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THE BOYS' FRIEND 1D

EVERY TUESDAY.

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No. 485.—Vol. X. New Series.]

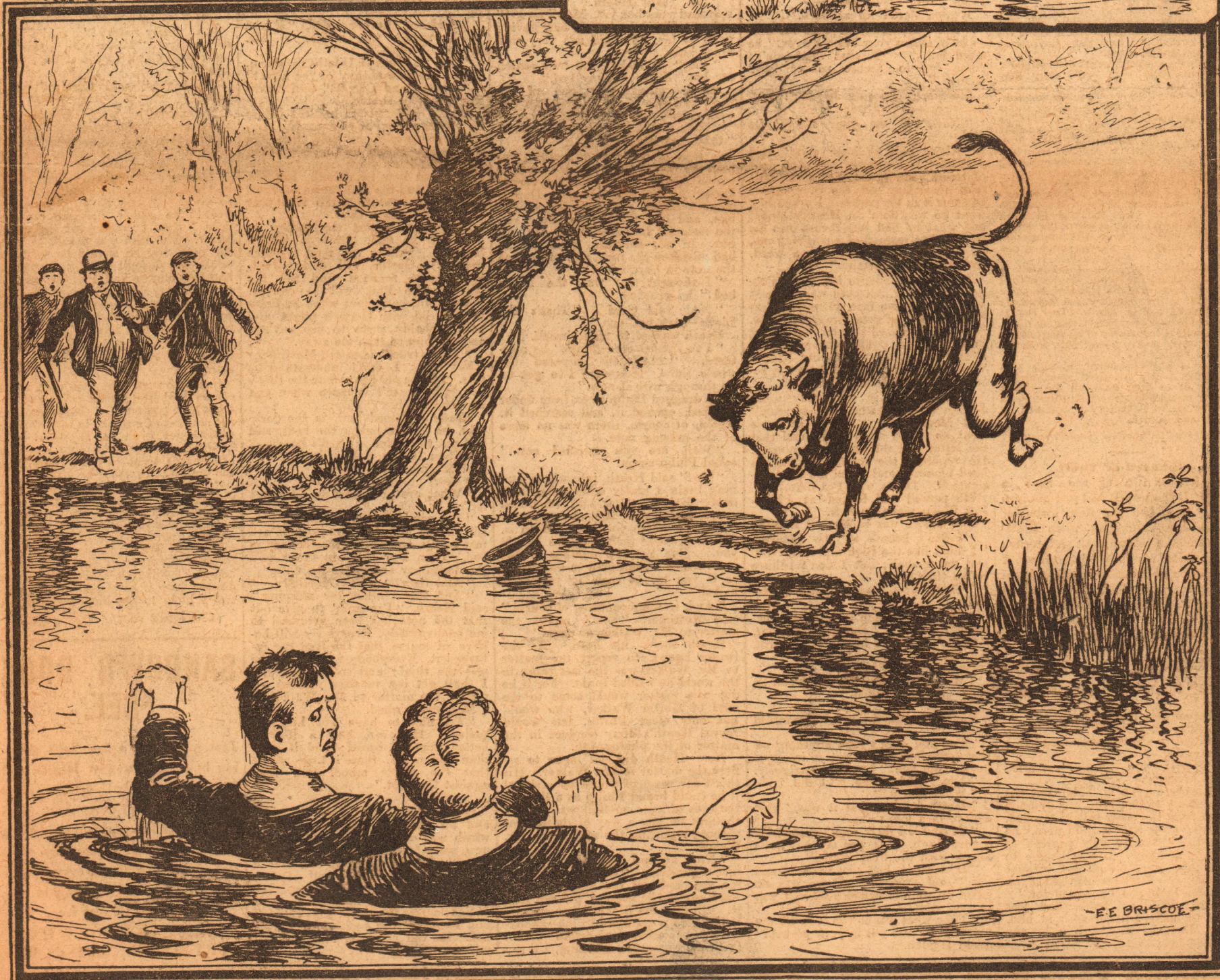
ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 24, 1910.]

THE BLOT

A Tale of Rayton College

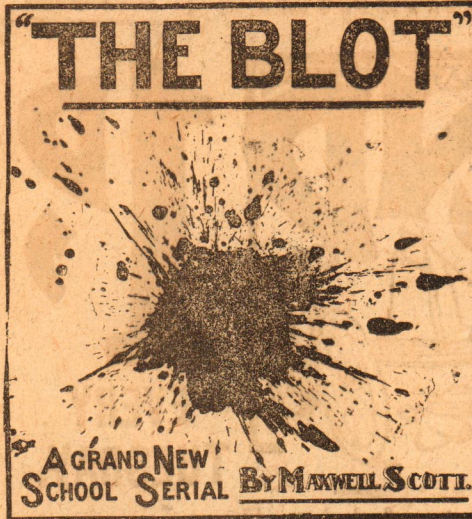
By Maxwell Scott.



E. E. BRISCOE

Incidents You Will Read of in This Week's Grand Chapters of our New School Serial. It's a Ripping Yarn!

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INTRODUCTION FOR THE NEW READER.

Philip Ashley is a brilliant lad at the Council School, but has declined an offer of a scholarship because of his mother, who is so poor that she has to char for her living.

But one day comes Phil's opportunity. Bravely he stops the maddened horses in Sir David Rendle's carriage, and saves the life of Elsie, his only child. It is the turning-point in Philip's career, for by way of reward Sir David sends him to Rayton College, equipping him down to the smallest detail, and also engaging the lad's mother as a well-paid housekeeper.

Phil starts, light-hearted and jubilant, on the journey to Rayton; but on the way

a terrible revolution

is made to him. Sir David's nephew, Godfrey Mortimer, who, in the presence of Phil's benefactor, has promised to shepherd him in his new surroundings, and show him every kindness possible between one schoolboy and another, turns out to be a humbug and a hypocrite.

No sooner is the train clear of Highfield than Mortimer stirs up trouble; but Phil sets upon him, and holds him in check till at the next station some more Raytonians enter the compartment.

The newcomers are friends of Mortimer's, and when they hear Phil's story they christen him "The Blot."

After being treated with much snobbishness, Phil arrives at Rayton College, and is made Mortimer's fag. On the night of his arrival Phil receives anything but a bright reception in his dormitory. His fellow-sleepers make a rush at him and strip him to the waist, afterwards liberally splashing his face, chest, and back with inky blots.

For some weeks Phil is ignored or badly treated. As the time of a great cricket-match comes round, however, Merrick, the school captain, hears that the Blot can bowl, and he is chosen as one of the eleven.

Phil turns up trumps, and through him alone the Raytonians win the match by one run.

A dastardly accusation of dishonesty is now brought against Philip. It so happened that the house-master's youngest daughter sent Phil to the room of one of Mortimer's companions, named Heath. The boy is reported to have been seen leaving the room, and Heath at once rushes to his apartments, and transfers a five pound note from his desk to Philip's box.

After a brief discussion, Heath's plan to search Ashley is agreed upon, and a quarter of an hour later, all the juniors having meanwhile retired, Mortimer leads the way up to Dormitory B, followed by Heath and Jordan.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

Accused of Theft.

ONE or two of the boys in Dormitory B had just got into bed, and the rest, including Philip, were undressing, when Mortimer strode in, with Heath and Jordan at his heels. Tubb had just taken off his boots, and had thrown one of them at Rigden. Rigden had ducked in the nick of time, and the boot, narrowly missing Mortimer, caught Heath a resounding whack on the side of the head.

"Who did that?" demanded Heath furiously.

"Did what?" inquired Tubb innocently.

"Threw that boot. Did you?"

"Guilty, my lord!" said Tubb. "But with a strong recommendation to mercy!"

"I'll give you mercy!" snarled Heath savagely.

He made a grab at Tubb, but the latter easily eluded him, and grinned at him from the other side of the bed.

"Keep your hair on, old man," he advised. "You've only yourself to blame, you know. If you choose to walk into our dormitory without knockin', you can't be surprised if you get more than you bargained for."

Heath glared at Tubb, and was about to make another rush at him, when Mortimer caught him by the arm and held him back.

"Don't be an ass!" said Mortimer, in a low voice. "We want the kids on our side in this business, and you're doin' your best to set 'em against us."

"That's all jolly fine," growled Heath; "but if you'd been hit on the head with the thick end of a boot, you wouldn't feel very sweet about it."

"I shouldn't," agreed Mortimer; "but I'd have sense to keep my feelin's to myself."

He turned to Tubb. "If you apologise to Heath," he said, "we'll say no more about it."

"A apologise!" snorted Tubb. "I like that! It's you who ought to apologise to us for comin' in without knockin'."

"Then we're quits," said Mortimer, who was determined not to lose his temper. "And now to business. Heath and Jordan and I have come here to-night because it has been reported to me, as head monitor of the House, that— But I'd better let Heath tell his own story. Tell 'em, Heath."

"This mornin'," said Heath, "I got a letter from my guv'nor enclosin' a five-pound note."

"Bloated millionaire!" murmured Tubb.

"Sure it wasn't a postal order for five bob?" inquired Card.

"Or five penny stamps?" suggested Rigden.

"I put the letter and the note on my study mantelpiece," continued Heath. "They were there three-quarters of an hour ago. They aren't there now. That's all."

Rigden flared up at once.

"Are you insinuat' that some of us have stolen your beastly fiver?" he cried hotly. "Is that what you've come for—to accuse us of bein' thieves?"

Mortimer, ignoring Rigden's outburst, turned to Jordan.

"Now, tell 'em your story," he said.

"About half an hour ago," said Jordan, "I was passin' the open door of Heath's study, and I saw the Blot take something off the mantelpiece and put it in his pocket. I asked him what he was doin' in Heath's study, and what he had just thrust into his pocket, but instead of answering me, he darted past me without a word, and rushed downstairs."

A grave-like silence fell on the assembled boys. All eyes were turned on Philip, whose face during the last few minutes had gone strangely white. For Philip realised that he was caught in a net from which there was no escape except by betraying Gertie Walker's secret. And that he was resolved he would never do.

"Heath was in my study when Jordan told him what he had seen," said Mortimer. "Heath at once went up to his study and found that the letter and the note were missin'. He reported the matter to me, as head monitor, and asked me to investigate it. That's why I'm here."

He paused and looked at Philip. But Philip made no sign.

The silence was broken by Rigden. "I don't believe it," he declared. "I don't like the Blot, and never did, and never shall; but I don't believe he's a thief!"

"Thank you," said Philip gratefully.

"Rigden's opinion is no doubt extremely valuable," sneered Mortimer, "but it's facts we have to deal with, not opinions."

He turned to Philip.

"Were you in Heath's study half an hour ago?" he asked.

"I was," said Philip.

Rigden regarded him with troubled eyes.

"But you didn't take anything off the mantelpiece and put it in your pocket, did you?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," said Philip. "I did."

"What was it?"

"Heath knows what it was," said Philip, in a low voice.

"Of course I do!" said Heath, with a curt laugh. "It was my guv'nor's letter, with the fiver inside."

"It was not, and you know it was not," said Philip. "There was no letter on the mantelpiece when I was in your study."

"Then what was it you took off the mantelpiece and put in your pocket?" asked Rigden.

"I cannot tell you," said Philip.

"Oh, but you must!"

"I cannot."

"Then tell us what you were doin' in Heath's study?" said Mortimer.

"I cannot."

Rigden made a last appeal.

"Look here, Blot," he said persuasively, "you don't seem to understand what an awful position you're in. You admit you went into Heath's study and took something off the mantelpiece, and put it in your pocket. Heath says it was a letter containin' a fiver. You say it wasn't. Speakin' for myself, I want to believe you, but I can't believe you unless you tell us what you took out of the study."

"I'm sorry," said Philip, "but I cannot tell you. My lips are sealed."

Rigden shrugged his shoulders and turned away. All the friendliness had gone out of his face now. He was now convinced that Philip had stolen the note. And his opinion was shared by all the rest of the boys, who regarded Philip with glances of mingled indignation and contempt.

"For the credit of the school," said Heath, "I don't want any public scandal if I can help it. If the Blot will confess and return my note, I'm willin' to let the matter drop."

"I haven't got your note, and you know I haven't!" said Philip passionately.

"Are you willing to be searched?" asked Mortimer.

Philip hesitated for a moment. He hated the idea of submitting to the indignity of being searched, but, knowing he had not the note, he decided to submit to the indignity as a means of proving his innocence.

"Yes, you can search me, if you like," he said.

Mortimer and Heath searched him; but, of course, they did not find the note.

"Well, are you satisfied now that I didn't steal the note?" asked Philip when they had finished.

"No," said Heath. "I haven't searched your box yet. May I do so?"

Again Philip hesitated, but, having gone so far, he could not very well draw back.

"Yes," he said, "you may search my box. It's under my bed."

Heath groped under one of the beds, and was about to drag the box out, when Card interrupted him.

"Here, I say, hold on," cried Card, "that's my box!"

A look of bitter mortification, unseen by the others, passed swiftly across Heath's face. As the reader knows, he had slipped up to Dormitory B before reporting his alleged loss, and had placed the letter and the note (as he thought) in Philip's box. In the darkness, however, he had mistaken the beds, and had placed the note in Card's box!

"I thought this was the Blot's bed!" he growled.

"No," said Card. "That's the Blot's—next but one."

Heath wanted to kick himself.

"I've spoiled everything!" he muttered. "Absolutely jiggered the whole show. However, I've got to go through with it now."

He dragged Philip's box from under the bed, opened it, and searched it. Again, of course, there was no trace of the missing note.

"Well, are you satisfied now?" asked Philip again.

"No!" said Heath, into whose cunning brain a crafty scheme had suddenly flashed. "I'm still convinced you stole the note, though I confess I can't find where you have hidden it. However, your theft will not benefit you. I've got the number of the note, which I shall give to the police, so if you try to cash it you'll be nailed."

"And, in the meantime, of course," said Mortimer, "you'll report the matter to Mr. Walker at once?"

Heath shook his head. As the reader knows, to report the matter to Mr. Walker was the last thing in the world he wished to do. For if he did the matter would come to the ears of Gertie Walker, who would not only clear Philip, but would reveal Heath's dirty conduct in the matter of the photograph.

No. Heath did not mean to report the matter to Mr. Walker. His thirst for revenge would be satisfied if he could brand Philip as a thief in the eyes of his schoolfellows. And he thought he saw a way of doing that without reporting the matter to Mr. Walker.

"No," he said, in reply to Mortimer's question. "As I said before, for the credit of the school I don't want any public scandal, if I can help it. I'll give the Blot another chance. If the note is returned to me—

anonymously or otherwise—before break-fast-time to-morrow morning, I'll say

no more about it. If it isn't, I shall

report the matter to Mr. Walker."

Saying which, he turned on his heel and strode away.

Shunned by the School.

MORTIMER was not at all satisfied with the way events were shaping. It is only fair to him to say that he really believed that Philip had stolen the note, and he had no patience with Heath's talk about "letting the matter drop" if the note was returned. Hating Philip as he did, he wanted to have him publicly convicted, publicly disgraced, and publicly expelled.

"Look here, old man," he said to Heath, when they reached his study, "I must say I don't at all approve of your idea of lettin' the matter drop if the Blot returns the note."

"Why not?" said Heath. "So long as I get my note back, why should I make any further fuss?"

"I thought you wanted revenge on the Blot for oustin' you from the eleven."

"And I've got my revenge! By to-morrow mornin' everybody in the school will know that the Blot is a thief. He'll be sent to Coventry, and nobody will have anythin' to do with him. That's revenge enough for me!"

"But it isn't enough for me!" said Mortimer vindictively. "I want him to be expelled, so that my uncle will cast him off and take no further interest in him. And the only way to get him expelled is to report the theft to Mr. Walker."

"Besides," he added, "the theft ought to be reported, anyhow. A robbery has been committed, and even though the stolen property is returned, it's our duty as monitors to report the matter to our House-master. We've no right to hush it up."

"And so," he concluded, "if you won't report the matter to Mr. Walker, I must."

"No, no!" cried Heath, in alarm. "You must do nothin' of the kind!"

"I must, and I shall!" said Mortimer. "Why shouldn't I?"

Heath hesitated for a while before he replied; then, after swearing Mortimer to secrecy, he told him the truth—how Philip had merely taken Gertie Walker's photograph from the study, and how he, Heath, had put the letter and the note (as he thought) in Philip's box, to make it appear that Philip was a thief.

"So if you report the matter to Walker," he said, "this is what'll happen. Walker will hold a public inquiry. Gertie will hear of it. She'll come forward and tell the truth. The Blot will be cleared. Walker will be furious when he hears what I did with Gertie's photo, and he'll probably write to my guv'nor and ask him to take me away."

"That's true," admitted Mortimer; "but what I don't understand is this. If you put the note in the Blot's box, why wasn't it there when you searched the box?"

Heath explained how, in the darkness, he had mistaken the beds, and had put the letter in Card's box.

"Then it's in Card's box now?"

said Mortimer.

"Yes."

"What are you goin' to do about it?"

"I'm goin' to wait an hour or two, till all the kids in Dormitory B are fast asleep, and all the masters are in bed. Then I'm goin' to creep into the dormitory and collar the note."

"And then?" asked Mortimer.

"And then, to-morrow morning," said Heath, "I'm goin' to give out that the note has been returned to me anonymously. Everybody will believe, of course, that the Blot has returned it. Everybody will believe he was the thief; and so in that way I shall get my revenge without reportin' the matter to Mr. Walker."

Mortimer sighed.

"I'd like to have got him expelled. However, half a loaf is better than no bread; and if your plan comes off, there's little doubt that the whole school will turn against the Blot."

It was two o'clock in the morning, and all the boys in Dormitory B, which was enshrouded in inky darkness, were fast asleep.

Softly the door opened, and Heath stole in. He had a small electric torch in his hand. He pressed the button, and sent a momentary flash of light across the room. This enabled him to locate the position of Card's bed. He did not wish to make any mistake this time.

Scarcely daring to breathe, he crept to Card's bedside and fell on his knees. Slowly and cautiously he drew the box from under the bed. The moment he raised the lid, however, the hinges gave out an unmusical squeak, and Card, who was the lightest of light sleepers, instantly awoke.

"Who's that?" he demanded, sitting up in bed and striving in vain to pierce the darkness.

Heath, with a gasp of dismay, leaped to his feet; but even as he did so, Card sprang out of bed and grabbed him by the arm.

"Help! Help!" he yelled.

Philip was the first to wake. As he jumped out of bed, Heath flung Card off and dashed towards the door. Card rushed blindly after him and collided with Philip. Each boy instantly seized the other, and by the time the rest of the boys had scrambled out of bed and had switched on the electric lights, Heath had made his escape, and had silently closed the door behind him.

"What's the giddy row?" asked Tubb, staring in bewilderment at Philip and Card, who were standing in the middle of the room, each holding the other tightly by the arm.

"I was awakened by somebody openin' my box," said Card. "I jumped out of bed and collared the chap, but he broke away. I shouted for help and bolted after him. I caught him again, and when you fellows switched the lights on I saw it was the Blot."

"More thievin'?" said Tubb.

"I expect so," said Card. "Anyhow, as you can see for yourselves, he had pulled my box from under the bed."

"I never did!" said Philip indignantly. "I never touched your box. I was asleep till your shout for help woke me. As I jumped out of bed, somebody ran into me. I seized you, but I didn't know who it was till the lights were turned on."

"A likely story!" said Tubb sneeringly. "Have you looked in your box, Card, to see if anything's missin'?"

"Not yet," said Card; "but I will."

He opened his box. The topmost thing was a suit of clothes. He removed this, and no sooner had he done so than he sprang to his feet with a shout of startled amazement.

"Heath's letter from his guv'nor!" he cried, holding the letter up for all to view. "And here's the missin' fiver!" he added, drawing out the note. "Now I understand the whole affair. The Blot was afraid to keep the note, lest he should be searched again. He daren't cash it, for Heath had told him he had kept the number of the note. So he decided to hide it in my box, hoping it would be found there and suspicion would be turned from him to me."

"It is false!" cried Philip hotly. "I never saw the note until this moment."

Card shrugged his shoulders. The others eyed Philip with glances of unspeakable contempt. There was not the shadow of a doubt in any of their minds—not even in Rigden's—that Philip had stolen the note and had afterwards tried to get rid of it in the manner suggested by Card.

"You dirty, low thief!" said Tubb, shaking his fist in Philip's face. "Why don't you go back to your pals in the slums instead of pollutin' us with your presence here? Bah! It makes me sick to think we have to breathe the same air as such a rotten bounder!"

Heath said he'd let the matter drop if he got his fiver back, but I hope to goodness he'll report

(Continued on the next page.)

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the matter to the Head and have you expelled."

Heath, however, knew a trick worth two of that. Card gave him the letter and the note at breakfast-time, and explained what had happened.

"You'll report him, won't you?" said Card.

"No," said Heath. "I have to think of the reputation of the school, you know. Now I've got my fiver back, I shall take no further steps."

Long before noon the news had spread throughout the whole school that Philip had stolen a five-pound note from Heath's study, and had afterwards been caught in the act of placing it in Card's box. The result was completely to kill the popularity which Philip had achieved by his wonderful bowling feat in the match against St. Benedict's. Once more he became an outcast and a leper, despised and cold-shouldered by all the school.

Merrick did not hear the news until late in the afternoon. He at once sought an interview with Philip.

"I say, Ashley," he said, "I've just heard that you're accused of having taken a five-pound note from Heath's study. There's no truth in the story, of course, is there?"

"Not an atom," said Philip.

"I was sure there wasn't," said Merrick. "They say you were seen to go into Heath's study last night, take something off the mantelpiece, and put it in your pocket. That's a lie, I suppose?"

"No," said Philip, in a low voice. "That part of the story, at any rate, is true."

Merrick looked surprised. "True, is it?" he said. "But why did you go to Heath's study?"

"I'm afraid I cannot tell you," said Philip. "It's a secret."

Merrick drew himself up.

"I have no wish to pry into your secrets, of course," he said stiffly, "but you can't expect your schoolfellows to accept your bare assertion that you are innocent unless you are prepared to explain what you were doing in Heath's study last night, and what it was you took off his mantelpiece and put in your pocket."

"I cannot explain," said Philip miserably.

"Not even to me, in confidence?"

"Not even to you."

Merrick's face grew hard and stern. "I have been your friend up to now," he said, "I should like to continue to be your friend; but I cannot be your friend if you act like this. On the contrary, if you persist in refusing to give any explanation of your presence in Heath's study, I shall have no alternative but to conclude that the charge against you is true. Come now! Tell me why you went into Heath's study. Tell me what it was you took off the mantelpiece and put in your pocket."

Philip shook his head. Tears were standing in his eyes.

"Merrick, believe me, I never stole Heath's note," he said in a husky voice; "but I—I cannot give you the explanation you ask."

"Then I have no choice but to believe you guilty," said Merrick coldly.

And with that he walked away, and Philip had lost his best friend at Rayton College.

The Half-Term Holiday.

THE next fortnight was by far the hardest and bitterest fortnight Philip had spent since his arrival at Rayton.

During the first weeks of his life at the school the boys had made a dead set against him on account of his humble parentage, but they had never been able to say anything against his private character. On the contrary, some of them, like Rigden, for instance, had spoken well of his courage, his truthfulness, and his sincerity. And Merrick, in the face of the whole school, had openly befriended him, and had given him a place in the First Eleven.

But all that was changed now. In the opinion of his schoolfellows he was not only a boy of low origin, he was also—which was far worse—a convicted thief. Even Rigden believed this. So did Merrick. All the boys, in fact, believed it; and whether it was in Form, or in Big Room, or on the playing-fields, they cut Philip dead, and plainly let him see that his presence was objectionable to them.

He had still to act as Mortimer's fag, and he had still to fag for Mortimer and his chums at the nets, but he was never asked to bowl again, and he was never asked to

take part in any of the matches. Merrick did not object to a charwoman's son in the First Eleven, so long as he was worth his place, but he drew the line at a thief.

It was terribly hard for Philip to bear, but never for a moment did he dream of clearing himself by betraying Gertie Walker's secret. In his letters to his mother he made no mention of the unhappy life he was leading, and in the few spare hours which his fagging duties left him he repaired to the little room in the outbuildings and read hard for the Beresford.

Two weeks after the alleged theft of Heath's banknote the middle of the summer term was reached. At most schools this event is celebrated by an extra half-holiday. At Rayton College it was celebrated in this way:

In the first place, on the Saturday nearest to the middle of the term, the usual half-holiday was converted into a whole holiday. And in the second place, if any of the boys' parents, or guardians, or friends choose to invite them to stay with them for the week-end, the boys were allowed to leave the school immediately after breakfast on Saturday morning, and to remain away until afternoon school on Monday.

In the year of which we write Card's parents had taken a house for the summer at Barnby, about fifteen miles from Rayton. They had invited Card to spend the week-end with them, and had told him he could bring one of his chums. As a matter of course, Card had invited Tubb, and Tubb equally as a matter of course, had gleefully accepted the invitation. It had been furthermore arranged that Mr. Card's car should come to the school on Saturday morning and take the two boys to Barnby.

It was a magnificent and gorgeously-appointed touring-car, and created quite a sensation when, in charge of a liveried chauffeur, it glided up the school-drive about ten o'clock on Saturday morning and pulled up outside the front door of Walker's house.

"My aunt!" exclaimed Holcroft, who happened to be passing at the time with Pettigrew. "There's a sight for tired eyes! Twig the gold platin' and the silver buttons on the shover's livery? I wonder whose car it is—some rich and vulgar bounder's, I'll bet."

"Card was braggin' the other day that his guv'nor was goin' to send his car for him and Tubb," said Pettigrew. "Perhaps this is the car. Yes! See! There the little insects are!"

Card and Tubb came out of the house, each of them carrying a small portmanteau. They were dressed in their "Sunday best"—shiny silk toppers and all the rest—and were obviously conscious of their dignity and importance.

"Good-mornin', your majesty!" said Holcroft, raising his cap and making a sweeping bow. "Is your majesty goin' for another picnic in Rayton Wood?"

Card winced at this allusion, but neither he nor Tubb deigned to reply.

"Allow a poor menial to earn an honest copper by carryin' your bag," said Pettigrew, trying to catch hold of Card's bag.

Card dodged him and hastily scrambled into the car. Tubb was not so fortunate.

"Excuse me," said Holcroft, barring Tubb's way, "your hat is not quite straight."

As he uttered these words he placed his hand on the top of Tubb's topper and crushed it over his ears.

"You beastly cad!" howled Tubb. "I'll pay you out for this when we come back!"

He gave Holcroft a push which sent him reeling back; then he hurriedly scrambled in beside Card, and the chauffeur put in the clutch, and the car began to move away.

"Vulgar little boys!" jeered Card, leaning over the back of the car and "taking a sight" at Holcroft and Pettigrew. "Don't you wish you were comin' with us? Yah! Go home and wash your dirty faces!"

Holcroft whipped a rotten orange from his pocket, and sent it flying after the car. It was aimed at Card, but missed him, and struck the chauffeur in the nape of the neck, bespattering his gorgeous livery with streams of sticky juice.

The chauffeur was all for going back and "having it out" with Pettigrew and Holcroft. By the time he had stopped the car, however, the boys had disappeared; and after a brief and fruitless search for them he returned to his seat in anything but the best of humours, and sent the car flying through the gates and up the road in the direction of Barnby.

For a mile or so everything went as merry as a marriage bell, and Tubb and Card were just beginning to enjoy their ride when suddenly something went wrong with the mechanism, and the car slowed down and finally stopped.

"Anythin' serious?" asked Card, when the chauffeur had opened the bonnet and made his examination.

"Nothing I can't put right," growled the chauffeur. "But it'll take a bit of time."

"How long?"

"Half an hour, at least." Card made a wry face.

"I don't fancy sittin' here for half an hour," he said to Tubb. "What do you say? Shall we stroll on and let the car catch us up?"

"I'm game," said Tubb. They alighted from the car, and sauntered up the road. They had not gone very far—but far enough to have lost sight of the car—when they perceived two rustic youths sitting on a stile by the side of the road, each of them with a lump of fat bacon in one hand and a chunk of dry bread in the other.

"Farmer Stroggles's sons," said

With derisive cries, they vaulted over the stile and took to their heels.

"After 'em—after 'em!" roared Tubb, whose only thought was of revenge for his ruined topper.

Card, equally excited, followed Tubb's example and vaulted over the stile. Stroggles's two sons—'Enery and John—were then about half-way across the field on the other side of the stile, and were evidently making for a group of outbuildings, whose red-tiled roofs could be seen above the tops of the distant hedges.

Now, if Tubb and Card had paused to think they would have known that these were the outbuildings of Farmer Stroggles's house, and they would have remembered that Stroggles was the sworn foe of all Raytonians. But they did not pause to think. Mad for revenge, they pounded after 'Enery and John, gaining ground at every stride, and had just reached the first of the outbuildings when they were dismayed to hear 'Enery shout:

"Feyther—feyther! Quick! Here's two o' them fellers from the skule a-trespassin' on our land!"

"Jeehosaphat! We're in for it

"As-like as not," said Stroggles. "Yew two keep watch outside whiles I go up an' root 'em out."

"It's all up now!" groaned Card, as they heard the farmer start to mount the ladder.

"Not yet," whispered Tubb, pointing to the open window of the loft. "We must make a jump for it."

He sprang to the open window. Card followed him. John and 'Enery were standing outside, just under the window. They spotted the two boys at once.

"Feyther—feyther!" roared John. "Ere they are! They're goin' to jump out of—"

The sentence ended in a muffled yell, for at that moment Tubb dropped out of the window and alighted on the top of John, while Card alighted on 'Enery's shoulders.

Down went John and 'Enery, with Tubb and Card on top of them. All four were considerably shaken, but by the time Farmer Stroggles had descended the ladder, and had rushed out of the barn, Tubb and Card had picked themselves up and were racing away at breakneck speed.

Unfortunately, in their haste they took a wrong turning, and instead of making for the road, they turned into a field in which Stroggles kept a particularly vicious and unmanageable bull.

"This isn't the way we came," panted Card. "We've gone wrong somewhere!"

"So we have," said Tubb. "But we can't turn back now. We've got to go on and trust to luck."

It was quite clear they couldn't turn back, for by that time Stroggles and his sons had entered the field, and were racing after them. And it soon became equally clear that they couldn't go on, for presently the aforesaid bull caught sight of them, and came thundering to meet them with lowered head and uplifted tail.

The bull in front. Stroggles and his sons behind. A high hedge on their right. What could they do?

Half crazy with excitement and despair, they swerved to the right, but had not gone far when they found their further progress barred by a large and rather deep pond. And the bull was then but twenty yards behind them.

"Into the pond!" gasped Tubb. "It's our only chance. The brute can't get at us there."

They were only just in time, for even as they waded into the pond the bull dashed up to the edge, and stuck one of his horns through the tail of Card's jacket.

"Farther in—farther in!" cried Tubb. "We're not safe yet!"

Deeper and deeper they waded, till the water was up to their armpits. And then, to add to their misfortunes, Stroggles and his sons arrived on the scene.

Picture the scene, if you can. Tubb and Card, up to their armpits in water in the middle of the pond. The bull, on one side, pawing the ground, tossing his head, and bellowing angrily. Stroggles and his sons on the other side, brandishing their sticks, and uttering blood-curdling threats.

However, it was the bull, after all, which proved the salvation of Tubb and Card. Finding that he could not get at the two boys, it suddenly seemed to occur to him to vent his baffled spite on Stroggles and his offspring. He regarded them for a moment with flashing eyes; then up went his tail, down went his head, and he galloped round the pond at express speed.

"Run, feyther—run!" shrieked 'Enery. "T' bull's comin'!"

Stroggles took one glance at the advancing bull, and then, with simultaneous yells of terror, he and his two sons took to their heels in panic-stricken flight.

How they fared, neither Tubb nor Card waited to discover. Hastily scrambling out of the pond, they made for the gate at the top of the field, vaulted over it, and found themselves, to their intense delight, on the high road.

As they vaulted over the gate the welcome toot, toot of a motor-car fell on their ears; and a moment later the car which was to take them to Barnby came gliding round a corner of the road, not fifty yards away.

(Another splendid instalment next Tuesday. Please tell all your friends about "Sexton Blake, Foreman," our powerful, new detective story.)

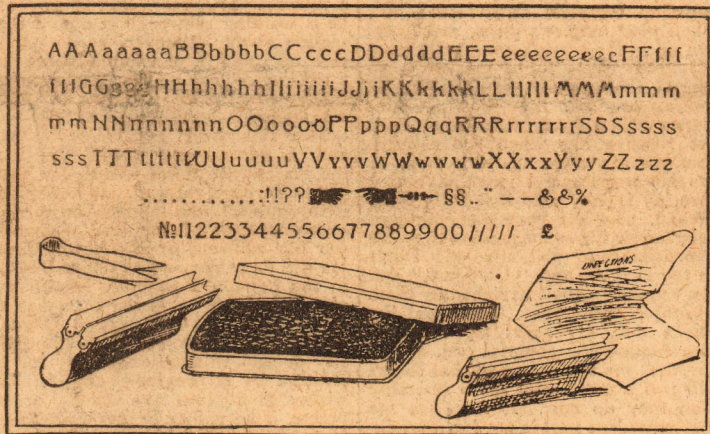
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Tubb. "Pretty lookin' creatures, aren't they?"

"D'you think they'll try to molest us?" asked Card anxiously.

"Let 'em try!" said the valiant Tubb. "I should hope we're more than a match for a couple of clodhoppers like those!"

They continued their walk. Neither of the youths took the slightest notice of them until they were passing the stile. Then suddenly one of them raised his hand, shield his lump of bacon at Tubb, and sent his shiny topper rolling into the road.

"Haw! Haw!" guffawed the other. "That was a darn fine shot, 'Enery! Now see me swipe the other!"

Card ducked, but did not duck low enough. The bacon missed his hat, but struck him in the face, and by the time he had wiped the fat out of his eyes the two rustics had leaped down from the stile and were playing football with Tubb's topper.

Boiling over with rage, the two Raytonians doubled their fists, and went for their assailants. But the latter had no stomach for fighting.

now!" groaned Tubb. "I'd forgotten this was Stroggles's land. We must hide. It's our only chance. In here—quick!"

He pushed Card through the open door of the outbuilding, which proved to be a barn with a hayloft overhead.

"I don't think either of those johnnies saw us turn in here," he said. "We'll climb up into the loft, and hide there till the coast is clear. They'll never think of looking for us here."

But he was mistaken. Scarcely had he and Card climbed up the ladder which led to the loft ere Stroggles came running round the end of the outbuildings, armed with a heavy hunting-crop, and followed by John and 'Enery.

"Where are they?" he bellowed. "Show me where they are, an' I'll flay 'em alive!"

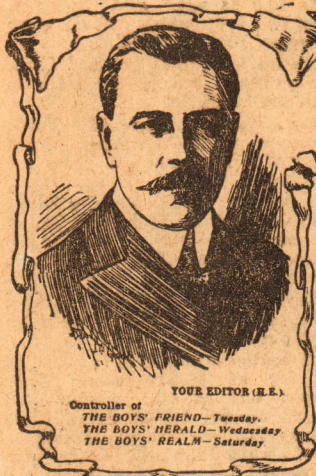
"They must ha' gone into the barn," said 'Enery.

Stroggles dashed to the door and peered in.

"No, they ain't here," he growled. "Mebbe they're in the hayloft," suggested John.

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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.**

* * * The contents of this number copyrighted in the United States of America.

A GRAND NEW WEST RIDING SERIAL COMING SOON.

THIS week I have much pleasure in telling my boys that I have a superb new serial in preparation that will deal with the wool industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, and Halifax will be the centre of our latest tale, and among the fascinating characters will be mill-hands, half-timers, and so on.

Mr. Stacey Blake, who is writing this new serial for our boys, was born in Bradford, and few people know the district better, whilst his stories are so popular and such warm favourites that I need say no more regarding the author I have chosen.

Our splendid tale, "Yorkshire Grit," will commence in a fortnight's time in our pages, and in the next issue I will give you full details regarding it.

A SILLY BOY.

I hope my young friend, L. D., who is a Fulham reader, won't be too angry with me for calling him a silly boy. Perhaps I am a little harsh in calling him this, because, after all, he realises that he has done a foolish thing, and now he wants to remedy the damage. But he does talk so stupidly and hopelessly about himself.

It appears that two short months ago a friend gave him a cigarette, which he foolishly accepted and smoked. Now, since that day—that fatal day eight or nine weeks ago—he has smoked several packets of cigarettes a day, and confesses that he cannot break himself of the habit. But his letter itself contradicts this statement, for he says that up to a day or so ago he had been a cigarette victim, but that since then he has lessened the quantity he was consuming.

Now, before L. D. started smoking his muscles were good and strong, and his lungs were sound and never failed him; now he finds that he cannot run a mile without getting blown. L. D.'s chums have advised him to write to me for help, and I think his chums are very sensible boys in so doing.

L. D. need not alarm himself in the least. If he wants to become an athlete, and if he wants to keep himself healthy, well, and strong, he has certainly got to do one thing, and straightway, too, and that is to drop the cigarette habit. After all, it is idle nonsense for him to talk about a habit which is only two months old having obtained such a hold over him that he cannot break it off. Further, I do not think that in so short a time it can have wrought such a dreadful change in his condition. Anyway, all this is beside the point. What he has to do is just as I have said, and I am dead in earnest in telling him to give up the cigarette habit. He can do it quite easily, too, for he writes like a boy who, having once made up his mind, would carry out his determination.

So let L. D. make up his mind on this point, and stick to it, and remember that I shall expect to hear from him in a month's time that he has kept his word. I shall put his letter in my special drawer, and shall hope to hear from him then. If I don't I shall write to him to know how he is getting on.

Apart from this, in order to pull himself together, I do not think he need do anything but just eat plain food, and, if his heart is sound, take a cold bath every day, and go in for swimming and boxing. In this way, he will soon find the cigarette effect disappearing.

THE BOY AT HOME.

I suppose scarcely a day passes but I get letters from boys who are in trouble at home. The letter I am reading just now is signed "Unhappy," and it is from a lad who is something more than a lad now, for he is twenty-one years old.

Some little time ago his mother died, leaving him, his father, his

sister, and a young woman a good deal older than himself who had been adopted some years before. Now, this young woman has rather taken the place of his mother, and remonstrates with my friend "Unhappy" if he should come in late, or if he should do or say anything of which she disapproves—"just as if she were my mother," as "Unhappy" says.

Well, my boy, I don't see very much to complain of. If she has taken your mother's place, and keeps you up to the scratch, you really have not much cause for a grievance, so long as she does not play the part of a shrew or scold. You must not altogether blame your father if he does not reprove her when she rebukes you, because, after all, poor man, he has his worries and troubles, and I dare say is jolly glad that this young woman, who has been a member of your family for so long, takes over the responsibility of the household. Don't be too hard on her, "Unhappy," and don't make yourself wretched by these miserable thoughts. Look on the bright side, my man; try to make your home-life a cheerful one, and, I am sure, you will soon find that things will run a great deal more smoothly than they do now. It seems to me that nowadays people are far more inclined to try and make themselves miserable than they used to be when I was a youngster. The explanation of this may be that I did not know so much of the world as I do now—anyway, I don't believe people were so fond of making themselves unhappy in the old days. The finest thing in the world is to try and be cheerful, and if you feel a little bit down, there is nothing that will pull you together so much as striving to make some other poor creature happy.

BANDY-LEGGED BOYS.

I get an awful lot of letters from lads who worry about their legs if they are knock-kneed or bandy, or not as strong as they ought to be, so this week I am giving these boys a few little tips on the subject of legs. Most of the boys who write to me are, I think, animated by unnatural vanity. Apparently they think their legs are not straight enough—quite forgetting that the perfect leg is not a straight one at all. Some of them complain that their knees incline inward a little; others, because they do not exercise sufficiently, find that a little run tires their muscles.

The knock-kneed boy whose limbs are not very badly affected can often remedy matters by the following simple plan: Get a piece of inch-thick board, about six inches wide, plane it down so that there are no splinters in it, and on going to bed at night place it between the knees, and get someone to wrap a calico bandage right round both legs with the board in between. The latter should be padded at the knees and ankles. Gradually increase the pressure of the bandage as the straining influence is felt. This remedy applies to bandy-legged and knock-kneed boys.

If, however, the deformity is very marked, and the boy is either badly

knock-kneed or extremely bandy-legged, there is only one other remedy for it. It involves lying up in a hospital for two or three weeks, and consists of breaking the legs and re-setting them. There is absolutely no pain attached to it, because the breaking and re-setting is done under an anæsthetic. There is only the physical inconvenience of lying on one's back to be endured while the bone is re-forming.

I want my lads who have a bandy-legged or a knock-kneed chum to cut this paragraph out and keep it by them so that should he ask for advice they will be able to help him and save him the trouble of writing to me.

AN OLD FRIEND.

I have much pleasure in replying to a letter from a very old friend of mine, who tells me he started reading **THE BOYS' FRIEND** when "Britain at Bay" appeared—and that is many years ago. He wants me to give him some advice on getting a situation on a railway. It appears that at present he is working as a page at one of the seaside towns; however, he does not care for this life, and wants to get on a railway so that he can earn enough money to help his parents, who are very poor.

This is a most laudable ambition, and I admire my friend, W. T., for his spirit. If he wishes for employment on a railway, his best plan is to write a formal application to the superintendent of the line of any of the big railways at the head office. He will find their names and addresses in the London Post Office Directory, of which, I am sure, his hotel has a copy. He should state his age, height, physical condition (whether he has any defects or not), and apply for a position as an engine-cleaner, if he wishes to go into the sheds, or a porter, if he wishes to go on the line. He will then probably receive a form, which he must fill up.

But what is wrong with taxi-cab driving, W. T.? Taxi-cabs, in spite of what people say, offer very decent employment to a steady, careful lad, and a civil, willing man can make a very good living out of it, if he likes. It does not take long to learn to drive, and the machinery is not a very difficult thing to master.

WANTS TO GO TO SEA.

"Sailor," who writes a very good hand for a boy, says that he is fifteen, and at present working in an estate agent's office for five shillings a week. This is very poor pay, and he says that there is hardly any prospect of obtaining a higher position.

What an extraordinary thing it is about most of our boys nowadays! They seem to have the idea that there will never be anything on earth for them because they happen to be office boys, van boys, or telegraph boys. Don't they realise that life is full of opportunities for sturdy, determined, respectful boys who mean to get on! Many of the richest and most important men in this country at the present time have been children of the very poorest class. There is not a trade, calling, or profession in which you will not find at the head, or very near to it, lads who have been in the position of my young friend, "Sailor."

I hope my boys who read this chat will abandon the hopeless spirit which some of them seem to possess. It is foolish, unfair to the world, and unworthy of them.

If the lad who is an office-boy likes his work, let him make up his mind that he will become head of his office, and keep on trying with that idea in view. Even if he does not succeed, he will be bound to get a good way up the ladder, and so will have achieved something.

But I am getting away from "Sailor's" question. It is the easiest thing in the world for him to go to sea, particularly as he happens to be a Liverpool reader. He should apply to the Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office in Liverpool. (If I remember rightly, it is somewhere down by Prince's Dock). His name will then be put on the list, and he should get a job very soon.

A HERO'S DEED.

A furious squall of wind and rain enveloped the lifeboat and hid it for a moment from the view of those ashore. When it had passed she was seen to be lying almost broadside on to the waves.

Frenziedly the crew plied their oars, but ere they could bring her round a monstrous wave towered above them, and then crashed down in a seething fury.

"Adam's overboard!" The shout was followed by another:

"Morrison's gone in after him!" With magnificent but reckless courage Bob Morrison had snatched up a rope and plunged into the boiling sea.

Rigid, white as death, Ruth stood staring with horror-dilated eyes at the two human forms struggling in that inferno of foaming breakers.

(This is an incident in the powerful new serial, "Only a Fisher Lass," by Maxwell Scott, which starts in this week's "Family Journal." Now on sale. Be sure you get a copy. You know yourself what Maxwell Scott's boys' stories are like. Ask your mother and father to read this gifted author's "grown-up" tale.)

FROM THE BACK BLOCKS.

I am always particularly pleased to find in my post-basket long, cheery letters from my chums in the Colonies, and I am glad to say **THE BOYS' FRIEND** is increasing in popularity by leaps and bounds in Britain beyond the Seas.

The following letter is, however, exceptionally interesting, and I am going to print it in full for you all to read:

"Box 129, Broken Hill,
New South Wales,
Australia.

"Dear Editor,—No doubt you will be pleased to hear from one of your many readers in sunny Australia, and to know that although there are papers printed for boys out here, they never have, and I do not think ever will, displace your popular trio of boys' papers from the esteem which they now enjoy.

"I am employed by a large firm of wholesale warehousemen, which firm makes a speciality of supplying sheep-stations in the back country with stores.

"Every month or so a travelling canvasser for orders is sent into the back blocks, and on one such occasion I had the privilege of accompanying the traveller, and I can assure you I had a most delightful six weeks.

"Our means of conveyance was a four-in-hand buggy, and we did from forty to sixty-five miles a day. I, of course, had to tend the horses and buggy, and therefore had to be up before daylight—about four o'clock, in fact—to feed and groom our team of horses. Then I had breakfast, yoked up, and away we went on our long drive. At midday light up the billy, a hasty snack, and off again.

"Arrived at our destination, unharness the horses, turn them out to grass, and then some food, generally followed by a yarn round the big open fire in the men's hut. On retiring you are shown a boxlike bench called a bunk, and it is comprised of boards laid on two cross-pieces six feet apart, the boards about three inches apart, and the only thing for protection is a sheep-skin 'hipper.' But for all the hardness I slept very soundly.

Kangaroos and Wallabies.

"The game we saw, however, was simply astounding—kangaroos and wallabies in vast numbers, as it is a close season for all game. The birds, too, are in great numbers, the trees being absolutely white at times with the white cockatoos resting, and the din is deafening. But I must not make my letter too long, or you will be bored, but I may candidly say I never had such a truly enjoyable time in my existence.

"Hoping you will excuse my long letter, and wishing you and all your papers the success you and they deserve,—I remain, yours sincerely,
"COLONIAL CHUM."

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

BOXING NOTES.

The Straight Left.

OF all the blows that it is possible to think of, the straight left is the best. This applies mostly to the blow at your opponent's head.

Whatever you do in boxing, don't be led away by people who try to make out that fancy blows—corkscrew punches, swings, and the like—are the better policy. They are not. The first blow that any boxer is ever taught is the straight left, and it is the first blow that a good boxer will try on the most skilled of opponents.

The straight left is the best blow, because, when properly taught, it is the easiest; it is the safest, for it leaves less of the body unguarded than any other, and nothing wears down your antagonist so greatly as steady, hard, and constant straight lefts in his face.

Although practice is necessary to make you perfect in any branch of sport, and especially boxing,

you can teach yourself

this prince of blows to a great extent before a looking-glass—a long one for choice.

Stand before the glass with your left knee very slightly bent, your left toe pointing straight before you, and the right eighteen inches behind at an angle of forty-five degrees. The right heel should be exactly behind the left. Hold up your left arm, bent a little at the elbow, and with the knuckles in the position which comes most natural to you. Keep the left shoulder well up to protect that side of your jaw.

Advance the left foot and hand at the same time, as though hitting at an opponent's head. In real boxing, if anything the left hand should strike its mark before the foot touches the ground. In this way the weight of the body is thrown better into the blow—especially if you rise on to the toes of your right foot.

All the best boxers of the present time, and in history, have made the most of the straight left. For instance, Jem Driscoll, of Cardiff, one of the very finest performers alive, is a splendid exponent of this blow. He owes most of his success to it. He springs in with lightning rapidity, and will hit his man twice in quick succession before he knows where he is.

THE END.

HOW TO WATCH A FOOTBALL MATCH.

THE title with which I have headed this article is not nearly so absurd as it seems when you come to think the matter out. Far more chills are caught when watching football than when actually engaged in playing our great winter game, and even though you be only a watcher at a match, there are certain precautions you should take.

In the first place, there is the question of footwear, and no boy should be so foolish as to stand about on a winter's afternoon in flimsy shoes. What you want is a pair of good, strong boots with thick soles, and there is nothing better for keeping the feet warm and dry.

In the depth of winter when biting winds may be expected, there is a wonderful comfort in a pair of leggings, particularly when standing about. Coachmen and others exposed to wind and weather know the value of leggings, and there could be no better

safeguard against colds.

I take it for granted that on a cold day you will wear an overcoat, but I hope you will not be so unwise as to run to the football ground and get overheated, and then cool off with your coat unbuttoned. To do this is arrant foolishness.

Many boys wear mufflers and wraps, but personally I am against them, believing that they cause more colds than they cure. By all means turn up the collar of your coat when it rains, but not under other circumstances. Boys who fad with themselves unreasonably are usually those who most frequently experience colds.

Yet another side of watching football matches—always try to behave in a gentlemanly manner. When the side you sympathise with is being whacked, take the matter in a sportsmanlike spirit, and do not give way to childlike sulkiness.

Even as a watcher you can show that you are a sportsman.

THE END.

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“EVER-READY JACK”

Our Grand New Series of Complete Stories.

MR. BLENT FROM BOSTON.

“HALLO, Carton! Hear you’re doing well at the Stores!” Jack, walking up the Stoke Newington Road on his way home from work one evening, which for early winter was bitterly cold, turned round in surprise at hearing a voice that he seemed to recognise, and found himself facing young Brown, his late employer’s junior assistant.

He held out his hand. “Glad to see you again,” he said. “But how is it you’re out at half-past six? Gaythorpe gone on the daylight-saving scheme, or what?”

“No,” said Brown calmly; “I’m sacked!”

Jack, remembering the terrible time he had had when out of employment, expressed sincere sympathy. “Oh, I’m all right!” said Brown. “I quitted last Saturday, and I’m going down to Brighton to join my brother-in-law, who’s got a nice little business which is growing rapidly. I shall get double my old screw, with a good chance of a partnership if things go on as they are.”

“I’m jolly glad!” said Jack. “But why did he sack you?” “Bad business,” said Brown, with a shrug of his shoulders. “Your stores have hit him pretty hard, and he will go on in his pig-headed way, saving a penny and losing a shilling. His trade gets worse and worse. The boy he took on in your place neglected things, caused no end of trouble with the customers, and in the end got clear away with ten pounds. I tell you, he’s sorry he sacked you, Carton—I heard him saying so once—but, of course, he’s too proud to write to you.”

“I’m sorry,” said Jack, “and I hope things will buck up. How’s Snuffler?”

“Oh, the tyke missed you a lot! He hangs about the shop most of the time now. Well, I must be trotting. Good luck!”

He went on his way, and Jack went home, sorry to hear that the rumours that had been going round about Gaythorpe’s declining business were true.

The next morning he was at the stores just before nine as usual. He no longer wore the brown uniform, for he had been promoted to a good position in the despatching department, and received eighteen shillings a week.

After the early morning rush, the chief clerk of the department came up to him as he was checking some delivery-bills.

“Look out for squalls, Carton,” he said, standing behind the boy with an unusually serious expression on his face. “There’s trouble brewing here, for a certainty.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jack.

“Has—” “The proprietors have engaged a Yankee as assistant-manager, and he starts to-day. The manager is mad about it. I heard him talking pretty straight to one of the guv’ners, and telling him the chap had bluffed them, and was absolutely no use. Mr. Blent, of Boston, U.S.A., is going to make trouble here, my lad, or my name is not James Plater!”

“But surely the manager will sit on him?” said Jack.

“I reckon he’s more likely to resign. This Yank is coming in to buck things up, and, if he gets half a chance, he’ll rule the roost. Well, there it is, but I hope he lets us alone. I’ve got a wife and a couple of kids—I can’t afford to fall out with anyone.”

Jack was too busy that morning to think much about the new man who

was coming into the business, but early that afternoon he saw the great man himself, who was making a tour of inspection, accompanied by the senior partner and the manager, who was trying hard not to show his dislike for the man who had been chosen to act as his first lieutenant in the big business.

Mr. Hiram P. Blent was a tall, thin, sallow-faced man of about thirty, with a cute expression that deceived people into thinking that he was a clever and keen man of business. Out in the States he had been a complete failure, owing to his desire to upset the working of every business he had gone into, but he had colossal cheek and self-confidence, and had succeeded in persuading the proprietors of the Standard Stores that he could treble their trade.

“Say,” he said, taking a glance round. “Guess there ought to be a bit of cutting down in this department. Strikes me there’re a lot of loafers knocking about.”

“This is a slack time,” said the manager shortly. “There’s more than enough for all of them in the busy hours.”

“Out in the States we don’t have a slack time,” he said. “Guess we’re goin’ hard all day.” He turned to the senior partner, ignoring the manager. “With a little alteration of deliveries, you could fire half the men,” he said.

“We’ll talk it over later, Mr. Blent,” said the senior partner hastily. He was a mean man, anxious to save a farthing if possible, but the manager had proved himself to be competent, and he certainly did not want to quarrel with him—at all events, not until the American had shown if he was capable of taking his place.

They passed on, and Jack saw a frown on the manager’s face and a scornful curl on his lips.

“Guess,” said the chief clerk, mimicking the American’s nasal voice, “that it wouldn’t grieve me much if someone dropped a ton of iron on his head.”

There was a good deal of anxiety among the employees of the Stores when they closed that night. Mr. Blent from Boston had been nosing round every department, and the cashiers told the bookkeeper, who told someone, else, until it gradually travelled down to the smallest errand-boy, that the American had had the salary-book, and had expressed himself shocked at some of the wages paid.

Jack said nothing to his mother about the advent of Mr. Blent when he returned home that night, but as he sat over the fire reading and trying to forget the ugly rumours that he had heard of forthcoming trouble, he could not help feeling that the good time he had had at the stores was ended.

The next morning he had his first encounter with Mr. Hiram Blent from Boston.

The Yankee walked out into the despatch-yard as Jack was checking the goods being placed into the large motor-van that went out to the outlying suburbs. It was not an easy task, for, with all the noise and bustle round about, the stream of boys with packages from different departments, and the questions of the men, he had to notice every packet put into the van, note the address of the customer, and tick it off in the book he held.

“Sixteen!” shouted a man, putting a heavy case on the van. “Jones, Loughton!”

“Right!” said Jack, and marked the book. Sixteen was the number put on the case by the packing department, who could tell exactly what was packed in it.

“Now, then, boy!” said a harsh voice behind him. “Guess you’re not here to look pretty! Get a move on, and help those chaps to arrange the load!”

Jack faced Mr. Blent of Boston calmly.

“I can’t, sir,” he said, “until everything is on the van, then I always give a hand.”

“I can’t help what you’ve been doing—it’s what you’re going to do that concerns me. Some of you here have got durned soft jobs, but you’re goin’ to be woken up soon. Just get to it.”

“I’m sorry, sir,” said Jack quietly,

“but I’m responsible for the loading of this van, and it needs all one’s attention to check the stuff put in. Unless the manager relieves me of the responsibility, I must keep on as I am doing.”

The American’s face went pale with rage. He noticed two or three of the men grinning. He opened his mouth to speak, and at the same moment the manager came out into the yard, so he swung round instead of addressing Jack.

“This lad has been insolent,” he said, in a lower voice. “We’d better fire him straightaway, for the sake of discipline.”

Now, from the time Jack Carton had been taken on at the stores the manager had taken a liking to him, and, seeing that he was a smart boy, had kept his eye on him.

“What is the matter?” he asked shortly.

“I told him to give a hand in the loading, and he refused,” said Mr. Blent angrily.

“I said I would help as soon as I’d got the goods checked off, sir,” put in Jack; “but it is impossible to do both, and I’m held responsible for the correct loading of the vans.”

“Exactly,” said the manager, keeping himself from saying what he felt for the sake of discipline. “Mr. Blent does not understand our system. Keep on as you usually do.”

He walked on, and the American, with a gleam of hatred in his eyes, followed him—mad with Jack for having made him look a fool, mad with himself for having put himself in the wrong, and giving victory to the manager in the first round of what was evidently going to be a big fight between them.

“You haven’t done yourself any good with that chap,” said the carman, when Jack, having checked off the goods, was giving him a hand in the van. “He’ll have his knife into you, and find some excuse to sack you. If I was you, my lad, I should have a look round for another job, and that pretty quick.”

Jack laughed. “Oh,” he said confidently, “the beast can’t sack me for nothing, and I shall take jolly good care I don’t give him an opportunity!”

“I’m not so sure,” said the carman. “He’s a strong ‘un, is that Yank, and he’ll do his best to make an opportunity!”

And before long the carman was to prove himself a true prophet, for the next afternoon Mr. Blent came into the office where Jack was sitting at a

desk entering the details of the mid-day despatch, and walked up to him.

“I’m told that you have charge of the petty cash, young feller,” he said.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack civilly.

“Well, I guess I’ve been goin’ through the accounts pretty thoroughly. It strikes me, my lad, that we’ve either got a durned lazy lot of errand-boys, or else you’re makin’ a very good thing out of your job.”

Jack sprang off the stool and faced the assistant-manager, his face crimson with rage.

“Do you mean to say that I’m a thief?” he demanded hoarsely.

“Well,” sneered the American, “I reckon more unlikely things than that have been said before.”

Then Jack lost control of his temper. The groundless charge and the unfair persecution by this man made his blood boil. Reckless of the consequences, he raised his left fist and sent it with all his force at the pale, sneering face.

Mr. Blent of Boston was taken by surprise. He staggered back, and a little streak of blood ran from his nose. Then, with a cry of rage like that of some wild animal, he sprang at the boy.

The American’s long arms whirled round like windmill sails, and Jack saw at once that he had no science whatever, but he realised that a blow from the angry man would be no joke, so he commenced by keeping up his guard, and waiting for an opportunity to get a blow in.

At last it came. He seemed to slip in between the whirling arms, his left caught the American a terrific blow on the mouth, and his right got in at his ribs.

Mr. Blent staggered, and before he could recover himself, Jack, thinking that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, darted in, and catching the man a heavy blow on the point of the jaw, sent him crashing to the floor.

The American leapt to his feet, his face distorted with rage, and glared wildly round the office; then, with a cry like that of an infuriated wild beast, he saw a heavy crowbar that was often used for opening cases standing in a corner, and he dashed for it.

Jack paled. He knew that he would stand no chance against a man armed with such a terrible weapon, and the Yankee in his present fit of rage might murder him. But how to escape?

The man stood between him and the door out into the yard, and he had no chance of gaining the wooden stairs that led up into the counting-house. The other clerks stood fascinated, making no attempt to come to his assistance.

The lift! Just behind him was the lift that led up into the packing department, which brought down from there the goods to be despatched. That was his only chance, and he ran towards it as the American, with the up-raised crowbar, dashed towards him.

“Below there!” The cry came from above, and the lift began to move upwards to receive some goods for despatch.

Jack measured his distance and sprang upwards. Unless he got into the lift, he would be at the mercy of the infuriated American, and unless he could scramble right in before it reached the first floor, he would be crushed to death.

For a moment his life hung in the balance; but, like an eel, he wriggled into the quickly ascending lift. The crowbar descended heavily within a couple of inches of his head, then he saw the pale, rage-convulsed face of the American for a second before the lift vanished from the office, and then, pale and trembling, he stumbled out on to the floor of the packing department.

He gave no explanation to the men, who stared blankly at him, but hurried to the manager’s office. His temper had left him now, and he looked a little pale and worried, but his voice did not falter as he went up to the manager’s desk.

“Please, sir,” he said quietly, “I should like to leave at once.”

The manager stared at him in amazement.

“Leave!” he gasped. “What for?”

“Mr. Blent called me a thief,” said Jack quietly, “and I knocked him down.”

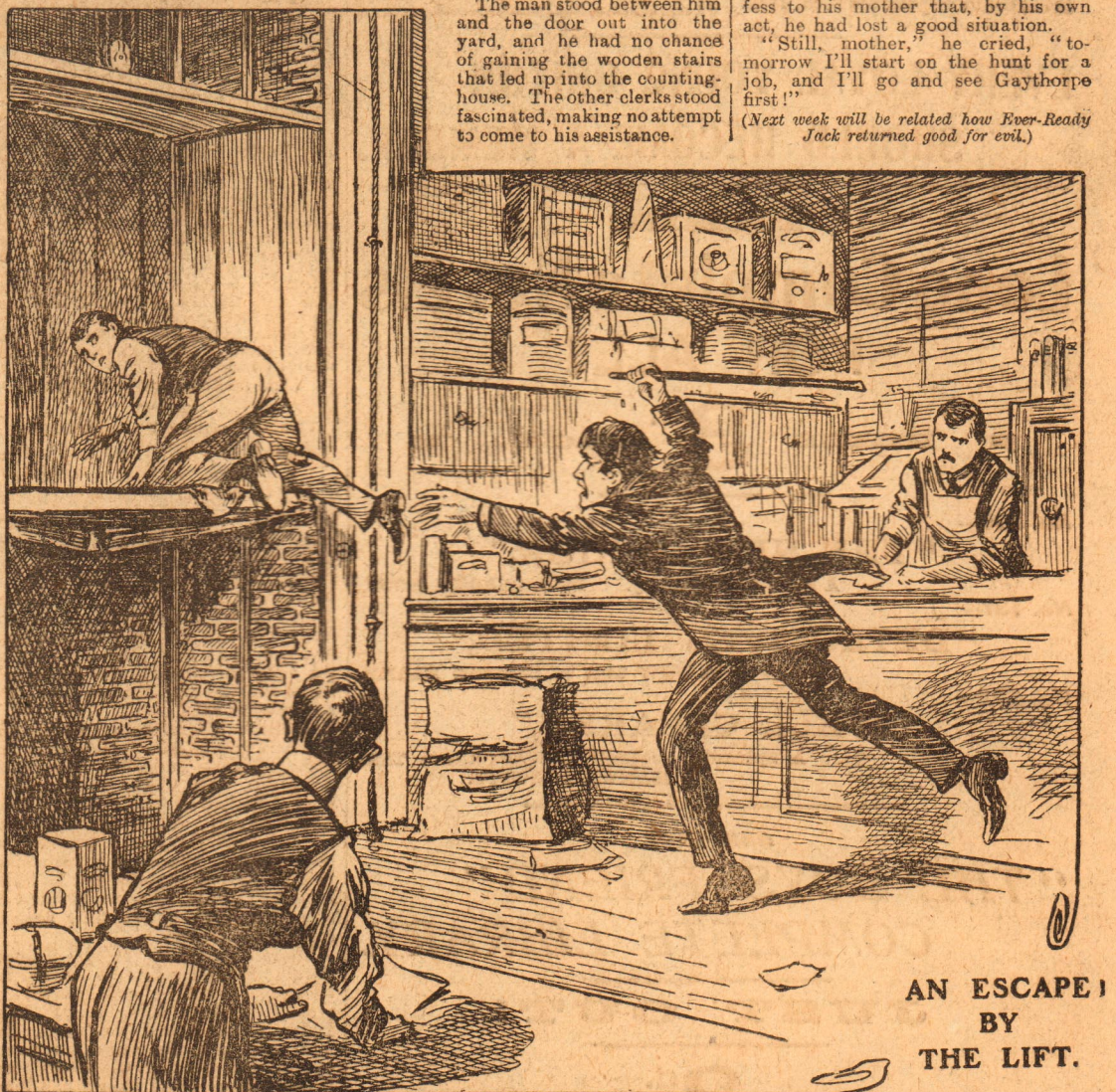
“Bra—” The manager checked himself, and added, in a more official tone: “I am very sorry, Carton, but, of course, after such a serious breach of discipline, you must leave at once. No doubt you had great provocation, but I can see, for many reasons, it would be impossible for you to remain here. I shall be pleased to give you a character, and perhaps some day we may meet again. I am very likely leaving too.”

Then the manager gave him his wages, shook him by the hand, and Jack, after collecting his camera and certain photographic things that belonged to him, walked out of the stores.

Out of work! His brisk step slackened as he walked homewards. He had to confess to his mother that, by his own act, he had lost a good situation.

“Still, mother,” he cried, “tomorrow I’ll start on the hunt for a job, and I’ll go and see Gaythorpe first!”

(Next week will be related how Ever-Ready Jack returned good for evil.)



**AN ESCAPE!
BY
THE LIFT.**

Jack Carton sprang to the already ascending lift to get clear of the infuriated American, and unless he could scramble right in before it reached the first floor, he would be crushed to death.

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NOTE FROM YOUR EDITOR.—I want all my readers who do not already belong to our League to join at once, because I have some special attractions in preparation for my League members. In addition to the neat badge and handsome certificate, there are some grand things in store for those who belong to my League; but as only those who are members can participate, I want to advise all new readers and those who have not joined to do so this week without fail.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

Rules of the League.

- First: To endeavour to lead a manly, honest life.
- Second: To be polite to all seniors and to girls.
- Third: To protect the weak as far as lies in a member's power.
- Fourth: To abstain from bad language.
- Fifth: To be kind to dumb animals.
- Sixth: To abstain from smoking until eighteen years of age.
- Seventh: To strive to be a bright British boy—always a patriot and lover of his country.
- Eighth: To assist fellow-members under all rightful circumstances.

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Our Stirring New Poor Boy Serial.

FOR NEW READERS.

This is our superb new poor boy and railway story, in which you read of JACK POSTERN, otherwise "The Dodger," who, through lack of parents and home, has become a railway waif, hanging about stations, carrying bags, and doing any odd job to earn an honest penny. Mrs. BRISTOWE, the widow of an unscrupulous railway clerk, who lost his life under tragic circumstances. He was the accomplice of

"RIP" KELLY, a real bad lot, who, with Bristowe's aid, attempts to rob the North British express of specie.

The Dodger is seized by Bristowe in a railway goods shed, and is convicted and sentenced to five years in a reformatory for loitering. While in the shed, however, Jack overhears a plot between Bristowe and Rip Kelly, and it is his intention to expose their villainy.

He escapes from the reformatory, and in an empty truck he arrives at Matchingham, and later he learns that it is impossible to reach Cowden in time. He raises an alarm of the intended robbery, and the superintendent of the line thereupon despatches a fast engine to catch up the North Briton express.

Rip Kelly is captured with the specie in his bag.

Our young hero is offered a berth on the railway, and, there being few positions open to him at the moment owing to his poor education, he becomes a van-boy.

He goes to live with Mrs. Bristowe (whose husband has since died), and is kindness itself to her.

As time goes on Jack earns promotion, until eventually he has charge of a parcels office.

One day, however, an insured parcel is lost, and Jack, almost demented, goes in search of it. His quest takes him to a lonely moorland cottage, and there he falls into the clutches of Rip Kelly.

The Dodger receives fearful injuries in the wreck of a boat train, and is not expected to live.

He recovers, however, and is sent by the railway authorities in search of the Duke of Dublin's daughter, who is missing. The girl is discovered with her memory complete lost.

It is arranged to take the duke's daughter through exactly the same scenes and shocks which caused the loss of memory, and the Dodger and Dr. Neville visit the cottage where Kelly has ill-treated her, and at once everything is recalled by the girl. But once again the Dodger comes face to face with Rip Kelly.

"Now, I think I've got you," he said, with a sneer. "And this time I'll make sure of things."

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Watcher at the Window.

THAT'S what you said before, you clumsy bungler!" sneered Jack unconcernedly. But under his outward calm his mind was working apace. The girl behind him, shrinking against the extreme end of the passage, was his principal concern. What might not the effect of this fresh outrage be on that delicate brain, even if they ever came out of the adventure alive? For Jack well knew that he was face to face with a desperate man.

To silence them for ever was clearly his only safeguard. He could not make matters worse for himself by doing so. He would be hanged if they were left to testify against him, that was sure; and he could only be hanged however many murders he committed. The Dodger recognised that his adversary would not be likely to delay, either. He would want to get clear away before their absence attracted attention.

These thoughts raced through Jack's mind almost as he uttered his sneering retort. Next second he reached behind him, seized Lady Helen bodily round the waist, and with one and the same movement opened the door of the living-room beside him, and half pulled, half flung her in, and slammed the door to. The whole thing was the work of the tenth of a second.

With a growl the Rip leapt forward, but too late.

He hurled himself on the door, and it gave perceptibly. There was no key to it. It was Jack's strength against the Rip's. There could be no question as to which must win in the end. The Rip renewed the onslaught again and again, and each time the door yielded further, the resistance from within was weaker. Bracing his huge bulk against the door by setting his feet against the opposite wall of the passage, he slowly forced it further and further back.

Meanwhile, Lady Helen had been unable to grasp for the second what was happening when the Dodger had seized her and hustled her so unceremoniously into the room.

And so it came about that she had even made his task the more difficult for him by resisting—partly from surprise, partly from fear. With a shriek she had struggled to prevent him closing the door.

Then her eyes fell on that still, motionless figure on the floor, stripped now of its disguise. And the horror of the situation brought to her that strange, sudden calm that often comes to women of highly-strung temperaments in the face of overwhelming calamity.

As the Rip made his first savage attack on the door, she leant her frail assistance to Jack in withstanding it.

Quickly under his breath he spoke to her:

"Listen!" he said. "Keep quite cool. Slip out of the window. I'll keep him busy here. Run as fast as you can along the line towards Kenley. Stop the first train, or person you see. Quick!"

"What!" she answered, in a whisper. "And leave you! Never! He'd kill you!"

Her brave concern in his safety sent a warm glow through him even in that critical moment. But it never shook his resolve.

"You must! And be quick!" he said. "It is our one chance! For Heaven's sake, don't fail me now!" He spoke almost sternly, and his appeal in the last phrase had its effect. She would not fail him!

She picked up her skirts, clambered through the selfsame window through which three months before he had dragged himself so painfully, and started to run towards Kenley with a speed and a strength lent her by fear; fear not for herself, but for the Dodger.

And then began that steady, irresistible pressure on the door from without, and inch by inch the Dodger yielded. Suddenly, as the door opened wide enough for him to see out, he took in at a glance the attitude the Rip was in. Exerting all his force, he successfully resisted further encroachment for a second or two; even forced the door to a shade. But it was only a momentary effort. When he felt he could do no more he suddenly skipped aside.

The door flew open. The Rip crashed to the ground, and in the same instant the Dodger swung a chair above his head and struck with all his might at the Rip.

But instead of hitting Kelly it came in contact with the doorpost and shivered to pieces in his hands.

Jack waited for no more. As the Rip staggered to his feet, he dived for the window, and made a dash for the line. In the open lay safety, Jack knew. The Rip dare not pursue him far, owing to the danger on a week-day of attracting the attention of a passing train, or of a gang of roadmen at work.

Reaching the line, the Dodger saw that Lady Helen had already covered

several hundred yards, and himself turned and made towards Calworth, the Rip on his heels.

A revolver barked, and whizz, ping went the bullet singing by. When it came to a matter of speed Jack was more than a match for Kelly, and from the sound of his pursuer's feet he knew that the man, unaccustomed to moving about on the railroad, was stumbling and tripping almost every step, and losing ground accordingly.

Glancing over his shoulder, Jack saw that he had at least a hundred yards the best of it. But he wanted to decoy Kelly as far as possible away from Lady Helen, so he slackened speed a bit, as if exhausted. The ruse succeeded. The Rip lunged forward with a sprint, and fired again. Off bounded the Dodger afresh, with Kelly labouring to get within range again.

And then, to Jack's inexpressible relief, he saw, far away along the line, a distant cloud of steam.

The Rip saw it too, and turned from the pursuit with a grunted oath. He dashed back towards the cottage.

"Oh, I won't follow you!" cried the Dodger, pulling up short. "I'm not to be caught, napping twice!"

And as the Rip disappeared round the angle of the cottage, he sat down to recover his breath and wait for the rapidly-approaching train.

"The Rip's safe enough now. We can bag him at our leisure as soon as I've got a few to help," he soliloquised. "Wonder why he came to the cottage at all? To unearth, his buried treasure, I suppose, and our little bit of play-acting disturbed him just when he least thought of interruption."

And the Dodger smiled grimly, for it so happened that he had not yet revealed to anyone the hiding-place of Lady Helen's jewels. He had promised himself a treat—namely, that he would himself, as a sort of final tableau to the scene he had planned, unearth her treasures and restore them to her. He had pictured to himself with keen relish the flush of pleasure that it would call up to her pretty face, and had in his mind rehearsed how she would look up at him from under her lashes and thank him. Well, it would have to be postponed.

As the train approached he planted himself in the middle of the permanent-way and held both arms aloft, palms forward, in the well-known "Stop!" sign.

The train was almost on him before the driver saw him. Then, to his unspeakable joy, he saw steam shut off, heard the squeal of the brakes and the banging of heavy-laden trucks, and noticed the sudden checking of what proved to be a long mineral train.

He jumped aside as it rattled by, carried forward by its own momentum, till it finally, with much banging and creaking, came to a standstill within a hundred yards of the cottage.

He raced after it.

The guard was leaning over the half-door of his van.

"Hallo, Dodger—that you?" he exclaimed. "What's up?"

"The Rip's in the cottage here. He's murdered Dr. Neville, of Kenley, and he tried to do me and Lady Helen Thwaite-Harty in!"

"Who?" shouted the guard. "Lady Helen Thwaite-Harty?"

At the sound of her name the man was all excitement. There was a reward of £1,000 for news of her, and every railwayman, every detective in Great Britain had been nursing dreams of finding her. And here the Dodger was talking of her as if she'd never been missed!

"Yes!" he answered brusquely. "She's cut it along towards Kenley. You can just make her out way off there along the line!"

"Oh, my lucky stars!" exclaimed the guard, and he jumped from his van and ran along the train to where the driver and fireman were leaning over the side of the cab shouting to know what was up.

"What's up?" shouted back the guard. "See that?" And he pointed towards the flutter of skirts in the distance. "That's a thousand golden quid running away from us as hard as it can go, that is! That's Lady Helen Thwaite—"

But he got no further.

The driver seized the control-lever and jerked it over a notch.

"Jump aboard, Bill, quick!" he shouted. "We split this!"

And with a jerk and a rattle of slack couplings the train began to move. The guard made a dash for his van. "Hi, stop!" shouted the Dodger. "Or you'll be sorry for it!" But his voice was drowned in the clatter of the jolting train.

With a bound he sprang after the guard, and succeeded in boarding his van.

"Here, you must hand-brake her, man!" he called to the guard. "We must get the Rip!"

"Rip be blowed!" answered the guard. "There's no thousand pounds for catching him! Let 'im wait! We can send someone back for him from Kenley!"

Quick as lightning the situation flashed through the Dodger's brain. He dare not say that he had already forestalled these money-grabbers by "discovering" Lady Helen the day before, as the chances were that if he did they would be so annoyed that in revenge they would not pull up for her, and he would have the mortification of being carried past her very eyes, and seemingly deserting her. And he pictured what her despair would be. On the other hand, to leave the Rip there was to give him a chance of getting away with the jewels! It was true they could very soon be on his heels on that shelterless moor.

But it was a risk. At the same time it was a source of unbounded joy to him to be hurrying towards that poor, pathetic little figure, stumbling bravely forward, and his heart quickened at the thought. But he resisted the temptation, and answered:

"P'raps not for the Rip," he said; "but there's five hundred for leading to the recovery of the jewels, and he's got them with him!"

"Why the giddy moon didn't you say so before?" snarled the guard. "It's too late now. But we'll lead to the recovery by giving information, anyway. What a bit of luck!"

As he spoke, the Dodger was jerked almost off his feet as the van overran the next truck. The engine brakes were on. The guard spun on the handbrake, while the Dodger, recklessly opening the half door, leaned out.

Fifty yards ahead stood Lady Helen, swaying, exhausted, and holding her panting sides. As she recognised the Dodger, the reaction came, and she dropped unconscious on the up four-foot way.

At the same second Jack suddenly noticed a passenger express careering towards her, not more than a quarter of a mile away. He leapt from the still moving train, with his heart in his mouth, and raced for dear life towards her, shouting and waving frantically as he ran.

But for answer the express only whistled shrilly, and, opening the cylinder exhausts, sent two great streams of steam hissing out ten yards ahead to clear the line. She was late, and being driven! That was obvious.

He never checked his speed. The staff of the mineral train held their breaths. He appeared to be charging headlong at that great snorting monster which tore along through a cloud of scalding steam. Into that cloud they saw him dive, and then the express roared by.

When it had passed, they saw Jack sitting beside the line, with scalded face, nursing Lady Helen's head on his knees.

"Well done, Dodger!" shouted the driver, in honest admiration. "By the powers, that was a near thing! I thought you were both gone!"

"So did I, by George!" echoed the guard. "And now let's get her ladyship aboard! We've got to account for this delay, you know!"

The Dodger could not speak. He

was suffering cruelly from the scalding, and not a little from shock. But he knew that he needed all his wits and all his strength yet. Biting his lip till it almost bled, he shouldered Lady Helen, and bore her tenderly to the van.

As he was lifting her in, her eyes flickered open, and looked at him with pleased recognition, and then, with a happy smile and a little contented sigh, she closed them again. He was more than rewarded.

They laid her softly on a cushion improvised from the guard's clothes, and rugs; the guard leant from his door and waved his flag, and the train jolted on again. Jack, sitting beside his charge on the floor.

She looked up at him, and seemed for a long time to take in every line of his face. Then, with a glance at the guard, who was still looking out

aloud he said, though so low that she couldn't hear:

"Got any vaseline or train grease handy, Dick? My face and hands are giving me fair jip!"

With the guard's help he smeared himself with thick train-grease—finest of all remedies for scalds or burns. And a few minutes later they slowed into Kenley.

As soon as he had seen Lady Helen installed in the first-class ladies' waiting-room, the Dodger took himself away and left others to minister to her and make arrangements for communicating the news of her discovery to the outside world. Some queer sense of shame seemed to prevent his taking any steps to establish his claim to the reward.

Besides, he had much yet to do. He got on the telephone to Calworth, and reported the occurrences of the

good rest, she should be any the worse.

Not many trains stop at Kenley, and he had still a considerable time to wait, during which he was once more the centre of sensation. The news of Dr. Neville's murder spread like wildfire, as did also knowledge of the fact that Lady Helen had been found. Telegrams and messages, inquiries and congratulations arrived from all quarters. But the Dodger was in no mood to be lionised.

He felt dissatisfied and disgusted that the Rip was still at large, that the jewels had not yet been restored to their owner; and so he kept away from the inquisitive and the laudatory, and left others to take whatever credit they liked for the events of the past two days. His share in them was but little known to the outside world, and he took an

"Nothing—just nothing," answered Mr. Caxton, in disgusted tones. "Not a trace of Kelly at the hut, nor of Dr. Neville's body, nor of the jewels!"

"What!" It was the Dodger's turn to utter the incredulous exclamation. "Oh, but I see!" he went on. "The Rip's taken the booty with him, and dropped the body in the quaking bog!"

And briefly he told his chief of the threats made by the two Kellys before the train smash. Until the Dodger had told them, the authorities had not even known that the disreputable old hermit on Bramley Flat was in any way connected with the polished arch-roguer notorious as the Rip!

"Well, we'll have the bog dragged—drained, if necessary—at once, before the body sinks too far for recovery," said Mr. Caxton, when Jack finished, and he rose and gave the necessary instructions. "Now," he went on, "take my advice, and go and see the G. M."

And the Dodger did so, and found a very differently-mannered individual from the overbearing magnate he had interviewed the day before. From him Jack learned that the company was graciously pleased to view with satisfaction what he had accomplished. To his surprise, the fact that the Rip had got off again—and apparently with the jewels, too—did not seem to be viewed very seriously.

"A pity—a pity, of course," said Sir John. "Still, there should be no difficulty in catching the rascal, and the main thing is that her ladyship has been restored in good health."

"No difficulty, sir!" exclaimed the Dodger. "You don't know Rip Kelly, if you say that."

"No, ah—ahem!—I can't claim any intimate acquaintance with that somewhat famous—or should we say infamous?—person. Still, he is well known, and has not got much of a start."

From which the Dodger gleaned two facts—first, that the chairman's relatives are of supreme importance, and secondly that the Press is a power. For he saw that, from the general manager downwards, every official of the company felt far more anxiety about finding the chairman's niece than about bringing the wrecker of the American boat train to justice, and that they were almost equally anxious that her reappearance should receive at least as much publicity as her disappearance.

The train smash had ceased to be an absorbing topic; the whole Press of Great Britain was full of Lady Helen's disappearance. Therefore it was only business to consider the latter as of greater importance.

There was something about Sir John Willet that put the Dodger on his guard. He did not like his kid-glove manner. His experience went to show that the condescending graciousness of the great ones of the earth was generally dearly paid for. As he had often said, "If the company makes you a present of two-pence, you can be jolly well sure they'll get threepence for it sooner or later."

He was, therefore, not in the least surprised when the G. M., with much "hemming" and "hawing," and beating about the bush, finally came to the point, which was that the

(Continued on the next page.)



As the forward robbed him of the ball Clifford stumbled, and fell forward on his face. (A rattling incident from "THE PELHAM BURGLAR HUNT," the splendid Jack Noble yarn which appears in the DOUBLE NUMBER of "THE 'B.R.' FOOTBALL LIBRARY." Now on Sale—1d.)

of the half-door, she put her hand forward and grasped the Dodger's with a grateful little squeeze.

"I don't quite know how many times you have saved my life," she said, with a whimsical little laugh.

"Oh, that's nothing!" answered Jack, overcome with joy.

"Isn't it, though?" she smiled back. "It's a great deal to me!"

"I mean I'm more than repaid by being of any service to you"—under his breath he added, "my dear." And as though the words had been spoken, she blushed and looked away.

He got up. "Look here, Jack Postern," he said to himself, "you are in a fair way of making a fool of yourself. Just please to remember this is a duke's daughter, and you are muck!"

morning at Bramley Flat, and had the satisfaction of learning that a strong and armed party was leaving for Kelly's hut at once on a service engine, whilst instructions were issued broadcast to ensure the apprehension of Kelly if he had—as was probable—already left the hut. Then he was told to report himself at Calworth, and accordingly had to go by the next train. To his great disappointment, Lady Helen had gone to the King's Arms, and he had to leave without seeing her again. He had the satisfaction of learning, however, that although she had at once gone to bed, worn out by the horrors and the fatigues through which she had passed, she appeared to have borne the strain remarkably well, and there was no reason why, if she could get a

almost savage joy in the fact. His face and hands, although now properly dressed, still caused him exquisite pain, and he was not a little shaken and unstrung by all he had gone through.

It was in this mood that late in the afternoon he reached Calworth, and reported to Mr. Caxton, the head of the Detective Service.

"The G. M. wants to see you at once," Mr. Caxton said, as soon as the Dodger appeared.

"Then the G. M. must wait, unless it's anything of importance," answered the Dodger.

"What!" gasped the detective-chief, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"I said the G. M. must wait. I want to know what's happened."

A MODEL TELEGRAPH, AND HOW TO MAKE ONE.

Part II. of a Practical Article by GEORGE P. MOON.

(Continued from page 250 of last week's BOYS' FRIEND.)

SLIP the needle inside the coil and insert the shaft, forcing the needle on against the shoulder of the middle unfiled portion of the shaft.

When the needle occupies the centre of the coil, the rear end of the shaft should project sufficiently to allow it to fit into the hole of the staple.

This being satisfactory, we can attach the coil to the case.

If you look at Figs. 4 and 5, you will see that this is done by gluing

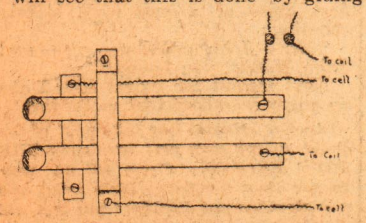


Fig. 9—The Transmitter Arrangement.

a little block of wood at the top and bottom, say, 1 in. square and 1/2 in. thick. Hollow an edge of each so that the coil may be held securely.

Next get a strip of thick brass sheeting, about 3/4 in. long and 1/2 in. wide. Bore a hole in the middle for the end of the shaft and one in each extremity for the screws by which it is fixed to the case, and bend it to fit over the coil in the manner depicted in Fig. 5. Screw on.

The indicator is pretty much like the needle, but it is of thin brass, and the hole for the shaft should be in the middle. The object of boring the hole in the needle rather nearer one end than the other is to cause it, and consequently the indicator, to hang vertically when at rest. The bearings must be very free; a drop of oil should be given occasionally.

Make the front staple similar to that of the rear, but 1/2 in. will be the better width, and 2 in. the length. Insert a small screw or piece of wire on each side of the top end of the indicator, 1/2 in. distant from it when it is vertical, to limit its oscillations.

(Fig. 8.) If these are different from each other and make a different sound when struck by the indicator, you will be able to read a message sent you without looking at the movements made by the latter.

The transmitter comes next on our programme. You will see it in Figs. 1 and 9. It consists of four pieces of brass, two of which form the keys of the instrument. All may be 1/2 in. wide. Those for the keys are 5 in. long, and are made springy by beating the metal on an anvil or other flat surface. In one end a hole for a screw is bored, and a slight bend is given to the strip so that the

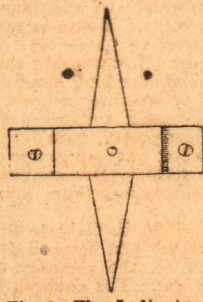


Fig. 8—The Indicator.

a	∨	n	∧
b	∩	o	∩∩
c	∩∩	p	∩∩∩
d	∩	q	∩∩∩
e	∩	r	∩∩
f	∩∩	s	∩∩∩
g	∩∩	t	∩
h	∩∩∩	u	∩∩
i	∩	v	∩∩∩
j	∩∩∩	w	∩∩
k	∩∩	x	∩∩∩
l	∩∩∩	y	∩∩∩
m	∩	z	∩∩∩

Fig. 10—Alphabet Used in Working the Telegraph.

free extremity stands away from the base when the other end is secured with the staple which crosses it. Glue a little disc of wood on the end of each, as shown. The staple may be 6 in. long; it has also screw holes in each end. Its raised part should be 1/2 in. above the base. The fourth strip should be long enough to allow the keys to rest upon it when they are depressed. Insert a couple of binding-screws into the base at any convenient point.

The wires for the coil, binding-

screws, and cell (the latter being a Leclanche or dry cell, which we can buy for about one shilling) are fixed to the transmitter in this way. The coil wires are attached, one to a binding-screw and the other to a screw of one of the keys, the insulating material of the end inch being removed to make a proper contact. The wires from the cell are fixed to the staple and brass strip beneath. The other key is connected to the other binding-screw. The ends of the cable connecting the two instruments are secured to the binding-screws.

If we now depress one of the keys a flow of electricity will begin to pass along the circuit from the cell, will pass through the coil, deflecting the needle, will then flash to the distant instrument, similarly deflect its needle, and return. The same result will follow the depression of the other key. Only in this case the needle will be deflected in a different direction. Care must be taken in "wiring up" that the two needles have the same right or left deflection, or your chum at the distant station will be unable to make head or tail of your messages.

THE END.

(More splendid articles next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

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THE RAILWAY WAIF.

(Continued from the previous page.)

Dodger must not expect to receive the reward for finding Lady Helen.

"You see, my lad," he explained loftily, "we cannot forget the fact that the company has already been at a loss of a matter of £2,000 through your—ah—carelessness in the loss of that insured packet, and so—"

"I like that!" broke in the Dodger. "When I risked my life to try and warn the company not to pay! My carelessness!"

"Possibly, possibly!" replied Sir John. "No doubt you did all in your power to mitigate the consequences of your negligence; if you had not, you would no longer be in the company's service. You must realise, from our exceptional treatment of you, that we have given full consideration to your good intentions. But the fact remains that you were responsible for the original loss of the packet, and also that your efforts afterwards to warn the company were of no avail, and the insurance money actually was paid over. So that we may say that you are indebted to the company in a sum of about £2,000 and expenses. You see that?"

"No, I'm hanged if I do!" answered Jack, without the smallest concern as to how his words would be taken.

The gross injustice of the thing nettled him. He had long ago resolved that he would not claim the reward for finding Lady Helen. It would have seemed sacrilege to him to have done so. What he had done he had done for her sake, not for the sake of a reward, and he was more than recompensed by the indissoluble tie between them of perils and dangers faced together. But his whole mood was changed by the G. M.'s monstrous injustice. If he was to forgo the reward, it would be as a voluntary act of self-sacrifice to tender memories, not at the dictates of a merciless company.

Sir John looked at him sternly, and his manner changed.

"Well, really," he said severely, "it does not much matter whether you do or not, Postern. It was only kindness on my part that led to my explaining to you in this way. The fact remains that in the circumstances the company would not dream of paying you the reward. It would be ridiculous. Reward an employee whose incompetence has already cost it thousands! Certainly not!"

The Dodger drew a long breath.

"Look here, Sir John Willet," he began, in very quiet, biting tones, "it may interest you to know that I had quite made up my mind not to touch a penny of the reward."

The G. M. breathed a sigh of relief. His manner relaxed again.

"A very proper feeling," he said graciously. "I can quite understand it. So that removes all difficulty."

"No, indeed, it does not," answered the Dodger. "My reasons for coming to that resolve were due to feelings which you would be quite unable to understand. In view, however, of what you have said, I have changed my mind. I now formally claim the reward."

"And I now formally reject your claim," retorted Sir John, rising to his feet and glowering down on the Dodger. "Have you anything more to say?"

"Yes, I have."

"I may as well inform you," the G. M. went on, ignoring the interruption, "that if you persist in your pretension, the company has no other course open to it but to dismiss you summarily under Regulation 147 of the terms of your engagement, and will, further, press its claim against you for the loss and expense incurred through your negligence."

"Right!" said the Dodger. "Now we understand one another. As I do press my claim, I take it I am no longer under the company's orders. Good-night, Sir John Willet!"

And the Dodger walked out of his office. Almost immediately outside he met Mr. Caxton.

"What was it?" he asked. "A new job and increased pay—eh?"

"No, the sack!" answered the Dodger. "The common or garden unqualified bag."

"No!" exclaimed the other incredulously. "But why?"

Very tersely the Dodger gave him a perfectly fair abstract of the interview.

"Whew! You're done for, my lad," commented the chief detective, not unsympathetically.

More than one of the company's employee's heard sufficient scraps of the conversation to know what had happened. The news spread like wildfire. Every few minutes Jack was stopped to recount the details of the interview afresh. He did so quite simply without any ulterior motive.

He little realised what he was doing, how he was inflaming these men, stirring up the long-smouldering fires of revolt which had been fed by a hundred similar acts of injustice and oppression.

The vivid description of that tyrannical interview, recited by the bandaged figure which was already scarred and broken in the company's service, was as a naked flame to a bale of tinder. In every mess-room and coffee-stall round the junction, in every goods-shed and shelter, among the night shifts of shunters and road gangs, nothing else was talked of that night.

The Dodger might have formed enemies by his rapid advance, but at least every man in the company's service throughout the length and breadth of four sections knew him, most of them respected him, many liked him—all recognised him as something exceptional, and admired his achievements. As a body, the railway workers were proud of him, whatever they might feel towards him

that was brewing. He knew the men were in a dangerous temper. But above all he felt the wicked injustice of the duty he had to perform. It went against his grain. But what could he do? He was powerless. If he rebelled, it would only mean his own downfall; it would not save Mrs. Bristowe. And he was a rising man with a large family, all at expensive schools, and doing well. If his resistance would have done any good, he would have resisted. But he knew it would not.

And so Mrs. Bristowe, on a trumped-up excuse that she had broken the covenants of her agreement by causing obstruction and annoying the company's passengers, was told she was to clear out that evening.

For clear insight into the ways of men and their motives, you may trust blindly to the corporate intelligence of a large body of workers. So it was that, when Mrs. Bristowe's fate became known, as it did within half an hour, none ever doubted for a moment that it was the work of the G. M., and that its object was to strike another blow at the Dodger. The instrumentality of the station-master and the trumped-up complaint deceived no one.

That night, as Sir John Willet was driving back to his house, two stones crashed through the plate-glass of his motor-car. Later, an informal meeting of railway men assembled just

"Gee, little mother!" he exclaimed.

"This is a proper facer!" "Oh, it's not so bad as it might be, Jack," she responded bravely. "So long as we are all together and in good health we've much to be thankful for, and I've saved quite a bit, you know," she added, with a touch of pride.

"Oh, we'll make a living all right!" answered the Dodger. "Don't you worry about that, missus. But it's a scandalous shame, that's what it is. And I'd have given my soul for the G. P. R.; I would—I mean it!" he added, with clenched teeth.

It was that which hurt. He loved the railway with a passionate love, and to him "the company" was a kind of god; he worshipped it with an idolatrous reverence. And now it had spurned him, and he had no more part or parcel in it.

The sound of a motor-horn and the loud panting of a powerful engine startled them. Motor-cars were not common in Calgate Street.

They both listened, heads half turned. The car stopped at their door, and there came the sound of voices debating, then a banging of the knocker.

Jack jumped up and opened the door, as he was, in shirt-sleeves.

An enormous touring motor-car, with dazzling headlights, seemed to fill up the whole narrow street. On the doorstep stood a man in peaked cap and livery-coat.

"Why, of course; come in, your Grace," he said, and opened the sitting-room door. "The Duke of Dublin," he announced. "And this," he went on, indicating Mrs. Bristowe, "is Mrs. Bristowe, my adopted sister and mother."

"Delighted to meet anyone who has the privilege of being a friend of Mr. Postern," said the duke, shaking Mrs. Bristowe by the hand. "I've come to have a real good look at him. I can't thank him for all I owe him. I'm not going to try. But I could not rest till I had seen him and shaken him by the hand. A mere selfish gratification and an unwarrantable intrusion, of course. But you must forgive me, in the circumstances."

He never paused for breath. He rattled on as, with the air of one used to arrange things, he placed a chair for Mrs. Bristowe and settled himself into another. "I apologise, I assure you. But this young man has given me back the dearest possession on earth." His voice shook, and his nostrils quivered suspiciously. "My hair was iron grey when she disappeared. You see it now," and he ran his fingers through locks as white as the driven snow. "That will perhaps tell you. And this splendid hero has not once, but repeatedly, risked his life for my little girl."

The Dodger blushed.

He did not know he was capable of such a performance. Truth to tell, he had, from some strange new sense of shame, not said much to Mrs. Bristowe about his adventures with Lady Helen. And she now looked across at him suspiciously. He had risked his life repeatedly for this duke's daughter, then, had he? A little jealous pang shot through her—and he knew it—a motherlike jealousy.

But still the old man went on, in the same humble, apologetic strain, glorifying the Dodger, and apologising for his intrusion.

"George! Ma'am, he's a king among men, and I simply had to rush straight off to see him, to set eyes on him. Here, let me have the honour of shaking hands with a man!" And he jumped up and gripped the Dodger's right hand in both his.

And so for half an hour he stayed and chatted. When first the Dodger had learned who his caller was, he had felt a strange resentment. This great duke would patronise him, probably wish to recompense him, offer him money. But there was no trace of it. He treated the Dodger's act as something beyond the realm of recompense; spoke to him as to one whom he looked up to, to whom he would always be under an obligation, his superior in fact.

Quite naturally he asked for a glass of beer, and finally:

"Will you do me a great favour, Mr. Postern?" he asked. "Will you—and Mrs. Bristowe and her children, the whole party—will you give Lady Helen and myself the pleasure of your company at Harty Towers for a week? Or at Scarborough—perhaps you'd prefer Scarborough? Whichever suits you best. You must. Please do! Fix your own date. We sha'n't take 'No' for an answer, mind. We shall worry till you do. Will you write and fix a date? That's right. And now I'll really relieve you of my presence. Forgive me for staying so long. And so many thanks!"

And he bustled out again. Jack, his heart warm to the impetuous little Irishman, watched the car feeling its way down the long, narrow street.

"Exactly like the G. M.'s car," he thought to himself. "But what a difference in the owners!"

Then in the distance he heard a curious, hoarse sound, a rumbling roar.

He knew that sound. It brought back a vision of the scene on the canal bridge when the infernal machine had exploded.

The sound was the harsh murmur of an angry crowd.

It grew and swelled as the crowd swept on. What did it mean? What was up?

Then round the corner came the first units of a vast mob, fiercely shouting:

"Err—John Willet—err—err! John Willet, you crowd!"

Next instant the hound flowed like an angry sea about that motor-car.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand railway story next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Please tell all your friends about our Saxon Blake serial, and also about the new Yorkshire tale that will shortly commence in our pages.)



Jack Postern raced towards the oncoming express, shouting and waving frantically, but the train rapidly got nearer. The lad appeared to charge headlong at this great snorting monster, and then the express roared by.

individually. And the gross injustice of the treatment he had received stirred that strange sense of brotherhood which is the workers' greatest strength.

Sir John, when the Dodger left his room, smiled leniently, and then dictated a letter or two, and went home to a sumptuous dinner, with never another thought of the incident. Next morning, however, as he made his way from his motor to his office, Mrs. Bristowe's stall caught his eyes and reminded him of the matter.

"Send the station-master to me," he ordered of a clerk; and as soon as that individual was ushered in:

"Morning, Thompson!" said Sir John, without looking up. "It's no use my dismissing the lad Postern, if that Mrs. Bristowe still continues to make a good living out of the company. She must be cleared out, and at once."

"I don't think we can, sir," replied the station-master nervously. "She's got an agreement."

"Agreement! Rubbish!" retorted the G. M. "You don't suppose a company's agreement is so drawn that we can't do as we like. Look the matter up. You'll find plenty of ways of doing what I order. She's to go, and to go to-day. See to it!"

And the station-master withdrew. But his heart was heavy. He had seen clear indications of the storm

outside the station-yard, and expressed itself in vigorous terms as to what had occurred. Owing to the fact that the Dodger did not belong to any of the regularly constituted services, it was not the business of any particular branch of the company's employ directly to resent the treatment he had received. But on the other hand, he had played a part in so many departments that all felt their interests touched by what had occurred, and the meeting reflected the universality of this feeling. It was composed of a strange mixture of shunters, porters, goods hands, checkers, drivers, firemen, road men, guards, signalmen, van men, and drivers and platelayers, with a considerable sprinkling of telegraphists and clerks. The whole proceedings were informal and spontaneous. It was a group of meetings, rather than one collective assembly, a series of clusters all expressing their indignation, and searching blindly for some method of exacting redress. Every now and again a speaker would, by sheer voice-power, gain the attention of the whole gathering, and command silence; but for the most part a dozen heated discussions were going on at once.

Meanwhile, in Calgate Street, the Dodger had just learned from Mrs. Bristowe of the calamity that had befallen her. The children had gone to bed.

"Does Mr. Postern live here?" he asked, in superciliously scornful tones.

"My name's Postern," replied the Dodger. "Who wants me, my man?"

The servant looked him over with an unconcealed sneer.

"If you try to tilt your nose any higher you'll break your neck," commented the Dodger. "Who wants me?"

"Kindly step out and speak to 'is Grace the Duke o' Dublin," answered the man, making towards the door of the carriage. But before he reached it the door opened, and a slight, elderly, clean-shaven man with white hair and keen grey eyes, stepped out.

"Not at all," he said. "I'll step out." And, advancing, he extended his hand. "So you are Postern," he went on. "Let me have a look at you, young fellow." He laid his hands on the lad's shoulders, and turned him towards the light. "I want to know what the pluckiest man in England looks like. George! You've got your face badly scalded! May I come in?"

And in the simplest manner in the world he took the Dodger's arm and stepped into the narrow passage with him. He had given Jack no time for speech. His promptness, his simplicity, his forcefulness, appealed irresistibly to the Dodger.



SEXTON BLAKE; FOREMAN.

Being a Grand New Serial
of the Great Detective, and
His Assistants Tinker and
Pedro.



NEW READERS START HERE.

The opening of this story finds Sexton Blake, the famous detective, with his young assistant Tinker, on the night previous to their embarkation to East Africa on a pleasure shooting trip. At the very last moment this long anticipated holiday is abandoned.

Sidney Temple is a young engineer, at present engaged in a large undertaking at Redcliff Dale to construct a scheme of supplying three neighbouring towns with water from a broad and swift river. This clever young engineer will make his name famous in the engineering world if he can only successfully finish the job in the contracted time. Everything goes well for six months, but now some unknown enemy is destroying all his plans and completed work.

Sexton Blake and Tinker, disguised as navvies,

obtain employment in the workings of this great scheme at Redcliff Dale. This village is better known by the fancy name of "Ginger Town," and the famous detective and his assistant get lodgings at the cottage of Job Peckchaff, some distance away from the workings.

Tinker is employed on the day shift, while his employer works with the night shift, and consequently the two only meet on rare occasions.

Black Jock is an exceedingly harsh and suspicious foreman, under whom Tinker is working. In the night the work of months is mysteriously made a complete wreck, and the machinery found in a dishevelled condition.

So far, Sexton Blake has not struck the slightest clue to the mystery he has come to solve, and nothing but ruin stares Sidney Temple in the face.

The detective, now known as Bob Packer, is promoted to ganger, or sort of petty foreman, and, half conscious that something is going to happen, he stays on after his usual working hours. A huge pump is employed to keep clear any water that fights its way past the dam of the river.

The listening detective marks its steady rise and fall—throb, throb—and the undertone made by the gushing water it lifts and drives away. Blake feels a dreamy mood stealing over him, as he listens. Then comes another sound, breaking into it sharply, and he is alert in an instant.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

THE 7th CHAPTER.

First Touch With the Enemy—A Grim Ordeal.

THE sound came from the distant pump-house, and was not loud or long—any ear less acute than his might well have missed it—just a faint cry in a man's voice; a cry of pain or alarm, cut off suddenly.

Blake paused for another moment to hear if it came again. But it was not repeated.

"Because the man who made it has been stunned—or killed!" he ejaculated.

Descending from the height where he stood, he made with rapid strides towards the pump-house. His way lay over the bed of the reservoir, under the huge wall of the dam.

It was difficult and rather dangerous going, for there were no lights here, and the clayey bed was for the most part a mere swamp awaiting further work until drained and dried. Here and there, but quite invisible in the gloom, were pits filled with stagnant water, deep enough to drown a giant if by ill-luck he stumbled into one of them.

These perilous places were spanned by a narrow course of single planks, loose and slippery with ooze; difficult enough to keep to in broad daylight, but in darkness a foothold only suited to a cat.

Yet Sexton Blake held on his way with never a check to his rapid stride, and yet never a slip or stumble. His eyes seemed to serve him even in that gloom, or a sort of instinct, combined with a steady nerve, kept him to the narrow track of safety. Yet he knew his peril well enough; knew that if he made a single false step into that oozy clay he would be sucked down before his cry for help—if heard, for that part of the works was deserted—could bring him assistance.

It was a long journey to make in this manner, for the bed of the reservoir was nearly a mile in breadth, extending, in fact, right across the valley, and the pumping-works stood at the far extremity, right under the great wall of the dam.

He approached it at last, and paused for a single instant to glance at the building.

It towered above him, a great rough structure of timber and iron; a black patch upon the gloom. Through an opening above his head he could see the ponderous beam of the pump slowly sweeping up and down; catching the yellow light of some dim lamp below as it descended, and melting into darkness as it rose. He listened, but there was no unusual sound; only the rhythmic beat of the mighty pistons and the hoarse gush, gush of the discharged torrent through the sluice below.

He crossed the narrow plank that spanned the sluice, and approached the door of the engine-house, which adjoined the great shed containing the pump.

The door was unlatched. He noiselessly pushed it open and stepped in.

Only one man—relieved by another at daybreak—had charge of both engine and pump. For the latter was so perfect in its action that it needed but little attention.

The night engineer should, of course, have been on duty then. But Blake could see nothing of the man; the engine-house appeared to be deserted. The engine was at work; the light from a lamp hung above it, glancing on the spokes of the massive flywheel as it slowly revolved, and glinting from the polished crank and rods. An oil-can lay on its side on the edge of the frame, and the oil was dripping to the floor. It could only have been left so for a few minutes, or it would have emptied itself, so that Blake knew the man had not long left the engine. But he was invisible now.

"Gone to have a look at the pump, perhaps," was the detective's natural thought. Yet even then he thought it strange that the man should have been in such haste as to leave his oil-can overturned to empty itself upon the ground.

And that queer foreboding of his came back with redoubled force.

The engine-house was separated from the pumping-shed by a stout bulkhead of planks, with a doorway in the lower part.

As Blake turned towards this, intending to pass through, his foot struck against some soft, heavy object lying upon the floor, which was in darkness just there, the light of the one lamp not reaching so far.

He stooped down, and dim as the light was, made out the body of the engineer lying face downwards upon the ground, as though he were dead.

But he was not dead; only drugged—the detective speedily ascertained that. A heavy, sickening odour hung about the man, and clutched in his right hand was a wad of sodden linen, as if he had torn the thing away from his face—but too late!

Blake could do nothing to help the man, and he had other work before him just then.

Sexton Blake is a real personage, not a detective out of the pages of lurid fiction, who always carries a big six-shooter in his walks abroad and sleeps with two under his pillow. Blake seldom carried a revolver, and he had none with him now; a navy with a revolver on his hip might have excited remark.

But unarmed though he was, and quite aware that he ran some risk, he stepped noiselessly to the opening in the bulkhead, and passed through.

It was a weird, uncanny scene the pump-shed by night.

A single lamp, hung midway from the roof, was the only light. It served to show, as a huge blot of blackness, the yawning pit into which the great pistons slowly plunged, and as slowly rose again. High above the ponderous beam, sweeping into the light as it descended, then rising to vanish in the gloom, looked like the mighty arm of some colossus threatening an unseen enemy in the pit beneath.

Oddly enough, that very thought came into the detective's mind as, standing well back in the shadows near the wall, he looked upwards into the half-light above.

The beam worked between two massive iron columns, and these were spanned by a narrow bridge, or gallery, for the purpose of reaching the bearings. An iron ladder led up to this from the edge of the pit.

The bridge was much in shade, but Blake's eyes were now accustomed to the gloom, and he soon made out the dark figure of a man, a short, thick-set man, standing with his back towards him in the middle of the bridge beside the bearings of the beam. He held in his hand what appeared to be a large glass flask, and as the detective caught sight of him he was in the act of tilting this.

Then suddenly there came a sharp hissing sound; a stream of dense white vapour arose from the bearings, and the night breeze, blowing down from an opening in the roof, brought with it to the detective's nostrils the keen, acrid smell of some corrosive fluid upon metal.

He sprang to the ladder and bounded up it two rungs at a stride, shouting as he went:

"Hi, you there! What are you doing? What stuff is that you have there?"

His shout was to stop the man in the act, and it had that effect. The fellow started and turned round, revealing a face half covered with a black mask. He looked down, and saw Blake, now half-way up the ladder.

"What is it?" he shouted back, in a hoarse, guttural voice. "It's vitriol, that's what it is! Have some of it, you meddlin' fool!"

And he flung the flask down, straight at the detective's head.

Only by a side-swing that almost threw him off the ladder did Blake dodge it. But it struck the side rail, and shattered in a thousand fragments, scattering its terrible contents far and wide. The fearful stuff missed the detective's face, or he would have been hideously disfigured, and probably blinded for life. But as it was, some fell upon his hands, burning like molten metal.

Undaunted by the pain, or rather maddened by it, he sprang further up the ladder, and ran along the narrow bridge.

At bay—for the bridge ended where he stood, and he had no means of escape—the fellow whipped out a revolver. But Blake was close upon him then, and deftly struck it from his hand ere he could fire. It fell with a hollow splash into the dark water far below.

Then the two men closed and struggled—on that narrow foothold, and with that fearful black gulf twenty feet beneath!

It was the grimmest contest in which Sexton Blake ever engaged. He was no weakling, but an athlete trained and fit. Yet he had met his match in that unknown antagonist. The fellow, clumsy and squat of build though he was, seemed to possess giant strength and exerted it desperately to the full.

The bridge was hardly more than a foot wide, provided on one side only with a light iron rail.

Blake's antagonist strove to hurl him off upon the unprotected side, and seemed reckless whether he went with him in the fatal fall. To and fro they swayed; now against the slender rail, now perilously overhanging the unguarded edge. Once the villain nearly succeeded in his murderous purpose, but Blake, by a mighty effort, threw his weight the other way. Both came against the light handrail with fearful force.

The slender stanchions snapped with a crack like a pistol-shot.

The fellow managed to throw himself flat upon the bridge, and clung there. But Blake was hurled off into space. With marvellous presence of mind he clutched at the broken rail as he felt himself going, and swung out with it. Like a straw it bent down under his weight. But by the mercy of Providence it did not snap.

And there he hung, clinging to the smooth, thin rail, so slender that it barely afforded a grip for his hands, and the black pit, with its seething waters, yawning under him.

A hoarse, fierce voice came from above:

"Ay, cling there till your muscles fail, you prying fool! Then drop to your death!"

The taunt fell upon unheeding ears, for in that fearful moment Blake's brain was working at lightning speed, seeking an expedient to save himself from an awful fate.

One only came to him—a desperate one.

He began to set himself swinging, as a spider at the end of its line. There was a frightful risk in this—the frail rod might break with the bending. Yet it was his sole chance, if only it held long enough for his purpose.

Once, twice! He swung out a full yard each way; then, gathering momentum, wider and wider still; the rod grating horribly against the edge of the bridge above.

Yet it held until he swung so far out that his body almost struck the great piston-rod working in the centre of the pit.

Once more back, then forward again, until his brain—marvellously clear even then—told him he was near enough for his desperate attempt. With something like a prayer upon his lips he let go the slender rail and flung his arms around the piston-rod as it was descending.

He had landed on the cross-head, and that afforded him a foothold. But before he could leap off it carried him below the edge of the pit, and his chance for the time was gone.

Then came the fearful thought—what if he was carried so far down as to be plunged into that swirling vortex below, and dragged from his hold? He tried to clamber up the rod, but it was slippery with grease, and too wide for his arms and knees to grip.

There was nothing for it but to wait.

Slowly, with maddening slowness as it seemed to his tense brain, the piston bore him down deeper into the black, cold depths. The gush of the water, reverberating from the sides of the pit, roared like Niagara in his ears, stunning him almost with its uproar.

(Continued on the next page.)



Both men came against the light handrail with fearful force. The slender stanchions snapped, and Blake was hurled off into space. With marvellous presence of mind he clutched at the broken rail, and swung out with it.

Down, and yet deeper down. Suddenly a chill struck to his ankles, then to his legs. He felt a mighty force, like giant hands, tugging at his limbs. He was in the pump cylinder, and the fierce vortex was about to drag him down.

He clung to the great rod with all the strength of a despairing man's last hope.

That deadly chill rose higher still, and the giant grip was about his very waist. The strain threatened to snap the strong sinews of his arms. Then he thought that the tension seemed to lessen slightly. Yes, the piston was rising again!

It ascended with cruel slowness, but at last it brought him level with the edge of the pit. He gathered himself for the effort and leapt, landing upon the very brink, but safe!

For hours it seemed to endure, but Blake knew that in reality the whole of that grim adventure had passed in a few minutes, and his first thought on recovering his breath was to look for the villain who had caused it all. Blake searched the whole place with eyes sharpened by a longing to get at grips with his enemy again.

But the fellow had vanished. "But I shall know him again," muttered the detective; "in spite of his mask I shall know him, for he could not disguise that voice."

THE 8th CHAPTER. What the Vitriol Did.

SEXTON BLAKE made no attempt at pursuit. With the start the miscreant had, and in the pitchy darkness of that black night, there would be little chance of running him down. And the detective's thoughts, now that he himself was safe, instantly flew to the luckless engine-minder.

He turned back to the engine-room, where the man still lay inert, as one actually dead.

Taking the lamp that hung above the engine, Blake stooped over him and peered anxiously into his face. His eyes were closed, his lips—of a ghastly blue—were slightly parted, but no breath seemed to pass them, and there was no perceptible motion of his heart.

"He is an elderly man," murmured the detective, painfully impressed by these ominous signs. "What if the drug has proved too powerful for him?"

He had got to know the man well in the short time he had been at the works, and had learnt to like him. Jacob Spanner—"Old Spanner," as he was called amongst the men—had been in Sidney Temple's employ on previous contracts, and had proved himself a steady and reliable man. He was getting on in years, and had a wife and family.

Sexton Blake's broad and generous heart was deeply moved as he looked on the poor fellow's livid, deathlike face.

There was no help at hand, but the detective was a man of infinite resource, and not likely to stand in hopeless idleness when a human life might be saved.

He lifted the old man in his arms and bore him to the open doorway, where the night wind might play upon his head. Then he loosened the clothing about his neck and chest, and getting some cold water, bathed his face.

As he was engaged in this a hurried step made him look up. Sidney Temple came with rapid stride out of the darkness that lay beyond the door.

The young engineer looked pale and alarmed. His voice was broken, as with haste or great agitation.

"You here, Blake?" he exclaimed. Then, as he caught sight of the prone figure on the ground: "Ah, Heavens! What is this? Old Spanner! What has happened to him?"

"He has been drugged—chloroformed," answered Blake, still continuing his task.

"Chloroformed! By whom? How?"

Without looking up or ceasing his efforts for a moment, Blake briefly told him what had occurred, touching very lightly upon his own adventure, however.

Temple heard him in amazement, and something akin to horror.

"I knew it—I knew it!" he ejaculated. "I had a feeling that there was some fresh mischief in the air to-night! I could not rest, and something has brought me here. But—good heavens!—I never dreamt of this! Is he—is he dead?"

"No; he is recovering, I think," said Blake, in a tone of intense relief.

He joyfully noted a slight heaving of the man's chest; a tremor seemed

to run through his limbs, his eyelids lifted the merest trifle, but still it was a sign of returning life.

"I will go and send for medical help!" cried Temple. "See! He is relapsing! He may yet die!"

"No; he will recover," said Blake, with the assurance that came of better knowledge. "He needs no doctor; fresh air and a little time will bring him round. Stay here; we have other work to do," he added suddenly, as he sprang to his feet. "Hark!"

A dull grinding noise, with now and then a sharper screech in it, came from the adjoining pumping-shed.

"What is it?" asked Temple, his senses too bewildered with agitation to recognise the sound himself—the peculiar sound of metal grating upon metal.

"The scoundrel has succeeded better than I thought!" exclaimed Blake. "The pump beam is grating in its bearings. It is about to stop!"

Temple started, and went paleer than before. He knew all too well what that meant for him—catastrophe and ruin!

"What shall we do?" he cried wildly in a new despair. "Shall I fetch help?"

"There is no time," said Blake, who knew that the night shift—the nearest men—were working at the other extremity of the great dam, almost a mile away. "Hark again! It is slowing to a stop rapidly!"

The harsh grating noise grew louder, and the sharp screeching was like a witch's shriek, as the corroded bearings of the ponderous beam ground in its own rustlike sand.

"It is stopping!" cried Temple. "We can do nothing!"

"We can at least try," said Blake almost sternly. "Pull yourself together, man! I want your help!"

He ran to the engine and shut off steam. The now irregular throb, throb of the pump speedily ceased, and the grinding noise, with one prolonged shriek, as though the great machine had senses and was in agony, died away.

"Let me at least go and warn the men to leave the works!" cried Temple. "Now that the pump is stopped the water will rise a thousand gallons every minute!"

"No time!" said Blake sharply. "Stay here and help! Time enough to raise the alarm when we have failed! Peel off your coat, man, and work as you never worked before! The danger will be ours first!"

He was right, as Temple remembered instantly. The pumping-station was situated at the lowest portion of the bed of the great reservoir, where the flood water entered, and which would of course be inundated first, and that very speedily.

Still, it was less his personal peril, less even the jeopardy of his great work than the thought of others, that made him brace himself to aid Blake by all means in his power.

"Tell me what to do!" he cried, tearing off his coat and pitching it aside.

"Take that bucket," said Blake; "fill it with hot water at the gauge-tap, and pass it up to me again and again as fast as you can fill it!"

He had already caught up a can of oil, containing about a gallon, and with that and the biggest spanner he could snatch from the engineer's tool-rack, he ran into the pump-shed and mounted the ladder to the narrow bridge.

It was a fearsome footway now without the handrail—broken, and hanging over the black pit below.

Yet the detective ran along it as lightly and as surely as a cat until he reached the bearings of the great beam.

The light of the lamp that hung from the roof showed him the great red tears of rust oozing from the bearing where the acid had done its fell work. Fortunately, the unknown miscreant had only been able to attack the nearest one; Blake's arrival had interrupted him and saved the other. But the vitriol had done its work only too well!

With the big spanner, and exerting all his strength—a perilous business in that narrow space—Blake succeeded in loosening the corroded nuts of the bearing-cap, and lifted the weighty piece of metal off.

By this time Temple had reached him with the first pail of boiling water.

He poured it over the bearing, scrubbing away with a wad of cotton waste he had also brought with him. Meanwhile Temple returned for more water.

It was a long business, for the

young engineer, plucky though he was, had none of Blake's iron nerve, and the passage of that fearsome bridge, burdened with the heavy pail, rather tired him, and made his movements slow and cautious.

Once, as Blake waited for a fresh supply, his quick ear caught an ominous sound. It was the swirl of water in the sluice outside. The flood was rising—rising fast!

Glancing through an opening in the wall, he could see it glistening darkly under the night sky as it rose above the sluice and swirled around the low mound on which the pump-house stood—like an army long kept at bay by the great giant that was now so still, but victorious at last!

Temple, far less alert because far less cool, had heard nothing of this, and Blake said not a word of it, but took the pail from him and bade him hasten back and stand by to start the engine when he shouted to him.

Then he worked with the strength and energy of ten men to clear the last of the rust away.

"That will do now," he muttered between set teeth. "Now for the oil."

He drenched the bearing with oil, and then replaced the cover and screwed the nuts home. He then refilled the oil-cup, and shouted down to Temple:

"Start her—start her!"

There came the hiss of steam as Temple opened the throttle, then an awful grating jerk that made the bridge tremble and almost threw Blake off. Then the great beam slowly lifted, but grinding still, and sending vibrations through the mighty framework and jarring every bone in the detective's body.

The beam descended, but with less jar as the oil began to get in its work.

It gradually worked more smoothly, but slowly. Blake called down:

"More steam—more steam!"

Temple answered that he had opened the throttle wide. Yet the pump's action was still slow—all too slow to master the rapidly rising waters.

Then the detective guessed that the fires had got low for want of tending. He dashed along the bridge, down the iron ladder, and into the engine-room.

Temple ran to meet him, a look of dismay upon his face.

"Look—look!" he cried. "The water—the water!"

With trembling hand he pointed through the open door. The dark flood swirled within ten yards of the doorway, and even in the instant they looked it grew perceptibly nearer.

It had encompassed the entire spot. They were completely cut off, for the bridge across the sluice was already carried away.

Blake's first thought was for the old engine-minder.

The detective lifted him and placed him in the safest place he could find—a pile of ashes in a corner of the shed.

"Now," he said, "take a shovel, Temple, and stoke for all you're worth! It's a fight between fire and water, and our lives are the stakes!"

THE 9th CHAPTER.

Between Flood and Fire!

THERE were two stokeholes, and two sets of boilers to the great engine that worked the mammoth pump.

Blake threw open the doors, and saw that the fires were very low—"at the last gasp," as the phrase goes. They would need skill and care to nurse them up in time.

His knowledge stood him in good stead now. And this was a grim matter, for it was a race with death!

He coaxed both fires with a skilled hand at first, letting in the blast when they would stand it; then, setting Temple to heave down the coal, began to feed it in.

The effect was soon marked. The engine gathered speed—slowly at first, then rapidly. The crank made hazy bands of light as it flew round; the bright rods, glancing in and out, seemed like the play of electric sparks. The great flywheel, which, at the engine's normal pace, revolved so slowly that one might count its spokes, now whirled as a solid disc, and made a deep, booming hum.

Yet Blake still heaped in the fuel, although each furnace was now a glowing cavern of white fire.

For the battle was all with the enemy as yet. The flood still gained fast!

It had reached the doorway now, and was leaping the threshold in little yellow waves—each wave some inches in advance of the last.

Both Blake and Temple glanced that way. Their eyes met in a significant look, and without a

spoken word each plied his shovel faster.

The vibration of the over-driven engine now shook the building, and from the adjoining shed the swish, swish of the mighty beam, as it swept through the air, was like the rush of a great wind among trees.

But the throbbing gush of the giant pump was not heard, though usually that was the most marked sound. But now the flood was brimming above the mouth of the pit, and the piston was working deep under water.

Once Old Spanner sat up on the cinder-head, and seemed to listen.

"Summat wrong with the pump," they hear him mutter. "The old girl ain't in proper stroke. The engine's racing."

He tried to get up, but the effects of the drug still clung to him, and he dropped down again, as though overpowered by sleep or coma.

"It is better so," murmured Blake, glancing at him. "He, at least, is unconscious of our fearful peril."

For fearful it had now become!

Both men had cast aside their shovels, for the fires were roaring livid white, like smelting-furnaces, and the pressure-gauge indicated that the boilers would barely stand another ounce.

Neither spoke. They stood with folded arms, watching the progress of that grim battle between the giant in the adjoining shed and the on-coming flood. The issue was now out of their hands.

And victory was with the enemy still!

The water was already half-way across the floor of the engine-house, which rose slightly towards where the boilers stood. Already it had reached the engine and the flywheel.

At last Temple spoke—raising his voice to a shout because of the din:

"We might retreat to the bridge over the pump!" he said hoarsely. "That would give us a little longer grace! We could carry Spanner between us!"

Blake shook his head, pointing to the door in the bulkhead leading to the pump-shed. It lay rather lower than the engine-room, but already the water was pouring over the sill of the doorway, and spurting through each crevice in the lower part of the boarding.

It came not in a continuous stream, but in intermittent jerks, as the pump for a moment conquered it, and was again conquered in its turn.

But always the water gained, coming in greater volume each time.

"It would be useless," said the detective; "the place is flooded waist-deep. To venture in there would mean that we should be drawn into the vortex of the pump. No; let us remain here. There is still a chance!"

It was a terribly slender one, as he knew all too well!

The pump was working at a rate never dreamt of by its makers, making the stout building shake with each tremendous stroke—threatening to bring it down like a house of cards!

And yet the water still gained.

The cinder-heap on which Old Spanner lay—happily, still unconscious—was now an island with a broad swirl of yellow foam around it. Blake and Temple, driven back inch by inch, were now so close to the roaring furnaces that the fierce heat scorched their clothing.

Then a new and more fearful peril loomed suddenly upon the minds of both.

When the water reached those fierce fires a fearful explosion would follow!

"Blake," said Temple, in a strained, unnatural voice, "better take our chance with the flood. A strong swimmer might breast it. And better a death by drowning than—than—"

His lips refused to frame the other more awful alternative.

"Then try it," responded Blake calmly. "As for me, I'll not leave that helpless old man."

Temple's face flushed.

"Nor will I!" he said. "I was a coward even to think of it! Blake, don't despise me! It was only a passing thought. We will stick it out together!"

The two men silently clasped hands. Then, as the water had now reached their feet and there was no further retreat but against the red-hot furnace-doors, they waded, knee-deep, to the cinder-heap, where there was just room for each to crouch beside the prostrate man.

And there they waited, their eyes fixed upon the rising flood that seemed to mark off, inch by inch, their remaining chance of life!

(Another grand, long instalment next Tuesday, in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

The Whole Truth About SHIPS' STEWARDS.

By CAPTAIN WILLIS, Mercantile Marine.

AT some time or other in every boy's life there comes a longing to go to sea. A few years ago every boy wanted to go as an apprentice, but now that premiums are asked for by so many shipping firms, a post as steward is the one most sought after.

Day after day the editor of every boys' paper receives letters of inquiry from lads who wish to go to sea as stewards, and most of the youngsters seem to think it is the easiest matter imaginable to secure such a post.

As one who has knocked about at sea in all sorts of craft, I have been asked to write this article about the subject of stewardships, and I should like to say first of all that for every vacancy for a steward there are at least a score of applicants, nineteen of whom are quite incapable of doing a steward's work.

"You want to remember first of all that it is only on passenger boats that stewards are carried at all in any numbers, and in the case of the crack liners many of the stewards remain in the service for many years,

gradually working themselves up

to the higher positions of their calling.

Now, there are, briefly, three ways in which to obtain a post as a steward. The first and best way is to go to the docks and slip aboard the vessels lying there, offering your services to one of the officers. More stewards get jobs by this plan than by any other.

Sometimes, though very occasionally, a lad can get a job by writing to the head offices of the company by which he would wish to be employed. Generally speaking—and I put the matter with a sailor's bluntness—this is a waste of good postage-stamps and stationery.

The third plan is to set about finding a man who is engaged in some capacity aboard a ship and to get him to speak on your behalf in the right direction. This is what we might call getting a job by influence, but all the influence in the world will prove unavailing if the applicant has not got the right stuff in him for the work.

I might mention that there are folk who advertise that they can get a lad a post as a steward on payment of a fee. Many of these people are, of course, honest and straightforward, but advertisements like these are sometimes misleading, designed to trap the unwary, so you must have your wits about you in dealing with them.

Ships' stewards are a hard-worked class, like all who earn their living on the sea, and in most vessels they have to do their "watches" just as seamen do so far as time is concerned. Often they are on from five in the morning till late at night, with brief spells to themselves, and I need hardly say that many passengers are most exacting and worrisome, making the life of the steward who waits upon them a perfect misery.

Another point you often hear spoken of is

the magic tip

the steward receives at the end of a voyage. Speaking from experience, these tips are usually very meagre, and when added to the comparatively small wage do not make the sum total very alluring. The days of fat tips are over, generally speaking, however attentive a man might be, and this side of stewarding is greatly overrated.

On a smart liner, not overcrowded with passengers, a steward's job is well worth seeking, but few of the lads who aim to be stewards without more experience of the sea than is gained in pleasure-steamers find the life a bed of roses. And even when they do get a job many of them find the first voyage so hard and exacting that they make it also the last.

THE END.

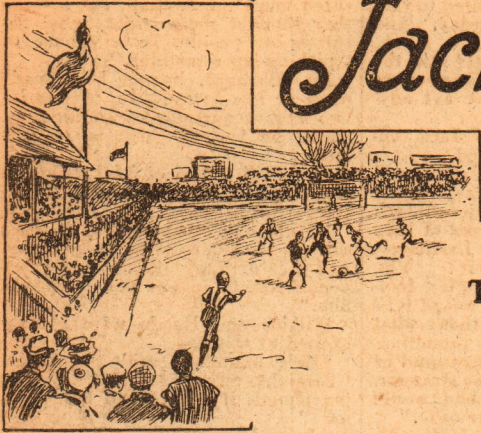
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Jack Laleham's Cross Roads

The Story of a Boy Who Became a
Professional Footballer.

THE 1st CHAPTER. Jack Leaves Home.

"JOHN, there's a pile of wood in the yard. I want you to chop it this afternoon."

"This afternoon!" Jack Laleham's face fell as he spoke.

"Yes, and the lot, mind; no shirking!"

"Won't Monday evening do?"

"None of your sauce, please! No, Monday evening won't do! You'll have to give up your blessed football once in a way."

And with these words, Peter Wilkins strode off, leaving his stepson in a very angry and rebellious frame of mind. Peter Wilkins, idler, poacher, drunkard, and general ruffian, had married Jack's mother three years previously, and since then Jack and his sister Kate had had a hard time of it. Poorly fed, and uncomfortably lodged, they had been bullied by their stepfather till they dreaded the sound of his voice. And until lately Jack had occasionally also been soundly thrashed, very often for trivial faults, sometimes for no reason at all.

But Jack was now sixteen years of age—big and strong for his age—and the last time Peter Wilkins raised a stick to him the boy had torn it from his grasp, and hurled it away, with such a look of fierce anger in his eyes that the cowardly tyrant had not dared to repeat the experiment.

But there were other ways of making the lad miserable, and Peter Wilkins did not hesitate to avail himself of them. Jack's one joy in life was the game he got—or could get when permitted—on Saturday afternoons—of cricket in the summer, and football in the winter. He loved both, but was devoted to football, and his great ambition was to become a really fine player and make his living by the game. But his stepfather frequently contrived to find some task for him to do, and so prevent his enjoying his hard-earned holiday. This time it was to chop wood, and Jack, knowing that there was actually not the slightest hurry about the matter, as the wood would not be wanted till the following Wednesday, when his stepfather was to take it to the little general shop he supplied, felt bitterly angry at being deprived of his fun.

His own father, a sober, honest man, had taught him the trade of a carpenter, and now he was earning ten shillings a week at a cabinet-maker's in the town. But the ten shillings a week had to be paid to his stepfather for his board and lodging, and poor Jack very seldom had a sixpence to call his own.

As he set about his uncongenial task directly after his scanty dinner—Mr. Wilkins had a nice steak all to himself—he turned things over in his mind, and resolved that he would not very much longer endure the life he was living. He reflected that he was big and strong, and it also occurred to him that Mr. Fletcher, for whom he worked, might, if properly approached, raise his wages by a few shillings weekly, in which case he could afford to leave his stepfather's house and find for himself.

The more he thought about matters—chopping his wood busily the while—the more determined he became. And finally he made up his mind. This was the last time Peter Wilkins should prevent him joining his comrades in their weekly game. The field in which they played was close to his house; from the yard he was working in he could even hear the thud of the football—it was early in October—and the shouts of the players. It was tantalising, indeed, but he was now resolved on a course of action. He would approach Mr. Fletcher on Monday morning, and whether successful in his application or not, would leave the home which

used to be so happy, but which was now so wretched.

If he worked hard and got on, it was possible that in time he might be able to rescue his sister from it also; but, at any rate, he felt there could be no happiness for either of them as things were.

"Hallo, Jack!" came a voice over the fence suddenly. Looking up, Jack saw his friend Bill Trant.

"What! Working? Aren't you coming for a game?"

"Too late!" growled Jack. "No it isn't! The Swifts have scratched, and we're having a practice game. Come along."

Jack hesitated for a moment. Dare he, after all, take the plunge? But it was only for a moment.

"All right!" he cried. "Wait while I get my boots. Sha'n't be a minute."

And throwing the chopper aside, he ran indoors, to emerge directly afterwards, football boots in hand. Vaulting over the fence, he joined his friend, and the pair hurried to the field near. The game had begun, but each side was a man short, and their advent made up the full complement. So, one on each side, they joined in, Jack taking his usual place as centre-forward, Bill Trant going into goal.

And before very long Jack was keeping Bill very busy indeed.

It was only a practice game, but it was capital exercise and good fun, and in view of fixtures to follow every player worked his hardest and best.

Jack, as usual, distinguished himself. He was easily the best forward on the ground, and with a couple of brilliant shots, which, as Bill Trant averred, no International could have stopped, gained the victory for his side.

It was very pleasant while it lasted, but Jack knew well he had trouble to face when it was over. But he did not flinch now. His mind was made up, and he felt no alarm when, on arriving home, and taking his place at the tea-table, his stepfather began to swear at him coarsely.

"Don't give him no tea!" he roared to Jack's mother, a poor, trembling, pale-faced woman, who lived in terror of her husband. "If he won't work, let him starve." Jack, saying nothing, took the teapot from his mother's hand, and poured himself out a cup. Then he helped himself to a piece of bread-and-dripping—Mr. Wilkins was provided with bloaters—and began to eat.

Peter Wilkins was aghast at his daring, and tried to shout something. He was too furious, however, for words, and so, seizing a mug from the table, he threw it at the lad's head.

Jack thrust out his arm just in time, and diverted the course of the missile, which smashed to atoms on the wall behind.

Then he got up. "That settles it," he said quietly. "Mother, I'm off. I'm not going to live any longer with this man."

He turned and went out of the room, and his mother, sinking on to a chair, burst into tears.

"Let him go, and be hanged to him!" growled his stepfather, going on with his meal.

Kate, Jack's sister, a pretty girl of fifteen, rose and followed her brother, whom she could hear moving upstairs. He was packing his few belongings together.

"Oh, Jack," she cried, "do you really mean it?"

"Yes," he answered. "I'm going. Don't cry, Kate; it'll be better for all of us."

And then he told her his plans, and how he hoped that before very long he would be able to offer her a happier home.

She saw it was no use trying to dissuade him; indeed, in her heart, she approved of his action.

"I shall be close at hand if you want me," said Jack. "But I dare

say he'll treat you better when I'm gone. It's me he hates most."

And then, his small parcel being ready—his belongings were very few—he went downstairs, and re-entered the kitchen.

He kissed his mother, and took no notice of the growls his stepfather hurled at him.

Then, with a parting kiss to Kate at the door, he left his home for good.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Caught Red-handed.

NOW that Jack had taken the step, he was faced with an immediate problem of some seriousness. He had duly paid over his week's wages to his stepfather that morning, and till next Saturday all he possessed in the way of cash was one shilling and ninepence.

Where was he to go that night? He could hardly afford to pay for a bed anywhere, and though there were one or two friends who might have taken him in, he did not care about troubling them. To do so, he reflected, might bring on them the wrath of his stepfather, who never hesitated about creating a scene, and who was prone enough to abuse his neighbours at all times. Besides, Jack was of an independent spirit.

However, for the moment, the first thing was to get something to eat. One mouthful of bread-and-dripping is not a satisfactory meal, especially after playing football, and that was all he had had.

So he betook himself to a ham and beef shop, and expended threepence on a large sandwich. While consuming this, he came to a decision as to a sleeping-place for the night. At Mr. Fletcher's workshops were some sheds, mostly full of shavings and sawdust. There could be no harm in his making a bed in one of these, and on Monday, perhaps, the cabinet-maker would advance a little on account of wages.

So, somewhere about half-past nine, Jack Laleham, bundle in hand, walked to the place where he did his

daily work, and clambered over the gate into the yard. In an open shed in a corner was a fine pile of clean wood shavings, and throwing himself on this, Jack, with his bundle for a pillow, went to sleep, tired out with a day's healthy exertion.

He had no idea what time it was, when the noise of a slight tapping, or hammering, woke him. He sat up, and wondered who it could be. No one worked at the place by night, that much he knew. And yet there it was, distinct, though not very loud, the tap, tap of a hammer.

Rising from his comfortable resting-place, Jack went outside the shed, and looked over towards the works. Then, in the office, a small room at the end of the building, he saw the flicker of a light.—Who could it be?

He crept cautiously to the window and peered in. Then he saw at once what was happening. Two men were engaged in breaking open Mr. Fletcher's desk. In the faint light he could not have recognised them, but, in any case, their backs were turned towards him.

That they were thieves was obvious. The question was, how had they got in?

He went to the door—there was only one to the whole building—and found it ajar. This, then, was where they had entered; one of them must have somehow obtained possession of the key, or of a duplicate. Anyhow, a key was in the door.

Jack's course of action was decided on in an instant. Strong and brave as he was, he could not have tackled two men with the hope of capturing them. So, very quietly, he locked them in, and then, with all speed, crossed the yard, and ran to the market-place hard by, where a policeman was always on duty. This time it happened to be an officer whom he knew.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the policeman. "Jack Laleham! What are you doing out this time o' night?"

"Quick, Mr. Cates!" cried Jack. "There are two men robbing Mr. Fletcher's office. I've seen 'em. We can catch 'em both, if we look sharp."

"No larks, now?" said the policeman.

"True as I'm here!" answered Jack. "Quick. Don't let 'em lose a minute."

"How do you know?" "I looked through the window—I was in the shed. I'll explain to you later."

"You're sure there's only two of them?" asked the officer, who was a family man, and therefore prudent. "That's all—and we'll have 'em both. Quick!"

And Jack ran on, the burly Cates following as quickly as he could. Arrived at the gate, Jack clambered on top of it.

"They're there still," he said. "I can see the light!"

It was no easy matter for the policeman to clamber over the high gate, but at length he safely descended on the other side, and going noiselessly

across the yard with Jack, peered through the window.

"You're right," he whispered to the lad. "Now, how do we get in?"

"I've opened the door," answered Jack. "Hush! I hear them coming—they're coming out!"

"Right! You take that side! Pounce on 'em as they come out!" So they waited, one on each side of the doorway, and a minute later two men emerged, the second of whom bore a bag in his hand. Jack, quicker than the policeman, flung himself on the first comer, who gave a gasp of surprise, and a moment later the second man was in the powerful grip of P.-c. Cates.

Jack's prisoner was not going to be taken so easily, though. Giving his body a violent swing round, he flung the lad off before he had got a firm hold of him, and, rushing to the gate, was over it in an instant.

But Jack was after him, and though the thief got a good start, the swift young footballer was much too fast for him. Before he had gone a hundred yards, Jack was on him, and had flung him to the ground, where he lay panting.

Holding him down, Jack shouted lustily for assistance, and very soon a second constable appeared on the scene, and took charge of the captive.

Meanwhile, Cates had secured the other man, whose bag contained ample evidence of the crime the pair had committed. And to Jack's astonishment this man proved to be Jim Roade, a man employed by Mr. Fletcher, partly in finishing work, partly as a clerk.

When the prisoners were safely under lock and key Jack told his story to the police. How he had left home, slept in the shed, and been awakened by the hammering.

He was given a comfortable bed at the police-station, and the next morning Mr. Fletcher saw him, and thanked him heartily for what he had done.

He then told his employer how he was situated; how he had left home penniless, and slept in the shed because he had no bed to go to.

"So you're not going home any more!" said Mr. Fletcher. "Well, I'm not surprised. Your stepfather isn't the sort of man I should care to live with."

Mr. Wilkins' reputation was none of the best anywhere.

"Well," went on the cabinet-maker, "of course, Roade won't be here any more. I expect he'll be in goal for the next six months, and so there's a chance for you. But can you do his work—the book part, I mean?"

Jack told him with some pride that he could write a good hand, and do sums of all kinds well. He had worked hard while at school, and was now to reap the benefit of his industry.

Mr. Fletcher expressed himself willing to try him in Roade's place, and to advance his wages at once to fifteen shillings a week. If he did well in his new post, he was promised a pound a week at the New Year, and for the rest his progress would depend on himself.

Jack thanked his employer gratefully, and set about his new duties with a light heart, deeming himself, as indeed he was, a very fortunate fellow. He found comfortable lodgings that day, and when Saturday afternoon came round was ready to take his part in the football field feeling more fit and cheerful than he had done for a long time previously.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. Success.—Two Enemies.

JACK'S club was the Trentborough Junior Wolves, most of its members being lads of from sixteen to nineteen years of age. The Trentborough Wolves, of course, were a strong club, who generally made a good show for the F. A. Cup, and the Juniors occasionally supplied them with valuable recruits.

There was a match every season between the Juniors and the Reserves of the senior club, and any junior who showed specially good form in this was helped to join the Wolves, whose red-and-black squares were colours well known and respected on the football field. The colours of the Juniors were also red and black, but the squares were smaller.

On this particular Saturday the Juniors were opposed to a club from Hillborough in the County Junior League Competition, and a victory would give them a good start for the season. The Hillborough team was known to be a strong one, however, particularly in defence, and it would need some specially good shooting to



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get past their goalkeeper. But the Junior Wolves, nevertheless, felt sanguine of success, and in any case, they were workers, who wouldn't be beaten without a hard struggle.

With the Wolves playing a league match away there were quite a number of spectators that afternoon on the Juniors' ground when the contest began.

It was even fighting at first—first one side and then the other making a bit of way, only to be driven back.

But after the first quarter of an hour the Juniors began to get the upper hand, Jack, who was in his best form, making some brilliant dashes, and putting in one or two shots which the Hillborough goalkeeper only just managed to stop. Still, half-time was near at hand ere anything definite resulted. Then Jack, taking a good pass from his left wing, sped towards goal, and, dribbling deftly past the backs who opposed him, sent in a swift, low shot from a sharp angle, and scored the first point for the Juniors amid loud applause.

The second half of the game was rather rough, the Hillborough players showing a little temper. But the Juniors still pressed, and Jack kept their custodian very busy. In fact, he scored twice more, and the Junior Wolves left the field victorious by three goals to nil.

Among the spectators was a short, stout, bearded man, who watched the game with great interest. His name was Gregory, and he was one of the officials of the senior Wolves.

"That centre-forward is a smart youngster," he said to the Juniors' secretary. "Who is he?"

"His name is Laleham—Jack Laleham."

"Why, is that the lad who caught the burglar at Fletcher's? I was reading about it in this week's paper. Is he a Trentborough boy?"

"Yes."

"Well, we must keep an eye on him. He ought to be useful to us in a year or so."

Mr. Gregory was one of those who believed, rightly, in encouraging local talent, and always opposed importations to the best of his ability. He would have liked to have seen the Trentborough Wolves all local men, but that, under existing conditions, was impossible, and the team, who were all professionals, included men from various localities. Still, a good local man would always have the preference, and Mr. Gregory determined not to lose sight of Jack. The latter, as we have said, was big and strong for his age, and as a footballer was quite the equal of many older players.

And when towards the end of that season, within a day or two, in fact, of his seventeenth birthday, he took part in the match for the Juniors against the Reserves, and gave one of his best displays, he found himself, to his delight, well on the road to success in the football world, for he was asked to join the Senior Wolves for the next season, and would look forward hopefully to taking part in some really important matches.

Before that season had come round several things had happened. In the first place, Jack's mother was taken ill and died, to his great sorrow, and at her death he removed his sister from his stepfather's house. His wages having risen to twenty-five shillings a week, he took a small cottage for Kate and himself, where they lived together very happily; the more so as Mr. Wilkins, who threatened to be troublesome to them for a time, left the town and went no one knew whither.

Jim Roade, meanwhile, got six months' hard labour for his share in the burglary at Mr. Fletcher's, and he, too, for a time, was seen no more at Trentborough. But he came out of prison vowing vengeance against the lad who had been the means of putting him there; and so Jack, though he was in blissful ignorance of the fact, had two bitter enemies in the world, for his stepfather felt even more vindictive against him than did the cabinetmaker's ex-clerk. It would certainly go hard with him if he fell into the clutches of either of these men.

During the summer months Jack had kept himself very fit by playing all the cricket he could, and had made several good scores for his club. But his heart was in the winter game, and he was right glad when, the month of August having come round, the Wolves started practice-games, in which he took part with a keenness which Mr. Gregory vowed was quite refreshing to see.

THE 4th CHAPTER. Wilkins Threatens Disturbance.

IN the early part of that season Jack played with the Reserves, for good as he was he could hardly hope with his limited experience to be given a place in the first team. But it was astonishing how he had improved, and the year added to his age had brought additional weight and strength to his frame. In fact, there were few more powerful young fellows in the whole club, and certainly none whose hearts were more thoroughly in the game.

Early in the new year, however, it happened that an unexpected chance came his way. McRobbie, the centre-forward of the first team, met with a nasty accident in the course of a rather rough game, breaking his leg, and, of course, was rendered hors de combat for the remainder of the season.

It was generally expected that a player named Anderson would fill the vacancy. He was a good player from Durham, who had signed on for the Trentborough Club. But Mr. Gregory strongly advocated the claims of Jack Laleham.

"He's a local lad," he said, "and in my opinion quite as good as Anderson. I've seen him play several times this season, and I'm sure he'd do well."

"But," others urged, "this is rather an important match in which to try a novice—or, if not a novice, only a youngster."

"He's all the more likely to do well," answered Mr. Gregory. "I've noticed that the more important the occasion, and the stronger the opposing team, the better he plays. Give him a chance, and if he fails blame me afterwards."

"That won't help us much if we've lost the match," said someone.

But Mr. Gregory was an acknowledged good judge, and no one took a keener interest in the success of the Wolves. He wouldn't have recommended a player without good reason, that was certain. And Jack had other supporters, too, so it happened that he was given the preference, and found himself chosen to take part in one of the most important matches of the season—the County League game with Hanton, who were looked upon as the chief rivals of the Trentborough team for premier honours.

It was a great chance, and he knew it. But he meant to do his best, and as Mr. Gregory had truly said, he always rose to a big occasion. For he was not in any way troubled with nervousness, though perfectly modest about his achievements.

As it happened, this match laid the foundation of his fame as a footballer. He surprised everybody by his certainty and resource, as well as by his speed and dash. What he might have lacked in experience, he made up for by natural gifts as a player, for he seemed to do the right thing by instinct.

It was largely owing to him that the Trentborough Wolves added two points to their score in the League table, and he was thrilled with pride later as he read the accounts of the game in the sporting and other papers. But what was of more material advantage was the fact that he was permanently installed in the Wolves team, and given a salary of two pounds a week.

Full pledged professional though he now became, he was wise enough to remember that one cannot live by football all one's life, and so he continued to work hard at Mr. Fletcher's establishment. His employer took a keen interest in his football successes, and was quite proud to have him on his staff.

What with his football pay and his wages, he was now quite comfortably off, and his sister presided over a pretty and pleasant home.

What a change it was from the old days, they thought, and how grateful they felt to football!

The only cloud that arose on their horizon came in the person of Mr. Wilkins. That scoundrel, living on his wits at Hillborough, heard of his stepson's progress, and determined to reap advantage for himself from it.

Returning home from his work one evening, Jack found his stepfather waiting for him in their little parlour, having forced his way thither despite Kate's protests.

Jack was furious when she told him, but managed to preserve an appearance of calmness as he entered the room. If Mr. Wilkins, however, had been of quick perception, he would have noticed a nasty gleam in his stepson's eyes.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I want a little 'elp, Jack,"

answered Wilkins. "I'm awfully hard up—near starving. I know you're doing well; for old time's sake you'll help me, won't you?"

"Old times!" cried Jack. "I wonder you have the nerve to refer to them. Understand me once for all—not a sixpence do I give to you. You led me a life of misery when I was in your power, and you hastened my mother's death by your drunken brutality. Go! And never come here again!"

"D'ye mean it, Jack? You'd never be so cruel to your poor old stepfather, what always did his best—"

"Go!" shouted Jack, taking a threatening step towards him.

"Arf a quid, and I'll never trouble you again!"

He was backing to the door as he spoke. Without answering him, Jack darted forward, seized him by the scruff of the neck, and pushed him out of the room, down the passage, and into the street.

"Hang you!" he cried, as Jack was closing the door on him. "I'll be even with you for this, see if I don't! I'll stop your football, or my name's not Wilkins!"

But Jack took no notice of his threats, though the future was to prove there was more in them than empty words.

THE 5th CHAPTER. A Bookmaker at Work.

THE end of the season was at hand. The Trentborough

Wolves stood at the head of the County League table, jointly with Bramworth, a seaside place fifty miles from Trentborough. The "Mariners," as they were called, were a strong team, who had played a draw with the Wolves in the first match between them, before Jack had got his chance in the first eleven. Now, the two clubs had to meet in the last League match, and the issue of the contest would decide the premiership of the League.

Needless to say, everybody was looking forward to the encounter with the keenest interest. All the players were in the strictest training, and the Trentborough executive, with the view of having their men as fit as possible, had sent the team and its trainer to a seaside resort within a couple of miles of Bramworth, there to spend the week before the match.

It was hard work, but a very pleasant change, and Jack and his comrades were thoroughly enjoying themselves. They stayed at a small hotel, and, though they naturally avoided the bar, they heard a lot of talk about the forthcoming contest. And they also discovered that a lot of betting was taking place in connection with it.

The battle, of course, was to be decided on the Saturday, and on the Thursday evening, returning to the hotel after a practice on a field lent them for the purpose, Jack noticed a short, stout man, with a red face and a black moustache, looking at him very hard as he passed through the doorway. The man wore a large diamond in his scarf, and another flashed on his finger as he put a cigar to his lips.

Jack thought little of the man as he passed him, but later on, as he was leaving the hotel for a stroll along the sea-front, the man spoke to him.

"Good evening!" he said.

Jack returned the salutation civilly enough, and was going on when the man spoke again.

"Feeling pretty fit for Saturday?" he said.

"Quite fit, thanks!" answered Jack, wondering why the man so evidently wanted to get into conversation with him. But, of course, he reflected, he was interested in the match, and, therefore, in the players.

"Have a drink?"

"No, thanks!"

He doesn't know much about it, thought Jack, or he wouldn't have made such an offer.

"Not too proud, are you?" asked the stranger.

Jack smiled. He certainly wasn't too proud, but promiscuous drinking was scarcely the thing for a man in training.

"No, I'm not proud," he said, "but I won't drink, all the same, thanks."

"Have a cigar, then?"

The man was very persistent, and seemed determined to be hospitable in some way or another. But what did he want?

"I say," he went on, "you're not in a hurry, are you? Give me five minutes—I want to have a chat with you."

Jack wasn't in a hurry, and not

wishing to appear churlish, assented. He presumed the man wanted to talk about the contest of Saturday. And so he did.

"Come in here for a bit," said the stranger, indicating a coffee-room as he spoke. "Sure you won't 'ave anything?"

"Quite sure!" returned Jack, entering the room as directed.

The stranger followed him and shut the door. There was no one else in the place. He motioned Jack to a chair, and stood in front of him.

"Now, look here, sonny Laleham—that's your name, isn't it? Yes. Well, now, I reckon you play football for what you can get out of it?"

"I'm a professional, if that's what you mean," returned Jack proudly.

"Yes, that means a paltry quid or two a week," said the stranger, "and that's all. Now, how would you like a pony all to your own?"

"A pony?" echoed Jack, astonished.

"Yes—don't come the innocent, my lad—a pony! Twenty-five pounds."

"If I could earn it honestly—"

began Jack.

The other interrupted him impatiently.

"Honestly!" he sneered. "Who does come by money honestly? Does anybody? If you buy a thing for a pound, and sells it for two, is that honest? You can call it trade; but you take my word, honesty's nothing to worry about nowadays. We all want to make a bit, we do. And I can show you how to make twenty-five pounds very easy."

Jack was already suspicious of the fellow, but waited to see what he would propose.

"It's just this," he said. "It don't suit my book—my betting-book, I mean—for Trentborough to win on Saturday. I don't say they're bound to at all, mind you, but I want to make sure as they don't. So, if twenty-five pounds is any use to you—being the man I'm most afraid of—all you've got to do is—"

"Well?" Jack rose, as he spoke.

"Why, you have an off-day, that's all. Play bad on purpose, see?"

"Yes," cried Jack, "I do see, you scoundrel!"

And he hurled the fellow on one side, and strode out of the room and out of the hotel. So that was what the man wanted, was it? To bribe him to betray his side! Jack was furious, and it took a good many sharp turns along the sea-front to calm him down.

Meanwhile, he had put so much vigour into the push he gave the tempter, whose name, it may be mentioned, was Barnard, that that worthy had reeled yards, and to save himself falling, he caught hold of the nearest thing, which happened to be a small table whereon stood a couple of large cruets. The table not being of any weight, yielded to the pull, and so went over with him, as he fell backwards on the floor, with the result that an avalanche of salt, vinegar, and other matters descended upon him with a crash.

This was heard in the bar, where two men, strangers to the place, were drinking, and they at once rushed out, in time to see Mr. Barnard picking himself up, and looking a comic object with his face absolutely scarlet, and his clothes dabbled with various blotches of oil, sauce, and so on.

"The beast!" he roared. "The beast! I'll pay him out for this, see if I don't!"

THE 6th CHAPTER. A Plot Against Jack.

WHAT'S the matter, guv'nor?" asked one of the men who had run out of the bar.

"The matter! Why, I've been assaulted, by one o' them footballers!"

The two men, seedy-looking individuals both, were busily rendering assistance to wipe off the condiments from his clothes.

"No, you don't say! Who was it? D'ye know him?"

"Jack Laleham—that's who it was!"

"Jack Laleham!" echoed one of the men. "My stepson!"

It was Peter Wilkins who spoke.

"Your stepson! If I'd got a stepson like that, I'd tan the bark off him!"

"So I have done many a time, and I'd like the job of doing it again. Me and my mate here haven't got no love for Jack Laleham, have we, Jim?"

"Not us!" growled the second man—none other than Jim Roade. The two worthies had contrived to travel from Hillborough to see the big

match at Bramworth, not that they cared much for football, but because they thought there might, amid the throng of people, be a chance of "picking up something."

Mr. Barnard, having been made more or less presentable, invited his two new acquaintances to the bar, where he treated them to refreshment.

They still talked of Jack Laleham and his misdeeds, and at length Barnard said:

"Well, between ourselves, it don't suit me for him to play on Saturday, and it's worth my while to pay a ten-pound note to anyone who prevented him."

Wilkins and Roade were greatly excited at this.

"Ten pounds!" said the latter. "Straight, guv'nor? You'd pay us ten pounds if we stopped him playing?"

"I would so," answered Barnard.

"But look here, I don't want him hurt, you know, only kept out of the way. I don't want no police-court business."

"No more do we," said Wilkins.

"I give you my word. Besides, I wouldn't hurt him, not my own stepson. Look here, guv'nor, leave it to us. We'll do it. He sha'n't play o' Saturday. I tell you what we'll do—"

Mr. Barnard put up his hand to stop him.

"No," he said. "I don't want to know. That's your business. All I say is, if Laleham don't play, you can come to me for ten pounds after the match."

"Ow about a bit on account?" asked Wilkins.

"Not me!" returned Barnard. "Earn your money first, and you shall have it. I'm honest, I am."

"But we haven't anything to get about with."

"Oh, well, here—here's half-a-crown. I'll risk that. And if you do the job, you needn't pay it back."

Thus was the villainous compact made, and a plot entered into by his enemies to keep Jack Laleham from doing his duty in the great match. He, quite unsuspecting of what was afoot, was strolling along the sea-front drinking in the invigorating sea air, and giving free play to happy and ambitious thoughts. After all, the attempt to bribe him made by Barnard, angry though it had made him, was a compliment to his prowess. He was evidently regarded as the dangerous man of the Trentborough team, and it was a proud thought it was so. And truly, for a lad not yet eighteen, Jack Laleham had achieved phenomenal success. Visions of International caps rose in his mind, and he felt that if his good fortune held these highest rewards of football were not beyond his reach.

But for the present the main thing was for the Trentborough Wolves to win on Saturday, and for him to do his best to that end. A thought struck him; perhaps he was not the only one of the team the bookmaker had tried to bribe, and possibly—But no! Even in thought Jack could not be disloyal to his comrades, and he felt sure that one and all of them would have repudiated the offer as indignantly as he had himself.

He returned to the hotel, and meeting the trainer in their sitting-room, told him what had happened. The trainer was very angry.

"So that's their game, is it? Just to win their bets and swindle folk of their money, they'd try and corrupt our lads, eh? I'd like to have the handling of the fellow for five minutes, that I would!"

It would certainly have gone hard with the fat and unathletic Mr. Barnard if the Wolves' trainer could have had his wish granted.

"Keep a sharp look-out, my lad," he said to Jack. "These sort of villains would stick at nothing. Take my advice and don't talk to any more strangers, before the match, anyway. And on Saturday, show 'em what you can do, and help 'em lose their money."

And Jack, when he went to bed that night, was, if possible, keener than ever for the success of the Trentborough Wolves.

But Peter Wilkins and Jim Roade were equally keen to earn the reward promised by the unscrupulous bookmaker. They discussed various schemes together, but unfortunately they were handicapped—as they thought unfairly—by the necessity of refraining from bodily injury.

It would have been quite easy for them, by taking Jack unawares, to inflict such hurt upon him as would have prevented him playing, but Mr. Barnard had been very explicit on this point. They were not to hurt him.

A good deal of the betting-man's half-crown went in beer before they could decide on a plan.

"I have it!" ejaculated Roade at length. "You know them empty houses up Harbour Court—condemned they are, 'cos they're so damp, being built right up against the river?"

The so-called river was a deep and dirty stream, more like a canal in places, with its sides bricked up as it passed through the town, frequently under arches and long tunnels, on its way to the sea.

"What of them?" asked Wilkins. "Why, if we could get him in one of them, specially in the cellar part, he might holler as much as he liked, and no one would hear him. He'd get a bit wet, perhaps, but that wouldn't hurt him, would it?"

"No; but how do you suppose you'll get him there? Carry him? I don't think!"

"Well, we might carry him, clever, if it comes to that! But I see a way of getting him there. Don't he pass the court reg'lar on his way to the hotel after practice?"

"Yes, but he don't go up it."

"Look here, now, you listen to me, and I'll tell yer. I mean having them ten pounds, and don't you forget it. Come along, and have a look at the place, and I'll tell you my plans."

So, after a final glass, the two ruffians marched off, and made their way to the block of dilapidated and deserted dwellings known as Harbour Court.

**THE 7th CHAPTER.
Led into the Trap.**

IT was Friday, the day before the match, and the team were taking things very quietly. A few exercises and a walk in the morning, and in the afternoon indoor games, such as draughts, dominoes, and so on. A few of the men played billiards, and there was a table at the hotel. Altogether the day passed pleasantly enough, and in the evening before the final meal they set off in different directions for an easy stroll. Jack, with Hollis, the trainer, went towards the practice ground, the small pavilion of which Hollis had left certain articles he now desired to take to the hotel.

Their talk was naturally of football, and more especially of Saturday's game, on which so much depended. But before they reached the practice ground a small, respectable-looking boy came running after them and spoke to Jack.

"If you please," he said, "there's a young woman at the hotel wants to see you. She's your sister, and she's got a message from Mr. Fletcher."

Jack was amazed at this news.

"I suppose she's come over to see the match," put in Hollis.

"She arranged to come over by the excursion to-morrow," answered Jack. "Besides—a message from Mr. Fletcher! I hope nothing's wrong."

"What should there be wrong?" asked Hollis.

All the same, like Jack, he felt anxious; it wasn't a time when he wanted any of his charges to be worried.

"Well, I'd best go and see, anyway," said Jack.

And he started off at a brisk pace, followed by the boy, who, however, finding it difficult to keep up, slowed down, and was soon left far behind.

Jack's way lay through the quietest part of the town, and past the entrance to Harbour Court, of which Roade and Wilkins had been speaking. He was just going by the archway leading to the deserted houses, when a man spoke to him. It was very dark, the nearest lamp being many yards away, and Jack could only just see that the man was a stranger to him, and had a heavy moustache.

"Got such a thing as a light, sir?" he said.

Jack, in a hurry though he was, had no wish to be disobliging, so he produced a box of matches from his pocket.

The man, apparently to get shelter from the breeze, entered the court, and then struck a match. He failed, however, to get a light for his pipe, and struck another, which also went out.

Jack, impatient under the circumstances, followed him into the court and offered to help.

"Here," he said, "light it in my cap." And he held up his cap for the purpose. The man tried again, this time, aided by the shelter of the cap, successfully; but just as his pipe began to draw Jack received a heavy blow on the back of the head, which drove him, half-stunned, into the smoker's arms.

These immediately closed round

him in a vice-like grip, and simultaneously the man who had struck him, darting forward, flung a thick cloth over his head, the ends of which he tied behind his neck. Then, seizing Jack round the waist, the ruffian helped his fellow-conspirator to drag our hero along the court, the pair finally thrusting him through the doorway of the house farthest from the arched entrance.

Needless to say, Jack struggled hard, but he had been greatly dazed by the first blow, delivered by a short club with a cloth bound round the end, and, moreover, could hardly breathe owing to the way his head was enveloped.

His assailants never spoke a word through all this, and Jack had no idea who they were, though as soon as he could think he connected them in his mind with the bookmaker whose bribe he had spurned. Had he known that his stepfather and Jim Roade were in the place, he would have guessed the rest, but it so happened he had not seen either of them till Jim, disguised with a false moustache, had asked him for a match.

Jim Roade's precious plan had succeeded only too well. The ruse of pretending Jack's sister wanted to see him with a message from Mr. Fletcher was his invention, and he was proud of it.

To carry out their plot, the villains

the match?" asked Wilkins. "We can't leave him there to starve."

"Can't we?" answered Roade. "Serve him right if we did. Anyhow, we sha'n't let him out. Old Barnard'll have to see to that."

The precious pair then, their foul work accomplished, repaired to an inn in a poor quarter of the town, where they found Barnard.

"We've done the job, gov'nor," said Roade. "He won't play to-morrow."

"You haven't hurt him?" asked Barnard anxiously.

"Hurt him! Not us! What we've done is—"

"I don't want to know," interrupted Barnard. "Mind, it's your affair, not mine, what you've done. All I've got to do is to pay you if he don't play."

"There's no fear of his playing now," said Wilkins.

And indeed there did not appear to be.

**THE 8th CHAPTER.
Jack Laleham's Escape.**

JACK LALEHAM lay where he had fallen, half stunned, for some minutes. Then he tore away the cloth from his head, and, being at last able to breathe freely, rose to his feet and began to consider the situation.

That he was in some place under-

Would he be heard if he shouted? He feared not; but it was worth trying. He had good lungs, and he used them effectively; but no response came. The court was quite deserted, the breeze outside was blowing strongly, and his voice, powerful as it was, could not carry to the street beyond.

He gave up after a time, realising the hopelessness of attracting attention.

Then, moving very cautiously, he groped his way to the door by which he had entered, and, exerting all his strength, tried to force it open. Time after time he hurled himself against it, but in vain. It had been put in before the days of jerry-building, and its stout oak planks would have defied a battering-ram, while its massive bolts were quite immovable.

Carefully Jack felt his way round the slimy walls of his prison-house, but found nothing but the bare brickwork. There was no other door or opening of any kind.

But just as he had nearly completed the circuit of the cellar, and was close to the door again, his foot kicked against something in the floor—something that projected, and that moved as he struck it.

Stepping down, he found that it was an iron ring. His heart leapt at the discovery. A ring like that must belong to a stone or a trapdoor—evidently to something that could be

He rose, and placed a foot on the top step. It was firm enough. Still, he proceeded very cautiously, feeling each step with a foot in advance before descending on it. Two—three—four—five—six—seven in all, and then the way was blocked by another door.

He passed his hand round the edge of this, hoping to find a latch or handle of some kind. He was not disappointed. A rusty iron ring, some five feet from the bottom, was evidently the handle of a latch without. He turned it with all his strength, for long disuse had made it very stiff. At last it gave way, and to his delight, the door swung open outwards.

He took a step outwards, but luckily did not complete it. For his foot encountered no resistance. Just avoiding the loss of his balance, he drew back, and, stooping down again, felt with his hands.

Water!

The steps led direct to the water's edge.

But what water was it? Not the sea—that was impossible. The canal—he had seen it higher up in the town, and knew that it passed through various tunnels to the harbour. The canal it must be.

He gazed through the black darkness in either direction, and then suddenly a bright light appeared—he could not tell how far off—on his right. He looked at it hopefully. Then it disappeared, equally suddenly. But after a while it came again. And then Jack knew where it was. It was the light in the harbour, and by swimming the canal in that direction, he could get free.

He was a good swimmer, and did not know what fear was; but there was no need to be reckless. It was impossible to judge how far distant the harbour was, and the canal was probably deep all the way to it. It would not do to be hampered with too much clothing.

He divested himself of coat, waistcoat, shirt, and boots, which he left on the steps above the water's edge. Then, clad only in a vest and trousers, he lowered himself into the water. He tried the depth, and found, as he expected, that he could not touch bottom. There was no hope for him, then, unless he could reach the harbour. But he felt confident of his ability to do so, and cheered every other minute by the light that gleamed on him from that haven of refuge, he struck out boldly and strongly, and at length found himself in the huge square pool where lay the vessels of the fishing fleet.

A watchman on one of these heard his shouts, and he was soon hauled aboard. Half an hour later, clad in a fisherman's blue guernsey and trousers, kindly lent him on the snaek, he made his way to the hotel, where he knew his absence must have been causing great anxiety to Hollis and his comrades.

**THE 9th CHAPTER.
The Plot Fails.**

THEY had, indeed, been anxious about him! Hollis, when he returned to the hotel and found Jack had not arrived there, and, further, that no young woman was waiting to see him, at once jumped to the conclusion that foul play was afoot, and attributed it rightly to the man who had tried to bribe Jack to sell the game.

Unfortunately Hollis knew neither the name nor the appearance of this individual.

"I believe," said one of the Wolves' team, "that fellow Roade is mixed up in it. It was Jack who got him caught, you know, over that burglary at Fletcher's, and I've seen him hanging about here lately."

Hollis and the rest agreed, but whatever their suspicions might be, they availed nothing. The main thing was to find Jack, and find him quickly. For all knew that the chances of the Trentborough Wolves in the great match on the morrow would be largely discounted if Jack Laleham did not take part in the game.

Hollis sent one of his men over by bicycle to Bramworth, where Mr. Gregory and other officials of the club had arrived, to inform them of what had happened. Others he sent in various directions about the town and along the sea-front. He himself went to the police-station, and soon there was a regular hue and cry after our hero.

Naturally, Harbour Court was searched among other places, but Jack had already made good his escape before Hollis, accompanied by a policeman, made his way through the dark archway leading to it. So their shouts were unanswered, and



"Yes," cried Jack, "I do see, you scoundrel!" And he hurled the fellow on one side. He put plenty of vigour into the push, and the bookmaker caught hold of a small table whereon stood a couple of large cruets. The table, not being of any weight, yielded to the pull, and so went over with him as he fell backwards on the floor, with the result that an avalanche of salt, vinegar, and other matters descended upon him with a crash.

had been obliged to half stun their victim; but the weapon they prepared and used was too well padded to cause any cut or wound, though it might well have done more serious damage than that.

Inside the house Wilkins, still holding Jack, kicked the door to, and then they pushed him along a passage to a stairway at the back leading to the cellar. Poor Jack's struggles were in vain; he was now almost suffocated, and could offer but little resistance.

Down the steps they dragged him, and then pushed him through a doorway which faced them. With a final violent shove, which sent poor Jack full length on the slimy brick floor, they left him, and, closing the door, they bolted it top and bottom, besides turning the rusty key in the lock.

Jack Laleham was a prisoner.

"He can shout there till he busts himself," said Wilkins, as a cry for help came from Jack's lips. "No one can hear him."

"We've earned our money, I reckon," answered Roade, as, closing the front door behind them, they entered the court; "and, what's more, I've evened things up a bit with Master Centre-forward! Blowed if I ain't more glad about that than about the money."

"How about letting him out after

ground he knew for certain, for he had been dragged downstairs after leaving the street level.

He felt in his pocket for matches. He would at least see what sort of a prisoner he was in.

Then he remembered. He had given his matches to one of his assailants, and so condemned himself to darkness. And the darkness was complete and utter.

For a short time he stood motionless. He realised now the plot that had been worked against him. Obviously the bookmaker who had failed to bribe him, had employed other ruffians to keep him out of the way and prevent his playing. They would doubtless keep him a prisoner till after the match.

This, Jack reflected, would be a serious thing for the Wolves as well as for himself. A reserve man would have to take his place, and the team would be materially weakened. Jack's loyalty to the club was as great as his devotion to the game, and he fiercely resolved that he would somehow, if it were humanly possible, baffle his foes after all. Unfortunately he had been greatly bruised and shaken in the struggle with his captors, and he feared that even if he did escape and take part in the game, he could hardly do himself justice.

But the first thing was to escape!

Perhaps there was another chamber below the cellar. But, if so, and he entered it, he would be no less a prisoner. Still, he must investigate—at any rate, he had no other chance.

Kneeling down, and passing his hands round the ring, he found it was attached to a square slab of stone round the edges of which he carefully felt. It was about two feet square, and seemed fairly massive. Still, it was evidently meant to be moved, and Jack did not lack for strength.

Standing straddle-legs over the stone, he seized the ring with both hands, and essayed to lift it. It did not move. No doubt, he reflected, it had not been moved for a long time, and was stuck fast by accumulated dirt. Luckily he had a knife in his pocket, and ten minutes' work with this round the edges of the stone removed quite a lot of mucky matter.

Then he tried again, and this time his strength told. The stone came up as he pulled, and he was able to swing it on to the floor at one side. A breath of cold, damp, evil-smelling air came up as he did so.

Lying down by the side of the opening, he thrust a hand down. It struck a step—a second—evidently this was a flight of brick stairs. His hopes rose high. They might lead to freedom!

though each house was entered, no sign of Jack was found. They did not open the locked and bolted door of the cellar into which our hero had been so unceremoniously thrust, or they would have discovered his means of escape, for his clothes were lying on the steps where he left them.

It was nearly half-past nine when Hollis, with two or three members of the team and a constable, hurrying along a road leading to the harbour, were met by, apparently, a young fisher-lad, who ran towards them gleefully.

It was Jack. What a welcome he got! How delighted they all were to find him safe and sound. Hollis danced for joy on the pavement.

As briefly as possible he told them what had happened to him, and as he talked he led them to the scene of his imprisonment. Then, his clothes recovered, they returned to the hotel, where another hearty greeting awaited Jack from the rest of his comrades.

Loud was the indignation on all sides at the treatment he had been subjected to, and dire was the vengeance threatened on those who had maltreated him. Still, the great thing was that he was safe, and the pluck he had shown in effecting his escape sent him up hugely in the estimation of everybody.

But though safe, he bore the marks of the attack upon him in the shape of several nasty bruises, while, now that the excitement was subsiding, his head began to ache dreadfully as the result of the blow he had received at the outset.

Hollis took him in hand, and after attending to his bruises, ordered a hot bath and bed immediately afterwards. These measures proved efficacious, and the next morning Jack woke feeling fairly well, in the circumstances. His head still ached a little, and he felt rather stiff, but a good rub down improved matters so far as the stiffness was concerned.

In any case, he informed Mr. Gregory and the other officials of the club, who came over in the morning, and who were naturally very solicitous about his health, that he felt quite well enough to play.

And play he did. There was a crowd of several thousand people on the Bramworth ground when the game began, and among them, in the front row near the middle of the field, were Barnard and his two confederates. He had no desire for their society, but they forced it upon him and did not intend to lose sight of him until he had paid them their ten sovereigns.

To do him justice, he would not have shirked this liability. He was quite ready, as he had said all along, to pay them directly the match was over, so long as Jack Laleham did not take part in it. But he resented their want of confidence, and though not very particular about appearances, as a rule, did not care about being followed by a couple of shabby-looking ruffians wherever he went.

At last, amid shouts from thousands of throats, the teams took the field.

And, to the dismay of the conspirators and the intense surprise of Wilkins and Roade, Jack Laleham, looking as fit as the proverbial fiddle, appeared in the centre of his comrades, some of whom slapped him on the back in congratulatory fashion as he strode along.

Barnard turned to his hirelings with a muttered growl.

The plot had failed; the Trentborough Wolves were not to be handicapped by the loss of their centre-forward, and unless Bramworth could win the match on their merits, Mr. Barnard would lose a large sum of money.

As he turned and reviled them, the ruffians slunk off. They cared nothing about the football, and it mattered nothing to them which side won.

They left the ground and went into a public-house, which, like most on that day, was almost deserted. There they talked matters over, debating what steps they should take. As Roade said, it wasn't their fault that Jack had escaped. They had done their part, and they must be paid for it. If not, let Barnard look out for himself.

THE 10th CHAPTER. The Great Match.

FOR the first quarter of an hour the play proved of the evenest description, and it was evident from the start that whichever side won would have to fight hard for victory.

First Trentborough, then the Mariners pressed, and both goalkeepers had some hard shots to deal

with. Jack Laleham led the way in some desperate attacks, but he was well watched, and was not able to keep control of the ball for long. But the play was so fast and furious that after a time condition began to play an important part, and Hollis had turned out his men as fit as it was possible for them to be; whereas one or two of the Bramworth team seemed a trifle stale.

The news of the attempted kidnapping of the Wolves' centre-forward had spread rapidly among the spectators, and Jack found himself a sort of popular hero in consequence. Every little thing that he did was loudly applauded, and the supporters of Bramworth were sportsmanlike enough to join in the cheers, though they all feared him as the most dangerous man on the Wolves' side.

After a time the Wolves began to press their opponents, but the defence of the Mariners' backs was very strong, and in goal they had an International player named Tims, whom it was hard to surpass.

It was gradually appearing, however, that the Wolves were the stronger team, and Mr. Barnard, standing disconsolate and lonely, began to grow very apprehensive indeed. Still the time sped on, and no score was made.

But a few minutes before half-time would give the players a much-needed rest. On the Wolves' right wing, dashing swiftly down the side of the ground, centred beautifully to Jack, who took the ball unerringly, and eluding the backs by some quick and clever work, found himself with an opening at last. A lovely, low, swift shot into the corner of the net beat the great goalkeeper fairly, and a mighty shout all round the ground proclaimed the fact that the Wolves had scored the first goal of the match.

With but five minutes more to go, Jack put in another pretty piece of work, and appeared to have another good chance of scoring. But before he could get in his kick, he was charged from behind by an opponent, and another, kicking wildly at the ball as he fell, caught him a nasty hack on the ankle, amid shouts of "Foul!" from all sides. The referee loudly cautioned the offender, who protested the affair was quite accidental; and Jack, though in great pain from the blow, spoke up for him, and declared that it was so.

But the Wolves' centre-forward was certainly in the wars, and the way he limped till the whistle sounded augured ill for the ultimate success of his side. Hollis attended to the injury as well as he could, and Jack resolved to husband his strength as much as possible till a really good opening should again present itself. But this was a long time coming, for, profiting somewhat by his lameness, and refreshed by their brief rest, the Mariners put in some severe work, and the Trentborough defence was again sorely taxed.

Still no score was made, and it began at length to look as if Jack's first goal would prove to be the only one of the match. Ten minutes before time the Bramworth captain called on his men for a supreme effort, and such was the vigour of the onslaught that ensued that the downfall of the Wolves' goal seemed inevitable. Time after time, however, the backs cleared, and the goalkeeper playing the game of his life; the defence held good till the effort spent itself, and the tired Mariners slackened their efforts.

Then came the Wolves' opportunity. A swift and brilliant rush down the left side of the ground, a neat centre to Jack, who in the excitement forgot his lameness, another dodgy bit of footwork by him, and then a dazzling shot, aimed as truly as with a gun—and the Wolves had scored their second goal.

That was practically the end. A few minutes more and the whistle sounded, and amid lusty cheers from their supporters, the Wolves left the field. As they did so, two of them seized Jack and hoisted him up, and he was borne off in triumph on his comrades' shoulders, the hero of the match.

The Trentborough Wolves were champions of the Counties League—thanks largely to Jack Laleham.

THE 11th CHAPTER. Jack Laleham's Revenge.

MR. BARNARD, angry and sick at heart, left the field muttering curses, and made his way to one of his usual haunts. Though he did not know it, two men were watching him as he passed through the gate, and those two, our old acquaintances Roade and Wilkins, followed him as he went down the

road towards the Red Lion. When he passed through the portals of that hostelry into one of the private bars, they were at his heels, and as he called for a drink Roade said hoarsely:

"Don't forget us, guv'nor. We're thirsty, too."

He turned on them angrily. "Go and buy yourselves drink, you fools!" he cried. "I've done with you."

"Have you?" said Roade. "I don't think. We ain't been paid yet."

"Paid!" roared the bookmaker, furious. "What for? What have you done? Didn't he play after all? And didn't he win the match for 'em, hang him?"

"Well," answered Wilkins, "that wasn't our fault. We put him away, didn't we? We weren't to blame if someone let him out. Anyway, we want our money. Ten pounds, if you please."

"Ten what!" shouted Barnard, now beside himself with anger. But for that fact he would scarcely have talked so loudly with his confederates in so public a place. It was true they had one small bar to themselves, but there were others along the counter, merely partitioned off, and it happened that in one of these were certain persons who found the dispute in progress very interesting.

These persons were none other than Hollis, Jack Laleham, and Mr. Gregory. They would not have gone to a public-house, but Jack had caught sight of the man who had tried to bribe him, and had pointed him out to Hollis. Then Jack and his friend had seen Roade and Wilkins following the bookmaker, and Hollis had at once suggested following them.

"We'll find out something if we look sharp," he said.

Mr. Gregory joining them at the moment, all three went in pursuit of the plotters, followed them into the Red Lion, and listened to their talk from an adjacent compartment of the bar.

"They put him away, did they?" echoed Mr. Gregory to his companions. "That's enough for us, lads! Wait here while I fetch a policeman. If they attempt to go out, hold them!"

The unsuspecting Mr. Barnard went on denouncing his confederates, and very soon they were nearly coming to blows. The landlord of the inn, however, thought it time to interfere for the sake of the credit of his house, so bade them be quiet or leave.

Taking the hint, Barnard left the compartment, followed by the others, and made his way to the door.

He went no farther, though. Jack Laleham stood in front of him and barred the way.

"Out o' the way! Let me pass!" he said fiercely.

Meanwhile, Roade and Wilkins, seeing Jack, had hurriedly retreated behind the partition.

"Not so fast, my friend," said Jack calmly. "You've got to stay here a bit."

The bookmaker rushed at him with raised fist. But Hollis, standing by, seized his arm with an iron grip. Jack only smiled contemptuously.

"Officer," said Mr. Gregory, coming up at the moment, "I give this man in custody for assaulting and kidnapping this young fellow—our centre-forward, Jack Laleham."

"I never touched him," protested Barnard.

"Where are the others, Hollis?" asked Mr. Gregory.

"Inside; we've got 'em all right."

Without another word, Hollis seized Roade by the arm, and dragged him out. Jack took hold of Wilkins, who, however, unlike his confederate, hadn't the pluck to struggle. Arrived outside, they saw their late employer in the custody of the constable.

They were all three marched off to the police-station, and in due time got their deserts.

They vowed vengeance, all three, in the approved fashion, but they never molested Jack Laleham again, nor did their threats cause him any uneasiness.

He went on from success to success, prospering as he deserved.

Before he was twenty he had won his International cap, and he remained the shining light of the Trentborough Wolves. Big efforts were made by Northern and other League clubs to secure his services, but he was not to be won over, and as a Wolf he ended, as he had begun, his football career.

THE END.

(One of Morton Pike's grand, complete, long stories next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT.

Our Helpful Series That Will Interest All Boys, Whether Scouts or Not.

How to Learn Morse Telegraphy.

I WAS talking last week about Morse flag-wagging, which is, of course, the only kind of Morse you need to learn for the Signaller's Badge.

But there are other kinds of Morse signalling which are still more fascinating, and in many ways more useful. I don't mind telling you frankly that they are difficult to learn properly, and need a lot of practice. But, believe me, a little hard work spent on them in the autumn and winter evenings is well worth while.

First of all, there is Morse telegraphy just as it is used in post-offices. This is very interesting, jolly useful, and not really hard to learn if you give your mind to it.

I know a troop—not my own this time—which has a special field telegraph section. The fellows in it are all good telegraphists, and they run around with a little handcart containing their instruments, batteries, and coils of wire.

On a field day you see them rigging up their field telegraph lines from the commander-in-chief's headquarters to the "firing" line, and tapping away at their messages like steam. They have a rattling good time, and are jolly useful.

I'd like to see more scouts doing this.

And you can teach yourself. If you can get a man who is a real telegraphist to teach you, make the most of him. He'll teach you the work more quickly, and much better, than you can pick it up for yourself. It's like learning swimming or rowing or anything like that. You get a better style if you're properly taught; but if you can't get a teacher you can learn how to do it pretty well "on your own."

The Apparatus You Want.

The very first thing to do, of course, is to get the Morse alphabet absolutely "pat."

Then get your apparatus for telegraphy.

You want a Morse "key," a "sounder," and ordinary wet battery such as is used for electric bells, and some rather thin insulated wire.

The "key" is the thing you send the message with. It has a knob which you press up and down. The "sounder" is the thing at the other end which kicks up a row and repeats the message to the fellow listening. The thing you hear going "click, click, click" in post-offices is the Morse sounder.

I own that all this is a bit expensive. A small key will cost you about 4s. 6d. A sounder about the same. The batteries and wire would come to about half-a-crown.

But if a few of you club together—or, better still, if your scoutmaster will buy the things out of the troop funds—you can get them all right. And they're well worth the money, because let me tell you that without them you can't learn telegraphy.

It's no earthly good tinkering about with home-made apparatus, and thinking you're learning telegraphy. You can't do it.

How to Start.

When you have your apparatus, rig it up like this:

Put the sounder on the mantelpiece in your bed-room or on a shelf or somewhere like that. Put the key on the table. The battery should be placed somewhere near the key. I should say put it on the floor under the table, then there is not much chance of its being knocked over.

Run two wires from the key to the battery. Connect one end of each to the terminals on the key, the other end of one to the terminal on one porous pot of the battery, and the other to the terminal on the carbon stick.

Now connect up the sounder with the battery in exactly the same way, the ends of the two wires on the terminals of the sounder, the other ends on the remaining terminals of the battery.

Run the wires round the room, and, if possible, keep them well away from one another.

Now you'll find that when you press down the knob of the key the sounder gives a loud "click." When you let it come up again it gives another click. So you see how the message is sent. To send a dot you just press the knob of the key down and up quickly. To make a dash you press it down and hold it there for just a little space. Always try to get your dots the same length, and your dashes the same length, and the spaces in between them the same length. When you can do that you're sending very well, even if you are slow. It's no good trying to go too fast at first.

The great thing is POSITION. You should sit squarely facing the table with the handle of the key pointing towards you. Your whole right arm should be free—no leaning your elbow on the table, boys!—and the elbow on a level with the knuckles. The wrist should hang low.

Don't HOLD the knob of the key, and don't TAP it. Rest the ball of your first finger on the top of the knob and let your thumb and middle finger fall naturally into position on either side of it.

You depress the knob by a slight movement of the wrist, which must be held loose and free so that it will "swing" easily. Don't PULL the knob up again. Just ease your fingers, and the spring will put it back into position.

Remember that there must be nothing stiff about your movements in telegraphy. Everything must be done by the play of the wrist, so the wrist must hang absolutely free and loose.

Start by sending a series of dots,



The Morse "Key" Described for Our Scouts This Week.

trying to keep them of an even length. Then try sending dots and dashes alternately. When you can do this pretty regularly, comment on letters, and then on words.

Now get a chum—or as man, chums as you like—to read the messages from the sounder. Take it in turns to send and read. The very best way to practise reading is to go and sit in a post-office—if the postmaster will let you—and listen to the sounder ticking off telegrams. Try and read each letter as it comes off. At first you'll only be able to pick up an "a" here and a "c" there, but after a bit you'll be able to read the whole message as well as the post-office people themselves.

Only I must warn you that in post-office telegraphy they use a lot of abbreviations which you don't understand unless you know their codes. So if you now and then get letters which seem out of the alphabet altogether, you'll know that they are special terms.

Field Telegraphy.

Then when you're getting on pretty well, buy another key and sounder and a lot more wire, and cart your apparatus out into the open.

Run your wire, say from one tree to another, or from a post to the corner of a barn. You can buy little insulating cups to twist your wires round for a few pence. Then you can have no end of fun sending messages to and fro, and you'll be the most valuable chaps in the troop.

A Telegraph Game.

When you've got to this stage you can have all sorts of games with your telegraph wire.

For instance, let one patrol be sending messages to and fro from one place to another. Another patrol, armed with a sounder, have to find their line, "tap" it by connecting the sounder with the wire, get the message down correctly, and scoot off without being discovered.

THE SCOUTMASTER.

(Another splendid Scout article next Tuesday.)

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