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

EVERY TUESDAY.

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

No. 489.—VOL. X. NEW SERIES.]

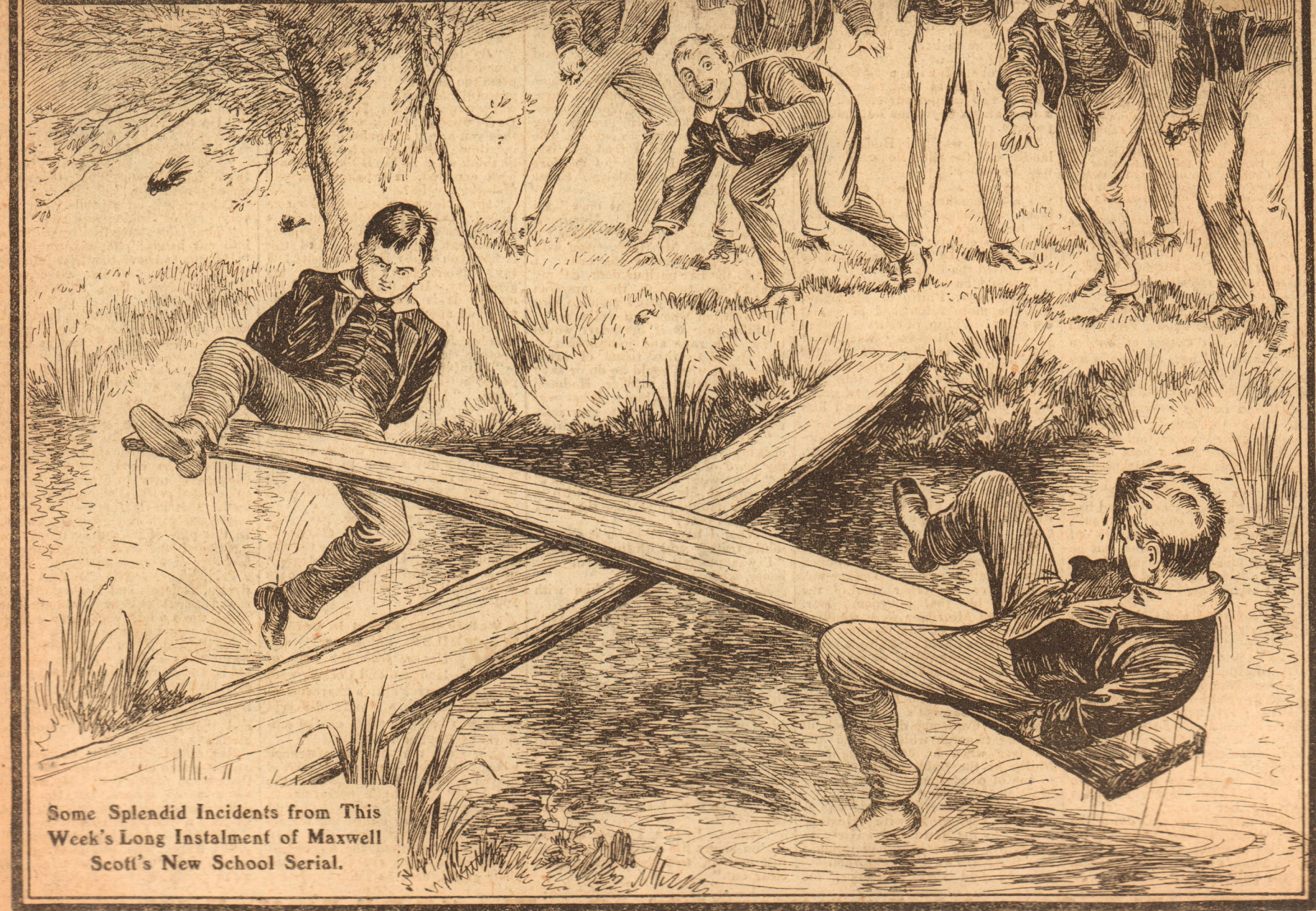
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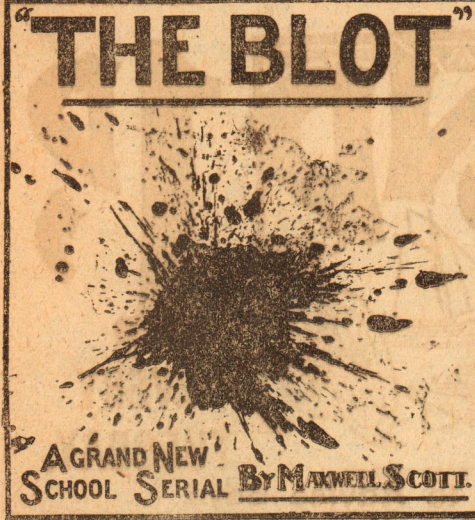
## THE BLOT

A Tale of Rayton College.  
By Maxwell Scott.



Some Splendid Incidents from This Week's Long Instalment of Maxwell Scott's New School Serial.

YOU CAN START READING BELOW.



## 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 Philip'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 new-comers are friends of Mortimer, 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 tag.

From the time he enters the school plots of dishonesty, etc., are laid for him, and Mortimer does all he can to get Phil disgraced.

Phil is working up for the Beresford examination, and he is raked out of his secret study in order to keep watch while Mortimer and his companions play cards. This Phil refuses to do.

Mortimer tells his uncle that Ashley plays cards for money, and relates to him the facts of the missing banknote which Phil is supposed to have stolen. Thus Sir David is most indifferent to Phil.

Jim Cocker is a bookmaker, and is black-mailing Dr. Paul, the head-master of Rayton College. The demands for money from Cocker are becoming so frequent that the school-master finds it necessary to disappear from the college.

On the afternoon of the head-master's disappearance Philip sees a man come from the Blue Boar, a dirty public-house in the neighbourhood.

It is Jim Cocker, the Highfield bookie.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

## The Return of Cocker.

AS the reader knows, Philip had seen Jim Cocker at Rayton twice before, and on each occasion Cocker had been talking to Dr. Paul, Head-master of Rayton College. And on the second occasion Philip had unwittingly overheard enough of their conversation to show him that Cocker had a hold on the doctor, and was levying blackmail on him.

Cocker, on the other hand, had never seen Philip at Rayton, and had no idea that he was one of Dr. Paul's pupils. As a matter of fact, he did not even know Philip's name, but he recognised him the moment he saw him, and a look of mingled consternation and alarm swept over his coarse face.

"That's the lad wot tried to burn the letters!" he gasped. "He must be one of the doctor's scholars! And he knows where I live! He'll tell the doctor!"

With one bound he reached Philip's side and gripped him by the arm.

"Here, I say, none of that!" said Philip indignantly. "Let me go!"

"I want a word or two with you, young fellow-my-lad," said Cocker meaningly.

"That's more than I want with you," said Philip, trying to shake him off. "Let me go!"

Cocker glanced up and down the street; then, before Philip could divine his intention, he tightened his grip on Philip's arm and dragged him into the public-house.

At that moment Heath came round the corner of the village street—just in time to see Cocker drag Philip into the inn. Instantly a gleam of malignant triumph leaped into Heath's eyes, for Mr. Sopworth, one of the masters of the school, was only a few yards behind him!

Heath waited until Mr. Sopworth overtook him.

"Well, I never!" he gasped.

"What is that, my boy?" said Mr. Sopworth. "I say what is that?"

"Didn't you see, sir?"

"No. To what do you refer? I say to what do you refer?"

"Well, I don't like tellin' tales," said Heath. "But really, in a case like this—for the credit of the school, you know—"

"Exactly!" said Mr. Sopworth. "For the credit of the school. But, again, to what do you refer?"

"The Blot, sir," said Heath. "Ashley, you know!"

"Yes," purred Mr. Sopworth. "What about him?"

"He has just gone into the Blue Boar, sir!" said Heath.

## A Conspiracy of Falseness.

FROM the front door of the Blue Boar a sanded passage led to the rear of the premises. On one side of this passage was the tap-room; on the other was a small room known as the "bar parlour."

At the moment when Cocker dragged Philip into the passage, the tap-room was deserted and the door was open. The door of the bar parlour was closed, and from behind it came a murmur of voices.

"Now, you've no cause to be frightened," said Cocker, trying to drag Philip into the tap-room. "I ain't goin' to hurt yer. I only want to say somethin' to yer private-like. Just come along o' me into this room—I won't keep yer more'n five minutes."

"I tell you, I don't want to have any communication with you," said Philip, wrenching himself free from Cocker's grasp. "You had no right to bring me in here. If any of the masters—"

He broke off with a startled exclamation, for at that moment the door of the bar parlour opened, and a man and a boy came out into the passage.

The man was Eli Hodgson, the laundroid of the Blue Boar. The boy was Mortimer!

Hodgson, as already explained, was a bookmaker as well as a publican. Mortimer, who added betting to his other vices, was one of Hodgson's clients; and this was not the first time by any means that he had visited the Blue Boar.

It would be hard to say which of the two boys, Philip or Mortimer, was the more astonished at seeing the other! Philip, of course, guessed at once why Mortimer was there. Mortimer, on the other hand, thought that Philip had been spying on him and had followed him into the public-house. With an angry growl he sprang at Philip and seized him by the arm.

And at that moment Mr. Sopworth strode in at the front door, with Heath at his heels!

In view of what followed, it is essential that the reader should form a clear mental picture of the scene which met Mr. Sopworth's outraged gaze.

Hodgson was standing on one side of the passage, just outside the open door of the bar parlour. Cocker was standing on the other side of the passage, by the tap-room door. Philip and Mortimer were standing in the middle of the passage, and Mortimer had hold of Philip's arm.

Now, Mr. Sopworth, as we know, was a contemptible toady. He was ready enough to get a charwoman's son expelled, but he had no desire to get a baronet's nephew into trouble. Consequently the look of gloating triumph which flashed into his face when he caught sight of Philip in the public-house changed to one of consternation when he saw Mortimer was there too!

But Mr. Sopworth's dismay was as nothing compared with Heath's. Heath, in his haste and anxiety to get Philip into trouble, had brought Mr. Sopworth to the public-house—only to find that Mortimer, his

greatest chum, was there! He had set a trap for Philip, so to speak, and though Philip had been caught, Mortimer had been caught too!

"Mortimer!" said Mr. Sopworth in a pained voice. "I cannot say that I am surprised to find Ashley here. I say I am not surprised to find Ashley here, but I must confess it is a great shock to me to find you here!"

Mortimer, who had been overwhelmed with dismay at the sight of Mr. Sopworth, and had dropped Philip's arm, quickly recovered himself.

"My presence here is easily explained, sir," he said glibly. "I was walkin' up the street just now, and, to my horror, I saw the Blot—I mean Ashley—turn into this public-house. I immediately followed him and ordered him to come out at once. He refused, and I had just caught hold of his arm and was tryin' to drag him out when you arrived."

A look of relief crossed Heath's face.

"That's true, sir," he said to Mr. Sopworth. "I told you how I saw Ashley walk into this house, but you hurried after him so quickly that I hadn't time to tell you that I also saw Mortimer dart in after him with the evident intention of making him come out."

"What an infamous falsehood!" cried Philip hotly. "I was walking quietly past the door of this house when this man came out." He pointed to Cocker. "He comes from the same town as I do, and he and I have met before. For some reason he grabbed me by the arm, and before I knew what he was doing, he dragged me into the house."

"Me!" gasped Cocker, holding up his hands in pretended horror. "D'yer 'ear that, Eli? The young shayer sez I dragged 'im in! Me, wot's never been out of the 'ouse this afternoon! Me, wot was drinkin' a quiet 'arf-pint in the tap-room, an' 'eard a noise in the passage, an' came to the door, an' saw these two boys seuffin'!"

"Don't believe him, sir!" said Philip to Mr. Sopworth. "It's all false. As I've told you, he dragged me into this passage, and I had just shaken him off, and was going away, when that door opened and Mortimer and the laundroid came out."

"Wot!" shouted Hodgson. "Yer dare to say as this young gentleman—Mortimer, as yer call 'im—came out o' the bar parlour along o' me?"

"You know he did!" said Philip.

"My word, sir, but 'e does know 'ow to tell 'em!" said Hodgson, turning to Mr. Sopworth. "Wot 'appened was this. I was sittin' in the bar parlour doin' up my accounts. The door was open, an' I seed this boy come in. 'E 'ad 'ardly got in afore this other young gentleman comes runnin' after 'im."

"Come out o' this at once!" sez the one yer call Mortimer. "Sha'n't! sez the other. 'Then I'll make yer!' sez Mortimer. And with that he grabs 'im by the arm. I runs to the bar parlour door, an' my friend 'ere runs to the tap-room door, an' we was just a-goin' to turn 'em both out when you walks in."

Philip felt as if his heart would burst with rage and indignation as he listened to this tissue of falsehoods. Yet what could he do or say? Heath, Mortimer, Cocker, Hodgson—all were against him! What was his word against theirs, especially with such a judge as Mr. Sopworth?

"Mr. Sopworth," he said, in a choking voice, "I swear to you on my word of honour—"

"Your word of honour! Ha, ha!" interrupted Mr. Sopworth, with a sneering laugh. "I like that! I say I like that!"

"What I have told you is the absolute truth," said Philip in despair. "I was passing the door of this house, when—"

Mr. Sopworth silenced him with an imperious gesture.

"Spare me a repetition of your cock-and-bull tale!" he said. "I desire to question this man."

He turned to Hodgson.

"I wish to be perfectly just and impartial," he said. "I say I wish to be perfectly just and impartial. I find two of our boys in your house. It is my duty to investigate the reason of their presence here. I will take the case of Mortimer first. You say he only came in to fetch this other boy—Ashley—out?"

"That's so," said Hodgson. "Has he ever been in your house before?"

"Never. In fact, I never set eyes on 'im in my life until he walked in just now an' told the other chap to clear out."

"And now about Ashley," said Mr. Sopworth. "Has he ever been in your house before?" Hodgson coughed, and looked the other way.

"Your silence is a sufficient answer," said Mr. Sopworth. "I say your silence is a sufficient answer. Ashley has been here before."

"Oh! I didn't say that," said Hodgson.

"Because you couldn't say it!" cried Philip. "You know very well I've never been in this house before."

"I never said you 'ad," said Hodgson. "I ain't the sort to give my pals away!"

"Pals!" said Mr. Sopworth. "That means that Ashley is a frequent visitor here. It is useless to deny it. You cannot deceive me. I say you cannot deceive me!"

"But he is deceiving you!" said Philip passionately. "He's pretending to shield me, when all the time—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Sopworth. "Do not add to your guilt by telling further untruths. I say do not add to your guilt by telling further untruths."

He turned to Heath. "For you, my boy, I have nothing but unqualified praise," he said. "I know how repugnant it must have been to your sensitive and chivalrous nature, I know what a pang it must have cost you, to tell me that you had seen Ashley enter this low den. But, for the sake of the school's good name, you did what was right. You performed your duty nobly, and for you I have nothing but unqualified praise."

He turned to Mortimer.

"In your case, my dear boy," he said, "I fear my praise must be qualified with a tiny admixture of blame. I quite understand the noble impulse which prompted you to follow Ashley into this house and try to make him leave. You acted on the spur of the moment, I am sure. I say you acted on the spur of the moment, I am sure. But it was indiscreet. You ought not to have entered the house even for such a high and noble purpose. You should have done as Heath did, and contented yourself with reporting the matter to one of the masters."

Thereupon, while I have only praise for your good intention, I must gently chide you for your indiscretion."

Then he turned to Philip. "As for you, wretched boy," he thundered, "words fail me to express the horror with which your disgraceful conduct has filled me. What will your generous benefactor, Sir David Rendle, think when he hears that you are in the habit of frequenting low public-houses? What will he think when he hears that you have been expelled, as expelled you will undoubtedly be?"

"On a former occasion," he continued, "when I caught you in a tobacconist's shop, I generously overlooked your offence. And this is how you repay my generosity! I say this is how you repay my generosity. It is useless to plead for mercy. It is useless to beg me to give you another chance."

Philip, by the way, had neither pleaded for mercy nor begged for another chance. "Painful as my duty is, I must perform it," continued Mr. Sopworth. "I cannot consent to overlook your crime again. On my return to the school I shall report the whole affair to your house-master, Mr. Walker. He, no doubt, will report it in due course to Dr. Paul. And the result, as I have said, will be that you will undoubtedly be expelled."

He pointed to the door. "Return to the school at once!" he commanded. "Return to the school at once, I say. Go straight up to your dormitory, and remain there until Mr. Walker sends for you."

**A Victory that Ended in Defeat.** WHILEST Mortimer and Heath, with the help of Hodgson and Cocker, were swearing away Philip's character at the Blue Boar, a vastly different scene was being enacted on the outskirts of Rayton Wood.

Ever since that historic afternoon when Holcroft and Rutherford played such havoc with the "R.A.T.S." dramatic performance, Tubb and his fellow-sufferers on that occasion had been hungering for revenge. Day after day they had watched and waited for an opportunity of catching the two boys off their guard, and, as Tubb expressed

it, "givin' 'em socks!" With that discretion which is the better part of valour, however, Holcroft and Rutherford had taken very good care never to venture outside the school grounds unless in the company of a bodyguard of their own supporters.

It may have been that when ten days had passed Holcroft and Rutherford concluded that they might now safely relax their vigilance. It may have been that they thought their rivals had given up all hope of revenge. Or it may have been—which is far more likely—that they thought that Tubb and his chums had gone down to the village. However that may be, about half-past four on this particular afternoon, Holcroft suggested to Rutherford that they should go for a spin up the river, and Rutherford agreed.

It was Ridden who brought the news. Tubb and Card were playing draughts in Big Room. Jackson and Smith minor were laboriously inditing impositions—not because any impositions were due from them, but in readiness for the time when they would be! Hepworth was teaching Pritchard the Morse code.

"News! Great news!" cried Ridden, bursting into the room. "Now we've got 'em!"

"Got what?" growled Tubb.

"The jim-jams?"

"Owl!" said Ridden. "Holcroft and Rutherford!"

Tubb sprang to his feet, upsetting the draughtboard and scattering the pieces in all directions.

"How? Where? What do you mean?" he demanded excitedly.

"They've just gone down to the boathouse," said Ridden. "I saw 'em! In boatin' flannels. They're goin' for a row."

"Anybody with 'em?"

"No."

Tubb let out a whoop of triumph. "Come on!" he cried, snatching up his cap. "As the poet says, such an opportunity may not occur again!"

"What's the giddy programme?" inquired Card, as they dashed out of the room.

"Don't know yet," said Tubb. "Haven't had time to think. We'll launch another boat and follow 'em. When we've collared them, we'll settle what to do with 'em!"

Hogan was in the boathouse when they arrived. Holcroft and Rutherford had disappeared.

"Seen anythin' of Holcroft and Rutherford?" asked Tubb innocently. Hogan grinned. He guessed what the game was.

"Yes," he said. "Sure, they've just launched wan av the skills an' gone for a spin up the river."

"Up the river?"

"Yes."

"Nobody with 'em?"

"Faith, the boat'll only hold two!" said Hogan. "No; there was nobody with 'em!"

Tubb struck an attitude. He was very fond of striking attitudes.

"The fates have delivered them into our hands!" he said tragically. "Help us to shove this boat into the water, Hogan. Collar those oars, Ridden. Now, then, all together! In she goes!"

The boat was quickly launched, and a few seconds later it was forging its way up the river as fast as three pairs of oars could propel it.

The river, as previously mentioned, flowed through Rayton Wood before it reached the boathouse. For the whole of its course through the wood it was broad and deep, and easily navigable, though it wound in and out in most tortuous fashion.

Beyond the wood, however, for a distance of over half a mile, it was so infested with shallows and sandbanks that navigation could only be conducted with the greatest caution. In this part of its course, it may be mentioned, the river flowed through a corner of Farmer Stroggles' land.

Paddling leisurely against the stream, Holcroft and Rutherford had rowed about half-way through the wood, when a boat shot round a bend in the winding river about twenty yards behind them. Holcroft, who was rowing stroke, was the first to see it, and he recognised its occupants at a glance.

"Tubb and his crew!" he gasped. "Row, man—row! They're after us, and they're only twenty yards behind!"

Rutherford, in his excitement, caught a crab and fell backwards into the bottom of the boat. He was up again in an instant, but the brief delay had enabled the pursuing boat to draw a few yards nearer.

"Spurt, you beggars—spurt!" yelled Tubb, who was steering the other boat. "They've seen us, but we're gainin' on them! Row it out,

Rigden! Keep it up, Card! Hurroo! Well rowed us! We're overhaulin' 'em hand over fist!"

This was a mild exaggeration, to say the least of it. The second boat was certainly not overhauling the first "hand over fist." In fact, if it were gaining at all, it was very, very little. When the two boats reached the end of the wood, and shot under the stone bridge which led to Farmer Stroggles' house, the distance which separated them was practically the same as at the start.

"We're holdin' our own, aren't we?" panted Rutherford, whose arms and back were aching with the un-wonted exertion, and whose face was dripping with perspiration.

"Yes," said Holcroft gloomily. "But I'm thinkin' we made a mistake in runnin' away from them."

"But there are seven of them," said Rutherford, "and only two of us."

"I know," said Holcroft. "I don't mean we ought to have waited for 'em and fought 'em. I mean we ought to have turned round, as soon as we saw 'em, and tried to dodge past 'em and get back to the boat-house."

"It would have been easier work rowin' with the stream," said Rutherford.

"And I didn't mean that, either," said Holcroft. "Have you forgotten what's ahead of us?"

"Yes, by Jove, I had forgotten!" groaned Rutherford. "But I remember now! The shallows!"

"And the sandbanks!" said Holcroft. "Without a cox to steer the boat, we can't go very much farther up the river in this direction. In fact, we're among the shallows now. I felt the blade of my oar—"

The sentence ended in a shout of dismay, for at that moment the boat gave a sudden bump, lurched to one side, and stopped dead!

They had grounded on one of the numerous sandbanks with which this stretch of the river abounded.

"They're aground!" yelled Tubb, nearly falling overboard in his excitement. "Now we've got 'em!"

But Holcroft and Rutherford were not caught yet. The moment their boat grounded, they shipped their oars, jumped into the river, which was little more than knee-deep at this point, and started to wade ashore.

"They're makin' for the bank!" cried Tubb. "I'm goin' to alter our course. Look out!"

Frenziedly he tugged at the tiller rope. The boat's head swung across the stream, but by the time she reached the riverside, Holcroft and Rutherford had scrambled up the sloping bank, and had taken to their heels across an adjoining field.

"After 'em!" roared Tubb, leaping ashore.

"What about the boat?" gasped Card, as he and the others followed Tubb's example. "She'll drift away if we don't tie her up!"

"Tie her up, then!" shouted Tubb over his shoulder. "Then follow us!"

By that time Holcroft and Rutherford were half-way across the field. It was a large grass field, and enclosed on two sides by high and insurmountable hedges. On the third side it was bounded by a narrow stream, which emptied itself into the river.

Standing in the field, with one's back to the river, the stream was on the left. It was crossed by a narrow footbridge consisting of two planks. On the opposite side of the field, in the middle of one of the hedges, was a five-barred gate.

It was for this gate that Holcroft and Rutherford were making.

They reached it quite thirty yards ahead of their pursuers—only to discover that the gate was locked, and was surmounted by a double line of barbed wire! They could neither open the gate nor climb over it.

"It's all up now!" groaned Holcroft. "We're fairly caught. But we'll not give in without a fight."

To give the two boys their due, they put up quite a decent fight. Holcroft got in one sweet uppercut which lifted Tubb off his feet, and a swinging back-hander from Rutherford closed Rigden's eye for the rest of the afternoon. But the odds—six to two at first, and seven to two when Card arrived—were too many for them. Fighting and struggling to the last, they were finally overpowered and dragged down. Then, whilst two of their captors sat on their heads, the others rendered them incapable of further resistance by tying their hands behind their backs with pocket-handkerchiefs.

"Here endeth the first lesson!" said Tubb, with a satisfied grin.

"Now, what shall we do with the rotters? Don't all speak at once!"

"Duck 'em in the river," suggested Hepworth.

"Too mild," said Tubb.

"Tie 'em to the stern of our boat," said Pritchard, "and tow 'em behind us all the way back to the boat-house."

"That's better," said Tubb. "But we can do that later. That'll do for the grand finale. We're not goin' back to the boat-house yet. What shall we do to them here and now?"

"Hang 'em up to the branch of a tree and light a fire under them," said Rigden. "Same as they did to us in Rayton Wood."

"There's no tree handy, and we haven't a rope," said Tubb. "Try, again!"

"I have it!" cried Card, as a brilliant inspiration struck him. "Oh, a gorgeous idea! Warranted jewelled in every hole! Patented in all the principal countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America! All rights strictly reserved!"

"Cough it up!" said Tubb.

"What's the wheeze?"

"Bring 'em along to that footbridge on the other side of the field, and I'll show you," said Card.

Wondering what Card's idea could be, they marched their prisoners to the other side of the field.

"Now help me to heave up one of the planks," said Card.

The footbridge, as previously stated, consisted of two planks, lying parallel to each other, and stretching from one side of the narrow stream to the other. The planks were not fastened down in any way, so that it was an easy matter to pull one up.

"Now, lay this second plank across the first, like a see-saw," said Card. "We'll put Holcroft on one end of the see-saw, and Rutherford on the other. Then we'll pelt 'em with lumps of clay, and when one chap is knocked off the see-saw, and drops into the water, the see-saw will tip up, and the other chap will drop in, too. We can then stick 'em up again, and repeat the dose as often as we like."

Card's novel proposal was received with rapturous applause, and in less than five minutes the second plank had been balanced across the centre of the first, Holcroft—with his hands still tied behind his back—had been seated astride one end, and Rutherford had been seated astride the other. Underneath the bridge, it may be mentioned, the water was fairly deep, and the bed of the stream was free from boulders, so there was not much fear of the two boys hurting themselves to any serious extent when they fell in.

"Here beginneth the second lesson!" grinned Tubb, gleefully surveying the two wretched objects who were balanced on the plank, whose every movement sent a shiver of apprehension through them. "Now arm yourselves, my merry men, and then to the fray! No stones, remember. Just lumps of clay, and the softer the better!"

There was no lack of clay on the banks of the little stream. Each of the seven boys helped himself to a handful, which he rolled into a ball. Then they stationed themselves in a line about ten yards from the edge of the stream.

"I claim first shot!" said Card.

"It was my idea!"

"Right-ho!" said Tubb. "Fire away!"

Card took careful aim, and shied at Holcroft's head. Holcroft drew back his head in the neck of time, and the missile, after grazing the tip of his nose, dropped harmlessly on the opposite bank.

Tubb took the next shot. He also aimed at Holcroft's head, but again Holcroft ducked, and although the plank swayed up and down in ominous fashion, the two boys succeeded in preserving their balance.

Rigden, who was the next to fire, made as if he were going to shy at Holcroft, like Card and Tubb had done. In the act of shying, however, he suddenly altered his aim, and the ball of clay, catching Rutherford off his guard, struck him with a juicy squelch on the side of the jaw.

"Take care!" howled Holcroft, as Rutherford lurched to one side, and the plank bobbed up and down like a thing bewitched.

"Take care yourself!" cried Hepworth; and he landed a lump of clay in the centre of Holcroft's face.

With a muffled yell, Holcroft slid backwards off the end of the plank, and fell with a splash into the stream. Freed from his weight, that end of the plank immediately tipped up, and the next instant, amid shrieks of laughter from Tubb and his chums,

Rutherford was also precipitated into the water!

"Oh, good shot!" cried Tubb, patting Hepworth on the back. "Which will you have, sir—your money back, or another shot?"

"I'll have another shot!" said Hepworth.

"Right you are, sir!" said Tubb. "The gentleman will have another shot, boys! Fish the cokenuts out of the pond and stick 'em up again!"

Gasping and spluttering, Holcroft and Rutherford were hauled out of the stream. The plank, which had also fallen into the water, was replaced in its former position. But just as Tubb and his chums were about to seat their victims astride the plank again an excited shout fell on their startled ears.

"Feyther, feyther! Coom quick! There's a lot o' them skule lads in oor field, an' they've pulled up the bridge!"

The seven boys spun round on their heels with simultaneous gasps of alarm. On the other side of the locked gate on the opposite side of the field stood a rustic-looking youth whom they recognised at a glance. It was 'Enery Stroggles, the farmer's eldest son.

If 'Enery had been alone, the boys would probably have jeered at him, and defied him to interfere with them. But he was not alone. Coming across the field on the other side of the gate, running as hard as he could run, was Farmer Stroggles himself, brandishing a cartwhip in one hand, and fumbling in his pocket with the other for the key of the gate. And behind the farmer were his other son, John, and three or four of the farmhands.

"Pulled up the bridge, 'ave they?" bellowed Stroggles. "The varmints! The reptiles! I'll bridge 'em! I'll flay 'em alive!"

"Great Scott! I'd forgotten this

boat, and tow us back to the boat-house, weren't they?"

"That was the idea," said Rutherford.

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said Holcroft. "We can't tow them back to the boat-house—there are too many of them. But we can tow their boat back."

"Before they get in?" said Rutherford.

"Of course," said Holcroft.

Tubb's heart sank as he heard these words. He trod the water for a moment, and shook his fist at Holcroft.

"You touch our boat if you dare!" he panted.

"Oh, we dare!" laughed Holcroft. "Don't you worry about the boat. We'll catch the boat, and tow it back to the boat-house, and you can swim home!"

"Stop 'em!" yelled Tubb, putting on a spurt, and swimming madly towards the skiff. "They're goin' to collar our boat! Surround 'em! Capsize 'em!"

His six companions followed his example, and made a dash for the skiff. But Holcroft was too quick for them. Rigden, it is true, managed to get his hands on the gunwale of the boat, but a sharp rap on the knuckles caused him to let go with a howl of pain, and the next moment the skiff was clear of the swimmers. A moment or two later it overtook the drifting boat, and Rutherford, skilfully shipping his oar, caught hold of the mooring-rope and tied it to the stern of the skiff.

"Ta-ta, dear boys!" he cried, blowing a kiss to their pursuers. "See you later, perhaps! Hope you won't get very wet!"

Half crazy with rage and chagrin, Tubb and his comrades swam as they had never swum before. But it was all in vain. At every stroke of Holcroft's and Rutherford's oars, the

bookmaker, and lives in Highfield, where I come from."

"A friend of yours?"

"Oh, no, sir! I have only seen him four times in my life before this afternoon—twice at Highfield and twice at Rayton. I have never spoken to him until this afternoon."

"You say he took you to the Blue Boar against your will. How was that?"

"He came out of the house just as I was passing the door. He seemed surprised and alarmed to see me, and before I knew what he was doing, he grabbed me and dragged me in."

"I may say," purred Mr. Sopworth, "that the man denies that statement in toto. He says he was drinking in the tap-room when he heard Ashley walk in. A moment later he heard Mortimer follow Ashley and try to persuade him to leave. The landlord of the inn corroborates that statement. I say the landlord corroborates that statement!"

"Did you ask the landlord if Ashley had ever been to his house before?"

"I did," said Mr. Sopworth, "and he gave me to understand that Ashley was a frequent visitor there. In fact, he spoke of him as a 'pal.'"

"Is that true?" asked Mr. Walker, turning to Philip.

"It is an infamous lie, sir!" said Philip. "I was never inside the Blue Boar in my life until this evening, and the landlord knows it."

"Can you suggest any reason why the landlord should bear false witness against you?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Or any reason why Cocker, as you call him, should drag you into the house?"

"No, sir. He said he wanted to say something to me, but I don't know what he could have to say to me."

"Your assertion is that both Cocker and the landlord are lying when they say that you walked into the house of your own accord?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why should they lie? They had nothing to gain by telling an untruth."

"Their statement is untrue, sir, all the same."

Mr. Walker shook his head.

"Heath tells me that he saw you go into the inn," he said. "He says you were not dragged in, but walked in of your own accord. He says he saw Mortimer run in after you, with the evident intention of making you come out. Both those statements, you say, are false?"

"Absolutely false, sir."

"Then, according to you, Heath and Mortimer are also lying, as well as Cocker and the landlord?"

"Yes, sir."

"In fact, according to you, all these four have entered into a conspiracy of falsehood against you?"

"Yes, sir."

Again Mr. Walker shook his head.

"On the one hand," he said, "I have the statements of four persons, each of whom corroborates the other. On the other hand, I have your unsupported assertions. Heath and Mortimer, to say nothing of Cocker and the landlord, have nothing to gain by making false statements. You have everything to gain. If I am to believe your story, I must believe that all those four persons are guilty of wicked and deliberate perjury. You can hardly expect me to believe that. Come now, be advised by me. Make a clean breast of the whole affair."

"I have nothing to confess," said Philip, in a choking voice.

Mr. Walker's face hardened.

"Very well," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "Dr. Paul, as you are probably aware, is away from home at present. Although I am in charge of the school during his absence, I have not the powers of a head-master. Your case will have to stand over until Dr. Paul returns, when, I have little doubt, he will expel you from the school."

"In the meantime," continued Mr. Walker, "I cannot allow you to mix with the rest of the boys. There is a small room upstairs which we use for the isolation of infectious cases. Your books and other things shall be taken up to that room as soon as possible, and there you will work and sleep, and have your meals until Dr. Paul returns. You will be allowed to take exercise in the open air at stated intervals, while the other boys are in Form, but, needless to say, you will not be permitted to go outside the school grounds. You can now go back to your dormitory, and I will send for you as soon as the isolation room has been prepared for you."

(Another grand instalment next week in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

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was Stroggles' land!" gasped Tubb. "We'll have to cut and run. Luckily we'll have plenty of time to get back to the boat, and push off into the river before they can catch us."

"You're not goin' to leave us behind, are you?" moaned Holcroft.

"No fear!" said Tubb. "We're not such cads as that. Help me to untie them, you chaps, and look jolly smart!"

When a handkerchief has been tightly knotted, and has afterwards been wetted, it is not an easy matter to untie it. By the time that Holcroft and Rutherford had been liberated, Stroggles had unlocked the gate, and he and his sons and his men were tearing across the field at breakneck speed.

But the heavy-footed farmer and his men were no match for the speedy youngsters. The latter easily reached the river first—only to discover that Tubb's boat had broken loose from its moorings, and was drifting downstream. Holcroft's and Rutherford's skiff was still where they had left it, stranded on the sandbank, but the other boat was twenty yards away.

"There's no help for it!" groaned Tubb. "We'll have to swim after the boat. Come on!"

The nine boys plunged into the river just as Stroggles and his men came running up. Holcroft and Rutherford waded towards their own boat; Tubb and the rest swam after the other. Stroggles and his men, who could not swim, and were afraid to wade, danced and gesticulated on the bank, and filled the air with shouts of baffled rage.

Holcroft and Rutherford had no difficulty in pushing their light skiff into deep water and scrambling aboard; and long before Tubb and his chums had overtaken their own boat, Holcroft and Rutherford came paddling down the stream behind them.

"Let me see," said Holcroft, loud enough for Tubb to hear, "they were goin' to tie us to the stern of their

two boats drew farther and farther ahead, and ultimately vanished round one of the bends of the river.

"I don't know how it is," said Tubb moodily, as he and his dripping chums scrambled out of the water, lower down the river, and wearily set out to tramp back to the school—"I don't know how it is, but whenever we try to get a bit of our own back out of Holcroft and his crowd, something always happens to rub the gill off the giddy gingerbread!"

### Isolated.

MR. WALKER wishes to see you in his study."

It was Atkin who brought the message. Philip, white and wretched-looking, was seated on the edge of his bed. He rose and went downstairs.

Mr. Walker was seated at his desk. Mr. Sopworth occupied a seat beside him. Heath and Mortimer stood near by.

There was a troubled look on Mr. Walker's face. He had always liked Philip, but in view of the story he had just heard, he was beginning to fear that his liking had been misplaced.

"I have sent for you, Ashley," he began, "in consequence of a very serious statement which has been made to me by Mr. Sopworth, and which is corroborated by Heath and Mortimer. Mr. Sopworth tells me that he found you in the Blue Boar this evening. I need not remind you that to go into a public-house is one of the gravest offences a boy can commit. I am glad to say there have only been two cases since I came here, but in both cases the offender was expelled. You do not deny, I understand, that you were in the Blue Boar?"

"No, sir," said Philip. "But I was taken there against my will."

"By whom?"

"By a man named Cocker. He's a



# YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

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

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

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

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## "SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE."

**T**HIS is the second week of our new serial, "Yorkshire Grit," and I hope my friends will find the second instalment even more to their liking than the first. I must confess that this would prove rather a difficult thing. Anyway, I have asked my friends to write to me about the story, because, as I have so often told them in the past, it is only by hearing their own opinions concerning the stories which I publish, that I can discover whether I am on the right track, and am giving them what they want. I have another little bit of news for them in the fact that in three weeks' time I am starting another new serial story, entitled "Soldiers of Fortune."

For this week's number I have secured a very extra-special story, entitled "The Boy Who Never Had a Chance." It is entirely based upon a case which was tried in one of the London police courts recently; a boy there who was charged with an offence said he had never had a chance. The magistrate in disposing of the case said, "I will give you one." This is worked out in the story which appears in this week's number.

## "EVERY WOMAN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA."

Last week I spoke to my friends about this wonderful new book for women which is shortly to appear. I just want this week to make another reference to it, and to tell my young friends to keep their eye upon other announcements concerning it, because, when it appears, I do want them to draw the attention of their mothers and sisters to it. It is a work which I honestly think ought to be bought by every lady in the country.

## A BOY IN LOVE.

Oh dear—oh dear! Another lad tells me he is in love.

He says that he is fifteen, and a little time ago was working in an office. In that same office was a young lady, and whilst my reader was working there he entertained a very strong affection for her. Not long ago he plucked up enough courage to ask this young lady if it were possible for him to be something more than a friend to her, and she, very sensibly, replied that he was too young—this because she is nineteen years of age.

My young friend, whose initials are A. D., however, goes on to say that, in his opinion, age does not matter, and he further adds that he finds it impossible to forget this young lady. He wants me, however, to give him some advice on the subject, and to answer his question, which is as follows: Do I think it possible that this young lady will ever love him? Boylike, he then adds more qualifications. He tells me the young lady has a different religious belief from himself, and that whilst she is very pretty, he is decidedly ugly.

There you are, my friends; there is the whole case in a nutshell, and my advice to A. D. is to remember that at fifteen years of age he looks at things with the serious eye of fifteen; I am quite sure he believes every line he has written to me; he is absolutely convinced that if he doesn't marry this girl, he will never love another one.

But dear, young A. D., I do assure you that when you are twenty you will alter your views of life considerably, when you are twenty-five you will alter them again, and when you are thirty you will still find that your opinions have changed with the growth of years and the accumulation of experience.

The advice which is best for you, I think, is to tell you to try and put out of your mind your thoughts of love for this lady. Keep on friendly terms with her, if you like, but don't imagine for a moment that you are really desperately in love with her.

## THE GLASGOW POLICE.

G. M. is a Glasgow reader who wants me to tell him how to join the

Glasgow Police Force. He says he is nineteen, 5ft., 7in. in height, and rather slightly built.

The best course my young friend can follow is to address a formal application to the Chief Constable of the Glasgow police, at the head office of the constabulary at Glasgow. He will then speedily receive information as to age, height, and other qualifications which applicants to the Glasgow Police Force must possess.

## A VERY COMMON TROUBLE.

W. J. M. says that he and a friend want to go into partnership, and wish to travel to Australia, there to work either on a farm or station. Their notion is that, once they get out there, they will work together until they get enough capital to start a ranch or farm on their own, naturally a small one at first. My friend further says that they are both working lads, and the money they are earning is not enough to pay for passage and kit, so they want me to tell them of any society which will help them to emigrate to Australia.

I suppose I have had this question put to me many hundreds of times in the course of the years I have had the pleasure of writing this weekly "Chat," and once more I have to tell my young friends that there is no society which will help them. They can get all the particulars they may want concerning Australia by applying to the Chief Clerk, Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, Westminster, London, S.W.; but I am afraid that they will have to pay their own passage, and provide their own kit before they can get to this desired country.

## A BOY WITHOUT PALS.

"Joe" is a Leeds reader who says he has lost his only pal, who left home six months ago. As a result he is very lonely, and wants me to put his name and address in the paper so that other boys may write to him.

Poor old "Joe"! Surely a lad who lives in Leeds ought to be able to find a chum without having to correspond with boys in different parts of the country. If "Joe" is a wise boy, he will look around among the lads who live in his street, and soon find some nice boy to chum up with.

## A WHOLESALE ORDER.

"Joseph J." is an Irish friend of mine who tells me he wishes to become either a wireless operator on a steamer or a steward, and he wants full information in next week's **BOYS' FRIEND**—i.e., the week after his letter reaches me—of the duties of wireless operators and stewards, their pay, prospects, etc.

I am afraid my young friend is asking for the impossible. In the first place, it is quite out of the ques-

tion for me to answer a letter received one week in the following week's issue of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, for the simple reason that that number is already printed.

Wireless operators on steamers carrying wireless telegraphy apparatus are appointed by the company owning the steamer, and my young friend can get full details of their pay, appointment, etc., by writing to the secretary or manager of a steamship company.

The stewards on a steamer are usually appointed by the purser, and the best time to make application is when a boat is going into dock from a voyage. The duties are, mainly, waiting at table, cleaning cabins, and other domestic work of this character.

## A GIRL READER.

The following extremely charming little letter comes to me from Silver Star Ranch, British Columbia. My correspondent signs herself "Criticiser," and her letter is certainly a very sensible and extremely clever one for a girl of twelve. Needless to say, I am delighted to get it, and to say that I shall be only too pleased to hear from her at any time she likes to write to Your Editor in the Old Country.

"My dear Editor, I saw in a recent issue of the old 'Green 'Un' in your 'Den' that you liked to have letters from girl readers, so I determined to write and tell you how I love your paper. I'm only twelve years of age, yet I like it immensely, and so does my brother. A friend of my brother sends him all the issues of **THE BOYS' FRIEND** at the end of each month, and when my brother has read them I have them.

"I wrote to you once before last year, before I came out here, and sent an addressed and stamped card, and I received a personal answer from you, which I was delighted to get.

"In one of your recent 'Dens,' I saw a letter from a boy reader, who talked of all the stories as 'absurd piffle.' I think it selfish of him to write such a letter, because even if the stories did not appeal specially to him, it is no reason why they should not appeal to your other readers. The complete stories in the dear old 'Green 'Un' certainly do credit to their writers, though some are better than others. I had very nearly forgotten to criticise 'King of the Halls.' It does seem to get better and better every instalment. I admire Ralph Royle for his coolness of head, courage, and self-will.

"You can guess that we—my brother and I—like **THE BOYS' FRIEND** all the better for being out here, as the nearest store is twenty-five miles by road and nine miles by steamer, at the head of the lake, and we don't often get papers, except newspapers from the Old Country, as it's called out here, once a week, and they don't last long.

"It all seemed so strange at first when we came out here, surrounded by mountains and fir and pine trees, instead of houses; but we seem to have got quite used to it now. It was exactly a year ago yesterday that we started from Liverpool on the Lake Manitoba. We had a lovely passage over here—very rough, but it didn't trouble us much, as we were good sailors all of us.

"Well, dear Editor, I must conclude this now, with best wishes for the success of your paper.

"CRITICISER."

The new life on which my correspondent has entered must be one of great interest, but whilst she finds

many distractions and pleasures in her new surroundings, I am quite certain she will never forget the Old Country.

## WOULD-BE SARCAISM.

Many of my friends will remember that a week or two ago I gave a little sound, healthy advice to a boy who told me he had fallen in love with one of the well-known musical comedy stars. It has produced the following attempt at sarcasm:

"My dear Editor, I have read your splendid advice. And so to you I am the most miserable, meanest, chicken-hearted skunk on the face of this earth? Really! I thank you from the bottom of my heart for such nice compliments; it is indeed sweet to be complimented so! You are almost too wise for this world, my dear Editor; you seem to understand too much! Your own verbosity seems to worry you! Giving recipes for coffee is more in your line, I think!

"Previous to this have I wrote (?) you about different things, signed with the initials of my subject, and you have expounded your views at length on a different theme altogether. Your beautiful eulogy has not hurt me in the least. In fact, I am quite pleased with it, and am going to cut it out and keep it as a specimen.

"Please except (most intelligent boys write 'accept') the kind regards of your chicken-hearted friend,

R. C. G."

I am very glad to get this letter, because it shows me that my remarks to this boy have gone home, and I have not the least doubt that although he jeers at my advice, he intends to profit by it.

## A NEW FRIEND.

One of my chums writes to say it is only a few weeks ago since he first received a copy of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**. Before then the only sort of papers he read were American novels. He is good enough to say, however, that since he got his first copy of **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, he has given them up altogether.

Moreover, he has done what I wish all my boys would do—he has shown the paper to his father, and I am glad to say his father has approved of it.

My young friend tells me he thinks there is room for improvement in the paper, in the shape of some short articles of Nature knowledge. I quite agree with him, and I will see that they appear in the paper. He goes on to say that whilst he was collecting birds' eggs a few weeks ago he discovered a newly-built nest near the remains of a blackbird's nest, and there was also a deserted chaffinch's nest near by. The new nest had been lined with the feathers from the chaffinch's nest, and built up with the dirt and straw from the blackbird's nest. The eggs which my reader found in this nest are about the size of a wryneck's, as round as a marble, and pure white in colour, and he wants me to tell him the name of the bird which lays eggs like this.

From the description given, I think the eggs are those of the long-tailed tit.

I am glad to have heard from my new friend, and I sincerely hope that it will not be the last time he writes to me.

## IS THIS FRIENDSHIP HARMFUL?

L. G. tells me he has been reading my straight talk to my young friend who is in love with an actress (to whom I have referred in a paragraph above), and he wants some advice in his case.

He says he is sixteen years old, strong, and pretty good at boxing, swimming, and cycling. He is very fond of a girl who is near his own age, and a very clever swimmer. But the fondness is not one-sided, for this young lady is quite as fond of him as he is of her. They often go out for walks and cycle rides together, and are going to the Exhibition in London in each other's company.

L. G. wants to know if there is any harm or selfishness in this friendship.

No, my young friend, no harm at all. I cannot see any possible objection to an acquaintanceship between two members of opposite sex, especially when they have so many mutual hobbies and interests. The acquaintanceship in this case is only calculated to refine the man and broaden the mind of the girl.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

## BOXING NOTES.

The Care of the Gloves.

**O**NE of the minor difficulties that beset all boxers is the hardness of new gloves. They are very often, if not always, so stiff that it is a great effort to close them tight.

Now, it must be remembered that you should always close them, otherwise your blows will lack all "steam," and, moreover, you are liable to sprain your wrist badly, or actually break it. So you must exert yourself to keep the glove closed, and that, with the most common make of glove, will make your wrist very tired.

But this is the least of the evils, and should be adhered to. Some boxers recommend doubling a glove up and pressing it under a heavy weight. This may make a little difference, but, on the whole, should not be recommended, as it may spoil the glove.

The best plan is to keep practising with new gloves on a punching-ball or when taking lessons, and to reserve the fairly new but more comfortable gloves for sparring practice and competitions.

Really, a very small percentage of boxers, especially beginners, know how to wear their gloves.

Already it has been pointed out that they should be kept well closed, but besides this, the fingers and thumb should be thrust up to the very farthest point they will go, and this is most important with new gloves.

How many times have you tried to put on gloves and found that all the finger-holes inside are either hopelessly muddled up or else broken.

This is the result of not wearing them properly from the start. Another bad effect, which comes generally from not wearing gloves properly, is that the padding gets moved, and comes either all over the tops of the fingers or on the wrist, leaving the knuckles only thinly covered with leather. To box with these would be unfair, as it is no better than bare fists.

THE END.

## YOUR DOG,

And How to Take Care of Him.

**L**AST week I wrote chiefly about the house dog. In the case of a yard dog, for pity's sake, don't keep it chained up continually, as so many people are in the habit of doing. As a matter of fact, it causes a great deal of trouble, such as constipation, cramp, and so on, and it is now recognised by most dog lovers as arrant cruelty.

If it must be shut up by sheer force of circumstances, you should see that it has regular runs at least three times a day. Of course, it is understood that at times the retriever, collie, or whatever kind it may be, cannot conveniently be allowed the free run of the garden, but even in such cases as this it should be seen that the dog has a good long chain.

A splendid plan is to build a run round the dog's kennel, or to have a wire arrangement. What I mean is a wire arrangement to carry a wire by means of pulleys on posts along a pathway from one end of the garden to the other. From this wire hang the chain, and fasten it to the dog's collar. By this means the animal will be able to go backwards and forwards, and so avoid being cramped up in a kennel.

It is about the age of six months that the dog suffers with distemper, although, of course, it does not necessarily mean that all dogs must go through this illness, and yet a dog may take the trouble after it is matured.

To a great extent this disease may be guarded against. The dog must have a warm, clean bed, fresh water to drink, and stale food must not be left about the kennel. Nor should you give it a lot of meat.

Be very careful not to allow your dog the free run of the streets, but only allow it out when you are at liberty to take it yourself.

The first indications of the disease will be that the animal's nose becomes dry and hot, and its eyes will run and become covered with scaly matter.

(Next week the treatment of distemper will be explained, and the correct manner of administering medicine.)

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# EVER-READY JACK



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## THE ROAD TO RUIN.

"DON'T you forget, Carton," said a pale-faced, somewhat shifty-eyed youth, coming up behind Jack's stool about half an hour before the busy young fellows in the huge basement office were due to leave their work; "we shall expect you to come to my rooms and give us our revenge to-night."

"Really, Lewis," said Jack awkwardly, "it's good of you to invite me, but I—I—" "No backing out of it, Carton. Surely you don't funk another night's play? Not afraid of us winning our money back—eh?" "I never wanted it," said Jack miserably. "I wanted you to take it back, I—"

"Now then, Carton, get on with your work!" cried the head clerk, as Jack's raised voice came to his ears; and Lewis, with a meaning glance, passed on.

Jack bit his lips, and bending over the book before him, went on with the monotonous work of entering up the goods that had been despatched from Messrs. Morton & Co.'s warehouse in St. Paul's Churchyard that day.

Jack had been at the large wholesale draper's nearly a month, having obtained the situation through an advertisement a few days after leaving the place in the City Road. He was not really keen on his work, but he was anxious to keep the situation, for his mother was worried, believing that the strange millionaire's threat to ruin her son would be carried out, and Jack meant to try and remain at the place until he heard of something else to prove to his mother that her suspicions were unfounded.

As he finished up his work he tried vainly to think of some excuse to get out of going to Lewis's lodgings to play cards that evening, but he knew well enough that if he did not go Lewis would be offended.

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He did not really care greatly for the tall, pale-faced youth, but Lewis had been very friendly with him from almost his first day at Morton's, and he was in a much better position in the firm, being a nephew of one of the partners, and had hinted strongly that unless Jack did as he wanted him to it would be a bad thing for him.

James Lewis was waiting for him outside when he walked into St. Paul's Churchyard, and promptly seized him by the arm.

"Come on, Carton!" he cried boisterously. "It's a beastly cold night! Let's go home in comfort in a taxi. We'll go straight to my digs, have some grub, and then settle down to a decent game. Hi, cabby!"

Jack made a weak protest. He could not afford cabs, and he did not want to be under further obligations to Lewis; but the elder lad would not listen, and bundled him, still protesting, into the taxi.

Jack was very silent during the drive to Lewis's lodgings in a large old-fashioned house near Clapton Common. His mother was away on a short visit to a relative in Manchester, and was therefore unable to give her son the advice that he so sorely needed, but Jack vaguely felt that his friendship with Lewis was doing him no good.

The cab stopped outside a large old-fashioned house that had seen its best days and was now let out in apartments. Lewis paid the driver, let himself in with his latchkey, and ushered Jack into a good-sized room, comfortably furnished. A fire was burning in the grate and supper was laid on the table.

"Let's get to it, Carton," he said. "I expect Sweating and Rogers will be round here in half an hour; so we must get grub over."

Jack did not do justice to the meal, and to Lewis's disgust, refused to drink the beer he offered him. Then two young fellows of much the same appearance as their host came in, and the table was cleared and cards produced.

"Now for the merry game of nap!" cried Lewis, pouring himself out a glass of whisky from the decanter on the sideboard and lighting a cigar. "We've got to get our revenge on Carton. What do you say to penny points, you chaps?"

"It seems a lot," said Jack. "Why can't we play a friendly game without gambling over it? I can't afford to lose money, and I certainly don't want to win yours."

"Oh, hark at him!" laughed the narrow-chested Sweating. "Pat the good little boy's head someone!" Lewis flushed angrily.

"Don't be a fool, Carton!" he said. "We're not going to gamble—it will only be a matter of a few shillings, anyway; besides," he added significantly, "we've no room for milkshops at Morton's."

For a moment Jack thought of leaving them. Then came the

thought of the hospitality that Lewis had offered him and the dread of losing the job that he needed so greatly, and he sat down to play.

Lewis kept an account of the money won or lost, so as to save the delay of getting change, and for some time Jack had no idea how much he had won or lost, though he felt that his friends must have won back their money, for he was by no means a clever player, and luck had been against him.

"How do we stand?" asked Rogers, after they had been playing for an hour, and Sweating suggested a pause to fill their glasses.

Lewis busied himself with a pencil on the sheet of paper in front of him. "Carton's the loser at present," he said. "He owes me a pound, Sweating fifteen shillings, and you eight, Rogers. There's only a few shillings between Sweating and you, and you owe us about ten bob each, Rogers."

Jack scarcely heard the last part of the speech. He sat, pale and silent, gripping the edge of the table.

He had lost over two pounds! He had had no idea how penny points can mount up when reckless players "double" and cards run badly. He was surprised by the amount. He had nothing like that sum upon him, and it meant drawing the money from the savings bank.

"I shan't play any more to-night," he said hoarsely. "I'll draw out the money and pay you chaps as soon as I get it. Good-night!"

"But I say, Carton, there's no hurry to square up. Luck's been against you. You'll win it back if you keep on."

But Jack was firm. "I can't afford it," he said; and went out.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered miserably, as he walked back to Dewson's Dwellings, to the rooms that, without his mother, looked cold and cheerless. "And how is all this going to end?"

"Look here, Carton," said Lewis, a week later, "I'm sorry you've had such rotten luck with cards, for I know you can't afford to lose the money. I'm going to put you right again. All you've got to do is to draw ten pounds out of the savings bank and come with me to Gatwick Steeplechases on Saturday."

Jack shook his head. "That's as much gambling as cards," he said, "and I'm going to chuck it altogether. Better leave off a loser than go on losing more."

"Oh, as you like," said Lewis, with affected carelessness. "It doesn't matter to me, but I've got a pal in a local stable, and the tips he has given me are certainties. It's just a question of picking up money for nothing. I only wanted to do you a good turn. Of course, if—" He shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Wait a minute, Lewis!" cried Jack, his face pale and his heart beating quickly, as he was faced by the great temptation. He knew that it was both wrong and foolish to gamble, for in the end the gambler always loses. His common-sense told him that bookmakers, keepers of gaming-houses, and the like would not be so plentiful and so prosperous unless it were so.

But just once—just to take advantage of the great opportunity offered him by Lewis to regain the money he had lost, to increase his dwindling balance at the savings bank.

"Don't!" said conscience faintly. "Go, you fool!" said the louder voice of the Tempter.

"All right," said Jack, somewhat hoarsely, "I'll get the money and come. Thanks for telling me, Lewis!"

The elder lad smiled strangely as he walked away.

"I'll lay six to one bar one!" roared a bookmaker, as the numbers went up for the first race. "Six to one The Ploughman! Eight to one Flotsam!"

Jack gazed around the crowded ring in blank bewilderment. He and Lewis had only stopped to have some sandwiches and catch a late special train, which had arrived at the racecourse station just as the saddling bell had gone for the first race. All around him was a hoarse roar in a language that he could not understand.

"Come on," said Lewis. "Flotsam's the horse that my pal has given me as the winner. We're jolly lucky to get eights! I should put a couple of pounds on; that's sixteen pounds profit. Not bad for a start—eh? Give me the money. I'll make the bet for you."

Before Jack quite realised what he was doing he had handed his friend two sovereigns, and the latter had disappeared among the crowd. He came back just as the horses were going to the post.

"Got it on all right," he said casually. "Look out for the yellow jacket and red cap."

Jack felt a strange excitement as he watched the many-coloured silk jackets at the starting-post, gleaming brightly under the chill rays of a wintry sun. Then a white flag fell.

"They're off!" came the hoarse cry from all around him; and he saw the yellow jacket and red cap well in front.

"Sixteen pounds!" he muttered; and determined that if the horse won he would not tempt fortune by betting again.

It was a two-mile race, and the horses, leaving the straight, went off on the half-circle that took them a long way from the stands, but his keen eyes saw that the horse he had backed had come to the front, and was drawing well away from the others.

"Flotsam leads!" he cried excitedly.

A man near him laughed. "They ain't racin' yet, my lad. You just wait and— Ah, now they're at it! Look at The Ploughman!"

The big black horse, clearing hurdle after hurdle neatly, and never losing a foot, was sweeping up. On entering the straight Flotsam was easily passed by three horses, and with the roar of "The Ploughman wins!" ringing in his ears, Jack saw the black horse come over the last hurdle in front of the rest of the field, and with the favourite taking off badly and losing a lot of ground, go on to win with ease.

He had lost two pounds! Two weeks' wages had gone in those few minutes of mad excitement.

"Rotten luck!" he heard Lewis say sympathetically. "Still, there's plenty of time yet!"

There was plenty of time—to lose all the money he had upon him. True, in the big race of the afternoon—a three-mile steeplechase—Springer, the horse he had backed, was leading the field, and only lost through falling at the last jump and throwing his jockey severely. But he had lost!

"Let's get home!" said Jack hoarsely, longing to get away from the loud cries of the bookmakers that rang mockingly in his ears. He felt that he hated them, though it was his own stupidity that had caused him to throw away ten pounds—a sum that would have kept him three or four months.

But, as a matter of fact, the bookmakers had not had his money, for Lewis had only pretended to back the horses, and had put the money in his pocket, feeling pretty certain that none of his tips were of any use.

That night Jack met his mother on her return from the country. His heart was heavy, and he felt for the first time that he could not meet those clear, searching grey eyes.

"The beast!" cried Jack Carton savagely. "The mean hound! I see it all now!"

He stood in the doorway of a shop in Cheapside and watched two figures on the opposite side of the road with blazing eyes and clenched fists.

For he had seen Lewis—the lad who had posed as his friend—leave a restaurant with Mr. Paulos, of Park Lane, the mysterious millionaire who had sworn to ruin him, to hound him from place to place.

In a flash everything was clearly revealed. The millionaire had bribed Lewis to ruin him. His little capital meant that he could weather a certain amount of unemployment; with no capital behind him he would be helpless. The cards and the racing had cost him dear, but he was not destitute, for he still had nearly forty pounds in the bank.

"I'll win yet!" he gasped, staring after the retreating figures. "I've been a silly fool, but I'm not beaten, not by a long way! Now I know what to do!"

He hurried back to Morton's, the wholesale draper's, and made his way to the manager's room and asked to leave as soon as was convenient.

"Oh, leave at once if you want to!" said the manager irritably. "We can fill your place in a few hours!"

"Very well, sir," said Jack quietly. "I should like to leave now."

He drew the money due to him and walked to the room where Lewis worked.

"You mean beast!" he panted angrily, and noted with savage glee the startled look in the other's eyes. "I'm not under you now, you cad, for I've sacked myself! You and your scheming millionaire haven't done me yet! I'm going now, and I give you that to remember me by!"

His right arm shot out and caught the elder lad a terrific blow on the point of the jaw, sending him crashing to the floor with the high stool on top of him.

Jack waited for him to rise, but finding that he made no attempt to do so, he stared blankly at him and turned on his heel and walked out into the streets of London without a character, with powerful enemies, and with everything apparently against him.

Yet he meant to prove that he was Ever-Ready Jack, and to succeed against them all.

THE END.

(Next week will be related how "Ever-Ready Jack" came into his own.)



"I'm going now, and I give you that to remember me by!" said Jack. His right arm shot out and caught the elder lad a terrific blow on the point of the jaw, sending him crashing to the floor.

By the Clever Author of "Sunken Millions," etc., etc.



## Our Stirring Poor Boy Serial. Commence To-day.

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 Briton 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 raises an alarm of the intended robbery, and 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 time owing to his poor education, he becomes a van-boy.

He goes to live with Mrs. Bristowe (whose husband has since died), and his kindness itself to her—inducing the company to give her a fruit stall at the station. As time goes on Jack earns promotion, until he eventually 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 the 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.

Sir John Willel, the manager of the railway, blames Jack Postern for the lost parcel, and refuses to pay him the £1,000 reward for the recovery of the duke's daughter. Owing to this injustice, the Dodger claims the reward, and in consequence of this he is dismissed from the service, and Mrs. Bristowe is also removed.

This action causes a great stir among the railway workers, who set fire to the depot. Then the Dodger induces the men to accept the terms of the railway authorities.

Jack is taken back on the railway as traffic superintendent.

William Sparks, an aviator, seeks an interview with the Dodger with the view of obtaining an express train to pilot him on his attempt to win a prize for a continuous flight from London to Liverpool.

Van Germee was engaged as an engineer in the building of this aeroplane, and has now built a machine of his own on the same lines as that of William Sparks. It is now a fight between the two men. Jack is giving the final instructions to Sparks.

"There he is! There's the scoundrel!" Sparks exclaims.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

## SMART TRICKS

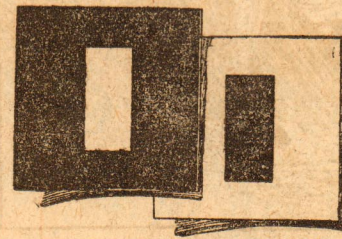
For Smart Boys.

**W**HEN the long evenings of autumn are upon us, and parties or family gatherings are a common occurrence, the boy who can show some simple trick to amuse the company may always be sure of a hearty welcome. The following simple tricks, which require no apparatus, may be new to some of our readers. Most of the articles required are usually to be found in any kitchen, and the amount wanted is so small that even the most careful housewife would not mind.

Pin a sheet of white paper, the bottom of which rests on the floor, against the wall. Then ask one of those present who has a top hat to put it on and stand up before the others. Ask them then to mark on the wall the height it would reach if stood upon the floor beside the paper. When the hat is at length

placed on the floor, it will almost certainly be found that no one has estimated anywhere near the correct height, practically all guesses being far too high.

Cut a piece each of black and white paper about six inches square, and also two pieces, one black and one white, two inches long by three-quarters of an inch broad. Place the small white piece on the black square, and the black one on the white square. Ask which is the



Which is the larger—the white or black? A trick described in this article.

watched him keenly, and a premonition of what was coming suddenly seized him.

The foreigner pulled his chair a shade closer to Jack, and looking round to see that he was not overheard, carefully abstracted a pocket-book from his coat.

"Mr. Postern," he said, "I am going to speak to you quite frankly as man to man." He undid the pocket-book as he spoke, and produced a wad of banknotes that he laid on the desk. "The prize that my compatriot will win if he is not interfered with is worth £10,000. I have here £2,500, one quarter of the value of the whole prize. If you will give me your word that the company's own special, as I call it, will not run to-night, or even that it will not start before 12.30, that money is yours. You are a gentleman, I know; I am quite willing simply to take your word. If you will give it, I will leave the money now, and no one shall be the wiser. There are a hundred excuses you can make. I leave it to you."

He laid his hand upon the little stack of notes, and looked up at the Dodger.

Very quietly Jack rose from his seat. "Monsieur Grammot," he said, "otherwise Monsieur Van Germee"—and the man sprang to his feet—"you have said that I am a gentleman. I do not pretend to be. But, at least, I am an honest man. You are not. Clear out before you are kicked out!"

The foreigner went white to the lips; a wicked light came into his eyes.

"You silly little fool!" he sneered, as he picked up the notes and slowly replaced them in his pocket-book. "You don't know when you're well off!" His lips parted in a malicious snarl, giving him a strangely saturnine expression.

"If you are not well off the company's premises in thirty seconds, you'll feel a silly fool!" retorted the Dodger as he threw the door open.

"Show this person out!" he called to a clerk outside, and the Belgian retired.

Punctually at twenty to twelve that night the Dodger took his place in the cab of the great 4-4-0 which was waiting for him just outside the goods depot on the No. 2 down main. On the No. 1 down local, level with it stood the special which was to accompany the Belgian.

The Dodger clambered up on to the tender and inspected the lights behind it.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What's the matter with that second light? And the third, too? They are both flickering!"

"Oh, they're all right!" exclaimed the fireman from where he was oiling, preparatory to the start.

"I tell you they're not," retorted the Dodger, and took a sharp look at the man. Instantly the idea of treachery occurred to him. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Henry Packerston," the other replied.

"How long in the company's service?"

"Eighteen months, sir."

"Any reports against you?"

The other hesitated almost imperceptibly before replying.

"No, sir; none to speak of."

"What do you mean?"

"I was reported the other day for holding up a local for a passenger who was late."

"And you were proved to have received a tip, I suppose?"

"That's what they made out, sir."

"I thought so," added the Dodger. "Change over with the fireman of that other special."

The man looked up at the Dodger for a moment, as if calculating the value of impertinence. Before he could decide, the Dodger, looking down at him from his lofty perch, said:

"Get along now, before I come and make you!" And the man slunk off without further comment.

"Now then," Jack said to the new fireman when he arrived, "is your sheet clean?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Very well, then, just see what is the matter with those lamps."

In a moment or two he came back.

"Both burners are clogged up, sir; it looks to me as if it had been done on purpose."

"So it has," replied the Dodger.

"Take them out, and put others in. Look sharp; we have only a few minutes."

Quickly the work was completed. The fireman and driver took their places on the footplate. The Dodger cast an eye over every sparkling item of the highly-polished and complicated fitting of the cab front.

"All ready?" he asked.

"Quite, sir," answered the driver.

"Very well, then, stand by!"

A moment afterwards a curious purring sound, a mighty throbbing, made itself audible above even the roar and clatter of the busy railway.

Almost simultaneously, to right and to left, far up in the sky, two bright lights, moving rapidly, came into view.

"There they are!" sang out the Dodger, and the same second Van Germee's special began whistling for a clear line. The next instant the signals fell—the down main was already clear.

As though with one impulse the two great engines shrieked out their starting signals, and together slowly began to creep forward.

The Dodger, his eyes fixed on the flying machine on his right, saw its lamp blink twice, the preconcerted signal from Sparks that he had picked then up. The Dodger whistled back the acknowledgment of the signal. Then to the driver he said:

"Let her out! Mind, it's a race!" Then to the fireman:

"Keep up a good head of steam; bank her up all you know!"

Something in his excitement was infectious. Both the driver and fireman felt its contagion, as foot by foot, yard by yard, furlong by furlong, the two engines raced on side by side. There was nothing in it so far.

The Belgian was flying far higher than his opponent, but so far as could be judged from below they raced neck-and-neck together. Both were flying at a terrific speed, and push them as they would the huge locomotives were put to it to keep pace with them.

The aviators were forging slowly ahead. Sparks' machine, on the lower level, seemed if anything to have a little the better of it.

Suddenly Van Germee swooped slanting down like some great hawk striking at its prey. Down he shot at breakneck speed until just over Sparks; only a few feet seemed to separate them. The Dodger held his breath. Some terrible catastrophe seemed imminent. In an instant Sparks had been caught in the vortex of his rival's machine. From below his headlight was seen to wobble and sway, and then dart off sideways to the west.

"All clear!" the Dodger cried, with delight, as his trained eye picked up the signals one after the other. "There's the Belgian train!"

"The cur!" exclaimed the Dodger.

"He did that on purpose! Shut her off a bit."

As the driver obeyed, the rival special sped roaring ahead, whistling shrilly at the Bushey distant.

"That gives it them!" almost groaned the Dodger. "They have got the lead!"

He never took his eyes off the swaying, swerving light of the British flying machine. Gradually he saw it swoop up and down again to a lower level, and then come curving gracefully towards the line.

But his opponent was leading by a mile by the time the machine was once more under control. The tail lights of the other special had already disappeared in the distance.

At the Bushey home signal there was a further delay of some seconds to allow the other train to clear into the next section.

"Beaten at the start!" exclaimed the Dodger in disgust. "Even if Sparks overhauls that Belgian blackguard we shall be a section behind now the whole way!"

He was sick with disgust.

The Race Through the Night.

**T**HE Belgian's flying-machine was already lost to view, and Sparks travelling at a tremendous rate in his effort to catch up his rival, was momentarily out-distancing the Dodger's train. At each check the special dropped further behind.

"Now, all you know!" Jack cried to the driver as the signal fell and let them through. "If we can only get on level terms at Knightley, we may have a chance of taking the lead again. They have been warned all through to give the leader a clear line."

Mile by mile they tore along through the crisp night air, slackening only as at each section they had to slow down for the clearing signal from the section ahead.

"They are not gaining on us, at any rate," commented the Dodger as they pulled up on one of these occasions. "They are not a full section clear of us yet."

All the time Sparks was increasing his lead from the train. His light showed, now far away, little more than a bright speck upon the horizon. Several times he had disappeared entirely, blotted from view on the approach to the large towns, to be picked up again in the open country beyond.

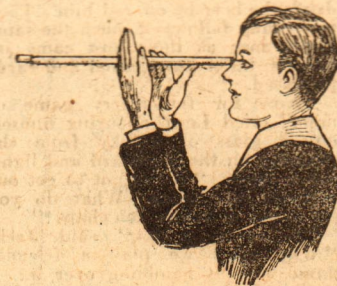
Minute after minute they dashed forward, crashing through stations, roaring over bridges, shrieking through tunnels, waking the silent night by the thunder of their speed.

At the Knightley distant Jack gave the four short, shrill whistles signifying urgency, and to his delight they were switched without a check on to the relief down local. Here the road once again broadened into a four and later to a six trackway for the accommodation of the heavy traffic of the great Midland city.

As they crashed through its suburbs the flying-machine was wholly lost to view in the haze and glare from the huge works that flared and groaned in the dark and still night all round that busy manufacturing centre. Unchecked, they rushed shrieking through the great covered station, and sped on into the blackness beyond.

"All clear!" the Dodger cried, with delight, as his trained eye picked up the signals one after the other. "There's the Belgian train!"

(Continued on the next page.)



The paper tube that seems to pass through the hand.

known, but seems very wonderful to those who learn it for the first time. Roll a piece of paper into a tube of about three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Keep both eyes open, and hold the tube a little in front of the right eye, at the same time holding the left hand, palm towards the face, close to the tube about halfway down. You will then find that you are ap-

larger, and everyone will say that the white on black is larger than the black on white, and unless the delusion is known, you will have to measure each to convince your friends that they are the same size. You can also do this by merely placing a white and black oblong beside one another, but the illusion is increased by putting a piece of paper or card on a piece of the opposite colour.

Upon a disc of white cardboard rule alternate lines of red and blue; these should be very thin, and no white should show. Hold this disc up before those present, and ask the colour. Provided you are at the right distance, all will say that the colour is violet, as the blue and red merge into one another at a little distance.

**It is best to experiment** with this at first, or you may not get the right distance. A disc ruled with thick lines must be held further away than one with very thin lines. Another optical illusion is better

parently looking through a tube put through a hole in your left hand.

This simple little trick always mystifies those who do not know the solution. Borrow a hat or a basket, and ask two or three of those present to put in a penny, taking care that each one bears a different date. You yourself must not see the pennies, and must either hold the receptacle behind your back or be blindfolded. Then ask someone to take out one of the coins, look at it very carefully, and pass it round for all to examine. While this is being done say you will pick out the coin when it is returned to the hat, which you can easily do, as the one that has been examined will be found appreciably warmer to the touch than those which have not been disturbed. It requires a fair number of people to perform this satisfactorily, as otherwise the coin will not have been made warm enough. The explanation, of course, is that the metal retains the warmth of the hand for a considerable time.

(Another "Smart Tricks" article next week.)

"The Blue Crusaders" are the most popular Football Team of the day,

See The "B.R." Football Library.

he added a second later, as far away he detected the three red tail-lights of a fast passenger special. "We must overhaul her now before we reach Pulton, and get on to the same track again. Oh, if only we could take the lead!"

Like one possessed, the fireman, the coal-begrimed sweat streaming off his face in the ruddy glare of the hot furnace, shovelled unceasingly. The driver opened out the throttle to its full extent to make the most of the slight down grade.

"Eighty an hour if a foot!" he muttered, almost under his breath.

"We are gaining—we are gaining!" cried the Dodger, delighted to see the tail-lights gradually slipping back towards them, as little by little they crept up, until once again they were on level terms.

But their rivals were by no means done with. As Jack's train ranged up alongside they began slowly to open out again. They had obviously a tremendous reserve head of steam. Side by side the two great engines roared along.

"We shall reach the points together at this rate, and both get held up! For the love of goodness, keep her going!"

The Dodger himself seized a raking bar as he spoke, and trimmed the roaring furnace.

"There is one of the flying-machines, sir!" called out the driver. "Do you know whose it is, sir?"

The Dodger looked up. "It is impossible to tell," he replied.

The light overhead was all that could be seen. It was folly to waste steam even upon whistling the agreed sign.

"Never mind," he added; "they must both be about somewhere."

Even as he spoke, looking round the horizon, his eye suddenly caught, a furlong ahead, some enormous black object lying across the very metals they were on.

"Look out!" he shouted. "What is that ahead?"

With one glance through the circular light, the driver sprang to shut off steam. The Dodger caught his hand.

"Too late!" he cried.

Next second there was a terrific crash, followed by the sound of crunching timber and grating metal, and the whole air was filled with flying hay.

For a fraction of time the great engine seemed to reel and stagger; then, recovering itself like a living thing, it leapt forward once more.

"I believe that was a deliberate attempt to wreck us!" exclaimed the Dodger through his clenched teeth.

"What, in fortune's name, was it?" asked the driver.

"A load of hay placed deliberately on the rails at the level-crossing," the Dodger replied. "It was too late to check speed. Our only chance was to do what we did—go through it. All our head-lights must be gone, and goodness knows whether we are damaged."

"We had better stop to see, hadn't we, sir?"

"No; we will find out soon enough if we are damaged, and I'll soon settle whether our lights are gone."

Before his companion could protest, the Dodger, his coat tightly buttoned, his cap pressed over his ears, swung himself out of the cab on to the outside of the swaying engine. The rush of air nearly lifted him from his feet. He could scarcely breathe, and instinctively turned his face from the fury of the blast.

Inch by inch, clinging to the hand-rail, he fought his way slowly forward, over the great driving-wheel casing, through a very wilderness of hay, with which the whole engine was draped and festooned, to the boiler-plate of the huge locomotive.

Hay and wreckage piled up in heaped confusion on the engine front left him scant foothold, and blowing into his eyes and nostrils, choked and blinded him. He dared not relax his hold to brush his face clear.

With one arm reeved through the handrail, he gingerly stooped down to examine the lights. A sudden lurch of the speeding engine carried him off his feet, and shot him, hanging by one arm, to the uttermost limit of the handrail.

For a moment he hung dangling over the front bogey, then exerting all his strength, he hauled himself to the step-plate again. The lights still burned. The lamps and brackets were bent and twisted, but what matter that?

Slowly he fought his way back to the cab again.

"What has happened to the other train?" he asked as he recovered breath.

Their rival no longer raced alongside.

"By James, sir," replied the fireman, looking back, "looks to me as if they were in trouble!"

"We probably scattered the wreck of the cart right into them," answered the Dodger. "But keep on—keep on we must!"

And all the time they could only detect the one flying-machine ahead of them. It was flying low, and not nearly so fast as it had been before. Gradually the train was overhauling it.

Jack had now nothing to fear from being overtaken by the other special. He had established a clear lead, and as he reached the points he was switched without delay on to the main down as they rattled through Pulton.

"You can ease her a bit now," said the Dodger.

By degrees the train ran right under the flying-machine, and Jack gave a preconcerted signal on the whistle. But the light above him never winked nor flickered.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "It's that wretched Belgian we're piloting, after all, I do believe!"

The fireman sprang to the brakes. The Dodger threw over the reversing gear. The special, carried by its own impetus, ran shrieking and skidding along the slippery rails, crash into the wreck of the flying-machine, sending splinters and scraps of metal and canvas showering upwards on both sides, and carrying along with it for another twenty yards before it came to rest a great curtain of wreckage, that stood up high above the smoke stack.

The Dodger leapt from the cab.

"Quick, Sales!" he cried to the driver. "Where's the wretched flying-man? You, Bright," he added, turning to the fireman, "run back down the line to the Beeston box, and block the line, and tell them to telephone for help! Sharp's the word!"

He ran as he shouted, looking this way and that amongst the wreckage, carrying a tail-lamp that he had snatched from its bracket as he jumped down.

"There he is!" the driver shouted at last.

And they made out a human form dragging itself laboriously and painfully across the up line. They raced

started off once more in pursuit of Sparks.

They were now on his own familiar stretch of line. On they dashed to Upton, then down the long grade through Jossington, Byfield, Thoston, and along the straight to Naughtley, and down again to the great maze of lights that heralded the approach to Calworth.

"Steady! Steady!" counselled the Dodger to the driver. "Mind the facing points!"

And they slowed up to thread their way through the complicated network of cross-tracks and switches. To them it seemed that they were barely more than crawling. To the night hands at work at the junction it appeared as if some maniac were driving a demented train at hurricane speed through the station.

Once clear of the gut across the canal they opened out again, raced on to Braxted, and then let her go for all she was worth across the Nine Miles Straight.

"Forty miles in thirty minutes!" commented the Dodger, as he sighted the lights of Kenley. "We will catch him yet!"

Even as he spoke, a tiny speck of

Branches and mains of the Great Central, Midland, North-Western, Lancashire and Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Great Provincial lines all served the district, branching away in every direction.

"He has learnt a lesson," the Dodger remarked. "He is flying high, and that, at least, will help him; he will get a better view of the direction from the lights on the lines."

Gradually, as the miles slipped by, they drew up on the flying-machine, until at last the Dodger sounded the whistle once more. There was a pause, and then, to his infinite delight, he saw the aviator blink the prearranged reply.

"That's him all right, and he has spotted us. Jump up and see that our lights are bright!"

The fireman obeyed, almost before the words were spoken.

"All burning bright!" he sang out.

"That's good! If he can do his job now, he has won his prize!"

The train was slowed down just to keep pace with him. And so they bounded on across the great saltings, with a clear view for miles round; over the Ship Canal and the Dee; across an arm of the Mersey; until at last the flaring furnaces of Warrington lit up the western sky, and they shut off steam, their feat accomplished.

"He is coming down between Garston and Mossley Hill," the Dodger said. "He must be able to see Mossley Hill Church from where he is now, and he will have marked the triangle of lines round Garston, when he went over the track. We cannot do anything more for him."

Slowly they ran forward to Garston, and pulled into the siding.

The stir and activity at the place, so unusual in those small hours of the morning, told them at once of Sparks' success. Crowds of pressmen and spectators, drawn by the rumour of the aviator's approach, were running together from every side. In a field close by they found him, almost delirious with delight at his success.

But Jack's work was not done yet. On his mind weighed heavily the thought of the other special, and what had happened to it. He got to the telegraph-office, and in a few minutes was clicking out his inquiries. To his infinite relief came back the news that the other train, although unable to proceed further, had not been seriously damaged. Portions of the framework of the haycart, scattered by Jack's train, had crashed into their rival, smashing her headlights and temporarily jamming a crank rod. The fireman had been slightly hurt through being thrown by the shock against the forepart of the cab, but was not much the worse for it, and had been able to help in clearing the engine of its obstruction, and they had pulled ahead slowly to Pulton, to learn there of the discomfiture of the Belgian.

When he had satisfied himself on these points, and not till then, Jack made his way to Sparks.

"Well done, young fellow!" he said, grasping the aviator by the hand. "It was a fine fight, but I am afraid I was not much good after Pulton."

"Oh, indeed, you were!" answered Sparks. "I could not have done it but for you. I was properly lost just before I saw you coming up. I spotted you a long time before you whistled. I was actually then hovering uncertain which line to take."

Briefly the Dodger explained the incidents of the journey. As he heard about the haycart, Sparks suddenly started.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "That explains it! I saw a whole lot of lights wavering and flickering on the line just south of Pulton as I was passing over, and I could just make out in the dark a group of men leading a team of horses away. That haycart was put there on purpose, you mark my words!"

"But," asked the Dodger, "why on earth should that scoundrel take such a risk when he did not in the least know who would be ahead at that point?"

"You've forgotten the telephone," Sparks replied. "I've no doubt that he only had to give some sign from his machine to his accomplices to carry out their dastardly work."

"If only we can bring it home to him!" the Dodger said viciously through his clenched teeth. "The brute's already lost his machine, and had a nasty spill, but if he was responsible for that haycart, hanging would be too good for him! They

"THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LIBRARY."

STUNNING COMPLETE BLUE CRUSADER YARN BY A.S.HARDY EVERY THURSDAY.



"THE NEW CRUSADER"

The above is a reduced facsimile of this week's superb number. On Sale Thursday, October 20th. Price One Halfpenny.

Once again the whistle shrieked out the signal, but as before, there was no response from the flying-machine above.

"What does it mean? Where on earth has Sparks got to? Either he has lost the road coming through Knightley, or he has come to grief!" Suddenly he added: "What's this Belgian idiot doing?"

For lower and lower the flying-machine came, until the whirr of its propellers pulsed on the air above the thunder of the special, and the down draught from its planes was distinctly felt in the cab, disturbing even the mighty rush created by their speed!

"The silly lunatic will be into us in another moment! Ease her—ease her off!"

The driver sprang to the control, and shut off steam.

Scarcely had he done so than, with a lurch and wobble, the flying-machine fluttered impotently on to the line ahead of them, ran careering to this side and that for thirty or forty yards, and then collapsed into an indistinguishable heap.

towards the crawling figure. It was the wretched Belgian.

Something had gone wrong with his motor, due probably to the chilling effect of the night air. He was shaken and bruised, but not apparently seriously injured. They got him close to one side of the line, where he sat recovering himself, reviling his luck and blaspheming "that dirty little Britisher."

Suddenly, from his remarks, the Dodger realised that Sparks was on ahead. Just then Bright came racing back to say that a night gang at work close by would be there in a few moments to clear the line.

"Come on!" shouted the Dodger. "This chap's all right! Give a hand, both of you!"

With feverish energy the three set to work to rid the engine of its obstructions, and to clear a way for the train to get ahead. It was the work of a moment or two. As it was finished the gang of platelayers arrived on the scene.

The Dodger gave them a few hurried directions, and springing on the cab with his two assistants,

light, quivering and moving against the black sky far away, caught his eye.

"There he is!" he added. "Push her at it up the grade!"

"She's doing all she knows now, sir," answered the driver.

As she reached the incline the pace fell off perceptibly, but it was still tremendous. Mile after mile they sped along. Hedges and signals, telegraph-poles and stations raced backwards through the dark night.

The Dodger's eye, when not picking up the signals far ahead on the well-known line, saw that little speck of light quivering in the sky. Little by little it grew, and became more defined as it seemed to slip backwards towards them.

"We're overhauling him!" he shouted with joy. "We must get up to him before Trent Junction, or he will miss his way!"

The Dodger well knew the complicated maze of lines converging and spreading athwart the whole country in that neighbourhood. It would be practically impossible for the aviator to make sure of his road.

will be making inquiries about it long before this!"

"Well, I hope they catch whoever is to blame," answered Sparks. "As for you, I do not know how to thank you. I little thought when I asked that favour of you that it meant asking you to risk your life and the company's property as well."

"Oh, that's nothing!" answered the Dodger simply.

"Well, at any rate, the company will be the gainer I am glad to say," replied the other. "I promised to share the prize, and the moment the cheque is paid up the G.P.R. will be £5,000 the richer."

"I'll put it before the directors, but I do not think you will find they will accept."

"What do you mean?" asked Sparks.

"Well, of course, my dear fellow, don't you see, the company could never have entered into such a bargain as you suggested on its own. What I did was to book up a special against you. If you had not won, and had not been able to pay, they'd just have had to debit me, that's all. Now you've won you have simply got to foot the bill. I am afraid it won't be a small one, either. It will cost you between £100 and £125."

"But I've never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Sparks. "Do you mean to say that you were personally taking the risk?"

"It was not a risk," replied Jack. "I sized you up when I saw you, and I knew that, given fair play, you'd do it. Don't say another word about it. You will get a bill from the company for the special, and when you've paid that the matter's at an end."

In vain Sparks protested; the Dodger was adamant. The aviator was far too much of a gentleman even to suggest to the Dodger what he knew the latter would regard as an insult—namely, sharing the prize personally.

But a few days later Sparks called on the general manager. He was then a public character, and his name in everyone's mouth, and the G.M. received him without a moment's delay. In a few words Sparks explained to him that he had quite expected to have to divide the prize with the company.

"That was my bargain," he said, "and I want to be able to carry it out, but now I find it was not the company but Mr. Postern who was taking the risk. I offered a half-share in the prize for a special train. I got a special train, and I want to pay what I offered for it."

"Well," answered the general manager, "as the company was not a party to the bargain, it seems to me you had better thrash it out with Postern."

"But he won't regard it in that light."

"I know he won't," replied the manager. "I know him well enough for that."

"What do you suggest, then?" asked the other.

"There is only one solution I can see. You hand over whatever sum you think reasonable to the company to be distributed amongst those who helped you. I'll see that Postern gets his share of it. After all, it's only fair that the driver and fireman should get something, too."

So in the end it was arranged. Later the same day the general manager sent for the Dodger.

"We have been asked," he said, in his most official manner, "by Mr. Sparks to distribute amongst such members of our staff as helped him in his recent flight, a sum of money which he has deposited with us, and I have accordingly had placed to your credit on the company's books the sum of £1,000; £500 is being placed to the credit of Sales, the driver, who accompanied you, and £200 to Bright, the fireman. Certain other employees are receiving sums of from £5 upwards."

Before the Dodger had time to protest or object, the general manager turned straight to another topic of strict business routine.

Just as the Dodger was leaving, the G.M. remarked casually:

"Oh, by the way, when this matter of Mr. Sparks' generosity came before the board, it reminded us that there was a sum of £1,000 due to someone for tracing Lady Helen Thwaite-Harty. That was also adjusted at the same time. So that there's a matter of about £2,000 odd to your credit. Good-day! I'm very busy!" His eye twinkled as the Dodger was forced to withdraw.

That evening Jack and Mrs. Bristowe sat up far into the night in financial conclave.

"What do you think?" he exclaimed suddenly after supper.

"I am sure I don't know," she answered laughingly. "I am never astonished at anything where you are concerned, Jack."

"Oh, this will surprise you, at any rate! I am a bloated capitalist, a giddy financial magnate!"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Just what I said. That chap Sparks I knew was solid gold all through. He has insisted on the company rewarding those who helped him, and I have got one thousand golden sovereigns out of the deal. Then they've squared up the Lady Helen reward. That's another thousand! That beats you—eh, little mother?"

"I should just think it does!" she answered, with a smile.

Ever since the strike their funds had been slowly mending and recovering from the depredations that that sad time had made upon their slender resources. Jack's salary now far exceeded the needs of their modest establishment, and month by

"You are getting on, young man," said the manager genially. "I remember you well when you used to carry my bag to the station, or open a cab door for me."

"I remember myself well in those days, too," answered the Dodger.

"It isn't so long ago."

"Things have changed a bit, haven't they?"

#### On the Track of Rip Kelly.

It was with a new sense of importance that Jack took his place in the office that day, but he was restless and ill at ease. Through all that he had accomplished was a sense of bitter disappointment at not having brought Kelly to book, and above all at never having been able to restore Lady Helen her bag. A hundred times a day he had pictured to himself the scene when he should himself take it to her; how she would flush with pleasure and astonishment, how she would try and thank him, and he would not allow

stock, cross-examined the employees, and of an evening settled down to an apparently casual chat with the station-master or local superintendent.

He did his work thoroughly, yet always at the back of his mind was the thought of catching the Rip. He had few facts to go on. The first was to keep his eyes and ears open for news of a goggle-eyed hunchback, for the Rip's accomplice had never yet been run to earth. Next he knew that Kelly had probably not had sufficient funds left from his share of the insurance swindle to leave the country after the Thoston episode. He was no doubt still in the country. And he must be running short of money after lying low so long. He would be driven to replenish his coffers very soon.

From Jack's knowledge of the man, he was certain that Kelly was bound sooner or later to turn his attention to the Great Provincial, with which he was better acquainted than with any other likely source of revenue.

With these slender theories to go

at the same time, instead of running special services, and it would be a saving to the company as well."

The man well knew that this latter argument was an almost irresistible one with the board.

"That's true," answered the Dodger. "It would only make a six-minutes' difference on the running time to London, and it would be a great advantage."

They were sitting in the station-master's office.

"I suppose you have already discussed the whole thing with Mr. Clayton," the Dodger added, with a smile, well aware that no doubt the station-master and the inspector had between them decided to sound the head office on a question which would materially lighten their labours.

"We have mentioned it sometimes," replied the other casually.

"So I expect," rejoined the Dodger. "Where is Mr. Clayton? He seems to be off duty a lot lately; he is not in his quarters."

"I think he has got a friend staying with him."

"Oh! Who is that?"

"A very nice chap named Peterson. He's something to do with an engineering firm, I believe—travels in railway bridges, or big guns, or something of that kind."

"Clayton known him for long?"

asked the Dodger casually.

"Sure I could not say!" answered the other.

The Dodger dropped the subject, but later that evening, in conversation with the station-master, he suddenly remarked:

"I will just have a look over your quarters, if I may. Anything worth doing to them? While I am here, I might just as well have a look at them, and save the building department the cost of sending a man down."

"No; they're all right, thank you," replied Clayton. "But, of course, you are welcome to look over."

As they made their way through the house the Dodger made some casual inquiries.

"You have got quite big quarters for a widower with one child. You are well off here."

"Oh, I've nothing to grumble at!" answered the station-master, fearful lest this might be the prelude to a changing of quarters.

"That's your room," commented the Dodger, "and that's your little girl's. Who's in this one?"

"A friend of mine, staying here for a day or two," replied Clayton casually.

The Dodger fingered the hairbrush on the prim little dressing-table.

Unobserved, he extracted from it one or two loose hairs hanging to it. His quick eye had detected a certain dull lifelessness about them which bespoke artificial rather than natural hair. As he passed the bed to leave the room he brushed his hand casually over the pillow. There were one or two other hairs there which he picked up. They were very different from those he had removed from the brush. The latter were dull, flaxlike strands of a pale colour, while the others were harsh, coarse brown hairs.

"I have not met him, have I?" he went on, in a most ordinary tone of voice.

"No, I don't think you have, Mr. Postern," answered Clayton.

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"Oh, he is a very pleasant chap! I got to know him through his having to pass through here every week. He's something to do with an engineering firm up in Glasgow. We struck up a friendship, and he generally stays a day or two with me every month now."

Any suspicions that the Dodger might have had as to Clayton's integrity were completely dispelled by the man's frankly-spoken replies.

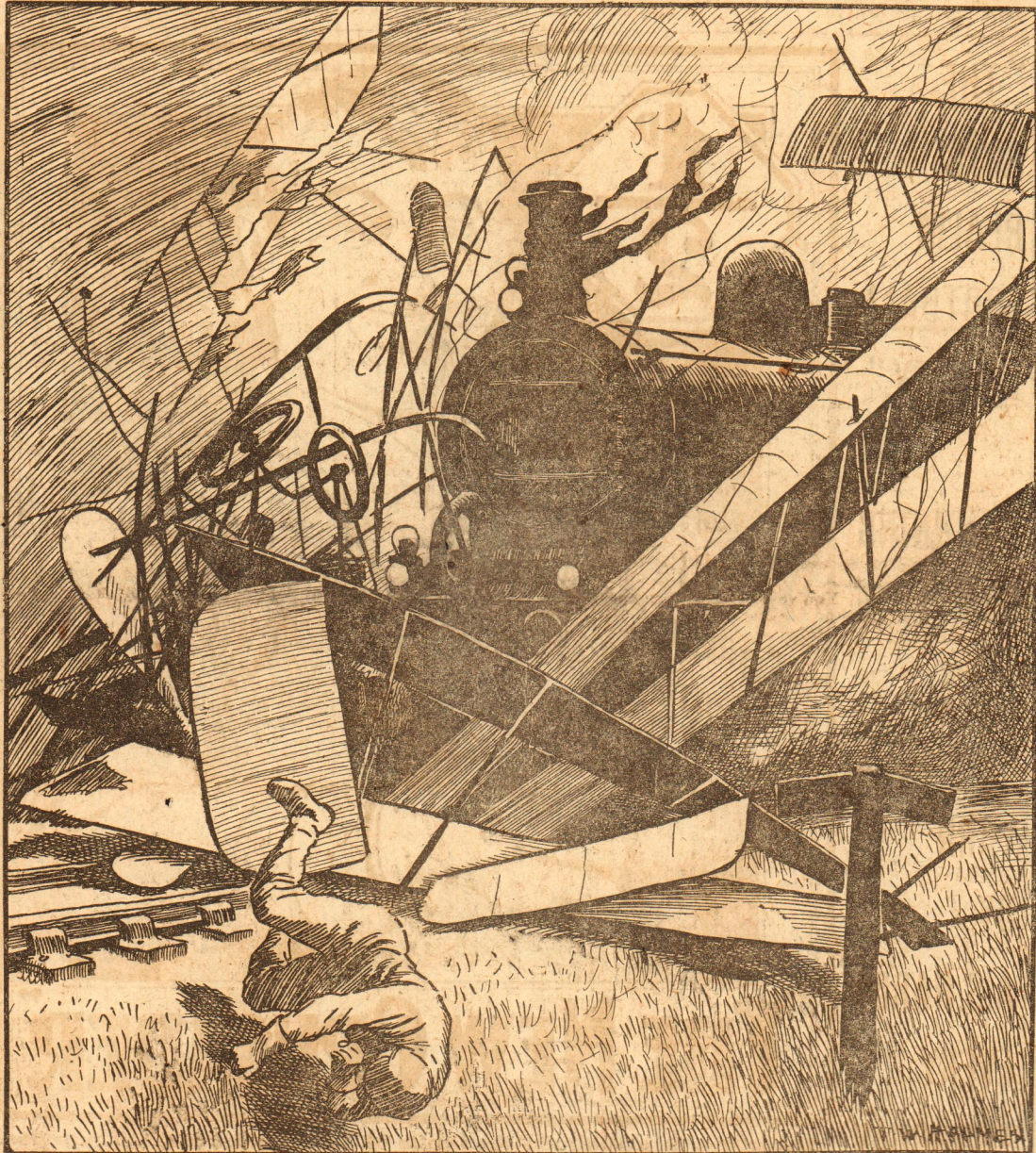
"If he is harbouring anyone he should not," thought the Dodger to himself, "he is a fool, and not a knave."

"I am not speaking now officially," he went on out loud, "but just as a friend, Clayton. The company are not awfully fond of its employees striking up rapid friendships with casual passengers, you know."

"I know that; but this is a real gentleman. I am sure, if the company has any objection to his staying the night with me occasionally, he would be the very first to give it up. He is away till late to-night, otherwise I'd ask you to meet him, Mr. Postern, and I am sure you would like him."

Jack pricked up his ears. "When did he go away?" he asked, somewhat sharply.

(Another grand instalment next Tuesday.)



The special train, carried by its own impetus, ran shrieking and skidding along the slippery rails, crash into the wreck of the flying-machine, sending splinters and scraps of metal and canvas showering upwards on both sides.

month had seen, his savings slowly mounting, whilst the profits from Mrs. Bristowe's stall had grown at an ever-increasing rate. During the past seven months she had been able steadily to put by.

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he asked.

"No. What?"

"I am going to put all my little lot into the G.P.R. I am going to become a proprietor, I am. They will listen to me then. I will be a shareholder, and they will have to consider my interests and my dividends. You had better do the same."

They sat up pondering the matter, working out the intricate calculations as to how much should be invested, how much stock it would buy, and how much income it would derive.

The next morning early Jack marched boldly into the head offices of the Calworth & Birmingham Bank, interviewed the manager, and arranged for the bank's brokers to purchase him £2,400 worth of G.P.R. stock.

her, and then how they would talk over their thrilling experiences. The restless desire to bring about the fulfilment of his dreams possessed him irresistibly to-day.

There was nothing but routine work to be accomplished. For the first time it irked him. Perhaps his ever watchful chief noticed it.

"Would you like to be detached for special duty for a month?" he asked.

"Rather, sir," replied the Dodger, his whole face lighting up with delight.

"Well, I want you to make a very thorough general inspection—the whole system—everything."

"I'm off at once, then!"

"Right you are, and good luck to you!"

And so he started a systematic inspection of the whole company's system. From London to Bristol, from Bristol to Glasgow, and from Glasgow back again to London. Not a station, not a spur line did he overlook. He arrived at a station, examined the books, inspected the permanent way and the rolling-

on Jack was always on the alert for some trace of the Rip.

More than once he thought he had picked up a thread connecting him with his arch-enemy, and then eagerly he would follow the clue, only to find that it led him nowhere. As the days passed with no definite result a great disappointment was gradually settling down upon him. He had worked his way to Cowden, and was sitting chatting with the local traffic inspector.

"Things are looking up," he was saying, "after last year's depression. You seem quite busy here, since we diverted the Liverpool traffic on to this road."

"Yes," answered the other, "there's about as much as we can handle now. I have been thinking whether you could not fix things at the head office so as to relieve us a bit here."

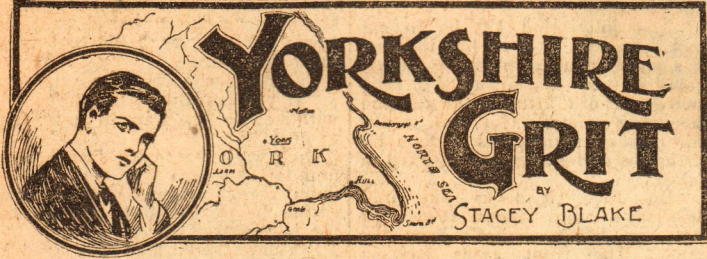
"In what way?" asked the Dodger.

"Well, it occurs to me that there's no point in the Liverpool expresses stopping here; they might just as well stop at Calworth instead, and handle the Calworth and Nottingham traffic



SUPERB NEW SERIAL

START TO-DAY.



THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

The opening chapters of this grand serial find Dick Allen, a thirteen-year-old Yorkshire lad, with his young sister Jessie, parentless and almost penniless. The boy, full of pluck and determined not to despair, cheers up the girl, and then sets out to fight the great battle of life.

At Trimble's Mills, in Bradford, the workers are out on strike, and it is here that Dick intends to apply for a post. Men and women are gathered in front of the great mill, and on the gates is a notice that hands are needed. Dick pushes his way through the crowd and boldly rings the bell. Instantly the cry of "Blackleg!" is raised, and Dick is seized by the strikers, who give him a terrible battering and throw him into a filthy pond.

The next morning Dick is out again plodding along with other mill-workers who are about to commence their long day's toil. He lingers about in front of great buildings, and then gaining courage, he applies for a post, but there seems no chance of getting employment anywhere, and he meets curt refusals at every turn.

Dick tries at Trimble's again, where Mr. Trimble is fitting up new machinery that will, when completed, turn out work at wonderful rapidity. This time he gains an entrance in defiance of the strikers, and is successful in making a start in life.

The strikers are furious, and they intend to break up the new machinery which they believe will cause the discharge of many of the hands. They hold a meeting, and even now are breaking down the huge gates of the mill to gain an entrance. The gates give way at last, and the strikers surge in.

Dick drops over the wall to give the alarm to the police, and as he disappears from view the men inside hear a wild, fierce cry outside.

"There's that rotten little blackleg! He's just dropped over t' wall! Down him! Down him!"

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

A Blackleg.

DICK heard the cry as he ran: "That rotten little blackleg! Down him! Down him!"

The cry was taken up by other voices. It was a job to suit the taste of some of the ruffianly elements of the city that were out this night to pursue this fleeing youngster. But Dick was swift on his legs. He was not afraid of being caught in a fair, straightaway run. His muscles had been hardened and his legs stretched on many a good football-field. He almost enjoyed the sport of it. And he calculated, besides, that the chase they gave him—almost into the Manchester Road—would have the effect of easing the attack on the mill gate, so he was not sorry for it.

Presently he dropped the last of them, but he did not lessen his speed. He was down in the square in record time. He turned in at the Town-hall gateway, and a minute later he was pouring into the ears of a police-inspector the demand for instant help.

"You shall have it, lad," said the inspector. "Mr. Trimble should have had it before, but he wouldn't, because he didn't want to be hard to his hands. But I guess this crowd isn't merely his mill-hands on strike. There'll be every rough in Bradford there. But you look blown, lad, and a bit sick. You'd better stop here a bit."

"No; I'm going back," said Dick stoutly. "I've just got a job there, sir, and I can't neglect it."

"All right; you shall come with us!" Every motor-cab in the square was commandeered. Four burly constables crowded into each. On the first one, riding on the step, was Dick. He hung out at arm's-length as they swung round into Vulcan Street, trying to see what was happening before Trimble's mill. He was seen by some who understood what his errand had been, and there came a hoarse yell and growls from one or two throats to greet him.

One man sprang out of a doorway, and flung a heavy cudgel at him. It crashed through the glass wind-screen of the motor-cab instead. Out of the following motor a policeman jumped and seized the street ruffian as he shot back into hiding.

"That's all right!" laughed the inspector in command into Dick's ear. "You're being avenged quickly."

The cabs came up against the kerb. One followed closely upon another. The police shot out, formed up into a compact body, and started away up the street, urging the crowd on in front of them. They got up to the mill gateway in time, for things were going hard with the besieged. A little crowd out of the mob, daring everything, had torn one of the big gates off its hinges, and they were dragging it forward under the archway to thrust up against the swift-moving belt that had for so long kept them at bay.

Then the body of constables plunged into the archway. There was a smart, quick fight. Handcuffs were snapped. A dozen men—and not a genuine workman among them—were made prisoners, and the crowd outside suddenly assumed a childlike innocence of demeanour that was far removed from any desire to break the law, though one wild voice tried to stir them up upon the edge of the crowd:

"Are you scared at a handful of coppers? Is this what you call fighting for your rights? Goy, lads, thi pals is lagged! Wilta leave 'em so? Come on! To the rescue!"

One or two voices cried out in hoarse agreement, but the main crowd hesitated. There was for a moment a curious little silence. Then on it broke suddenly another voice. Henry Trimble, the old mill-owner, with a bloodstained rag round his head, had staggered out through the broken gates, and was speaking.

The voice on the edge of the crowd yelled out again: "To t' rescue! Come on, lads; to t' rescue!"

"No; come on to work instead!" cried Henry Trimble. "Don't be fools any longer! You've been out of work long enough! Give your agitators a spell of idleness for a change! Knock off their beer-money and stop their talk!"

"You want us to come back to work, Mr. Trimble?" said a quiet voice from out of the indefinite crowd.

"Yes; and I want you to earn

good brass. I want men who can earn it."

"Then you will break up t' new machinery?"

"No, I won't! I'll add to it in a few months' time!"

"Then how can we earn good brass? How can we make a livin' wage? Them new frames'll turn out stuff in double quantity in half the time."

"It's over-production you've got into your minds, is it? I tell you, you've been listening to false economics. Don't talk to me about over-production of wool while there's a child in the world shivering for want of clothing! Are your own childer too well clothed? Look here, sithee," he cried, dropping into the local dialect, "it's the cheapening of production that's giving your women-folk hats and blouses and leather shoes, where before they used to wear clogs and shawls. Cheapen stuff, and you'll sell more of it. And you'll want to make more, and there'll be more employment."

"Cheapness is a curse!" cried one beer-soaked student of tap-room politics.

"No; cheapness is a blessing, because it means plenty!" cried the mill-owner. "Who's going to join in and take advantage of it?"

A crowd is very much like a child. It will cry and laugh almost in the same breath. Someone shouted approval. Someone else echoed it. An old woman, who had known the time of hand-looms when the food week in and week out was porridge, pushed her way out of the crowd.

"T' owd master is right!" she cried, waving her shawl over her head. "Get to your work, lads, and have done wi' your foolery!"

"Can we all have our owd places?" cried somebody.

"Yes," said the old man; "and perhaps they'll be better places than they were."

"Good on you, maister! We'll be back when t' whistle blows! We're all to have our owd jobs!"

"Only we're not going to work beside any blacklegs!" cried out another voice sullenly. "We're not going to stand that, mates, are we?"

One or two of the disappointed agitators, who viewed with displeasure the prospect of the end of the cheap beer, echoed the utterance, and added much disapproval of the ways of blacklegs, who were the enemies of all labour.

"Blacklegs!" said Mr. Trimble, in bewilderment. "I have employed none!"

"Yes; there's one stands beside you—him as fetched the police!" cried the first malcontent.

Dick had no need to be told the speaker was his own particular enemy, the big youth Widdop. He felt that his old ill-luck was on his heels again. He instinctively shrank away as the mill-owner turned to look at him.

"No; we'll not have him!" cried one or two voices in unison. "It's a bad example to put up with black-legs! We'll not come back to work if he stops!"

There was a moment, which seemed like an hour to Dick, during which Henry Trimble, with a redstained bandage round his head, looked at him. Dick shrank back another step. Then the old man suddenly darted forward, and seized him by the shoulder.

"No; he stays!" he cried. "He stays, if not one of you comes back!"

"Hooray for t' owd maister!" cried the old woman again, with her shawl waving round her head.

And the main crowd yelled out with her. A crowd of rough fellows came forward, and seized Dick by hand and arm.

"You've gotten pluck, lad—real Yorkshire grit!" they cried. "We'll let bygones be bygones!"

But Dick saw in the background one evil face that seemed to bode him little good for the future.

From the Hands of Death.

LAD, I wasn't going to throw you over. I know what you have done for me. I tell you, I can't thank you enough."

"Please, sir, it was not anything very much," Dick put in modestly, a little embarrassed by Mr. Trimble's praise. "There was really no danger. I'm a good runner, you know, and when I got over the wall and just legged out, there was not one among them who could catch me."

"Oh, it was not that merely—the going for the police, though there was not anybody else who could have done that; but when I fell under that shower of stones they tell me that you ran out and protected me at the risk of getting hurt yourself. And it was your idea running that engine belt before the entrance. Nothing but that moving belt would have kept the crowd at bay—nothing, at least, that we had at our command."

"I calculate, Dick Allen, that you saved me and my mill as well, for if those fellows had got inside, crazed as they were with mad talk and with beer upon empty stomachs, and led by ruffians whose only thought was plunder and mischief, they might have done anything!"

"It's merely that I happened to be there, sir," Dick replied. "Anybody else would have done the same."

"I don't believe it, lad. I don't think anybody else could have done—not quite so much. The danger is gone now, but I don't forget. I reckon a man can't give too much in exchange for his life, and though I am an old man, and I haven't many more years to live at most, yet life is very sweet to me, because I have so much I want to do—such a lot of work I want to finish before I am laid away. So I'm going to pay you back. We'll go into the office, and get the thing put into proper form. There's nothing like striking while the iron's hot!"

It was a silent mill now. The great hubbub in the street had ceased. A few of the defenders had gone back to their work of fitting the new machinery, and a small guard of police remained in the yard, but after the bedlam of noise it seemed an unnatural hush over the place.

It was close on midnight when old Henry Trimble sat down in the office, with Dick standing beside him, and drew towards him a sheet of paper, upon which he commenced to write.

"I started, lad," he said, when he had written a few words, "just as you are starting now—with nothing. I believe competition is keener now than it was, because everybody is trying to get rich quickly; but, still, pluck will win, and you've got that, lad. You've won your start to-night, and I'm going to see that you get it. I'm going to make you a partner in the mill you've saved."

"Sir!" gasped Dick.

"No; not now—not this minute! You'll have to work with the rest of them, starting upon the lowest stave of the ladder. I want you to work all the time—to learn everything that there is to learn. It is when you have worked, when you have won your spurs, so to speak, and have got enough experience to fit you for a place of command, that what I am going to write here will come into operation. It is when you are twenty-one that you will enter upon this business, owning a one-fourth share."

"It is too much, sir," ejaculated Dick. "You cannot mean it!"

"I always mean what I say. You have won it to-night. I hope I may be spared to see you enter upon the partnership. If not, with my written promise in your possession, you will always be secure."

Scarcely believing his ears and eyes, Dick watched the pen travel over the paper, saw the words forming that meant fortune to him.

"In consideration of the valuable service that I have this night received from Richard Allen, I do hereby give and bequeath—" began the writing.

"I think a lawyer couldn't have put it better than that," said the old man, with satisfaction.

"—one fourth share in the business and property known as Trimble's Mill, Vulcan Street, Bradford, upon the said Richard Allen reaching the age of twenty-one. And I do hereby direct—"

He stopped, and held his left hand to his forehead.

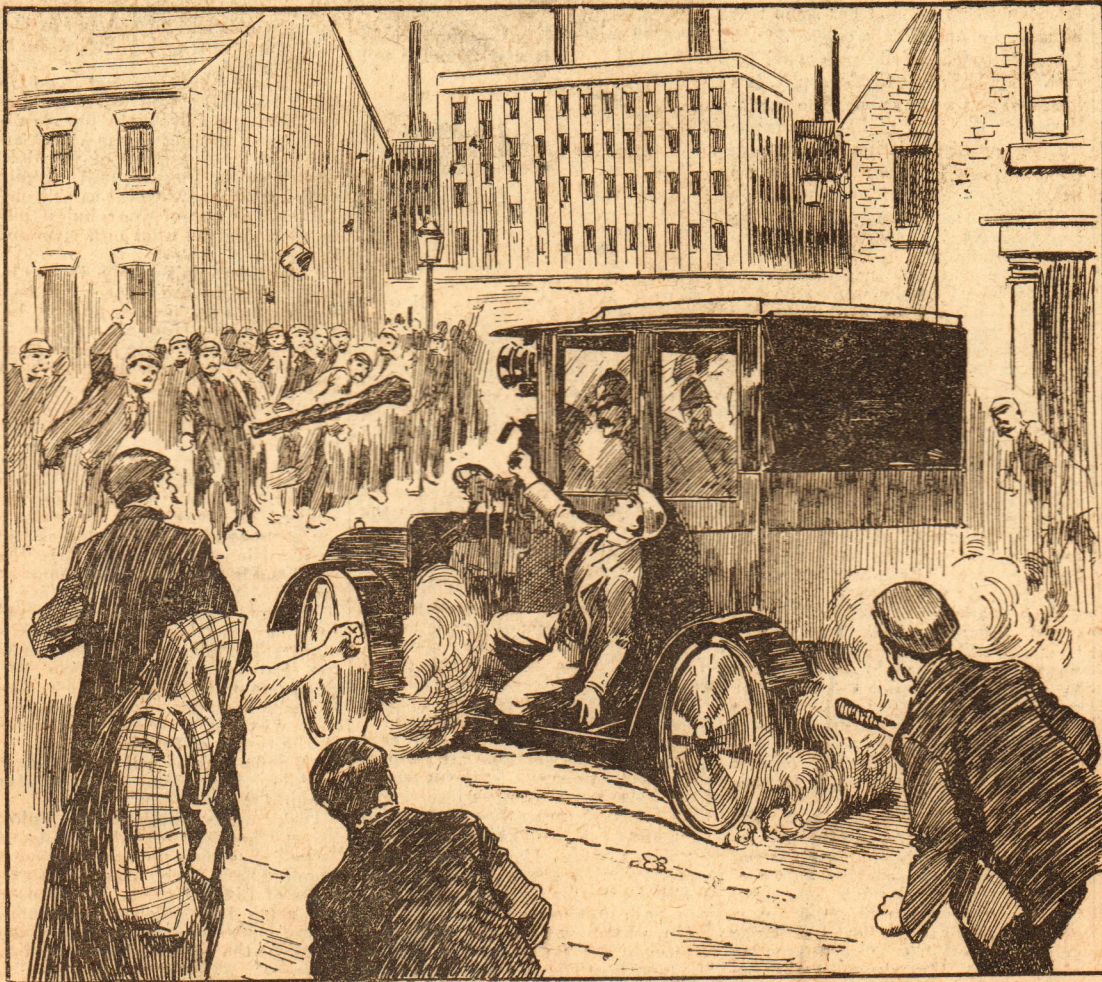
"I don't feel very well, Dick—just a little faint. Get me a glass of water. There's a tap over the basin in the corner, and there's a medicine-bottle in that cupboard beside the bookcase. Give me that! Thanks! Six drops. Be careful; my hands are not very steady!"

He drank off the water with the six drops of what must have been a very potent drug, for it had a rapid effect upon him.

"That's better, Dick. It's my heart, you know. I have to be careful sometimes. The excitement, I expect, has been a little too much. But now I will get this done, while I am able. Oh, yes; but I feel better now—much better. See, Dick, but we shall want a witness to my signature. Go down and find one of the men and bring him up here—the foreman, I think. Merely say that I want him. I will finish this while you are gone."

Dick hurried away treading on air. The world was opening out to him. Fortune was holding out both hands. Within the space of a few hours he had changed from the friendless boy who lacked almost food to eat, to this—with his foot firmly on the ladder of fortune, and a powerful friend behind him to push him on.

The change was almost more than he could realise. It seemed too good to be true. What a story to tell Jessie! How her blue eyes would light up when he could get away to tell her.



The police were rushing to stem the tide of the strikers. Dick was riding on the step of the first motor-cab. A man sprang out of a doorway, and flung a heavy cudgel at him.

## YORKSHIRE GRIT.

(Continued from the previous page.)

He found the man he wanted. "I'll be after you in half a tick, lad. Sithee, chuck me that lump of waste to get a bit of t'muck off my hands."

Dick hurried away, with the foreman fitter on his heels. He raced up the dark stone steps, entered by the swing door into the outer office, thence went to the inner room. He pushed open the door, after knocking lightly. What he saw made his heart stand still. Mr. Trimble lay inertly, motionless, with his head lying on the desk in front of him and arms sprawled out. The ink-pot was overturned, and the black mass was slowly dropping to the floor with a horrid sound like a blood-drip.

Dick sprang forward, with a great fear, almost a panic at his heart. He put his hand on the old man's shoulder. There was no response. He tried to pull him up into the chair. He caught a sight of the face—paper white—that could only be the colour of death. The pen had dropped from the nerveless fingers, leaving uncompleted the writing he had been engaged upon.

Dick hardly glanced at that. Without consciously thinking, it came to him that the hand of death had struck away his fortune; that he was once more the friendless boy he had been that morning when he started out to get work.

"What's t' matter, lad—what's t' matter?" broke out the foreman, hurrying into the room.

"I found him like this; I think he's dead!" gasped Dick. "I—I don't know what to do. I think it's his heart that's bad!"

And he suddenly remembered the bottle of stuff in the cupboard. He flung open the cupboard door, and seized the bottle—more for the sake of doing something than for any hope he had, for Henry Trimble seemed past help.

"He took this for his heart attacks—six drops. He had a dose just before I left, and it seemed to do him good."

The foreman fitter seized the bottle. "It's a preparation of strychnine," he said. "It's dangerous stuff, but it will set the heart going when nothing else will. We must try to get another dose down his throat. Pour it out, lad, while I try what working his arms will do."

The foreman fitter was a man of resource. He got Henry Trimble down on the floor, and set to work upon a vigorous attempt to induce artificial respiration.

"Is he dead?" whispered Dick, kneeling down fearfully, with the glass in his hand.

"I don't know, lad; I can't tell for a minute. Try and get that stuff between his lips. Steady—his teeth are clenched. Perhaps that's a good sign—I dunno. I think his jaw would drop if he was dead. That's it. I think some has gone down. Look here, lad, you'd better run for a doctor. You're quicker footed than anybody else. There's one in Manchester Road, by Franklin Street. I'll keep on at this meanwhile. I can't do any more. And tell one of the other chaps to come up as you go out. I'd forgotten the police. Some of those fellows know a bit about first aid sometimes. Yell out to 'em as you go by."

Dick ran, as he had never run before, to the corner of the street where the red lamp burned over the doorway. He sent the urgent message up the speaking-tube.

"I'll wait for you," he said, when the voice down the tube intimated that its owner would be up out of bed with all haste. "I want to see you start. For Heaven's sake don't delay! Come now. Slip a topcoat on and come. There's no one to see you."

"I'll be down soon," came the reply.

"If you're not down in three minutes I'll sling a brick through your window!" cried Dick, with a sudden, despairing fierceness, because he thought there was not enough sound of haste in the voice.

"Oh, run along! I'll be there before you. I'll come on a bicycle." But Dick waited. He was determined to see the doctor start.

"I'll throw that brick if you're not quick!" he yelled up the tube grimly, when he fancied three minutes had gone. There was no answer, but the door opened in a moment and a bicycle-wheel was thrust through.

"I'll not be long behind you, sir,"

Dick said, starting off with a long-strided run. "And thank you, sir, for being quick!"

He was back at the mill soon after the doctor, and he climbed the steps again with a heavy heart. He pushed his way into the office softly and quietly, as one entering a chamber of death. Then his heart leaped. He saw Henry Trimble lying on the floor with his head supported on someone's knee, and life in his face. He was drinking something out of a glass held to his lips by the doctor. His eyes were open. There was a little tinge of colour coming into his cheeks.

The old man's glance fell on Dick almost immediately he came into the room. It seemed somehow to arouse him.

"You're there, Dick, lad," he murmured. "I seem to have fainted. I think I shall be all right in a bit, but—but I'd like to sign that paper to make sure."

"Hush! You're not fit to hold a pen," said the doctor. "Wait a little while till you're stronger, and then—"

"No, no; give it to me now! I just want to—sign my name. You will witness it, one of you. Dick—Dick, give it to me."

Dick hesitated, and looked at the doctor. He would not snatch fortune for himself at the cost of an effort on the part of this old man that would hurry his death. But the doctor nodded.

"Give it to him," he said. Dick held the paper on a writing-pad in front of the mill-owner, and put the dipped pen into his hand. The sick hand traced a shaky signature.

"You—you witness that, doctor." The doctor, who was a spare young man with grave eyes and hair that was fast silvering, took the paper and inscribed boldly the signature "Denis Moor."

It was a name that was going in after life to be of some account to Dick Allen. He blotted it and the other signature carefully.

"Put it in your pocket, lad," whispered Mr. Trimble weakly. "Take care, and don't let anybody rob you of it."

## An Enemy.

THE whistles and buzzers were shrieking out on the raw morning, and the stones of the streets resounded to the clatter of hurrying feet as Dick made his way home up Scotland Street. He had seen the carriage away that had taken Henry Trimble home in care of Dr. Moor and a nurse hastily fetched, and then, when he was bidden by the foreman to go off and get some rest himself, he unwillingly obeyed. At the same time, he felt in no mood for rest. His body was tired enough, but his mind was all alive with the excitements of the past night; the paper that crumpled in his inner pocket, as he walked, was like a fire against his heart.

Yet there came moments when he could hardly believe now that this thing had happened, that upon this paper was written what meant fortune to him. As he walked he was possessed more than once with the wild desire to take it out and read it there again in the street.

But it was true. Of course, it was true. Jessie would never go hungry any more. Jessie should have strengthening food. She should have everything that money would buy to get her well again. He could afford it. He had snatched fortune from out of the very hands of fate.

And yet, if he had only known how much sorrow and striving lay between him and the success which he deemed already won, but which was in reality so far away!

He went into the yard, which was called Johnson's Fold, and gently tried the door of their house. The prudent neighbour who had come in to sleep with Jessie had carefully made fast both door and window, but he got in by climbing up the rain-water spout, and so reaching the window of his own room, where it was always possible to enter because the latch was broken.

On his own bed he lay back, and took in again every word that was written on the precious paper. Had any boy had such a chance before?

There flashed through his mind resolutions by the score. He was going to make such efforts. He was going to work so hard to master every bit of knowledge about the trade that he could, so that when the time came for him to be his own

master, and perhaps the master of others, he should be fitted for his responsibilities.

He wanted to go to tell Jessie of his good luck, and he went and listened once at her door, but her regular breathing told him she was sleeping, and he would not wake her. He heard presently the good neighbour stirring in the tiny room next to his. He slipped down below and got the fire going by the time Mrs. Brewer, untidy but cheerful, came down the narrow stairs.

"Why, it's as good as keeping a servant-lad, to come down to this," she said, looking at the cheerful blaze. "But how did you get in, lad?"

"My secret way," smiled Dick. "How's Jessie?"

"None so gradely. I'm not liking that cough of hers. I'm thinking she ought to have something better than tea and bread for vittals."

"And so she's going to!" cried Dick. "She's going to have something a lot better. I'm in work, Mrs. Brewer, now!"

"I'm glad to hear that. But thy six bob a week, lad, won't buy all she needs. Eh! When our poor folks gets sick, we've got to take our chance. Now I must run, or else our Bill and Alf will be back, and no breakfast ready for 'em."

Dick took out the few remaining coppers of his money. He went and bought a rasher of good bacon, an egg, and some new milk. He had meanwhile put on some oatmeal-porridge to cook. When at last the little girl came down it was to find a wonderful breakfast spread on the kitchen table.

"This is to celebrate," Dick said. "Celebrate what—your first situation, Dicky?"

"Call it my first step to fortune, kiddy."

The little girl shook her head mournfully. "You'll never get any fortune, Dick, with me to trouble you. I don't seem able to do anything for you. I seem always tired. I'm not big enough to go to work yet, only if I could keep house for you, Dick, it would be something. But look at this! You are looking after me instead of me after you. I ought to have got the fire lighted, and the breakfast ready, not you."

"And so you will, Jess, when you've bucked up a bit. That's why I want you to eat up and get strong. You can't get fit unless you eat plenty. Now, see, make a start on that porridge."

"It's a real beautiful, champion breakfast, Dick. But can we afford it?"

"Of course we can; because it's all settled that I am to be a mill-owner when I grow up."

"Oh, Dick!"

"It's true. You eat up that breakfast while it's hot, and then I'll tell you something."

He fetched the paper down when they had finished.

"It isn't very good writing," she said critically.

"Oh, you women! Can't you see what it says? What does it matter if it's like a beetle-crawling with inky legs? Besides, Mr. Trimble wasn't very well when he wrote that. Can't you see yourself riding out in your own motor-car, Jess?"

"With a big cloudy veil all over my head, Dick? Oh, isn't it just wonderful?" And she threw her arms round the boy's neck in wild delight. "But look here," she said thoughtfully, "you'll have to take a lot of care of that paper. Do you remember the piece we saw at the moving picture theatre about that will being lost so that the beautiful lady couldn't claim her property? Well, if you lose that it will be the same."

"I shall hide it, Jess. We'll think of a good place."

"And another thing; don't tell anybody about it. There are always a lot of mean, spiteful people about, and they'll hate you for it. Besides, if no one knows anything about that paper, they can't steal it."

"My Jingo, but you're a wise nipper! Who's been telling you?"

"I know, Dick; we'll sew that paper in your mattress to keep it safe. I'll make just the teeniest little hole, put the paper inside, and then fasten it up so that no one will ever know."

"Right, Jess. If you aren't very strong, you've got a head on you. We'll do that. And then I'll help you wash up the pots."

He went down to the mill that afternoon after snatching a rest in the morning. The new machines were being rapidly erected, and he was given a job at screwing up bolts

under a Keighley mechanic, who had a black eye as souvenir of the overnight trouble.

"And jolly glad I'll be to get back," he said. "If we had this sort of a picnic at every place we put up a bit of new machinery, I'd jolly soon go out of t' fitting trade and find something quieter. Goy, lad, it was fair autumn manœuvres, with a bit of the siege of Ladysmith chucked in an' all."

"By Jove, it looks like it!" drawled a voice behind them. "I say, you fellows, what's been the game? The front gates look a pretty wreck. In fact, the whole place seems jolly rotten."

Dick looked up and saw a man of twenty or so with a pallid face and slack mouth, though otherwise not ill-looking. In one corner of his mouth he held a cigarette droopingly, and in general appearance he was just a little too well-dressed for honest work-a-day Bradford. The fitter, suspicious after his kind—for the secrets of wool-working machinery are jealously guarded from any possible rivals—got on his feet.

"Strangers aren't allowed in here," he said brusquely. "What do you want?"

"By Jove, my man, I want a bit of respect from you!" snapped the young man, pushing his hat to the back of his head. "And, I guess, you beggar, I'll get it when you know who I am!"

"Not from me, young sucking-duck," retorted the Keighley man, with spare politeness.

"No? Then I'll see that you get the sack pretty soon."

"You can't; because I'm not employed here. I come fra Keighley, and I'm only on this erecting job."

"All right. When I'm the boss of this business—as I shall be some day—I shall request your firm, when I want new machinery, to send decent men for the erecting job. Where's Mr. Trimble? He doesn't seem to be at the office."

"He's not here, he's at home; and as I don't know who you are you'd better clear out of this room, anyhow."

"You impudent beggar! I'm Mr. Trimble's nephew."

"I've only your word for that. This is new machinery, and it isn't t' rule to let strangers hang their noses over it. Now, you clear out before you get those nice togs greased. And look out! I want that piece of shafting you're standing on."

The young man stepped to one side rather quickly to avoid contact with the oily shafting, and in doing so he stepped upon a pulley-wheel that was lying flat on the floor. The inevitable consequence was that he tripped up badly, and finally settled ungracefully in a pool of oil on the floor. He sprang to his feet flushed and furious, with many an oath mingled in his rapid speech.

"I'll see that you get paid for this," he said. "You working-classes are getting a jolly sight too cheeky. You want putting down a bit, and I'll start putting some of you down when I get bossing this mill. I guess you're all tarred with the same brush. I'll take it out of your hides jolly soon!" And he went out, slamming the door.

"Glad he ain't likely to be my boss," grinned the fitter. "If he is t' old man's nephew, as he says, he's a bit of a nut, from all accounts. I suppose he's just come back to Bradford to-day, and he'll not have heard of the old man's illness."

"Where has he come from?" asked Dick, for the matter was of some interest to him.

"I'm not sure; but I believe I've heard he's been knocking about abroad, studying markets or languages, or something. He looks to me as though he'd been studying beer and skittles. I dunno. Give that shaft-end a tap with your hammer, lad."

No news had come up to the mill since morning touching the condition of Mr. Trimble, and in the evening the foreman suggested that Dick should go up to Manningham and get to know how the sick man was, and convey to him, if he was fit to receive it, the report of the day's work.

"The last frame will be finished tomorrow. The engine ought to start running the next day."

Dick went away down Vulcan Street, through Nelson Street to the Town-hall, thence up Darley Street to Manningham Lane. Just by the big gates of Lister Park he turned down the steep hill called Oak Avenue, where houses of size and importance stood in their own gardens on both sides.

He found the right one, entered the garden, and rang the bell. The

girl who opened the door spoke reassuringly in answer to Dick's inquiry. Mr. Trimble was much better, though he had not to be disturbed. Still, she would inquire, as Dick had come from the mill.

The maid came back quickly. "If you are Dick Allen," she said with a smile, "you are to go upstairs at once."

Dick walked into the bedroom to find the old man lying propped up upon many pillows, with a nurse sitting beside the bed. He greeted the boy with a smile.

"You're here, lad! I'm glad to see you. This is the youngster, nurse, who saved my life last night. And he fetched the doctor, too, nurse, and threatened to throw a brick through his window if he did not hurry. Dr. Moor told me. That was good—he, he, he! Well, how are you getting on at the mill, Dick?"

"The engine ought to be able to start the day after to-morrow, sir." "That's good. Notice had better be put on the gate to that effect. They'll all tumble into their places again easily. And another thing—"

He stopped to listen to a strange noise on the stairs. Someone seemed to be coming up, in spite of the protestations of the maid. In the bedroom they could hear her declaiming that Mr. Trimble was engaged, and could on no account be seen.

"Course he can. He'll see me!" replied the other voice. "Aren't I more important to him than anybody else? Mind out, Mary Jane. Here, which is the door—this? No, it isn't. It's dark in there. Oh, this one!"

The bed-room door opened, and there stood in the way the young man who had visited the mill that afternoon. A piece of cigarette was dangling from his lips, but his face was not pale now, but very flushed. Indeed, his appearance suggested recent indulgence in something stronger than lemonade.

"Why, uncle, what's the matter with you? Not ill—eh?" he exclaimed, coming forward.

"What! You, James? Where have you sprung from? But I'm glad to see you—jolly glad, my dear nephew. No, I'm all right. At least, I shall be very soon. Just a touch of the old heart complaint. When did you get into Bradford?"

"This afternoon, uncle. I—I landed at Dover last night. B-but what a black hole the old place is! 'Pon my word, uncle, I can't get the smoke out of my throat."

"Yes, there's smoke. We like to see it. It means money. Er—let me introduce my young friend here to you, James. This is Dick Allen. He has done me a great service. And, Dick, lad, this is my nephew, James Ackroyd. I want you two to be good friends."

Dick came forward a step and half held out his hand. But the other stood with his legs apart, both hands in his pockets, steadily regarding Dick with an insolent stare.

"This is one of your work-lads, uncle, isn't it? I've seen him before to-day, and I'm not sure that I liked the look of him. I say, you don't want me to be friends with a lad of this sort, uncle, do you? That's coming it a bit too strong, isn't it?"

A crease of anger came in the old man's brow as he replied.

"This boy, James, saved my life last night. He practically saved the mill as well. That is something for gratitude."

"Yes—yes, rather!" broke out Ackroyd, with a sudden change of front. "Here, give me your hand, Dick Allen. If you've served my uncle, you've served me, don't you know."

"Yes, that's right. I want you to be friends. You may have to work together some day." And the old man went into the telling of Dick's part in the incidents of the night before.

James Ackroyd followed Dick down the stairs at the conclusion of the interview.

"Look here, you young beggar," he whispered into his ears against the front door, you seem to have been getting round my uncle nicely. I tell you, I'm not very struck on you myself. You're a rotten little prig, and if you get in my way at all—well, you'll get cleared out in a hurry! I live here when I'm in Bradford, and I don't want you. The old man is dotty enough, without you coming round to feed his foolishness. Now, you clear out!"

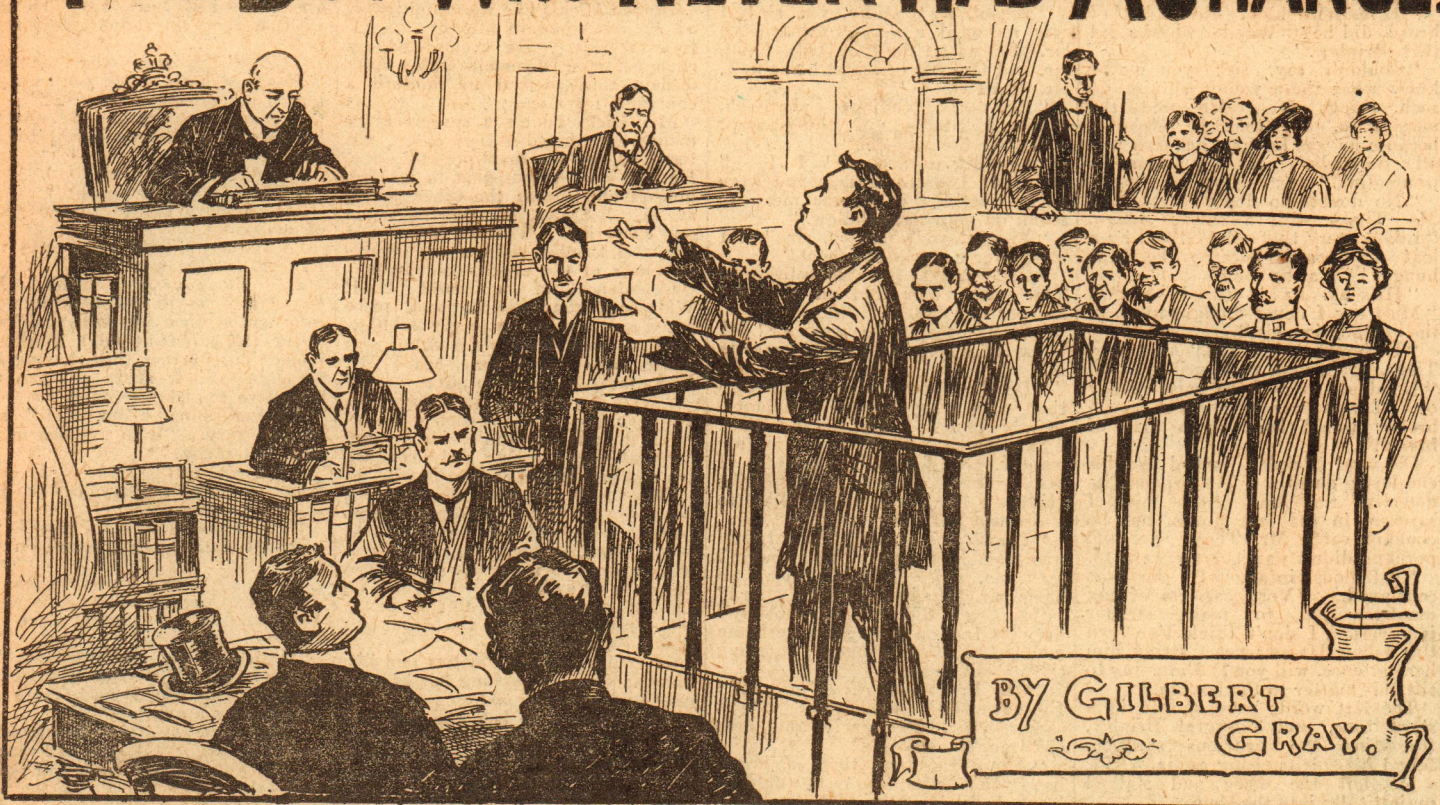
And he gave Dick a push through the open doorway, and banged the door heavily after him.

(Another ripping instalment of this grand new mill serial next Tuesday, when Dick will have a serious encounter with young Ackroyd.)

"The Blue Crusaders" are the most popular Football Team of the day.

See The "B.R." Football Library.

# THE BOY WHO NEVER HAD A CHANCE.



## THE 2nd CHAPTER. His First Step.

**T**WELVE months had passed. During that time Dick's conduct at the home had been exemplary. He had proved himself truthful, honest, and straightforward. He had been given a chance, and he had made up his mind to make the most of it. He had profited by his stay in the home, and had improved himself in reading, writing, and arithmetic—especially arithmetic, without which no boy embarking on a business life can do much.

Bob wanted to embark on a business life. He had hoped to learn a mechanical trade, but this had been impossible. So his ambitions had veered round a bit, and now his chief desire was to go, not into an office, but into a shop.

He was not yet seventeen, but he had gumption enough to know that a shop offered infinitely better chances than the average office.

He had announced his wish some time before to Mr. Fairfield. One day Mr. Fairfield sent for him. Entering the office, the missionary and master of the home smiled at him.

"Well, my lad," he said kindly, "how would you like to go into a grocer's shop?"

"Very much indeed, sir!" Bob answered, with sparkling eyes.

"Then you'll be pleased to hear I've got a job for you. Here's a note to a Mr. Skinnington. He keeps a grocer's shop in Bermondsey. He wants a boy, and is willing to give you a start. The wages are five shillings a week. In addition you'll get your tea, and on late nights your supper. How will that suit you?"

"Oh, sir, I don't know how to thank you enough! I'll do everything I can to deserve your kindness!"

"I believe you will. I've arranged for you to stay at a working-boys' institute not far from Mr. Skinnington's shop. You'll pay eighteenpence a week there for your lodgings; that will leave you three-and-sixpence for the rest of your expenses. Do you think you can manage?"

"Why, yes, sir; I should think so!"

And Bob really did think so. Five shillings a week and his tea. Why, it was a fortune compared to his old street arab days, when he had often gone days and days without food at all.

He went off to Mr. Skinnington's straightaway, and fixed up to start work the next morning.

Arrangements being made, he packed up his few belongings, including a new suit of which Mr. Fairfield made him a present, and transferred them to the Working Boys' Institute.

He entered on his work at Mr. Skinnington's with the greatest enthusiasm. Never had Mr. Skinnington's shop been swept so clean or kept so tidy before, never had his errands been run so expeditiously, never had goods been delivered to customers so promptly. The boy who had never had a chance proved himself an unqualified success when given one.

So for twelve months he continued in his job, making himself generally useful, learning the prices of things, and occasionally taking a hand behind the counter.

All the time he drew his five shillings a week, although by this time he was worth a good deal more, without a grumble.

At the end of that time the people at the Boys' Institute thought it was about time he paid a bit more rent. He had been admitted at the reduced fee of eighteenpence a week. The ordinary rent was half-a-crown. In future Bob would be expected to pay this.

Now, half-a-crown may sound moderate enough, but when it represents exactly half your income it is a serious matter.

Bob spoke to Mr. Skinnington about it. Mr. Skinnington was a very decent sort, an honest man, too, in spite of the general slander of grocers. He didn't put sand with his sugar, he didn't chop up birch-brooms to mix with his tea, and he certainly never did what the grocer of the fable did—namely, dust the feet of pedestrian flies which had been rambling amongst the sugar, and afterwards pitch them among the currants to swell their bulk.

Mr. Skinnington didn't do any of these things, and he wasn't exactly mean. The real matter with him was that he was hard up. Business

"Give me just one chance, sir!" pleaded a boy prisoner to a London magistrate a few weeks ago. The stirring incident has been chosen as the basis for this extra-special complete, long story.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

### THE 1st CHAPTER. "Give Me a Chance."

**H**IS name was Bob Harper, and he was a typical arab of the streets. Fifteen was his age, though the hardness of his face and the almost cunning glitter in his eyes made him look older.

You can't go for days and weeks and months and years half fed and badly clad, with nothing to do save stare at asphalt roads and stony pavements without getting some of their hardness into your face. And you can't be a wanderer and an out-cast, and be hunted from sheltering doorways by policemen and be looked on with suspicion by everybody without getting something of a self-defensive cunning into your eyes.

Bob Harper was ill-clad. His breeches were ragged, his coat was tattered, his boots—an odd pair—were in holes.

Bob was badly fed, hungry—in fact, starving!

He hadn't touched food for the past thirty-six hours. He had flattened his nose against more than one cookshop window that day, and had breathed in the grateful yet maddening steam that came up from the kitchens. But you can't take in sufficient nourishment that way, breathe you ever so deeply. You really can't, so don't get trying it.

Bob was in the Edgware Road, a part of London that was strange to him. He had tramped that morning from the Borough, where he lived—that is, slept in market carts when he could, or in doorways or narrow, dark alleys—to Paddington. An errand-boy had been wanted by a grocer, but the grocer had only to look at Bob once to be fully persuaded that he wasn't the errand-boy he wanted.

Bob had been strongly tempted as he left the shop to thrust his hand into an open biscuit box on the counter. But he had resisted, for he wanted to go straight did Bob. He had always wanted to go straight really, was always resolving to go straight; but good resolutions—you've heard of the place that is paved with them—and really Bob's life was like that place. So perhaps that was the reason why he had so often tripped over the ill-paved floor.

He had, however, resisted the biscuit box, so let that be placed to his everlasting credit.

He mooned along towards the Marble Arch, his eyes on the gutter. Suddenly he saw something drop from a gentleman's hand. Bob waited one moment, then he stooped to pick that something up.

A purse—heavy too—bulging with money!

Just for one instant Bob had visions of great feasts, new clothes, and many evenings in the twopenny seats at the picture palace, but with an effort of will he chased those visions away, and the next minute he was running after the man.

"Beg pardon, sir, but—but you've dropped something!"

"Eh—what! A purse? Why, yes, it's mine—it's mine!"

"Yes, sir; I saw you drop it. It's all muddy, sir, but I'll soon 'ave it clean."

And Bob rubbed it vigorously on the sleeve of his ragged coat.

That ragged coat rather offended the gentleman's eyes.

"That'll do!" he said testily.

"Give me the purse!"

He snatched it away, and turning on his heel, stalked off without another word.

Bob stared after him.

"Well, I'm blowed!" was all he said. "There's a gentleman for you!"

He wasn't a dissector of words. If he had been he might have reflected that "gentleman" was often only a title of courtesy.

Somehow that passing vision of unlimited feasts had left him hungrier than ever. He was simply famishing. He couldn't go without food much longer. A reward from the gentleman with the purse, even though it only amounted to twopenny, would have been a godsend. But the reward had not been forthcoming, and Bob went on his way far from rejoicing.

He began to reel as he walked; exhaustion was overtaking him. He turned into a side-street to avoid notice. With swimming head, he leant against some railings in a quiet square to rest. He must eat or he would drop.

"How oft the means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done."

Within ten yards of Bob loomed up a baker's truck, unattended, with the flap-door open and full of loaves.

The warm, pungent smell of well-baked crust was wafted to Bob's nostrils. What he did next he couldn't help.

He tottered across the pavement, took six long steps along the gutter, and then dived his hand into the baker's truck. One wrench, and he had screwed off the top of a loaf. The next instant the bread was under his ragged coat.

Again a vision of a surreptitious feed a street or two away, and again a rude dispelling of his dreams.

"Hi, hi!"

Footsteps clattered over the road—running footsteps—the baker's man, his face all aflow with virtuous indignation.

You may put chalk and alum and plaster into a loaf and sell it as bread. That's business. But you mustn't snatch the top of a loaf when you're starving. That's a crime! It is so enacted in the laws of the country, and the baker's man was a law-abiding citizen.

He rushed at Bob. Bob, with desperation in his eyes and the loaf-top still under his coat, turned and fled.

"Stop, thief!" yelled the baker.

His shouted request was heard by the very man for the job—a policeman, against whom Bob, blindly turning a corner, collided full butt!

"Hallo—hallo! What's up!"

"That boy's a thief!" panted the baker. "He stole a loaf! Look! It's under his coat now!"

It was only half a loaf, but in the policeman's eyes half a loaf was better than no crime.

"Do you charge him?" he asked.

"Certainly! I shall get blamed for it if I don't!"

"Let me go—let me go!" pleaded the boy. "I wouldn't have taken it only I was starving!"

"Starvin' was you?" said the policeman. "Then you come along o' me. We'll find you board and lodgin' free."

"What's your name?"

It was the magistrate who was speaking.

"Bob Harper, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"Anywhere, sir; I've no home."

"Where are your parents?"

"Never had any, sir, that I—"

"Like Topsy," interposed the magistrate's clerk—"spees he growed."

And everybody in court laughed, even those who had never read "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Laughter is cheap in courts of justice.

The magistrate didn't laugh, however. He frowned at those who did, and threatened to clear the court.

He looked at the boy rather pityingly. Bob had already said he wouldn't have taken the loaf except that he was starving. The magistrate was inclined to believe him. The boy was thin and pale, and there was a hunted look in his eyes.

"H'm—h'm! Any record of this boy—any previous charge against him?"

Up rose a burly inspector of police with a paper in his hand.

"Three previous convictions, your worship—twice for stealing fruitdock.

from the Borough Market and once for stealing a bun from a railway refreshment-room. Very bad case, sir! Habitual criminal, sir!"

"Sounds to me like a case of habitual appetite."

The magistrate said that to himself. Aloud he said to Bob:

"What have you to say? Have you been in prison before?"

"Yes, sir." Bob blurted out the words defiantly. "I was convicted for what the inspector said."

"Then you confess to being a confirmed thief?"

"How could I help it, sir?" burst out Bob. "I got hungry and I couldn't get work. What was I to do except steal? I don't want to go on stealing, I don't want to be a criminal all my life! I want to work! I want to be an honest man! Send me to a home, sir—send me anywhere where I can learn a trade. I've never had a chance all my life, sir—never one single chance! The more I go to prison the more I shall keep goin' there and the worse I shall get! Give me a chance, sir—give me a chance of gettin' a job! You will never regret it! Give me a chance of earning my living, and I will do my very best to go straight!"

Vehemently, even passionately, the words came from the boy's lips. There was no cringing about him, no suggestion of hypocrisy, or even of humility. He stood there a criminal self-confessed, yet in his bearing and his words there was a sturdy independence, a demand for justice, a touching plea that he might be given just one chance.

The magistrate had been thirty years on the bench. He knew human nature inside and out. He had the reputation of being a cynic. But there was no tinge of cynicism in his heart now. He looked at Bob for a full minute, and in that minute he read the boy's heart.

He turned to the court missionary.

"I think, Mr. Fairfield, that this is a case in which we might do something."

"I think so, too."

And they whispered together.

The magistrate turned to the boy.

"Robert Harper," he said, "you have asked to be given a chance. I am going to give you a chance. You will go with the court missionary. Mr. Fairfield will place you in a home. You will remain there for the present to see how you behave. If you conduct yourself properly a situation will be found for you. I don't believe that up to now you have ever had a fair chance. Take your chance now."

"Thank you, sir—oh, thank you! May Heaven bless you for your kindness!"

And Bob went sobbing from the

wasn't very good, profits were small, rent was high, rates were high; it was all paying out and very little coming in, and the long and the short of it was that the grocer couldn't afford to pay the boy more. "Not but what you're worth it," he said, with a ready justice not always observable in employers. "You ought to be getting more. That being so, and as I can't afford to give you more, I tell you what, Bob, look out for another job. You can stay here till you get one, but be on the look-out all the time."

Bob watched the advertisements, answered several, and at length got a reply. It was for a junior counter-hand at a shop in North London—a big shop with a dozen counter-men, big plate-glass windows, highly-polished brass-fitted mahogany doors, and a haughty ex-cavalry corporal to open them.

Now, ex-Army non-coms. are amongst the most polite of men. Corporal Brinley was an exception. He stalked in front of Tigg's Grocery Stores gorgeous in braided coat and gold-laced cap, canting his heels up as he had been wont to do in the days when he had worn spurs. He was civil enough to customers—a report of incivility might have deprived him of that coat and cap—especially to those who came in carriages, from whom he often got a tip for holding the basket-guard over a muddy wheel.

But to the staff at Tigg's Stores—"fifteen bob a week counter-jumpers," as he called them—he was extremely haughty.

As to poor Bob Harper, Corporal Brinley took a dislike to him from the first. And this for no reason at all, as it seemed to Bob.

There was a reason, though!

As a matter of fact, the corporal, quitting the Army after only a short service, had entered the London police. After two years in the force the authorities had discovered that Brinley wasn't exactly the man they wanted, and had promptly discharged him. His ignominious sacking from the police stuck in Brinley's gullet more than any other fact in his career because, above all things, he prided himself on his detective abilities.

His service as a constable was intended only as a prelude to a high position in the Criminal Investigation Department. In his own mind he could give points to all the Froests, all the Arrows, all the Dews, and all the other brilliant stars in the Scotland Yard constellation.

No wonder, then, that when he got the sack his pride and dignity were hurt. Beneath his breath he swore a melodramatic oath that the time should come when he would show Scotland Yard what a jewel they had missed when they got rid of him.

Engaged as doorkeeper at Tigg's Stores, he waited for a chance of distinguishing himself as a detective. None came.

On his afternoons off he eyed with envy the private detectives in the great West End drapery shops, whose duty it was to look out for shoplifters. He reflected bitterly that no shoplifters ever came to Tigg's Stores, or were ever likely to come.

It wasn't worth while for a lady shoplifter to smuggle a pound of loaf sugar into her pocket, while for a member of the light-fingered sisterhood to use her dainty cloak as a place of concealment for a purloined side of bacon was hardly probable.

So Brinley had to strut and fume and go on waiting for an opportunity to distinguish himself.

It came with the arrival of Bob Harper!

From the very first morning of Bob's arrival Brinley thought he recognised him. For a week, however, he said nothing, only thought hard.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "It's the fellow who asked for another chance. I remember all about him now. He'd stole a loaf, and I was in court when he was brought up before the magistrate. Here's the opportunity I've been waitin' for, and I'm not the man to miss it."

Straight to the counting-house went Corporal Brinley. Admitted to the private room in which sat Mr. Tiggs, the boss, Corporal Brinley poured out such a fluent tale of Bob Harper's infamous past as to fairly startle the boss out of his chair.

"You mean to say this is true, Brinley? You mean to say that I've taken a thief into my employ?"

"That's what you have done, sir. Reg'lar gaolbird he is. Convicted

three times for stealing, sir, and it ought to have been four."

"What was his last offence, you say?"

"Stealin' a loaf of bread, sir. Would have got time for it, sir, he would, only he turned hypocrite—piped his eye and played on the magistrate's feelings."

"H'm—h'm—h'm! Stole a loaf of bread, did he? Wonder why he did that, Brinley?"

"Couldn't say, sir; you never know what these young villains do such things for. He told the magistrate, sir, that he stole it because he was hungry, but that was all pretendin', to my idea—all pretendin'!"

"No doubt—no doubt!" returned Mr. Tiggs, with a curious laugh. "Likely story that—eh? Stealing a loaf of bread because he was hungry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Brinley. "Must say I never thought much of the explanation, sir."

"I should think not," said Mr. Tiggs, again with that curious smile. "No doubt stole it to raise money on. I wonder how much a pawnbroker would lend on a loaf of bread?"

Corporal Brinley looked at his employer quickly. He fancied he detected the least little bit of sarcasm in the last words, but he couldn't catch Mr. Tiggs' eye, and perhaps didn't particularly want to.

"Infamous—infamous!" the boss continued. "Very careless of my manager not to make stricter inquiries. I don't think I've seen this fellow Harper yet. Bring him here at once, will you? I'm going to sift this matter to the bottom."

The last words were spoken in a stern tone, and Corporal Brinley, forgetting the previous sarcasm, found his spirits rising again.

He left the office and stalked majestically into the shop.

"Harper," he called out peremptorily so that everybody in the place could hear, "you're wanted by Mr. Tiggs!"

Every assistant in the shop looked up. To be "wanted by Mr. Tiggs" was generally an ill omen. It generally meant that whoever was wanted by Mr. Tiggs wouldn't be wanted by him ever again after the following Saturday week. Somebody whispered as much to Bob Harper, and consequently Bob trembled a bit as he accompanied Corporal Brinley to the office.

Mr. Tiggs was a blunt man. Bluntness saved time; time was money, and that was the thing Mr. Tiggs never liked to waste.

He came to the point at once.

"Your name's Robert Harper, isn't it? I understand that you're a thief? Is that true?"

You might have knocked Bob over with a feather, so startled was he by the abrupt question. He simply couldn't answer for a moment, but could only stand there going red and white by turns, finishing up with white, and trembling very much.

"Not deaf, are you?" said the blunt Mr. Tiggs. "I'm told you're a thief; that you've been convicted three times for stealing, and that you ought to have been convicted a fourth. I ask you again is that true?"

"Yes, sir, quite true; every word of it."

Bob's head was hanging down with shame, and he was trembling more violently than ever. Suddenly, however, he steadied himself, raised his head and looked at Mr. Tiggs.

"It's all quite true, sir," he said desperately. "I can't deny it. But I wasn't a thief from choice. I stole—it was always food, sir—because I was starving. If you'll listen I'll tell you everything!"

His words were spoken quickly, almost fiercely, but there was a pleading note in them which had its effect.

"I'm listening," said Mr. Tiggs, just flicking at one eye as if something had got into it. "Tell me everything."

Bob did so, not striving too much to excuse himself, but making it quite clear that only hunger had driven him to crime.

"But I've never stolen since, sir," he concluded. "I've never taken a thing since I've been able to earn my own living. I'd rather work than steal, sir, any time, as I'll prove to you if you'll overlook my past and give me a chance in the future."

Mr. Tiggs had listened intently. More than once during the narrative he had fixed his keen eyes on Bob. Now, as he finished, he nodded his head quickly.

"Very well, Harper," he said, "I will overlook the past. I believe

you have been honest during the past two years, and I believe you'll be honest in the future. You can go back to your work. Brinley"—this to the corporal, who, answering the call, passed into the room as Bob passed out—"Brinley," said Mr. Tiggs, "you never went to school, did you?"

"School, sir! Why, yes, sir! I was reckoned a very good scholar, sir. Passed all the standards, I did, sir, and I've got prizes at home now, sir, that I've—"

"Ah, a studious chap—eh, Brinley? Studied everything except schoolboy honour—eh?"

"I—I beg pardon, sir! I—I—"

"What I mean is that you were never taught that it was mean to sneak on your schoolfellow."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I was never a sneak at school."

"Oh! Learnt the accomplishment later—eh? You told me that lad Harper was a thief."

"Why—why so he was, sir! I know it for certain; I could swear to it!"

"Do all your swearing in your own time. That boy Harper is honest—strictly honest. Understand that. I wouldn't keep a thief in my employ. I don't like thieves; I dislike 'em as much as I dislike sneaks. How would you like to leave next Saturday week?"

"Leave, sir—leave!" The corporal was trembling now. "You wouldn't sack me, sir? I didn't mean no harm, sir. I only did my duty, sir!"

"No, you didn't. It's nobody's duty to spy on his fellow-workmen and try to curry favour by carrying tales about them."

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir—I'm sorry! I'll never do it again, sir. Don't sack me, sir. I've a wife and three children, sir, and—"

"Ah, a wife and three children, have you? H'm, h'm! It would be hard luck if they had to suffer simply because you are a sneak. I'll overlook your offence this time, but if ever I catch you sneaking again, mind—"

Mr. Tiggs shook his forefinger. "Go back to your work!"

Corporal Brinley went back to his work, and as he went the haughtiness had gone out of his strut. His knees were inclined to knock together, and he felt indeed like unto the sneaking schoolboy with whom the blunt Mr. Tiggs had compared him.

Nevertheless, there was another feeling in his fluttering breast—a feeling of rage against Bob Harper and a longing for revenge.

### THE 3rd CHAPTER. A Terrible Robbery—Charged Unjustly.

MR. TIGGS had ten shops scattered over London. He had to divide his time equally between them. Consequently he couldn't be at the Islington branch very much. Sometimes a whole week went by without his putting in an appearance at all.

From Bob Harper's point of view, this was rather a pity, because, from that day when he was carpeted, he found himself subjected to a good deal of petty annoyance and persecution.

In his desire for revenge, Corporal Brinley made it his business to let out what he knew about Bob's past. As a result, it soon became common knowledge among the shopmen and warehousemen that the junior counter-hand had in the past been in prison for stealing.

Now, to do most of the shopmen justice, they didn't allow this to influence their treatment of Bob. They followed that excellent rule to speak of a chap as you find him. They had found Bob strictly honest and straightforward, and they spoke of him and treated him accordingly, being quite ready to let the dead past bury itself.

To this there was one exception. Horace Hicks, a consequential youth, cashier at Tigg's Stores, and no end of a dog.

No need to study fashion-books for men when Horace Hicks was about. One glance at his socks, or his tie, or his striped shirt, and there was the whole thing at a glance. Horace Hicks carried a silver-mounted walking-stick, puffed innumerable Egyptian cigarettes that stained his fingers abominably and offended the nostrils of real tobacco-smokers, and gave himself airs without end.

From his lofty eminence—there were two steps to the cashier's box—Horace looked down upon the mere counter-hands, and more especially on Bob Harper. It was true that most of the counter-hands earned larger incomes than Mr. Hicks, but

that didn't lessen his feeling of superiority. He was immeasurably above them in every way. He didn't have to soil his hands by serving tins of blacking and other beastly things like that. Perhaps it was as well, since the cigarettes aforementioned did quite enough of the soiling process.

Horace Hicks, like the unmitigated ass he was, thought himself superior to everybody. He even doled out change to the customers with a lofty disdain that seemed to indicate a contempt for money.

Mr. Hicks hadn't a contempt for money. He loved it—not wisely, but too well, as we shall presently see. He was a bit inconsistent in keeping himself aloof from the other people at Tigg's Stores, because he made one exception. That exception was Corporal Brinley, with whom he was on terms of the closest confidence.

Confidence of a secret kind! Whispered conversations took place between them nearly every middy. Had anybody been mean enough to listen, they might have heard Mr. Hicks make use of such phrases as:

"Well, if you think it's a dead cert, I'll have five bob on it each way."

"It'll win—it can't lose," the corporal would reply; and promptly ten shillings would change hands.

Occasionally—very occasionally—the horse upon which this money was to be invested would win. Horace Hicks would receive back his stake and winnings, and walk on air the following evening as he fancied himself on the high and easy road to fortune.

Generally, however, the dead cert didn't come off.

Of course, when an arrant fool like Mr. Hicks starts backing horses, it is easy to foresee his end.

He continued to bet, and bet, and bet. The more he betted, the more money he lost. He increased his bets so that sometimes he lost as much as six or seven pounds in a week. His salary at Tigg's was fifteen shillings. He had no private means, and his taste in socks and ties had never allowed him to save a penny.

Income fifteen bob—expenditure six or seven pounds! Something would have to happen.

Something did happen. A burglary took place—at least, appearances pointed to it being a burglary!

It happened like this. It was stock-taking time. For several days before three or four of the staff had been busy making an inventory of everything in the place. That meant that everything had to be taken out of its place and put back again, which left a mess.

Bob Harper, as junior, had to clear up that mess.

He stayed very late one night to do it. It was nearly midnight ere, having put everything right and swept up, he locked up the shop and made his way home to his humble lodgings.

He slept the sleep of the hard-worked—slept so soundly that he was a quarter of an hour late in arriving the next morning.

That was excusable under the circumstances; but, as it happened, he had the key, and consequently nobody could get in until he arrived. The worst of it was Mr. Belbury, the manager, was waiting, and chafing at the delay.

Mr. Belbury snatched the keys from Bob's hand, and went into the shop first.

After him went Bob and the waiting assistants.

Three minutes later, and from the inner office, came a shout from Mr. Belbury.

Everybody rushed in, to find the manager in an awful state, staring at the big safe in the corner, the door of which showed signs of having been forced open.

"Look at that!" he yelled. "The safe's been broken open! There's been a robbery!"

Everybody stared open-mouthed at the safe, too appalled to speak. Oppington broke the silence. He was first hand at the bacon-counter.

"A robbery, sir!" he gasped.

"Anything stolen?"

It was a vacuous remark, but something had to be said, and Oppington had stepped into the breach.

Mr. Belbury overlooked the imbecility of his question, and merely answered:

"Everything's gone! All the money's been stolen! The cash-box is empty! Where's the cashier? Where's Hicks?"

"Here, sir!" And a pair of striped green socks came into the room.

"How much money was there in the cash-box?" demanded the manager.

"Sixty— That is, I don't quite know, sir. But there was a lot. It

was all to have been paid into the bank to-day."

"Fetch your cash-book at once." The socks vanished through the gaping group of assistants. Horace Hicks rushed to his desk, and came back panting, a leather-bound book clasped dramatically to his breast.

"Sixty-seven pounds, thirteen and sevenpence-halfpenny, sir!" he said, with an altogether admirable preciseness.

"Ugh!" groaned the manager. "This is serious! Are you sure you locked the safe up after you?"

"Absolutely certain. It was the last thing I did before leaving for the day."

"What time was that?"

"Ten minutes past eight."

Mr. Belbury turned to the group of assistants.

"Did any of you come into this room after that time?"

All shook their heads, Mr. Oppington even volunteering the information that he was "half-way along Upper Street on a Highbury bound 'bus by that time, having left at eight o'clock sharp to take the missus to the Marlborough."

"Never mind about that," said Mr. Belbury. "Who was last in the shop last night?"

"Harper, sir!" The words came from Corporal Brinley before Bob himself could speak.

"Oh, were you here last?" the manager said, veering round on the boy.

"Yes, sir, I was here very late. I stayed to clear up after stock-taking was finished. I didn't leave till twelve."

"Did you come into this office?"

"No, sir. The door was locked, for one thing, and besides, there was no need for me to—"

"The office-key was on the bunch," put in Brinley, "and you had that."

"Oh, you had the keys, had you?" said the manager, with sudden suspicion. "Hicks, telephone to Mr. Tiggs, will you, and tell him there's been a robbery. And Brinley, you go at once and fetch the police."

Brinley went, without any attempt to conceal his eagerness. He was back with the constable in a few minutes.

The manager had been thinking hard in the interval. He turned at once as the policeman entered.

"Constable," said he, pointing to Bob Harper, "arrest that fellow!"

"Arrest me!" cried Bob, starting back and going pale. "What for, sir—oh, what for?"

"You know what for. You admit you were here till twelve o'clock last night. Arrest him, constable, for stealing the contents of our cash-box!"

"Young fellow-my-lad," said the constable, placing a heavy hand on Bob's shoulder, "you come along o' me!"

### THE 4th CHAPTER. To Save His Good Name.

YOU acted hastily, Mr. Belbury. I'm sorry you had him arrested. After all,

you'd nothing to go on, except his own admission that he was here till midnight."

It was Mr. Tiggs who was speaking. He had arrived post-haste on receiving a telephone message.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the manager, "but there was the boy's past to go on. You may not know it, sir, but that boy's been convicted for stealing three times in his life."

The boss looked up at the manager. "So Brinley's been at you, has he?"

"I don't understand, sir."

"Yes, you do. It was Brinley who told you about young Harper. Brinley told me, too, when the boy first came here. I had the boy in, and he admitted that it was all true, but explained that he only stole because he was starving. Belbury, it's a bad thing to steal, but it's also a bad thing to starve. You and I have never starved, but then we've never stolen. I'm sorry for that lad. I've watched him fairly closely when I've had the chance, and I—well, I can't believe he's the thief. Ah! Who's that?"

"An officer from Scotland Yard, sir," answered Oppington, opening the door. "Detective-sergeant Shureby."

"Ah, show him in! Glad to see you, sergeant. I sent for you to investigate the affair of this robbery. You've been told the bare facts over the telephone."

"Yes, sir," said the officer, passing across to the safe and examining the bolts and locks in a leisurely, but keen fashion. For Sergeant Shureby, or "Slow-and-Shureby" as he was always called at Scotland Yard, never

seemed to be in a hurry. "Boy in custody already, I understand?"

"Yes, yes. I'm rather sorry about that. Don't believe the boy did it. Hope he didn't, anyway."

"Safe was forced, wasn't it?"

"Funny sort of force," answered Shureby. "Plenty of chisel-marks and scratches; but, funny enough, they're not near the bolts. Looks to me like a blind!"

"What! You mean that the safe was unlocked properly, and then scratched about to put us on a false scent?"

"If it was a guessing competition, sir, what you've just said would about represent my guess. But I'd like to have a look round."

"Certainly, sergeant!" Do just what you think proper."

Shureby did. He thought it proper to climb up a ladder to the office skylight; he thought it proper to clamber through, and to spend twenty minutes on the roof.

At the end of that twenty minutes he came down.

"Any discoveries, sergeant?" asked Mr. Tiggs.

"So, so, sir—so, so. Anybody in the place with a partiality for fancy waistcoats?"

"Why, bless me, sergeant—fancy waistcoats! Is there, Belbury?"

"This sort of thing," said the sergeant, opening a big hand and disclosing a highly-polished brass button.

"Why, bless me," said Mr. Tiggs, "I think I have seen a waistcoat with buttons like that—quite recently, too."

"So have I," said Mr. Belbury, opening his eyes wide. "Young Hicks, the cashier, wears one!"

Sergeant Shureby rounded his lips, and seemed about to whistle.

"Cashier, eh? Does that young gentleman happen to have charge of the safe keys?"

"Why, yes, certainly. But I hope you don't think—"

"I'm afraid, sir, I'm bound to think that the young gentleman with the fancy waistcoat knows more of this business than he says. If you don't mind, sir, I'll see him."

Poor Bob Harper was in a prison cell, not, as we know, for the first time in his life; but this time was different. On previous occasions he had certainly been guilty of what the world calls crime. He had stolen things that didn't belong to him. That it was food, with starvation as the irresistible motive, had made no difference. He was a thief, almost self-confessed, and had been more or less resigned to his punishment.

But now circumstances were changed. For two years past he had gone dead straight, yet here he was in as bad a plight as if he had gone crooked—in prison, waiting to come before the magistrate the next morning.

All his good resolutions, his two years of absolute integrity, had been in vain. He was innocent this time, but who would believe him? His past would be raked up. The three convictions that stood against his name would be used against him. He would be convicted again, and sentenced most likely to a long term of imprisonment.

Poor Bob was no coward. He had endured much suffering in the past without complaint, but now it was a case of outraged innocence, of an unjust accusation, and that is one of the bitterest things in all the world to bear.

Bob had to cry. He turned his face to the wall, and cried bitterly. His frame shook with his sobs as he thought of the comparative happiness and brightness of the past two years, and contrasted them with the black and unknown future.

He wept then, and was so engrossed by grief that he did not hear the bolts of his cell door shoot back and the door open. Only when a voice called out to him did he turn, and shamefacedly whisked away the tears from his eyes.

He found himself wondering at the policeman's kind tone.

"What! Pipin' your eye, youngster? Don't do that. Come along with me; you're wanted in the office. Cheer up! I think most like there's good news for you."

There was good news for him. An inspector sat in the office. Near to him stood Mr. Tiggs.

"Hallo, Bob Harper!" he exclaimed. "I've come at last, you see. I'm afraid I've got to ask your forgiveness. Not that it was quite my fault that you were given in charge. Do you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, sir!" echoed the wondering Bob. "I—I don't quite understand."

"I'll explain, then," said the in-

spector. "The charge against you is withdrawn. The real thief has, we believe, been discovered. Mr. Tiggs here makes no charge against you, and, therefore, you are free."

Free! Bob's head buzzed. Everything seemed to whirl around him. Free! His innocence established. Whatever did it mean?

"Oh, sir, thank you!" he burst out to Mr. Tiggs. "I didn't steal the money, of course, but I was afraid—I was afraid that— But who is the thief, sir? It was a burglary, wasn't it?"

Mr. Tiggs put out his hand. "Not a burglary of the ordinary sort," said he. "There stands the thief."

He pointed to a dark corner of the office. Behind a bar there stood a youth.

Instantly Bob recognised him. "Horace Hicks!" he gasped.

"You stole the money, and allowed them to think it was I. Oh, how could you do it—how could you do it?"

Horace Hicks scowled. "I didn't steal the money!" he thundered out. "They fixed on me for no reason. 'Twas you—you who took it, and the theft will be proved against you before very long."

"Come," said Mr. Tiggs, interrupting, "you've suffered enough already, Bob. Come along with me back to the shop."

On the way back Mr. Tiggs explained something of what had happened. He told Bob of Sergeant Shureby's discovery, and of how on being taxed with the theft, and searched, Horace Hicks had been found in possession of nearly thirty pounds. Although protesting that the money had been rightly come by, Hicks had been given in charge, it being justifiably considered that the money formed part of the proceeds of the robbery.

In his desire to make amends to Bob, Mr. Tiggs overwhelmed him with apologies.

"Please—please don't, sir," Bob begged; "I'm happy, oh, so happy to be free, of course, but—"

"But what, Bob?" For the boy seemed to be breaking down.

Nor beyond begging his master to say no more could he give any explanation for his reluctance to prolong the discussion of the matter.

The fact was that he was thinking of the past, of the time when he had indeed been a thief. He looked upon the recent accusation against him as part of the penalty he must pay for past misdeeds. More than that, he was sorry for Horace Hicks. That youth had certainly never been very friendly disposed towards him, but, nevertheless, it was saddening for Bob to think that he should have succumbed to temptation and taken the first step that led to inevitable ruin.

That was the explanation, that was why he preferred to keep silence, and to let the matter drop.

But Mr. Tiggs did not quite follow this, and for the rest of the journey he found himself wondering at the strange demeanour of the lad beside him.

THE 5th CHAPTER.  
The Boy Who Gave a Chance.

IT was the afternoon of the same day. Bob had been back at the shop two or three hours, and had resumed work.

Mr. Tiggs had proclaimed his innocence to all the people employed there. Bob had found himself the subject of much handshaking, many sympathetic remarks at having been the victim of an unjust charge, and general congratulations at things having been put right.

To all of which Bob submitted with a reluctance that few people could understand.

The fact was that he was still thinking of his past, and that his heart was wrung with pity for Horace Hicks.

Why had the latter given way to temptation? Why had he taken that first downward step which would lead to hopeless ruin? He would have to suffer imprisonment such as he, Bob himself, had suffered in previous times. He shuddered as he remembered the sufferings of those days.

It was this fellow-feeling that produced a wondrous kindness towards Hicks.

Something else was to happen to increase that pity.

Later that afternoon, Bob found himself in a little passage leading into the street by way of a side door behind the shop. It was a way rarely frequented, but Mr. Tiggs sometimes used it coming and going.

Changing to glance towards the street, Bob suddenly caught sight of

a middle-aged woman dressed in widow's weeds. Her figure was bowed with sorrow, and evidently thinking herself alone, she was weeping silently into her handkerchief.

The sight touched Bob. He went up to her.

"Beg pardon, madam," he said, "but you seem to be—to be in trouble. Is there anything I can do? Anyone you want to see?"

At the first sound of his voice she had started upright, and with a great effort was fighting back her tears.

"I want to see Mr. Tiggs, but—but he won't see me."

"Won't see you, madam?"

"No, not again. He has seen me once, but I want to see him again. I want to ask him to have pity on my poor boy. They have taken him off to prison. They say he has stolen money. I can't believe it—oh, I can't believe it! I—I know he has been a bit wild lately. He has fallen in with bad company, but he wouldn't steal—he wouldn't steal."

At the mention of the name "Horace," a gleam of intelligence came into Bob's mind. He knew now who the poor lady was. She was the mother of the defaulting cashier.

His whole soul rose up in pity for her sorrow. She was weeping again and beating her breast. Bob had never had a mother that he remembered, but in his imaginative moments he had conjured up the figure of a dear, kind, soft-hearted creature such as this woman seemed to be. Often had he wished that he had a

But Mr. Tiggs was obdurate. "It is impossible," he said. "Your son allowed another boy to be charged with this crime. He deserves punishment for that. Let him be punished."

"Spare him, sir, spare him! Spare him, or my heart will break!"

Mr. Tiggs waved her away. "You must go," he said sternly. "I will not hear you any more."

"Then hear me, sir."

The words came from Bob Harper. Standing at the door he had heard every word of what had passed. The widow's terrible grief had moved him to profound pity, and a plan had formed itself in his mind.

A desperate plan—a plan ruinous to himself. Yet what cared he?

For this poor mother's sake he would sacrifice himself willingly.

"Why, Harper, what now? What have you to say?"

"You must do what this poor lady wishes, sir."

"Never! Her son is guilty."

"Her son is innocent. I am the thief. I confess everything. It was I who took the money."

"You—you stole that money after all? You dare to stand there and tell me that after all I have done for you, you are indeed the thief?"

"I have told you, sir; I have no more to say."

White-faced and trembling, and with his head hanging down, Bob stood there. Perhaps his abject look gave him the appearance of guilt. Anyway, it had an effect on Mr. Tiggs that was startling.



"Hi, hi!" shouted the baker, Bob, with desperation in his eyes and the loaf-top still under his coat, turned and fled. "Stop thief!" yelled the baker.

mother on whom to lavish the tenderness and devotion of which he felt himself capable.

Yet here was a mother—another boy's mother—weeping for the sorrow an ungrateful son was bringing upon her.

The sight melted his heart. "You must be Mrs. Hicks, then, madam?" he said brokenly. Then, pity giving him boldness he said: "Come this way; I will take you to Mr. Tiggs' office."

After seeing Mrs. Hicks once, Mr. Tiggs had several times that afternoon refused to listen to the widow's plea on her son's behalf. He was not a hard-hearted man, but he was incensed against Horace Hicks, not only for the crime he had committed, but more particularly for his having allowed Bob to be charged with the theft.

Therefore, when he found his office door suddenly thrown open and the widow enter, he burst out angrily in his touchy way:

"Go away—go away! I have told you that I cannot see you again."

"But, sir, my son—my son! He is innocent, I am sure!"

"He's nothing of the sort. Go away!"

But the woman stayed, protesting hysterically her son's innocence.

Suddenly from protest she changed to pleading. She dropped to her knees.

"Mercy, sir!" she cried out. "Oh, have mercy! If you will not believe my boy to be innocent, then save him, for pity's sake. Save him from a horrible prison, and save a widowed mother's heart from breaking."

He rose up full of a bitter wrath. "I ought to have known it," he cried out. "You were a thief years ago, and I suppose it's a case of once a thief, always a thief. I have pitied you once, but you need expect no more pity from me."

He rang the bell. A clerk answered it.

"Go for the police!" Mr. Tiggs said sternly. "I have to give this fellow in charge!"

THE 6th CHAPTER.  
At Bleakmoor Prison.

BOB was in prison.

The hearing before the magistrates, and the subsequent trial at the Old Bailey were long ago over, and here he was in the great penal prison at Bleakmoor, sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

His trial had not been a prolonged one. He had pleaded guilty, and the judge, after stern words about his being a self-confessed, hardened, and incorrigible thief, had sentenced him to the term mentioned.

Four months had passed since he had come to Bleakmoor. During that time his sufferings had been great. He had missed the life of freedom which had previously been his, had found hope and ambition, borne of two years' honest endeavour, fade from out his heart and mind.

Yet misery was not altogether his portion. For within him was the consciousness of innocence. He knew well that he had not committed that robbery at Mr. Tiggs'. He had confessed to it, it is true, but he had

done so for a noble purpose—to save Horace Hicks from irretrievable ruin, but, above all, to save the heart of the widowed mother from breaking.

He had listened that day to her heart-felt plea on her boy's behalf. He had heard his employer's refusal of pity. One way alone had remained to him, if the mother's feelings were to be spared.

He had taken that way, and had sacrificed himself.

He did not regret that sacrifice, even now that he was suffering so much. What did it matter his being branded as an incorrigible thief? There was no mother's heart to break over him, and as to friends—what friends had he?

No, he did not regret his sacrifice. It had brought happiness to one poor, sorrowing soul, and perhaps it had saved her son, too.

Surely, after the severe lesson Horace Hicks had had, he would never stray again from the path of honesty.

"Thank Heaven I've done one good little deed in my life!" he muttered to himself, and then he turned his face to the wall and wept to think of the two dreary years of prison life yet before him, and of the hopeless future beyond that.

"288, you're wanted in the Governor's office!"

Bob had sprung to attention at the sound of the warden's voice.

Wanted in the Governor's office—wanted for punishment? What had he done? he wondered.

Without a word he followed the warden to the room in which the Governor sat.

What was this? The Governor was looking at him with a smile on his face. Ordinarily he was so stern. Now undoubted kindness lurked in his eyes.

"Robert Harper!"

"What did that mean, too? His name instead of his number."

"Robert Harper, I have sent for you to give you some good news. You remember this—this lady?"

A figure clad in black rose from a chair. Bob saw her for the first time. "Mrs. Hicks!" he gasped. "What is it? Why have you come—"

"I have come to give you a mother's blessing. I have come to thank you for the noble sacrifice you made months ago. Oh, I know it all now, though I did not know it then! You said that you were the thief, when all the time it was—it was— Oh, I can't say it—I can't say it even now, about my poor, dead boy!"

"Dead! What do you mean, madam? Your son dead?"

But the widow was weeping, and could say no more. It was left for the Governor of the prison to explain. This he did in a very few words.

A few days previously Horace Hicks, it appeared, had been run over by a motor-car. After three days of suffering he had succumbed to his terrible injuries. On his death-bed he had made a confession to those gathered around him that he and not Bob Harper had stolen the money from the safe. Gambling had appeared to be his downfall. It had first got him into debt. To extricate himself, he, in collusion with Corporal Brinley, had planned the robbery. They had been astounded at Bob's confession later, but in order to spare themselves, had allowed him to pay the penalty.

But Bob's sufferings were soon to be over now. With the completion of a few formalities, he was set free.

The very first to welcome him back to freedom was Mr. Tiggs, who immediately reinstated him in his old position, while sending Brinley to the punishment he so richly deserved.

But another change came over Bob's life. Mrs. Hicks called at the shop one day, and with many tears, poured out her heart in gratitude for what he had done.

"Please—please, Mrs. Hicks, don't say any more," Bob had to beg of her. "It was for your sake that I did it. How I wish that I had had a mother like you!"

"And how I wish that you had been my son!"

"Why, goodness gracious me!" exclaimed Mr. Tiggs, coming in at that moment. "Here's one of you wants a mother, and the other wants a son! Why don't you arrange it between you?"

"Oh, if we only could!" said the woman cheerfully. "Bob, dear Bob, will you be my son?"

Bob looked at her, then put his arms about her.

"Yes—yes, dear mother, if you will only let me."

THE END.

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT.

Despatch Running. THIS is a jolly good game to play, especially if you're in the country, with plenty of good cover. My own boys like it better than anything else.

Pick out four or five rather big fellows, who are good runners. Give them each a despatch—it doesn't matter what's inside. Place them at a post—at camp, or at a neighbouring village—and tell them they are to deliver their despatches at another post—a village post-office or railway-station a couple of miles or so away—in a given time. Put a man there to receive them.

Then let the whole of the rest of the troop scatter themselves between the two places and try to prevent the despatch-runners from getting through or round them. They must not get closer than fifty yards to either the starting-place or the finishing-post, or the runners don't stand a chance.

If one despatch-runner gets through with his despatch in the time, his side wins—if not, the others do, of course. A despatch may be hidden anywhere among the runner's clothing, and until it is found and taken away from him he is not done.

The runners should wear something—a white band round the hat, for preference—to distinguish them from the defenders. The number of runners vary, of course, with the size of your troop. One fairly big fellow to ten smaller defenders is a good proportion.

In the dark it is an even better game, but then you must make the distances all closer to one another. And after a game like this at night, don't forget to call the roll and make sure every man is back at camp.

Scouting v. Home.

"CORPORAL" writes to me from Hull. He is in a fix.

He is awfully keen, and likes to turn up to every drill and parade. But his mater often wants him to chop wood or run errands, or do something or other for her just at the very time when he wants to go out scouting.

"It's jolly rough, sir, isn't it?" he says. Well, it is. But a scout never grumbles. He smiles and whistles under all circumstances. And he obeys orders. And a scout ought to be a scout at home first of all, and more there than anywhere else, bughtn't he?

So buckle to and help your mater, old chap, and do it with a grin. Then, when you can, turn up to your drills and do your best there. That's the true Scout spirit, and everybody will think the better of you for it.

THE SCOUTMASTER.

HOW TO DEVELOP MUSCLE.

A Superb Series of Articles Specially Written for THE BOYS' FRIEND by the World-Famed EUGEN SANDOW.

A SHORT time ago I was talking to one of my many youthful friends and, as I knew he had a little while previously commenced a course of my exercises at home, I naturally asked him how he was improving. His reply startled me, I must admit; it was this: "The pater has stopped me from doing any more, and I'm jolly glad, too; really, it made me feel quite bad."

This was too serious to be overlooked, so I made careful inquiries into the matter, and found, as I expected, that the young rascal had been so enthusiastic over his work, and was so anxious to become a "strong man" in about a month's time, that he had been doing four and five times the amount of work he should have done.

The result was just the same as if he had had four or five times too much to eat at each meal, or had studied much too hard, or had done anything else greatly to excess—it was bad for him.

And that one fact I want to impress on every one of my readers. Do all the work I set you, do it as if you meant it, put all your mind and muscle into it, but don't—don't over-

do it. You may think you are stronger than the majority of youths—you may be, you may feel you have not done enough, you may feel that another round dozen or so of movements will help you on better, but I repeat, don't do it.

Be content to leave the teaching to me. I have trained hundreds of thousands of youths and men from weakness to great strength, and I know exactly what is best for you, and what I know I tell you to do, and expect you to carry out my instructions as carefully and accurately as if I were in the room watching your movements.

Systematic exercise, as I advise, and carried out as I direct, will strengthen the weakest; over indulgence in exercise or exercising contrary to instructions can weaken the strongest. As I told you last week, it is not the amount of work you do, but the method of doing it that will give you strength far greater than you perhaps hope for.

I now give you a companion chart of the muscular system. Cut it out, and paste it alongside the one given last week, and each time I set you a new exercise, note the position of the muscles brought into play, and concentrate your attention on those muscles. The two charts show clearly all the principal body muscles, and will demonstrate how many of these are used in doing such elementary acts as walking and throwing.

The following exercise may appear very easy at first glance, but it is a very important one, bringing into play the muscles of the neck, chest, and arms. The one thing to remember is to keep the body upright and still. Do not sway from side to side, as first the right arm is raised and then the left.

If you do, you will lose half the benefit, and therefore only make half the progress you should.

Perform this movement not

more than fifteen times with each hand, and the other exercises already given should not exceed this.



EXERCISE 4.—READY POSITION. Arms bent, elbows slightly in front and pressed close to body, forearms perpendicular, bells level with the shoulders.

MOVEMENT: Press the right bell upward as far as possible, head thrown back, without moving body from the perpendicular. Draw the bell smartly down to the original position, at the same time pressing the left bell up. The face should be turned upward, and should rotate and follow the extended hand. Muscles: Deltoid, trapezius, triceps, latissimus dorsi, and neck muscles (lateral).

Exercise is undoubtedly the "Universal Doctor." I often wonder when I am having my fifteen minutes' work in the morning, how many hundreds of thousands of others—I think there are more likely millions—are doing the same, or will do the same, or have done the same that day.

Exercise is not confined to one race or class; every nationality and every state of society appreciate its use, and derive its many benefits.

I could tell you of crowned heads, of statesmen, of well-known actors, authors, and professional men, of the "horny-handed sons of toil," who do not neglect their exercise, though they have a hard day's manual work before them. I could tell you of white men, yellow men, red men, black men—all doing the same movements; some looking out on a wide expanse of snow and ice, others in the midst of tropical vegetation, but all of them taking the prescription of "Doctor Exercise."

EUGEN SANDOW.

(Another splendid article by Eugen Sandow next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

ETIQUETTE FOR BOYS.

Some Tips You Should Bear in Mind.

MANNERS maketh the man," is an old saying all manly boys should bear in mind.

Do not eat with a knife at table. Even cheese is not eaten with a knife now in good company.

Do not be satisfied with raising your hat to ladies only. Clergymen, your school-master, your employer, and other superiors are entitled to this form of salute from boys.

On receiving an invitation to a party, be sure and reply at once, whether you accept or decline. It is good form to buy a card at the stationer's upon which to reply.

When cycling with a lady, ride on her right, and give her the best piece of road. Try to shield her from traffic dangers.

Boys should always give up their seats to ladies in crowded public vehicles. Do not give way to a pretty lady, however, and refuse a plain old soul. This is not chivalry.

Be sure you do not make noises with your mouth when at table.

Never try to cry down another person's story told to amuse you all. This is very bad form. And be sure not to remark "I've heard that before," which is equally rude.

If you are invited to a friend's house, go looking your best, with clothes neatly brushed, boots spotless, and clean linen.

In going to a birthday party, it is usual to take some small present for the hero of the occasion.

In entering an office, be sure and take your hat off. Be sure and knock upon the door before entering a superior's room.

Never raise your voice when talking in a public place to try to attract attention.

Never clean your nails in a public place: give your fingers this attention in the privacy of your room.

In entering a train, tram, or lift, give way to ladies.

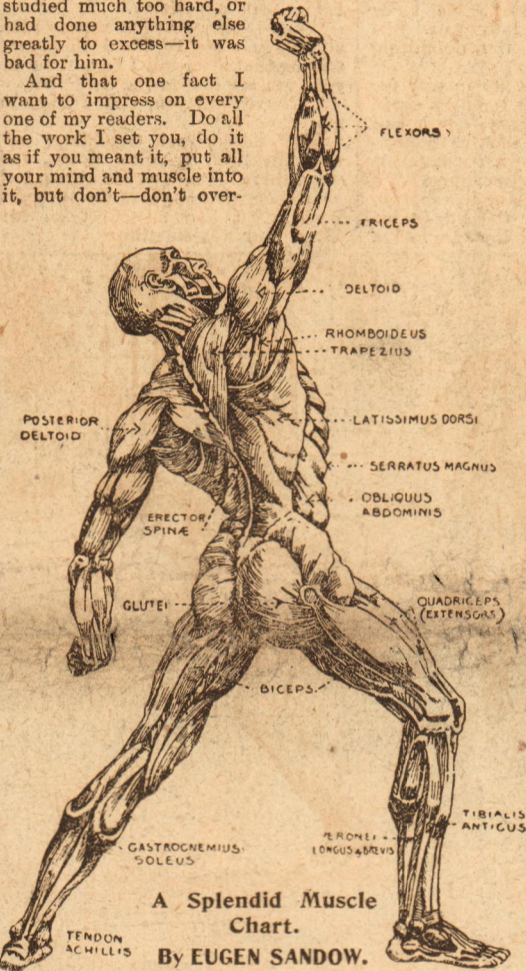
When sending up your plate at table for another helping, do not first remove your knife and fork.

When you have finished, place your knife and fork side by side on the plate, the points of the fork uppermost.

Be sure you have a clean handkerchief at all times; one that is soiled is offensive to other people.

Never wear out your welcome by staying too long when calling at a friend's house.

THE END.



A Splendid Muscle Chart. By EUGEN SANDOW.

Advertisement for Philip Leslie & Co. featuring 'FREE! FREE! FREE!!!' watches, phonographs, and aeroplanes. Includes an illustration of a watch and a gramophone. Text: 'Watches, Phonographs, Aeroplanes, etc. Send no money. We trust you. Simply for selling 12 of our new range of Xmas and New Year Cards we give you a handsome present ABSOLUTELY FREE. All you need do is to send us your name and address (a postcard will do) and we will forward you a selection of our beautiful hand-painted, gold-mounted, and other Xmas and New Year Cards and postcards, together with our new 1910 Prize List, containing upwards of 200 splendid FREE GIFTS, including 30-hour Lever Watches, Chains, Rings, Phonographs, Mono-Railways (the latest scientific novelty), Aeroplanes, Air Guns, Furs, Cinematographs, Toys, Musical Instruments, etc., etc. Sell or use the cards within 28 days and send us the money obtained, and we will reward you according to the grand List we send you. EVEN IF YOU DO NOT SELL A SINGLE CARD WE WILL GIVE YOU A PRESENT JUST THE SAME. 200 FREE GIFTS. SCIENTIFIC MONORAIL FREE. WRITE NOW. A Postcard will do. FREE GIFTS. PHILIP LESLIE & CO. (Dept. Xmas & New Year 12) Card Publishers, Richmond, London.

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Advertisement for Fretwork featuring 'NEW PENNY DESIGNS'. Text: 'Send us two penny stamps, and we will send you an ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE of our new and wonderful series of PENNY FRETWORK DESIGNS, together with FULL-SIZE DIAGRAMS for making two novel BELL-RINGING MONEY-BOXES in Fretwork. Write (Desk 4), NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION, 63, Farringdon Street, E.C.

Advertisement for 'The Little Spitfire' Air Rifle. Text: '6/- THE "LITTLE SPITFIRE" AIR RIFLE 6/- The most accurate air gun. Shoots slugs, darts, or shot with terrific force, and is guaranteed to kill at long range. Specially adapted for garden or saloon practice, bird and rabbit shooting, also for bottle and target practice. Securely packed, with sample of shot; postage 6d. extra. Illustrated List, Id.—B. FRANKS & CO., Gun Manufactory, Empire Works, Caroline Street, Birmingham. BLUSHING. FREE to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 5, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

Advertisement for Robey's Gramophone. Text: 'Send 4/6 for the world-famed "ROBEYPHONE" with 24 selections, sumptuously decorated 17-in. horn, powerful motor, 10-in. turn-table and loud tone sound-box, which I sell at HALF shop prices. I supply G.R.A.M.O.PHONE, COLUMBA PATHE, ZONOPHONE, CELSIOR, EDISON, and AMBEROL Phonographs and Records at low monthly payments. Free approval. Stupendous bargains. 5,000 Testimonials. GEO. ROBEY, Ltd. World's Provider, Dept. No. 10, COVENTRY. WRITE FOR LISTS. I GIVE CREDIT. SENT FOR 4/6 DEPOSIT.

Advertisement for Craig, Craig & Co. featuring a '£2-2 Suit FOR 15/-'. Text: 'Just as an Advertisement A £2-2 Suit FOR 15/- Sent Post Paid To your Door. 1/- Per Week. 7/6 BOOTS Lady's and Gent's 1/- Per Week. Send Size. Send us your name and address, and we will forward you FREE Patterns of Cloth, inch tape, and fashion plates. You will be delighted with what we send, and you need not return the samples even if you do not order a suit. CRAIG, CRAIG & CO., Head Office (Dept. 5), 81, Dunlop St., GLASGOW.

Advertisement for The Royal Card Co. featuring 'FREE! FREE! FREE!' Xmas and New Year Cards. Text: 'SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU. TIE-PIN, BROOCH, CHAIN, OR RING FREE FOR SELLING 12 CARDS. To advertise our new Series of lovely Xmas and New Year Cards offer every reader of this paper a handsome present, absolutely FREE simply for selling, or using 12 cards at 1d. each. Our 1910 Grand Prize List contains over 200 new gifts, including Ladies' or Gent's Watches, Electric Trains, Chains, Rings, Phonographs, Real Furs, Roller Skates, Umbrellas, Cinematographs, Toys of all kinds, Accordions, Air Guns, Steam Engines, Pins, Brooches, etc., etc., which we are giving away to purchasers of our cards. This Splendid AEROPLANE FREE WRITE NOW. All you need do is to send us your full name and address (a postcard will do) and we will send you per return a selection of Xmas and New Year Cards (including numerous folding cards) heavily gold-mounted, beautifully coloured and embossed, to sell or use at 1d. each. Use or sell what you can within 28 days and we will reward you according to the list we send you. WRITE NOW. IT NEED NOT COST YOU A PENNY OF YOUR OWN MONEY. Don't Delay. Post Now. Simply send a Postcard. THE ROYAL CARD CO. (Dept. 23), ROYAL PARADE, KEW, LONDON. SPLENDID VARIETY OF CARDS.



# 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 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 Peckehalf some distance away from the workings.

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 put 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. A huge pump is employed to keep clear any water that fights its way past the dam of the river.

The detective finds the engine-minder drugged and senseless. He then catches the enemy actually at work throwing virriol over the bearings of the great shaft of the pump. A terrible struggle ensues, and the marauder flies, while Sexton Blake miraculously escapes death.

One Sunday Sexton Blake pays a visit to Sir Richard Blaise. There being insufficient water to enable the grinders to work, they threaten to put an end to this great engineering scheme. The gang is being led by Black Jock, who had been dismissed from the works for making a merciless attack upon the great detective and his assistant.

Blake departs from Sir Richard's house, and strolls through the woods racking his brains to find some means of preventing what may prove a terrible calamity. Suddenly he is attacked and struck down by Black Jock with a gang of grinders, and is held a prisoner.

Ralph Ardoise appears upon the scene, and urges the gang of ruffians to stay at nothing. And Tinker, from a safe hiding-place, looks upon the scene and sees that his beloved master is a prisoner.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

### A Villain's Hints.

TINKER'S grief and horror was unspeakable. He had pictured Sexton Blake safe and well, a guest at the great house. But now!

"They have killed him! They have killed him!" he groaned, almost aloud, in his anguish.

But hope would not be denied even then, and madly fierce was his impulse to rush down into the dell, force his way through the throng, and see if any sign of life yet lingered in that limp and motionless form.

But he restrained the longing by a mighty effort of will.

"If would do no good," he reflected, trying to calm himself so that he might think clearly and act for the best. "If he is still living I cannot help him by getting captured, or perhaps knocked on the head myself."

He remained in cover, to wait and watch, the sweat of his agonised suspense dripping from his brow.

"What's this?" exclaimed Ardoise, striding forward as the two men laid their limp and ghastly burden on the ground. "Which of you mad fools did this? Who killed this man?"

There was a great hush—the hush of horror and dismay—among the men who crowded around.

"D'ye think he's really dead, yer honour?" asked one of the men, in awestruck tones.

"Dead, or so near it that I wouldn't

give a cracked sixpence for his chance of life!" said Ardoise.

"What's the odds, one way or another?" growled Black Jock, coming forward. "He's Temple's boss foreman, and he came here to spy. We dropped on him, and he got a knock on the head; that's the long and short of it. What are you made of?" he shouted fiercely, turning on the silent throng around. "Ain't none of you ever seen a dead man afore, that you gape at him with white faces and dropped jaws, like a pack of lily-livered girls!"

"Ay, but we'd no thought of killing!" one of the men faltered in dismay.

"Then you'd better 'a' stayed at home and kept out of a job like this!" sneered the burly ruffian; "because there'll be a few more like him if we're to carry this bit o' work through. And what's the odds if there's a hundred so long as we win?"

Ardoise laughed. "Well spoken, my brave gallows-bird!" he exclaimed. "You, at least, are a man! Put some of your spirit into these timid curs, and they may do something yet!"

Then, pointing to the still form on the ground, he faced round to the crowd, and said:

"Look you! Now that you've put your hand to the work you had best carry it through. This thing by itself is murder, and will bring some of you to the gallows. But if there's a general fight, and a score or so more skulls are split, it may pass as mere rioting, and they can't hang you in hundreds. A bold course is the best for you now."

With this he turned and strode away.

"The squire's right. We'd best go through with it now," said the big grinder with the iron bar.

"Go through with it!" cried Black Jock. "What else did you all meet here for with those things in your hands? Was it to play at sogers like boys!"

"Ay, we'll go through with it tonight! No turning back now!" cried the fiery-eyed little man who had stabbed at Blake with his sharpened file.

He bore the marks of the detective's blow plainly, for his jaw was swollen and black.

"Pity the squire wouldn't lead us," said another. "He's been in the Army, an' knows how to handle men."

"Hang the squire!" shouted Black Jock. "What better leader d'ye want than me! I'll lead any men through death, fire, and brimstone who've got the pluck to follow me!" "Ay, Black Jock's our man! We know he's got a poison-hate for Temple since he sacked him with a word and a kick!"

Black Jock scowled murder at the speaker. But it was no moment for a quarrel; he meant to strike whilst the iron was hot.

"Who could lead you better than me?" he demanded again. "Don't I know every turn of the place? And, anyhow, it's a dead easy job. We've only to capture the powder-magazine, then do as them Spaniards did yon black-faced squire told on. A few kegs of the right stuff shoved in the tunnel under the great dam, and where'd these fine works be in the morning? An old woman with a broom and shovel might sweep up all that 'ud be left!"

"The villain," muttered Tinker—the villain, to think of such an infernal plan!"

"It's a grand notion!" cried one of the crowd. "But there's a mighty lot o' men up there in Ginger Town, and they'll turn out at the first sound of us comin'. And a tough lot they'd be to fight!"

"Yes, there's up'ards of two hundred o' em, and they're all picked big 'uns, too!" said another—a pale-faced, weedy townsman, who was evidently not much in love with the prospect of actual fighting, however much he might like the talking part of the business.

Black Jock swung round on him with a fierce growl.

"Slink off home, you cur!" he roared. "We only want men here!"

Then, turning to the crowd again, he said:

"What if there are two hundred up there? There's nigh on that number among us here. And what's a little odds more or less?"

"Sides, there's close on a thousand chaps from the towns game to turn out an' join us at the word!" put in the man with the iron bar, whose name was Cronk.

"We don't want half that lot," said Black Jock. "But there's safety in numbers in a job like this. The more that's in it the less chance of bringing it home to a few. Tip 'em the word to turn out, and gather quietly somewhere hereabouts within a couple of hours. If the thing's to be done at all, it must be done tonight."

"Ay, let's get it over!" cried one of the men.

"You, Billings, Craft, Jarvis—you three, go an' pass the word round," said Cronk. "Tell 'em to come in two's and three's and gather in Coney Hollow, there at the bottom of the woods. That's a bigger place than this 'ere," he added, turning to Black Jock. "It's a rare spot for a quiet muster afore we march on the works."

"Good!" ejaculated the big ruffian. "And look you"—this to the three men who were about to set off—"warn 'em not to come empty-handed. For it's business to-night—no mere work for fists!"

"We'll tell 'em." And the three struck off through the woods towards the towns that lay far down the vale.

"If only they could be stopped before they rally the others," thought Tinker. "But it is impossible."

"Now, what are we going to do with this chap?" asked Cronk, pointing to the form that lay perfectly motionless upon the ground.

"If he's dead, a couple o' foot o' earth 'over him is the best thing," said Black Jock callously. "Stiff 'uns are awkward things to leave lying about."

"But we ain't sure he's quite dead," said Cronk.

"Well, he's so nigh it that it makes no odds either way," was the brutal rejoinder. "Tie a thumping stone to his feet, and chuck him into the water-hole in the middle of the woods. It's twenty feet deep, so they say, and he ain't likely to crawl out even if he pulls round."

"Merciful heavens—if they do that!" muttered Tinker, preparing to dash out; what to do he did not pause to think.

But luckily he was saved from that rash, perhaps fatal act.

### The Hut in the Woods.

NO, no! We'll have no hand in that; it's downright murder!" cried one of the crowd, stepping forward quickly. "We're game for a fight, but not for murder in cold blood!"

Tinker stayed where he was, and mentally blessed the speaker, whoever he might be.

He seemed to be a town mechanic of the better sort; a smallish man, but a bold and determined one for all that.

Black Jock scowled, but the man's words met with a chorus of approval from the others.

"Well, do as you like with him," he growled. "Only, don't forget, he'll be as good as a hundred common men against us if he should pull round and get back to the works. He's got brains as well as muscles, and he's a born fighting-man!"

The ruffian had imbibed an immense respect for Bob Packer's fighting powers, at any rate, much as he hated him.

"We won't give him the chance," said Cronk. "We'll truss him up hand and foot, and shove him in the old hut yonder with a gag over his mouth."

"Ay, ay, that's the better dodge!" agreed another. And the plan met with general approval.

"If he ain't dead, an' pulls round arter all, well an' good. Someone can come an' let him out to-morrow when this bust-up is all over an' done with," added Cronk.

"Do as you like, only be quick about it," said Black Jock; "then follow me down to Coney Hollow. I'm going to meet the town chaps, and shape them up a bit for the work in hand. Break up, all of you, and make for there in small parties—sharp!"

He strode off into the woods.

The men broke up into small bodies and left the dell by various paths, but all upon the further side to where Tinker stood in hiding.

Cronk and one other alone remained.

"B'lieve the chap's not worth troubling about; he's dead!" exclaimed the latter, not without a touch of dread in his tone.

"Dead or not, a turn or two of this rope around his wrists and ankles won't be amiss either way," said Cronk. "Bear a hand here. Lucky I brought this bit o' cord, thinking it might come in handy!"

He unwound a length of stout cord from around his waist as he spoke, and the two approached that still form upon the ground.

Tinker's heart, which had risen high with hope at the chance of yet rescuing Sexton Blake when they had done their work and gone, now sunk again, and once more grew sick and chill with despair.

For the detective showed no sign of life, roughly as they handled him. His lips remained rigid; his eyes closed. And his body rolled a limp, dead weight under their hands, as they turned him about to knot the cord around his limbs.

"He is dead—he is dead!" moaned the boy. "There isn't a spark of life in him, or he would never submit to that at the hands of a dozen men, let alone two!"

Again he was strongly impelled to rush out and fight the two men single-handed with any weapon, stone or broken branch, he could snatch up—even with his bare fists! But again a kind of instinct bade him remain there and wait.

His suspense was not long.

Cronk and his mate speedily finished their work—even to tying a dirty rag around the detective's mouth—and, picking up the inanimate form by feet and shoulders, carried it up the side of the dell, and into the woodland, passing so close to Tinker that he had to hastily crouch behind a big gnarled root to avoid being seen.

He was speedily up and upon their track. They had not far to go. The old hut was but a few hundred yards from the edge of the dell.

Long ago it had been the abode of

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a charcoal-burner, and the space around it was once cleared. But years of rank growth covered it now, and the dense bushes even enwrapped the old hut itself, so that it was almost invisible when quite close upon it.

Cronk and the other laid their burden on the ground, whilst the former, lifting a perfect curtain of brambles, kicked open a crazy old door which they covered.

"Now, in with him!" he said.

They carried the detective into the dark space thus revealed, and presently returned empty-handed, Cronk closing the door and dropping the curtain of brambles over it as before.

"Dead or alive, he'll lie snug enough there," he remarked, as the pair turned away.

"No one likely to find him, eh?" queried the other man.

"No one hereabouts durst go near the place," said Cronk. "Blazing Billy, the charcoal-man lured a traveller into there one night years ago, and cut his throat and robbed him, and shoved his body under the floor, and a year later he went stark ravin' mad, and dashed his own brains out agen the wall inside there. And they say as how an enormous spectre, with a split skull, runs round and round the place shrieking o' midnight!"

The other man quickened his pace, with a look of horror behind him, and the pair vanished into the wood.

Tinker barely gave them time to get beyond hearing, ere he was at the door of the hut, and had it open, for it had no fastening. Risky though it was, he struck a wax vesta, for the place inside was pitch dark.

It flickered, then flared up, and—the first thing that met his amazed eyes was the dead, or half-dead man, sitting up with the gag down around his neck, and regarding him with a placid smile.

"Ah, I thought you wouldn't be long popping in, Tinker," he remarked coolly. "Saw you behind those trees on the edge of the dell. Lucky there was nobody there whose eyes were as sharp, or you'd have had a bad time, my lad!"

"Then you weren't dead all the time, sir!" gasped Tinker between amazement and delight.

The detective laughed quietly.

"No," he said, "nor even part of it. Just a bit stunned at first, for I got an ugly crack—there's a cut on my forehead, I fancy. But my thick cap saved me from more. But just cut these cords off, will you? I'm about tired of squatting here!"

"Then you were playing 'possum, sir?" said Tinker, as he plied his knife upon the complicated turns of cord—no easy matter, as he had to do it in the dark.

"Just that," answered Blake. "When I came to—and found in whose hands I was, I thought it best to sham unconsciousness or death, for I knew that Black Jock would not stick at completing his work by another blow. And besides, I wanted to hear what was going forward."

"Then you know of their plans for an attack on the works to-night?" said Tinker.

"Yes, I heard every word, and found—as I had guessed before—that Ardoise is the prime villain in this plot, Tinker. The cunning scoundrel! How cleverly he goaded those men on!"

The detective was now free, and had got upon his feet. Such was his iron physique that he seemed little the worse for what he had undergone, or his matchless will-power conquered any pain or weakness he suffered.

"You think, then, that they will make the attempt, sir?" said Tinker, as they left the hut.

"Not a doubt of it, with a daring ruffian like that Black Jock to lead them, and all those men from the towns to back them up!" said the detective gravely. "There will be ugly work come of this—bloodshed, I'm afraid! For I mean to rouse the men and defend the place to the last. If it were only to defeat that villain Ardoise, they sha'n't destroy the works while I'm alive to strike a blow!"

"Well, we've not much time to prepare for their reception!" exclaimed Tinker, stepping out faster.

"Stop!" said Blake, as they reached the edge of the woods. "You must hurry to warn Sir Richard Blaise, Tinker! He is a magistrate, and at least ought to be warned of this plot. And, besides, it's not unlikely that some of these fellows may attack his house, for he is well known to be the chief promoter of this water scheme."

"By jinks, sir! I never thought of that!" ejaculated Tinker. "Of

course he ought to be told at once! I'll cut off and tell him. But I'll join you at the works in less than no time! I don't want to miss the chance of a decent scrap if there's likely to be one!"

"And I think there is," muttered Blake, as they parted, and he went his way towards the works at a swift pace—"that is, if a 'decent scrap' means a desperate and murderous fight. For that's what we are in for to-night!"

Tinker made his way quickly to the house of Sir Richard Blaise.

He promised himself to get his errand over swiftly, and join Blake at the works in time, to see the beginning of the "fun," as he called it.

But, as it happened, his return was not so easy or so quick as he hoped for.

**"You Must Go, Lad!"**

**B**EING at no time much troubled with timid modesty, and least of all on an occasion like this, Tinker went direct to the main entrance of the great mansion, and fired off a most tremendous "rat-tat" with the big brass knocker.

He was in a hurry, and did not mean to be delayed if he could help it.

There was "no waiting," as the showmen say. The footman on duty in the hall must have thought that the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, at the very least, had arrived, from the haste with which he opened that door.

It was an awful let-down for that six-foot-two of plush, powder, and pomp.

He flung the great door wide; he stood aghast. Words utterly failed him.

Instead of the gentleman in livery come to announce the arrival of the great man, he just saw Tinker.

And Tinker was not looking his best. He had started out that afternoon looking very neat and clean in his "Sunday things," but the evening's adventures had made an awful wreck of his appearance.

His boots were covered with sand and crushed grass. His clothes were dusty, and had elegant rips in several places, where his nice pink-and-white flannelette under-garment showed through like the slashed doublet and trunks of a gentleman of the Middle Ages, only not so regular. He had thrown away his collar, as being too white and conspicuous for his tracking job through the woods.

His face was dirty, scratched, and bleeding. He had lost his cap somewhere in the woods, and his hair, raked backwards and forwards, sideways and criss-cross by low-hanging boughs, looked like a mop stuck full of dead leaves.

Altogether, a madman, who had escaped from his keeper and spent a night in the woods, would have looked neat and respectable beside him.

The footman glared at him, gasped, then burst out:

"Wh-a-at! Who the— 'Ere, clear hout! Coming begging at the front door 'sif your was a dook! Bundle off, sharp!"

"I'm not begging," said Tinker. "I want to see Sir Richard, and mighty quick, too!"

"See Sir Richard! Ho, ho!" ejaculated the footman. "You'll see the inside of Slagford gaol if he comes hout! Clear off, or—"

He made to push Tinker off the steps, but he didn't know Tinker, or he wouldn't have tried it.

Dodging neatly, he tapped six-foot-two with the edge of his hand just where the crimson plush joined the white silk under his knees.

The footman doubled up like a jack-knife, and, losing his balance, went down the steps in a double cart-wheel, taking a green tub with a prickly cactus along with him.

Tinker did not wait to see where he landed, but dodged into the hall, almost running against a lanky page-boy who had just come downstairs.

"Hallo! Trying to pinch the umbrellers are yer?" cried the page-boy, making a grab at him.

Tinker was in a hurry, and his methods were hasty.

He hit the page-boy a nice little tap on the lowest button of his tunic, and the lanky youth staggered against the big hat-rack, toppling it over bodily, with a crash and a mighty clatter, as sticks, umbrellas, and whips fell in showers, and hats of all shapes and sizes tumbled down and hopped—plop, plop!—over the marble floor!

"What is this?" exclaimed a deep, imperative voice. And Sir Richard himself strode into the hall.

"Peter, what are you about? Ah,

who is this boy?"—as he caught sight of Tinker.

"Please, Sir Richard, he's been trying to pin—steal the umbrellers!" spluttered Buttons, scrambling on all fours amid the wreckage.

"It's a young tramp come a-begging, and I—" began the footman, appearing in the doorway with his hand on the broadest part of his crimson plush breeches, where something white showed.

Sir Richard checked a smile. "Nonsense!" he said. "I know the lad; he comes from the works!"

Then, turning to Tinker, who had wisely kept quiet until his turn came to get a word in:

"What brings you here, my boy, at this hour of a Sunday evening, and in such a state?"

"I have a message for you, sir—a most urgent message!" said Tinker.

"And that silly ass"—he cast a withering glance at the footman—"wouldn't let me in!"

"Come this way," said Sir Richard, who saw at once from Tinker's look that his errand was of grave importance.

He led the way to his private room, and closed the door.

"Now, my lad, what is it?"

homes, it being Sunday! But we must do what we can to defend the works from the mad fools and ruffians!"

He turned to the door. "Stay!" cried Sir Richard. "I will go with you, Sidney! I am no longer a young man, but my arm is still a stout one, thank Heaven, and some of these rascals shall feel the weight of it if they attempt any mischief!"

He drew his portly, but still stalwart figure proudly erect, and Tinker thought that he would be a recruit worth having.

"A fine hard-hitter in a scrap!" was the boy's admiring comment.

"But we must not act like rash schoolboys!" said Sir Richard quickly. "I am forgetting that I am a magistrate, and have my duties to perform in a case like this. You say that nearly a thousand townsmen are likely to join the grinders, my boy?" he added, again turning to Tinker.

"Fully that, sir." "Then there is likely to be serious rioting," said Sir Richard. "I know what these fellows are when once they get out of hand. I've not forgotten the Sheffield riots when I was a boy. They began in a small way,

"No you won't!" exclaimed Sir Richard sharply. "Your place is at the works, for that is the most important to defend. And I will be there, too—for that is a public danger, and the safety of this house is only a private affair of my own."

"What an old brick he is!" muttered Tinker.

"Yet I must send that message to the barracks," added the knight. "My lad, you must cycle there!"

"Bust the barracks!" growled Tinker to himself. He was longing to get away and rejoin Sexton Blake at the probable seat of war. But there was no refusing Sir Richard's request—or order, for it amounted to that.

"You know the way, of course?" "Oh, yes, sir!"

"Good! Then here's the letter for Colonel Carson. Now, be off, lad! Ride fast, but don't break your neck! Come, Temple! We'll just pick out something to bruise with from my little armoury, and get down to the scene of action!"

Assisted by the groom, under Sir Richard's orders, Tinker soon selected a bicycle from the shed, where several were kept, all in first-rate condition.

Tinker slackened his pace to avoid a collision.

A beam of moonlight revealed rider and horse, and he knew them both in an instant. It was Bates, the gipsy squire's rascally groom and henchman, mounted on Satan, the big black stallion he remembered so well for its amazing speed.

"Pull up, you boy!" shouted Bates. "There's no passing this way to-night!"

"Why?" asked Tinker. "Ain't it a public road, mister?"

"Why be hanged!" called back the groom. "You can't pass, I say! Pull up, and hand me any letter you've got about you. Get off and hand it over, or it'll be the worse for you!"

"So he guesses my errand!" thought the boy, who, during this brief passage of words, had just kept a mere way on his machine.

"Get down, I say, and bring it to me!" shouted the ruffian again; being, of course, afraid to dismount, lest the boy should dash past and get away.

"See you hanged first!" cooed Tinker softly. "Here goes, lucky or licked!"

He put on a sudden spurt with all the power he could bring to bear upon the pedals.

The road was very narrow just there, and the great horse almost completely blocked it—his tail touching the hedge that bordered one side, and his head almost over the deep ditch which ran on the other, leaving scarcely a foot of clear space upon its very brink.

Yet Tinker risked it.

He rode straight for the horse, as if intending to crash into it—then, suddenly swerving, passed right round its front, under its very head, stooping to clear the bridle.

The animal gave a shriek of fear, swerved and reared—its iron hoofs striking within an inch of Tinker's head.

Bates rose in his stirrups, and aimed a murderous blow with his clubbed whip at the lad as he shot by.

But Tinker got clear!

His respite was very brief, however. With a foul imprecation of rage, Bates wheeled his horse round, and, bringing his whip down with a cruel cut across its neck, made it literally fly down the road in pursuit.

Tinker now pedalled for dear life!

The road, loose and full of ruts, was hardly the sort of track for such a mad pace, but he rode it neck-or-nothing—the machine bounding and jolting, now in, now out of the deep channels scored by the heavy-laden carts going to and from the works.

Big flints, cut out by ponderous wheels, strewed the way, threatening an ugly spill if he fouled one in the uncertain light. And behind him, ever nearer and nearer, sounded the rapid beat of the black horse's hoofs.

His short start availed him only for a few moments. The fresh, powerful horse gained with each enormous stride.

"I can't keep it up! He's bound to ride me down!" gasped the boy.

He was lurching in his saddle now with sheer exhaustion. The road, as it flew under his wheels, looked red and fiery, seen through his bloodshot eyes. There was a mad beat, beat, in his brain, and the pain in his breast grew hot and stifling. His gallant spirit alone held him to his work.

"Stop, or I'll smash yer skull with my whipstock when I get abrest of yer!"

The ruffian's voice sounded terribly near! Near, too, the thud, thud of those flying hoofs!

"I'm done!" panted the boy, through his hot, dry lips, expecting every moment to feel the crash of the whip-handle on his head.

Then a desperate expedient flashed into his brain.

He was now within half a mile of the barracks, but he knew that he would be ridden down in less than a third of that distance if he attempted to keep on.

It was the sight of the stone bridge over the river, now but a little way ahead, that gave him that sudden, desperate idea.

The bridge had a low parapet—scarcely three feet high, in fact. Beneath it the river was broad and deep, for it was dammed up but a mile further down.

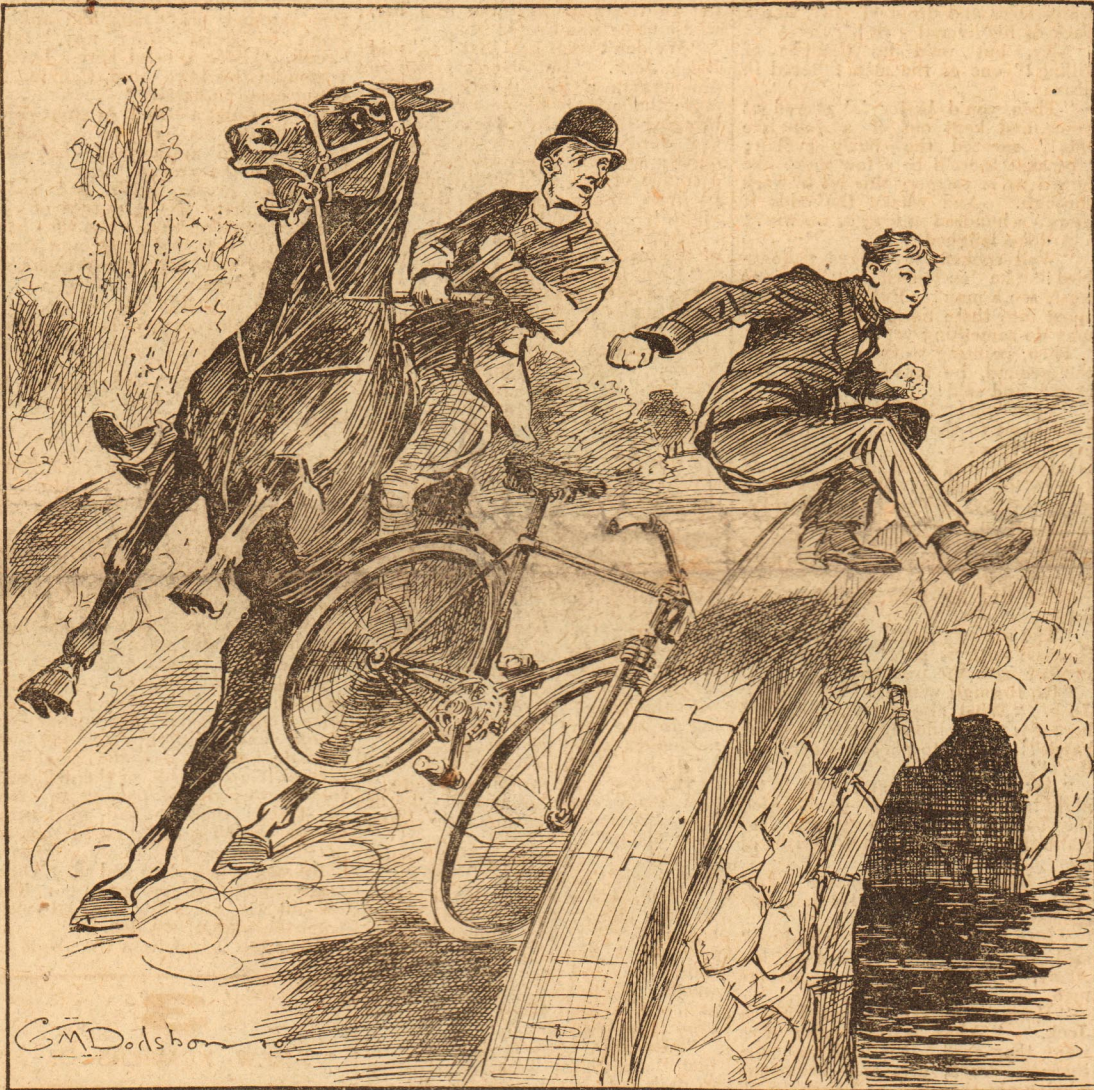
Tinker put on a final spurt to gain the crown of the bridge.

He reached it with the horse not ten yards from his rear wheel.

Right under the animal's feet he suddenly swerved, as though he had lost control of the machine, and ran crash against the wall of the bridge.

But as it struck, he vaulted out of the saddle, sheer over the parapet!

(Another grand instalment of this powerful detective serial will appear next Tuesday.)



Right under the animal's feet Tinker suddenly swerved, as though he had lost control of the machine, and ran it crash against the wall of the bridge. But as it struck, he vaulted out of the saddle, sheer over the parapet!

Clearly and briefly, Tinker told him of the threatened rising and plot to attack and destroy the new waterworks. He made no mention, however, of Squire Ardoise and his part in the affair.

Sir Richard heard him with growing alarm.

"Ha!" he ejaculated, half-aloud. "Then Drexel was right—only it is far worse than he supposed! Temple must know of this at once!"

He rang a bell. The page appeared, rather hoping that he was to fetch the constable for Tinker's benefit.

"Ask Mr. Temple to step in here," was Sir Richard's curt order.

In a few moments Sidney Temple came in, and, at the knight's request, Tinker repeated his alarming news. The young engineer started, and turned pale.

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "And they talk of attacking to-night?"

"Directly the men from the towns have joined them," said Tinker. "And they have already sent messages to turn them out!"

"Then there is little time to lose!" exclaimed Temple, in great agitation.

"I must hurry to the works and rouse out what men are there! Unfortunately, few are away at their

and ended in much bloodshed and destruction!"

"But we shall beat them off. My fellows are a stout lot, though few," said Temple, who was impatient to get to the works.

But Sir Richard shook his head.

"We must take proper precautions," he said. "I shall send my groom to ride fast to the barracks at Eastney, and ask the colonel to order a detachment under arms. Goodness knows, I hope we shall not need them! But who can tell how an outbreak like this may end?"

He made to ring the bell, but Tinker spoke up.

"Better not to send any of the men-servants away, sir," he said. "Best to keep them here."

Sir Richard looked at him sharply.

"I understand you, boy," he exclaimed. "You think some of these fellows may attack my house? By Jove, I can hardly believe it possible! Yet it is true they know that I set this water-scheme afoot. Yes, you're right, lad—you're right! It would be folly to send any of the men away!"

"I'll stay here!" declared Sidney Temple, no doubt thinking of peril to the girl he loved.

**Pursued!**

**T**WO minutes after getting his orders he was outside the great gates and bowling down the hard, white road that skirted the woods.

The road was a bit too white to please Tinker, for the sky, which had been dull and overcast, was clearing a little, and a wan moon gleamed at intervals through the drifting scud, showing him up rather too conspicuously if any of the enemy's pickets happened to be about.

He reflected, as he pedalled, that it was not at all unlikely.

"That fellow Ardoise is as cunning as they make 'em," he mentally remarked. "He won't forget that this road leads to the barracks, and that we're likely to send there for help."

But he began to hope that he was to get through unchecked after all.

He had accomplished nearly half his journey—it was about seven miles in all—when suddenly a man on horseback rode out from the shadow of some tall trees a little way ahead, and planted his steed—a powerful black animal—right across the road, evidently with the intention of blocking it.