the other boat?"

"Yes; she's threading her way between the barges yonder."

"Right! Keep her in view. That's your job for the present. See that she doesn't gain on us, or we on them. We mustn't be seen, whatever happens."

"Where are we going?" Dick asked.

"Can't tell you exactly, sonny, but we're going to follow that boat. I

don't know where they're making for exactly, but it's somewhere a goodish way down. I've suspected for some time that the gang to which these two men belong have got a place on the Essex marshes. I've tried to follow them before, but it was impossible from the bank. This is the first time I've had a boat ready. Now don't talk more than is necessary. If I'm not mistaken, we shall want all our breath for what we've got to go through."

The Unseen Watchers.

HOURS passed, and through them all that grim shadowing of one boat by another continued.

Blackwall and the Albert Docks had long ago been passed. Woolwich, with its mighty arsenal, had frowned across in the darkness from their right, and was now miles behind. On the Essex shore Jellow's Shipbuilding Yard, with its flaring lights and its many bright, white shafts of acetylene gas, had dazzled their eyes for ten minutes, ere, rowing steadily down river, the occupants of the boat had left it far behind them.

And now the river, ever widening, was changing its aspect. Not so much traffic here, though even now heavy barges occasionally floated past, propelled slowly by huge, unwieldy oars. Some there were at anchor, too, with a likelihood of there being more presently.

For the river and the low-lying marshlands stretching away on either shore were becoming obscured by a cold, clammy mist that threatened to deepen into such a fog as few waterways produced more frequently than the Thames.

But if the larger craft deemed it wise to anchor till the fog should pass away, the boat in which Pyson and the other man were kept on its course.

The other boat, propelled by the powerful arms of Studgrave and Jadson, followed in its wake. The gathering mist often hid the first boat from view. Yet they dare not approach too close lest the swish of their oars should betray their presence. The slightest sound carries so easily by water, and even such conversation as those in the pursuers' boat indulged in had to be carried on in the most careful undertones.

We often think of drama as representing violence and swift action, but drama of even a more thrilling sort may occur amid a wrapping of strictest silence. To Dick and Ben, seated in the stern of the pursuing boat, that silent chase down the dark river was thrilling indeed.

The very stillness made the scene the more eerie. And how strange this chase that had not for its object the overtaking of its quarry, but only the shadowing of it. Ever their eyes for mile after mile were fixed upon that low-lying boat which, at that distance off, looked as vague as a shapeless, floating log, and oftentimes as unsubstantial as a shadow.

"Difficult to know where we are?" whispered Studgrave, resting on his oars for a moment, and peering across to the Essex shore. "But we can't be far off Purfleet. Hist! What's that?"

From ahead of them, over the murky water came a low, melancholy hoot.

"Might be an owl," whispered Ben, in a tone of awe that accorded well with the uncanny surroundings.

"So it might, my lad, but it isn't. Owls don't take to the middle of the river. It came from the boat. It's a signal. There 'tis again!"

"And there's the answer!" Dick said quickly.

All eyes turned to the Essex shore. Two lights, blurred by the fog, were dancing about like will-o'-the-wisps.

"Aho! aho!" came in a low, challenging voice. "Who comes there?"

"Friends!" came the reply in Pyson's voice, as he steered the boat inshore. "Show a light, will you? This fog's as thick as peasoup, and mighty awkward for landing."

"Right-ho! Wait just a second." Across the silent water came a clicking sound. It was followed by a slight whirr.

"Back water!" exclaimed Studgrave quickly. "Back water, for all you're worth!"

The boat moved up river for perhaps a length of itself.

Not a moment too soon. From the shore across the space where they had been there shot with startling suddenness a shaft of light like a blurred sunbeam.

It came from a searchlight, worked from a small landing-stage close to the bank, and showed in its pale

yellow glow the other boat being rapidly pulled in.

In five seconds the boat was alongside. The shaft from the searchlight disappeared like the flame of a snuffed candle.

Breathlessly the four people in the other boat strained eyes and ears. In the faint glow of the will-o'-the-wisp lanterns they could see figures of stooping men hauling at those heavy sacks.

Presently lights and figures began to recede.

"All landed!" whispered Studgrave. "We must land, too, and follow them."

Quickly they pulled in shore, and ran aground some forty yards higher than the landing-stage.

Studgrave leapt on to the mud bank, the others following suit.

"There's a jut of bank here," the detective said. "Haul the boat up. She'll be out of sight there."

Two minutes of hauling, and the job was done.

They stood upon the bank, cautiously peering inland. Across the marsh came those dull blobs of light again. They followed them, halting when they seemed to halt, and moving when they seemed to move. Progress was slow. These marshlands were spongy and uncertain. Occasionally one or other of the party would squelch into the soft ground, and the water would ooze over the ankles.

"I can't understand where they're making for," Dick muttered. "There are no buildings in sight any way."

"Wait a bit, sonny, and we shall no doubt find out what it means. Seem to have halted there ahead, don't they?"

"Yes," returned Dick, looking forward. "One of those lights seems to be disappearing, sinking clean into the earth. And look, there's the other one doing the same thing!"

It was even as Dick had said. One after another the lanterns disappeared from view, and with them the figures of the men who had been carrying them.

Studgrave and his party moved cautiously forward. They neared the spot where the others had disappeared. The fog had suddenly become thicker, so that they could only see a few yards ahead of them.

Ben, in his eagerness, had got a little in advance of the rest. A sudden low cry from him made everybody start.

"Ben!" cried Dick in alarm, as he ran forward. "What is it? Why, where are you?"

No sign of Ben could he see.

"Ben! Ben!" he cried again. "Hush, not so loud, and be careful, for Heaven's sake!"

It was Ben's voice. It seemed to come, not from the level ground, but from somewhere below, as out of a pit. The direction of the sound made Dick halt.

It was lucky he did so, for as he stopped a puff of wind cleared the mist a little, and Dick was startled to find himself standing on the very brink of a pit.

Down below him, at a depth of about fifteen feet, was Ben.

He had fallen upon a heap of dry rushes, and was not very much hurt. He was in the act of rising to his feet, when he beheld Dick peering down in alarm. Up went his hand as a signal for silence. With the other hand he pointed forward.

"They're over there," he said, in a whisper. "I can hear them moving about."

He pointed forward to the other end of what seemed like a big pit.

Studgrave and the other had come up at a signal from Dick. All looked forward.

At a distance of some thirty yards, built against the side of the pit itself,

(Continued on the next page.)

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was a long hutlike structure. It was based with concrete, topped by banks of turf, and rooted with big, weather-beaten beams. The place where they now were was, in fact, part of an old ruined fort, built nearly a hundred years before to command the river, and to repel an expected invasion by Napoleon.

The mist had cleared temporarily. Studgrave had taken in their surroundings at a glance.

"Here we are! This way!" he whispered.

And moving to the right, he led the way down some rough, timbered steps.

They were beside Ben in a moment. "No; I'm not hurt," he explained, in answer to their questions. "I was lucky enough to fall on that heap of rushes, so I got off with nothing more than a jar. Listen! Can you hear them?"

The murmur of low voices came from the turf hut.

Stealthily they moved across the broad, deep base of the ancient earth-work, for it was that rather than an ordinary pit.

All was complete darkness, for of window the pit showed no sign.

Silently they crept along the base of the turf and concrete wall. At the end Studgrave halted.

"There's a door," he whispered—"a curious sort of door, and it appears to be the only one."

He pointed forward to a low-pitched arch. It was narrow, and not more than four feet high. The entrance to this aperture was blocked by a door of enormous thickness—a ponderous, roughly-finished slab of ancient oak, plated with broad sheets of iron and heavily studded with big-headed nails. It suggested the entrance to an ancient vault or crypt rather than anything else.

Studgrave's eyes went down to the big keyhole.

"Stopped up!" he muttered, raising his head immediately. "They're mighty careful that nobody shall see in."

"Or hear them, either," Ben said. "What a way off their voices seem."

And indeed the murmuring, which could be faintly heard, seemed to come from quite a distance.

"I wish we could get a sight of them," the detective said, "but I don't see how to do it. They'd hear us if we tried to force the door, and that would spoil our game. Well, Dick, what's up now?"

Dick had moved away to the further side of the long hut. He was beckoning the others to come there. In a few seconds they were at his side.

"See there!" he whispered, pointing to the timbered roof. "One of the beams has dropped an inch or two, and there's a space there that I might see through."

"So you could, sonny—so you could! But how can you get up? You might stand on my shoulders, but you'd be short of the sloping roof then by three or four feet. How can you manage it?"

"I know," said Dick. "We must do what I've seen the acrobats do in the circus. I'll show you what I mean. You stand here, inspector, and you, Mr. Jadson, stand alongside him. There! That's right! Now then, Ben, if you can climb to their shoulders—"

"That's easy!" Ben said, and was up in a twinkling, with one foot on Studgrave's shoulders and one on Jadson's. "I'm all right," he said; "but we're as far off as ever, Dick."

"Yes; I know we are at present, but we'll manage the job in a minute. Could you lift me up with one hand, Ben?"

"Ay, I could manage twice your weight!" answered the young giant. "Then bend down!"

"Right you are; I'm ready!"

"Now hoist!"

Ben took a grip of Dick's coat-collar. With a mighty swing he lifted him from the ground and through the air. With one movement he hoisted him on to his own shoulders and straightened himself at the same time.

"Bravo!" said Dick, from the top of this human pyramid. "Now I'm all right!"

He was indeed well abreast of the bottom of the sloping roof. He clawed at a rounded beam, then drawing himself upward, lay flat upon the roof.

Ben, freed from his burden, slid down silently to the ground.

Backing a bit, the three watched Dick as he drew himself slowly upward. In a few moments he was lying with his eyes glued to the space between the parted beams.

"Can you see anything?" whispered Studgrave.

Dick raised his head to show a face all working with excitement.

"Yes," he said; "I can see lots of things. I'll tell you presently. Let me take it all in first."

Again his eye went down to the aperture.

Truly, what he saw within was sufficiently surprising. The hut was fitted up like an engineer's shop. By the light of several powerful oil-lamps Dick could see a curious-looking lathe at which two men were working. Near to them stood Pyson, the other man who had come in the boat with him, and two others who had met them at the landing-stage.

Close to them lay the three sacks, now empty. What they had held was represented by the three heaps which lay close by.

Three heaps of bright burnished things—rivets, such as were used for the plates of the great warship.

Why had they brought those things there?

The sudden whirring of the lathe drew Dick's eyes to it, and he saw in a moment.

One by one the rivets were fitted into a revolving groove. A borer of highly-tempered steel was brought to work upon the core. Through a slot in the lathe fell a stream of steel filings, while from the other end, to which they were gradually worked, fell rivet after rivet.

But in what a changed form! No longer were they durable lengths of solid steel. The lathe had bored out their heart, transforming them into mere tubular jackets or casings, hollow as a gaspipe, and but very little stronger.

As the bright tubes of steel fell from the lathe into a basket, another man came forward, and taking the basket, carried it to the further end of the hut.

There, bending over a stove, was still another man. He was thrusting an iron ladle into a cauldron of molten lead. His companion, the one with the basket, busied himself by fixing a score of the hollowed rivets into an upright frame, grooved and slotted especially for their reception. Deftly the man with the ladle filled up the steel tubes with lead.

Dick gasped as he took in all these operations. He could see what they meant now, could believe that Inspector Studgrave's suspicions were only too well founded.

There was treachery afoot—treachery of the basest sort. These weakened, lead-filled rivets were being used for the plates of the Mammoth!

Those connected with this vile conspiracy well knew that plates so riveted would never stand the buffetings of an angry sea, let alone the pounding of shells upon them from the enemy's ships.

But how was such a conspiracy being carried out? Surely not solely by these rough, villainous men? Someone else must be in it—someone in high authority who could so arrange matters that the existence of these faulty rivets might not be suspected.

But who of such high authority could it be?

As if in answer to these exciting thoughts, a sound came to Dick's ears. He lifted his head, and peered over the roof of the hut.

Across the marshes he could descry three men. They had just stepped from a motor-car, which had pulled up on a rough road some distance away.

The fog had disappeared, and only a grey haze remained to obscure slightly the light of morning. In the east the sun was struggling to rise. By the light of this Dick could make out the three figures distinctly.

He started as he recognised Cyrus Briant and Jelfer J. Jelfer. The third figure, that of a well-dressed, distinguished-looking man, he had never seen before.

He turned and made a signal to those below.

"What is it?" asked Studgrave.

"Wait a moment till I come down, and I'll tell you."

He slid down the roof, and regardless of the height, leapt to the ground.

"Quick!" he said. "We must hide ourselves! There are some others coming—Cyrus Briant, Jelfer, and another!"

"Briant and Jelfer coming here! By Jupiter! Then we are in the thick of it. Yes; we must hide—we mustn't be seen!" exclaimed Studgrave. "Down, you fellows! Those rushes will cover us!"

He pointed to a piled-up heap similar to the one on to which Ben had fallen. All made for it. In a minute they had wriggled themselves out of sight.

Footsteps squelched upon the marsh

overhead. The three new-comers descended the steps to the old fort. Quickly they moved across towards the hut door.

Briant and Jelfer, sure enough. But the third figure, who was he?

Studgrave's eyes had fixed themselves upon him.

"Admiral Ranchard!" he said, with a gasp.

"Not the Admiral Ranchard?" Dick exclaimed.

"Yes; the famous British admiral—one of the Lords of the Admiralty!"

"Good heavens! Is it possible?"

"There's no doubt about it! I shouldn't have believed it, Dick, if I hadn't seen him. This is a deeper plot than even I suspected. It's a plot of vile treachery, of treason against this country, and one of the Lords of the Admiralty is taking a hand in it!"

A Traitor to His Flag.

THE detective's words numbed them to absolute silence.

Astonishment was written upon every face momentarily lifted to peer through the screen of rushes.

Admiral Ranchard! Was it possible, could it be possible that the man whose fame as a naval commander was world-wide, and whose career had made his name a household word, was leagued with other villains in so vile a conspiracy?



The human ladder was quickly formed, and clambering up until he gained Ben's shoulders, Dick grasped the edge of the roof.

It seemed incredible, out of all reason, too wildly improbable to be for a moment credited.

Yet there was the man before them, with a grin on his handsome, distinguished face. He was talking in low tones to Briant and Jelfer.

The three had halted at the door of another and smaller turf hut, separated from the bigger one by a space of some twenty yards.

Jelfer J. Jelfer, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, fitted one into the door of the small hut. He passed through, followed by the others. Five minutes later he emerged. Behind him came two other men.

Were they the same two who had entered the hut with him. They were, although it seemed nearly impossible. For both had changed their clothes, and had donned a false beard and wig, which quite transformed their appearance.

Dick Elton, peering at them from amid his covering of rushes, was not deceived.

"That's Cyrus Briant," he whispered. "I'd swear to his walk anywhere."

"Yes," answered Studgrave; "and the other's Admiral Ranchard. That disguise may deceive some people, but it doesn't deceive me. I've seen him too often at the Admiralty. Good heavens, how the plot is

thickening! This conspiracy is awful—awful! Look, they're going into the other place."

He lapsed into silence to watch the three new-comers approach the other hut.

Jelfer took the lead. Coming up to the door, he gave five distinct taps upon it.

"Who is it?" came from a voice within.

"Cantilever," returned Jelfer.

Instantly the door was opened. The three men passed in, and the doors were bolted and barred behind them.

"Cantilever!" repeated Studgrave. "That must be the secret password. I must remember it. It may be useful."

He raised his head. His face looked ghastly pale in the morning light.

"Are you ill, inspector?" whispered Dick in some alarm.

"I scarcely know," returned Studgrave. "I've been at Scotland Yard twenty years, and in that time I've had many strange experiences, but this—this beats all! A British admiral conspiring against his own country! Great heavens! What are things coming to? Awful, awful!"

He lapsed into deep thought, his strong mouth twitching with agitation.

"I was forgetting," he muttered, turning to Dick. "You haven't yet told me what you saw inside."

Dick told him.

"As I thought, just as I thought."

what I don't want. You understand? You're to go on just as usual."

Dick and Ben nodded.

A few minutes after the boat grated on the marsh. Studgrave and the two boys got out. With a few whispered words to his assistant Jadson, the detective led the way inland.

Within half an hour the three were seated together in the train.

"Are you coming with us, inspector?" Dick asked.

"No," returned Studgrave, starting as if out of a reverie. "I must go straight on to Scotland Yard and report. Mind, not a word from either of you to make those at the shipyard suspicious."

"Not a word. We'll be as secret as the grave. What do you think will happen, inspector?"

"I don't know. This job almost overwhelms me. Think of the sensation when I report this conspiracy, and show that a British Admiral is in it! There have been things known like this in other countries, but never in England before. If what I suspect turns out to be the truth, the scandal in which poor Dreyfus was concerned will be nothing to it. We're running into Barking now, and you get out here. Mind, not a word to anybody, not even the vaguest hint as to what you have seen."

Once more the boys gave the necessary promise, and the train drawing in along the platform, they bade good-bye to the detective and alighted.

It was still quite early, and they had time to obtain a refreshing wash before entering the Great Marsh Shipyard. Thanks to the ointment which Linacre had provided, Dick's burnt hand was in a fair way of recovery. Through the exciting night he had, indeed, almost forgotten his injury.

They were pretty tired after their adventures, but the sleep they had prudently obtained before setting out overnight had saved them from utter exhaustion. A wash, and a substantial breakfast obtained in a coffee house, enabled them to pull themselves together, and they were able to start work without drawing undue attention to themselves.

It was not without difficulty that Dick, for his part, was able to apply himself to his work. The exciting events of the night still ran through his mind.

After dinner that day, he and Ben, strolling about the yard down towards the river, discussed the matter in all its bearings. They wondered what Studgrave had done. He would, of course, report the matter to Scotland Yard, but would his superiors there refer the affair to the higher authorities at the Admiralty? What would result if they did?

Talking of these things, they had traversed the full length of the shipyard, and were walking along the side of the broad cutting giving on to the river.

Drawing nearer to the river, they suddenly became aware of a small boat which was being rapidly pulled in towards the landing-stage. Hereabouts was erected a huge electric floating crane, utilised for the lifting of boilers and other great weights up to 180 tons. Ordinarily this towering piece of giant mechanism (which previously they had not seen) would have claimed their instant attention.

Now, however, their eyes were attracted by something else.

The man in the small boat had ceased rowing, and had turned round. He had lifted a hand, and was making motions to the two boys who were looking at him.

"See who it is?" exclaimed Dick, in sudden excitement. "It's Jadson!"

"Yes, and he wants to see us. He's waving. Perhaps he's had a message from Studgrave. Come on, Dick!"

They turned, and at a run made for a point of the landing-stage towards which Jadson was making.

"Hi, where are you going?" came in a stern voice.

Dick turned his eyes quickly, to behold a man stepping from the platform of the floating crane on to the gangway leading to the landing-stage.

"It's Lotray," whispered Dick. "Take no notice of him. Pretend we haven't heard. We must see Jadson!"

"Where are you going?" yelled Lotray.

But the boys paid no heed to him. They dashed along, and leapt on to the landing-stage just as the boat came alongside.

"Jump in!" Jadson whispered. "I've something to say that'll be better said out of the hearing of anybody else."

(Another enthralling long instalment next week.)