

Read "Lonesome Len," in "The Boys' Herald," On Wednesday, November 9th.

Printing Set Coupon
No. 10.
See page 355.

THE BOYS' FRIEND 1^p

EVERY TUESDAY.

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

No. 491.—VOL. X. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY:

[WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 5, 1910.]



THE BLOT

A Tale of Rayton College
By Maxwell Scott.



The deed that nearly broke "The Blot's" heart. See this week's splendid chapters of Maxwell Scott's grand 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 Phil's benefactor, has promised to shepherd him in his new surroundings, and show him every kindness possible between one schoolboy and another, turns out to be a humbug and a hypocrite.

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

The newcomers are friends of Mortimer, 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 bag.

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.

Mortimer tells his uncle that Ashley plays cards for money, and relates to him the fact 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 blackmailing 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 is pulled into a public-house by Jim Cocker, and is seen in this establishment by Mr. Sopworth. Philip is taken before Mr. Walker, and is to be isolated from the other boys until Dr. Paul's return.

Mortimer and his companions are afraid that Phil will work too strenuously for the Beresford exam., and entering the isolation room during his absence they destroy sheets of writing representing many weeks' hard work. In case of trouble arising from this dastardly attack upon Philip, Mr. Walker's mischievous fox-terrier is sent into the room to play further havoc with Ashley's belongings.

"Now, Jinks, old man, you sail in and complete the work of destruction!" says Mortimer, releasing the terrier.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

A Bitter Blow.

JINKS needed no second invitation, and a moment later he was nosing among the books and papers on the floor, worrying this, tearing that, and generally enjoying himself.

"That'll stop him workin' for some time, at any rate!" chuckled Sadler, gazing at the scene of devastation. "Now let's clear out, or he'll be comin' back and catchin' us here."

"Half a mo'!" said Mortimer. He glided across to the lavatory basin, put in the plug, and turned on one of the taps.

"The Blot washed his hands before he went out," he said, with a wink. "Like the careless fellow that he is, he forgot to take out the plug, and he left one of the taps runnin'!"

The basin quickly filled, and by the time the four boys left the room the water was running over and splashing down on to the floor.

At the foot of the stairs they met Philip coming up. No words were exchanged, but the ill-concealed look of triumph on the four boys' faces,

the burst of stifled laughter which fell on Philip's ears when he had passed them, struck a chill to the boy's heart. Instinctively he felt that some fresh misfortune was in store for him, though what it was he could not imagine.

As he neared the door of his room a curious sound made itself heard—the sound of running water. He darted to the door and flung it open. Then he staggered back with a choking cry of grief and dismay.

On the floor was an ink-stained chaos of torn papers and mutilated books. Jinks was squatting on the bed, with the remains of a book in his mouth. Water was pouring over the edge of the

lavatory basin, and was flowing across the floor in an ever-widening stream.

Now at last Philip understood the meaning of that burst of stifled laughter. This was the work of Mortimer and his chums. These "sons of gentlemen" were determined that the "charwoman's brat" should not win the Beresford prize. And this was the means they had adopted to prevent him.

He staggered to the basin and turned off the tap. He chased Jinks out of the room and shut the door. For a moment he gazed at the chaos around him—his books destroyed and the work of weeks undone!

Then he flung himself on the bed, buried his face in the pillow, and sobbed like a heartbroken child.

A Friend in Need.

MR. DRUMMOND, it will be remembered, was the science-master at Rayton College. His study was under the isolation-room, and on this particular evening he had just sat down at his desk to correct some papers when a big drop of water splashed upon his head, to be followed almost instantly by another and another.

A single upward glance sufficed to show him where the water came from. There was a big wet patch on the ceiling, which was growing bigger every moment.

"Confound it!" he growled, hurriedly rising to his feet. "One of the pipes which supply the basin in the isolation-room must have burst, or else Ashley has gone out and carelessly left the tap running! I must see to the matter at once!"

He hurried upstairs, and knocked at the door of the isolation-room. As there was no reply, he concluded that Philip was out. He opened the door, then he started back with an exclamation of mingled amazement and dismay.

Philip was lying on the top of the bed, with his face buried in the pillow, sobbing like a heartbroken child. There was a pool of water on the uncarpeted floor, and in it and around it was a chaotic litter of torn books and papers, together with an overturned inkpot and a dragged-looking tablecloth.

"Ashley, my boy, whatever has happened?" asked Mr. Drummond, in a not unkindly voice.

At the sound of the master's voice Philip sat up with a start, and hastily dashed the tears from his eyes.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," he faltered. "I didn't hear you come in."

Mr. Drummond closed the door, and picked his way across the room.

"What has happened, my boy?" he asked again.

"I went out for a breath of fresh air, as I always do when the other boys are at prep," said Philip. "Everything in the room was all right when I left, but when I came back I found the basin running over, and—and this!"

He pointed to the wreckage on the floor.

"All my books have been ruined," he added, with a sob, "and I've no money to buy any more."

Mr. Drummond's face grew dark and stern. A gleam of righteous indignation flashed in his eyes.

"Whom do you suspect?" he asked.

"Jinks, Mr. Walker's terrier-pup, was sitting on the bed when I came in," said Philip. "He was worrying one of my books when I arrived."

"But Jinks couldn't turn on the

tap, you know," said Mr. Drummond, eyeing him keenly.

Philip averted his face. He had not the slightest doubt that Mortimer and his allies had done this thing, but his chivalrous code of honour would not allow him to speak.

"I may have left the tap running when I went out," he said in a low voice.

Mr. Drummond laid his hand on Philip's shoulder.

"You may have, but you know you didn't!" he said. "This is a vile and contemptible trick on the part of somebody who wishes to prevent you winning the Beresford. Am I not right?"

"Jinks was certainly in the room, sir," said Philip evasively. "And—and I couldn't swear that I didn't leave the tap running."

A look of admiration flitted across Mr. Drummond's face.

"I understand," he said. "You can't deny that I am right. Probably you know who it was who committed the outrage, but you won't betray them. Ah, well, I don't think any worse of you for that! It wouldn't be sneaking in this case, but if you are determined to shield the offenders, I would be the last person in the world to try to persuade you to alter your determination."

"At the same time," he continued, "the blackguards shall not profit by their dirty trick. If their object was to prevent you reading for the Beresford, we'll show them that their labour has been in vain. I dare say I have copies of most of the books which have been destroyed, and I'll lend them to you until after the exam. Any books I haven't got Mr. Walker is sure to have, and I'll borrow them from him. If it was Mr. Walker's dog which tore up your books," he added, with a sly twinkle in his eyes, "it's only right and proper that Mr. Walker should make good your loss! Now, let me help you to clear up this mess."

It was wonderful how Philip's spirits revived under the influence of Mr. Drummond's genial companionship. By the time the room had been put straight he was almost his old self again, and it was in quite a cheerful voice that he complied with Mr. Drummond's request to give him a list of the books that had been destroyed.

Armed with this list, Mr. Drummond returned to his study. When he came back he brought with him all but three of the books on the list, and also several other treatises on mathematics which he thought would be helpful to Philip.

"I'll now go and see Mr. Walker," he said. "He's pretty sure to have these other three books, and I know he'll be only too glad to lend them to you."

Merrick was with Mr. Walker when Mr. Drummond arrived. He rose to go, but Mr. Drummond signed to him to remain.

"You needn't go, Merrick," he said. "My business isn't private."

He turned to Mr. Walker, and told him what had happened.

"Confound the pup!" said Mr. Walker. "I shall really have to get rid of him. He gets more destructive every day. Of course, I'll give Ashley fresh copies of all his books that my dog has destroyed, but I must say that it was most careless of Ashley to leave the door open when he went out—for, of course, he must have left the door open or Jinks could not have got into the room."

With the sight of Philip's tear-stained face still fresh in his memory, Mr. Drummond could not let this pass.

"I don't think Ashley is to blame at all," he said. "If he left the door open, as you say he must have done, who shut it after Jinks went in? Did Jinks close the door behind him? Did Jinks turn on the tap?"

"Oh, I expect Ashley forgot to turn off the tap when he went out!" said Mr. Walker. "That was another piece of gross carelessness!"

"I don't believe it!" said Mr. Drummond warmly. "My firm belief is that somebody went into the room during Ashley's absence, and tore up his books and papers, and turned on the tap, and shut Jinks up in the room to complete the work of destruction."

"Preposterous!" said Mr. Walker. "Absurd! Who would do such a thing?"

"Somebody who wished to prevent Ashley winning the Beresford," said Mr. Drummond meaningly.

Mr. Walker shook his head.

"You're letting your sympathy for Ashley carry you away," he said. "There are no boys at Rayton, I am sure, who would be guilty of such a despicable trick. What do you say, Merrick?"

"I agree with you, sir," answered the captain of the school. "It is true that Ashley is very unpopular with the boys, but—"

"And why is he unpopular?" demanded Mr. Drummond, letting himself go. "Because he's a poor boy! Because he isn't the son of rich or aristocratic parents! Because his mother was a charwoman! Oh, I know what I'm talking about! I've seen how Ashley has been shunned and boycotted ever since he came here! And what has especially grieved and surprised me has been that you, Merrick, have been one of those who have boycotted him on account of his lowly origin!"

Merrick flushed.

"You are unjust, sir," he said. "I don't care two pins what a fellow's parents are so long as he's a decent sort. It is true that I have cut Ashley, but not because of his lowly origin. I did all I could to help him when he first came here, but when—when—"

He became confused, and paused.

"But when you found that he was in the habit of frequenting a low public-house," said Mr. Walker, "you very properly felt that you could have nothing more to do with him."

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Drummond. "That won't do! Merrick threw Ashley over long before that incident at the Blue Boar."

"Well, if you must know the truth," Merrick blurted out, "I threw Ashley over because I discovered he was a thief."

"A thief!" cried the two masters in the same breath.

"Yes," said Merrick. "I didn't intend ever to mention the matter, but I can't sit still and hear Mr. Drummond accuse me of being a prig. I didn't throw Ashley over because his mother is a poor woman, but because he stole a five-pound note belonging to Heath."

"Ashley a thief!" murmured Mr. Drummond, shaking his head. "I can't believe it—really I can't!"

"Neither could I at first, sir," said Merrick. "But these are the facts. Ashley was seen to go into Heath's study and take something off the mantelpiece and put it in his pocket. A little later a letter which Heath had received that morning containing a fiver, and which he had left on the mantelpiece, was found to have disappeared. Ashley was charged with having taken it. We denied the charge, but he admitted that he had been in Heath's study and had taken something off the mantelpiece, though he wouldn't say what it was. That same night he was caught in the act of hiding the note in another boy's box."

"As soon as ever I heard of this," concluded Merrick, "I went straight to Ashley and asked him for an explanation. He didn't deny that he had been in Heath's study, but he wouldn't say why. He admitted he had taken something off the mantelpiece and had put it in his pocket, but he wouldn't say what it was. In view of his refusal to give me any explanation, I had no choice but to believe him guilty, and from that day to this I have declined to have anything to do with him."

"And quite properly, too!" said Mr. Walker. "But why didn't you tell me this before?"

"Heath begged me not to," said Merrick. "Seeing that he had got his fiver back, he said, he preferred to let the matter drop rather than make a public scandal."

"Public scandal be hanged!" said Mr. Drummond. "The matter can't be allowed to drop!"

He turned to Mr. Walker.

"Now that the matter has at last been reported to you," he said, "you will hold a lengthy inquiry at once, of course?"

Mr. Walker wearily shook his head.

"I'm sick of the whole business," he said. "The boy has been nothing but a trouble ever since he came here. I never wish to hear his name again."

"That may be," said Mr. Drummond. "But the boy has been accused of theft, and it is only simple justice that he should have a chance of defending himself."

"He shall have a chance to defend himself when Dr. Paul returns," said Mr. Walker. "I've enough worries already without seeking fresh anxieties. Dr. Paul can deal with the matter when he returns. I shall do nothing."

Mr. Drummond shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "I have nothing more to say, except that, until the inquiry is held, and Ashley is proved to be guilty, I prefer to believe him innocent. Moreover,

believing, as I do, that the destruction of his books to-night was a deliberate attempt to prevent him winning the Beresford, I shall do all I can to help him to win it!"

He was as good as his word, and from that day to the day of the examination he spent most of his spare time in the isolation-room, coaching Philip and helping him with his work.

So that Mortimer's dastardly plot had just the very opposite result to that which he had hoped for. Instead of killing Philip's chances of winning the prize, it increased his chances twenty-fold.

Which is what the classics call "poetic justice."

At the Fair.

"I CALL it a rotten shame!" said Tubb disgustedly.

It was Saturday morning. The leader of the Walkerite juniors, accompanied by half a dozen of his chums, was reading a notice which Hogan had just pinned up on the board.

"To-day being Rayton Fair," the announcement ran, "the village is hereby declared to be out of bounds until further notice."

(Signed) J. H. WALKER.

"What does it mean?" asked Atkin, whose first term this was at Rayton College.

"It means," said Tubb, "that because there happens to be a fair at Rayton to-day we're forbidden to go down to the village. On the one day in the year when there's anything worth goin' down to the village for, we're not allowed to go! A rotten, filthy, beastly shame, I call it!"

"So it is!" agreed Card. "But it's only what you expected."

"It isn't!" said Tubb. "That's just what nettles me. I didn't expect it."

"Then you ought to have done!" said Card. "The village has been put out of bounds on Rayton Fair day every year since you and I have been here."

"I know," said Tubb. "But that was the doctor's doin'. Now that he's away, I made sure that old Walker would forget to put up the usual notice. For weeks I've been dreamin' of the giddy fun I'd have at the fair this afternoon!"

"Oh, I say!" laughed Rigden. "Draw it mild, old chap! It's only a week to-day since the doctor went away!"

Tubb ignored the remark.

"But I'm not goin' to be done out of my fun," he said. "I shall go to the fair, all the same."

"Better not," said the cautious Pritchard. "You'll jolly well get a thousand lines and a gatin' for the rest of the term if you're jolly well caught."

"But I shan't be caught," said Tubb. "I wasn't born yesterday. Who'll come with me?"

"Not me, for one," said Card.

"Nor me, either," said Rigden.

"Otherwise engaged," said Hepworth.

"Mr. Jackson presents his compliments to Mr. Tubb," said Jackson, "and regrets that he is unable to accept his very kind invitation."

Tubb glanced inquiringly at the rest of his chums.

"Is there nobody here with an ounce of pluck?" he asked, in accents of withering sarcasm.

Apparently there wasn't, for nobody replied.

"Cowards!" said Tubb. "Poltroons! Cravens! White-livered chickens!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Card sweetly. "But, I say, old man, don't be a goat! It isn't worth the risk!"

"I'm going to the fair, I tell you," said Tubb doggedly. "If none of you'll come with me, I'll go by myself."

It was in vain they tried to dissuade him, and it was equally in vain that he tried to persuade them to go with him. And so it came about that as soon as dinner was over, Tubb—knowing that Hogan was on the watch at the school gates to prevent any boys going down to the village—strolled down to the boat-house, launched one of the skiffs, rowed up to Rayton Wood, tied up his boat, and struck out for the fair-ground by the lane that ran past the back of the church.

The fair was in full swing when he arrived, and the field in which it was held was crowded with villagers in holiday attire. A dazzling steam-rounder—"Quinland's Bucking Horses"—occupied the centre of the field; and ranged around it was the

usual collection of booths, stalls, shooting-galleries, cokernut-shies, and so forth. In and out amongst the crowd vendors of lemon-drops, meat-pies, ham-sandwiches, and "ladies' tormentors" plied a busy trade.

Tubb paid a penny to see "The Fattest Woman on Earth," and two-pence to view "Professor Pott's Magical Illusions." He patronised the shooting-gallery, visited the ghost show, and was beginning to find things a trifle slow when he suddenly caught sight of Holcroft and Rutherford. They, too, had broken bounds and had come to the fair; and at the moment when Tubb caught sight of them they were just in the act of mounting two of Quinlan's bucking horses.

A gleam of unholy joy glittered in Tubb's eyes at the sight of the two leaders of the Paulite juniors. Here was a chance to pay off a few old scores. They did not know that he was there. As soon as the roundabout started, they would be at his mercy for two whole minutes—imprisoned, so to speak, on the horses' backs, and unable either to get at him or to get away from him.

"Hi!" Tubb beckoned to a man who was threading his way through the crowd with a basket of meat-pies. "How much?" he asked.

"A penny apiece, young sir," replied the man.

"I'll take a dozen," said Tubb, thrusting a shilling into the man's hand. "Not all at once, but two at a time. Come with me."

He dragged the man to the front of the roundabout. It had just started, and the bucking horses were circling round with gathering speed, rising and falling as they revolved.

Tubb grabbed two pies out of the basket and waited. Holcroft and Rutherford, riding side by side, were then on the far side of the circle. Presently the revolution of the circle brought them round in full view of the waiting Tubb.

"Great Scott! There's that beast, Tubb!" gasped Holcroft, catching sight of his rival. "And he means mischief, too. Look out!"

It was easy to say "Look out!" But Holcroft and Rutherford were helpless. With an exultant grin on his face, Tubb raised his hand.

Biff! A meat-pie, warm and soft and juicy, flew through the air and plastered itself across the centre of Holcroft's face. Whizz! A second pie landed on Rutherford's ear and discharged its gravy down his neck!

The spectators, who were used by this time to the pranks of the Rayntonians, roared with merriment. Holcroft and Rutherford yelled to the proprietor to stop the engine. Tubb merely grinned, and armed himself with two more pies.

"Tubb, you cad!" howled Holcroft, as he and Rutherford once again came sailing round to where Tubb lay in wait for them—"Tubb, you cad, I'll give you the biggest—"

The threat ended in a muffled gurgle, for at that moment a meat-pie landed on his mouth and choked his further utterance. Then another pie smote Rutherford between the eyes and nearly knocked him off his horse.

The engine was working at full speed now, and Tubb had barely time to grab two more pies out of the man's basket ere Holcroft and Rutherford circled into view again. Holcroft's face was plastered with pastry, and gravy was dripping from the end of his chin. Rutherford, clinging to the suspensory rod with one hand, was trying to extricate a piece of fat from his ear with the other.

"Bang goes saxe-pence!" cried Tubb, as he landed the fifth pie in Holcroft's left eye and the sixth in the nape of Rutherford's neck. "Oh, what a day we're havin'! Six luscious pies I've given you, free, gracious, and for nothing, and you aren't the least bit grateful!"

That was certainly true. Holcroft and Rutherford were not "the least bit grateful." They were furious. They thirsted for Tubb's blood. But they thirsted in vain. Until the engine stopped, they were helpless. To jump off the horses while the machinery was in motion would probably have meant a broken limb. And the proprietor of the roundabout either did not or would not hear their frenzied appeals to him to stop the engine. Consequently, they could only sit still and offer themselves as a target for Tubb's pies each time the revolving circle brought them round to him.

Next time they came round Holcroft covered over his horse's neck and made himself as small as possible. But that did not prevent a juicy pie knocking off his cap and bedewing his

hair with greasy gravy. Rutherford shielded his face with his arm, and escaped with nothing worse than a sticky blob of pastry on his elbow.

But all things come to an end at last, and presently, the two minutes being up, the proprietor shut off steam, and the horses began to slow down.

"They're going to stop now," said the pie merchant to Tubb. "If I was you, young sir, I'd scoot afore those gents 'ave time to get off."

"Just what I'm goin' to do," said Tubb, with a wink. "I'm too young to die just yet!"

He blew a farewell kiss to Holcroft and Rutherford, who at that moment came circling round again.

"By-by, dear boys!" he called out. "Sorry I have to go now. Hope you've enjoyed your free lunch!"

He turned on his heel and darted away, but had not gone more than twenty yards when he pulled up with a gasp of dismay. Mr. Sopworth had just entered the fair-ground—evidently to see if any of the boys were there—and was striding quickly in Tubb's direction!

Tubb at that moment was passing a large booth which bore the inscription "Mulvaney's Unrivalled Collection of Performing Animals." Along the front of the booth ran a raised platform, connected with the ground by a short flight of wooden steps. In the centre of this platform stood the proprietor, wielding an enormous rattle, and inviting the villagers in stentorian tones to "Walk up an' see the greatest show on earth."

On one side of the proprietor stood a clown, with one of the performing monkeys perched on his shoulder. On the other side stood a man in the livery of a groom, with a couple of the performing dogs on a leash.

Knowing that Mr. Sopworth was short-sighted, and hoping that he had not seen him, Tubb darted up the steps, paid his penny, and dived through the curtained doorway of the booth.

He was just in time, yet just too late. In other words, Mr. Sopworth had seen him, but had failed to recognise him.

With a thunderclap of anger on his brow, Mr. Sopworth pushed his way through the crowd, and strode to the foot of the steps in front of the booth.

"Make way for the gentleman there!" sang out the man with the rattle, who happened to be Mulvaney himself. "This way, sorr! Walk up, sorr! Just a-go'in' to begin, sorr!"

He twirled his rattle and assisted Mr. Sopworth up the steps.

"Sir," said Mr. Sopworth, "unless my eyes deceived me, I saw one of our boys enter this booth just now. I say I saw one of our boys enter this booth!"

"Sure, Oi wouldn't wonder if ye was right!" said Mulvaney. "Ye can generally trust a bhoys to know a good thing when he sees it. Walk up, ladies an' gentlemen, walk up! Just a-go'in' to begin, an' wan penny pays for everything!"

"Sir!" said Mr. Sopworth again. "I demand that you produce that boy to me at once. Fetch him out. Bring him to me. Do you hear what I say?"

"Bedad, Oi'd be very deaf if Oi didn't hear!" said Mulvaney. "But it's busy Oi am this minute. If ye want the bhoys, go an' fetch him. Oi haven't toime."

Mr. Sopworth strode towards the curtained portal, and was about to enter, when Mulvaney barred the way.

"Admission wan penny!" he said, holding out his hand.

"Insolent fellow!" said Mr. Sopworth. "Do you know who I am?"

"If ye was Kaiser Bill hisself," said Mulvaney, "ye couldn't go into my show widout payin'."

"I am one of the masters at Rayton College," said Mr. Sopworth, drawing himself up. "I say I am one of the masters at Rayton College."

"Thin it's sorry Oi am for the bhoys!" said Mulvaney. "Wan penny, av ye please!"

"I am not going to witness your low entertainment," said Mr. Sopworth. "I merely desire to fetch out one of our boys who has broken our rules by coming here. I shall not pay anything, of course!"

"Thin ye can't go in!" said Mulvaney stubbornly.

Mr. Sopworth glared at him.

"You dare to interfere with me in the execution of my duty?" he demanded.

"Sure, Oi'd assist at yer execution wid all the playsure in the world!"

said Mulvaney. "But ye can't go in widout payin'. Wan penny, please!"

"I shall report your insolence to the police," said Mr. Sopworth.

"Go an' do it, thin!" said Mulvaney. "In the mancoime, ye're blockin' the way an' preventin' other people comin' in. Stand aside, av ye please!"

"I shall not move from here," said Mr. Sopworth firmly, "until you produce the boy."

"Oh! Ye won't, won't ye?" said Mulvaney, with a grin.

He glanced over his shoulder, and winked at the groom. The latter, with an answering wink, slipped the two performing dogs from the leash. Mulvaney made a sign, and immediately the two dogs rose on their hind legs and solemnly advanced towards Mr. Sopworth with open mouths and rolling eyes.

Mr. Sopworth, terrified by the ferocious aspect of the dogs, hastily stepped back and trod on the clown's foot. The clown let out a heart-rending howl, and gave the startled master a push that sent him reeling into Mulvaney's arms. Mulvaney gave him another push that sent him staggering towards the top of the steps, whilst at the same instant the performing monkey, startled by the delighted shouts of the spectators, leaped from his perch on the clown's shoulder and sprang on to Mr. Sopworth's back.

"Help! Police! Murder!" screamed Mr. Sopworth, as the monkey, in his efforts to get a firm hold, clawed out a handful of Mr. Sopworth's hair. "Take him off! Take him off! He's biting me! He's tearing out my hair! He's—"

Before he could say more, he lost his balance and fell floundering backwards down the steps. As ill-luck would have it, a vendor of air-balloons was passing at that moment, and on the top of this man Mr. Sopworth fell, knocking him down,

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bursting most of his balloons, and scattering the remainder in all directions.

Influriated by the destruction of his wares, the balloon man leaped to his feet, snatched a stick from one of the bystanders, and dealt the prostrate Mr. Sopworth a stinging cut on the tenderest portion of his anatomy.

"Bust my balloons, will yer?" howled the man, dancing with rage. "Bust me, I'll bust you afore I've done with yer!" Take that, an' that, an' that!"

The monkey had returned to the clown by now. Bellowing with pain, Mr. Sopworth scrambled to his feet and took to his heels, with the balloon merchant in hot pursuit. The crowd, with roars of laughter, parted to right and left and made a passage for them. This way and that Mr. Sopworth ran, appealing for help, howling for the police, and squealing like a rabbit whenever his pursuer got in another cut.

Mulvaney laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"An' he said he wouldn't move till Oi produced the bhoys!" he said. "By the saints, he's movin' now!"

He raised the curtain at the entrance and beckoned to Tubb.

"There's a gentleman been inquiren' for ye, my bhoys," he said. "That's him over there."

Tubb glanced in the direction in which Mulvaney pointed. He was just in time to see Mr. Sopworth clear an ice-cream barrow with a flying leap and stumble forward into a cokernut shy, where a stick thrown by one of the competitors rattled him on the side of the head and sent him floundering on all fours among the nuts. Half dazed though he must have been, he was on his feet again in an instant, and before his pursuer could overtake him he had gained the exit and was flying up the road towards the school at breakneck speed.

"I think I'll follow his example and go home now," said Tubb.

"One shouldn't be greedy, and I've had as much fun as is good for me this afternoon. Ta-ta, and good luck to your show!"

But his adventures were not ended yet. Midway between the village and the school he heard a whoop of triumph behind him, and on glancing round he was dismayed to see Holcroft and Rutherford vault over a stile and race towards him.

"Now we've got the little beast!" yelled Holcroft. "Now we'll pay him back for his meat-pies!"

Tubb was not a bad runner, but he was no match for Holcroft and Rutherford. At every stride his pursuers gained ground, and he had just given himself up for lost when suddenly, on turning a corner of the road, he almost ran into the back of Mr. Sopworth.

For a moment Tubb was overwhelmed with consternation. Then his face brightened. Holcroft and Rutherford dare not molest him while he was in the company of one of the masters. He was safe—if he could only bluff Mr. Sopworth!

"Dear me, sir!" he exclaimed as Mr. Sopworth turned round and confronted him. "Have you met with an accident, sir? You have lost your hat, I see, and your clothes are—slightly soiled."

"I have been brutally assaulted on the fair ground," said Mr. Sopworth.

"The fair ground!" said Tubb innocently. "Where is that, sir?"

"It is Rayton Fair to-day," said Mr. Sopworth.

"Is it?" said Tubb. "But surely you haven't been to the fair, sir? I was always taught that fairs weren't respectable!"

"They are not," said Mr. Sopworth viciously. "They are most disreputable! I say they are most disreputable! But I went to the fair to-day at Mr. Walker's request. He asked me to go down and see if any of the boys had disobeyed his

glancing up, he pretended to see Holcroft and Rutherford for the first time.

"Hi! You chaps!" he sang out. "Can we give you a lift down to the boathouse? No? All right, then! So-long!"

He stepped into the boat, and a moment later he and Mr. Sopworth were gliding easily down the river, while Holcroft and Rutherford, beaten and baffled at every point, were moodily discussing whether they should swim across the river or go round by the road.

The Beresford Exam.

THE great day had arrived—the day on which the examination for the Beresford prize was to be held. And Dr. Paul had not yet returned.

It was a Wednesday. The examination was to be held in the Sixth Form class-room, where the candidates were to assemble at three o'clock.

About ten minutes to three Mr. Walker went up to the isolation-room where Philip, white-faced and a trifle nervous, was awaiting the summons to the fray.

"Now, Ashley, you'd better come down to the examination-room," said Mr. Walker. "All the other candidates are already there."

Philip rose to his feet and followed Mr. Walker downstairs. When the latter opened the House door to cross to the Sixth Form class-room he drew back with a start of surprise. A crowd of over fifty boys had assembled outside the door.

"Bo-o-oh!" A storm of hisses and groans greeted Philip's appearance, mingled with cries of "Thief!" "Work-house brat!" and similar expressions of contempt.

"Boys! Boys!" cried Mr. Walker. "What is the meaning of this unseemly demonstration?"

Mortimer, who was apparently the ringleader, stepped to the front and doffed his cap.

"With all due respect to you, sir," he said, "we desire to protest most emphatically against the Blot—I mean Ashley—being allowed to enter for the Beresford. The prize was founded for the benefit of sons of gentlemen, and we think it is most unjust that a low fellow like Ashley should be allowed to compete. We are sure, sir, that Dr. Paul would never have permitted such a thing; and we respectfully ask you, sir, even at the last moment, to withdraw the Blot from the examination."

Boisterous cheers greeted the conclusion of Mortimer's speech. Mr. Walker frowned, and held up his hand for silence.

"What you ask is impossible," he said. "The Beresford is open to any boy at the school, and I cannot prevent Ashley, or any other boy, competing, whatever his social position may be."

"He's a thief!" shouted Jordan. "Surely you have the power to bar a thief!"

"There is no proof yet that Ashley is a thief," said Mr. Walker.

"He is!" shouted Heath. "We all know it!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled the crowd. "Down with the thief! We won't let him compete! Mob him!"

There was an ugly rush. Mr. Walker hurriedly placed himself in front of Philip.

"Back! Back!" he thundered. "If any boy dares to lay a hand on Ashley in my presence, I'll expel him on the spot!"

Somewhat cowed, the boys retreated. There were muttered cries of "Shame!" Once more Mortimer stepped to the front.

"It isn't likely that Ashley will win the prize," he said. "But suppose he does, sir, and suppose Dr. Paul expels him when he returns, will he be allowed to retain the prize?"

Mr. Walker hesitated for a moment.

"No," he said at last. "I think I can promise you that. If Ashley should win the prize, and if he should afterwards be expelled, the prize will be given to the boy who obtains the second highest number of marks. Now kindly stand aside and let us pass."

Sullenly the boys obeyed, and it was between two lines of scowling faces, to the accompaniment of a continuous storm of hisses, that Philip followed Mr. Walker across the quad, and entered the examination-room.

(Another ripping instalment of this grand school serial will appear next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

"Soldiers of Fortune," a Superb New Serial, by a Grand New Author, Next Tuesday, commences in THE BOYS' FRIEND



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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ANOTHER NEW STORY.

IN next week's number of the "B. F." another new serial will commence. Its title is "Soldiers of Fortune"—a very good title, too, because it exactly conveys the scope of the story.

It is written by a gentleman who is famous as a traveller, as a travel-writer, and as a novelist. His name is Stanley Portal Hyatt, and he has had a world-wide experience—has been all over the globe seeing many things in many lands—and possesses the additional charm of being able to tell the story of his adventures in an attractive and fascinating way.

Mr. Stanley Portal Hyatt has been a sheep-station hand, an engineer, a hunter, trader, transport-rider, blockade-runner—in fact, almost everything! In the story which he has written for **THE BOYS' FRIEND** he will tell of wonderful adventures in South Africa and Rhodesia—he will introduce real living pen-pictures of lion-hunting, shooting hippopotami, and adventures with the native races.

WANTS TO MAKE A CHUM.

One of my friends, who is working in a mine away from home, tells me he feels rather lonely, and he has often seen a young fellow with whom he would very much like to become friends. However, he does not like to approach him because he thinks it would look as if he were trying to push himself on to this other fellow.

I don't think my reader should be so shy of making the acquaintance of the lad, whom he rather likes. The chances are that the other fellow is just as shy, and would be just as eager to respond to any friendly advances which were made to him. My advice to this young reader, therefore, is to make the first overtures of friendship, and the result may possibly be the discovery of a very pleasant and lasting chum.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.

Here is a letter which I am sure all my friends will read with interest, because, among other things, it proves that my papers are good, clean, and wholesome, and can be read with just as much interest by grown-ups as by boys.

My friend deals with another interesting point, and that is the prospects of the young people who go out to Australia. I have no doubt there is a good deal of truth in what he says, and as he is on the spot, his evidence should be received with very careful attention.

"Sydney.

"Dear Editor.—Just a line from the other side of the world. I am a constant reader of no fewer than six of your books—**BOYS' FRIEND**, 'Boys' Realm,' 'Boys' Herald,' 'Gem,' 'Union Jack,' and 'Pluck.'

"My old uncle—a man of sixty years, who has had a world-wide experience—reads and appreciates them immensely. For a long time he disclaimed them as a lot of trash, like the old American blood-and-thunder yarns of a few years ago. When he eventually did read one properly you could not stop him. And now he is every bit as anxious as I am to get the next week's lot.

"I am working on the railway, and am doing well, and hope to get on better.

"I have been to many corners of our grand Australia, and do not particularly wish to leave it, but there is hardly enough encouragement for anybody to get on out here.

"The young people from the Old Country, as immigrants have told me, are led to believe that you can almost

pick up gold every step you take, as it were. But, poor things, when they come here, they have to take on anything to avoid starvation.

"Mind, it is a rich country, but as I said before, there is no encouragement for anybody.

"This country, except along the coast, is hardly opened up at all.

"Of course, there are a few who might strike it lucky—get a good job, or something—but they want to know a good trade, or something useful.

"The new stories in 'Pluck' are very good. I believe the War Office in England does not appreciate that kind. My opinion is that a good tale like that only helps to keep patriotism in the soul of every Britisher who reads them.

"Military training is being made compulsory next year out here, which will be a grand thing. I shall be in my eighteenth year, and will join quick and lively. I also like very much the yarns in your three companion papers.

"Anything you wish to know about Australia I will oblige you with if possible. You can communicate through either of your papers—**BOYS' FRIEND**, 'Boys' Herald,' or 'Boys' Realm.'—Yours sincerely,
"TOM LEAF."

LOOKING AFTER ONE'S TEETH.

A friend of mine, who signs himself by the long non-de-plume of "A Faithful Reader of the 'Green' Un," wants me to give him some advice with regard to his teeth. He tells me that his front teeth are decaying very rapidly, and that a little hole between his two principal front teeth is gradually getting larger. In the place where he lives there is no dentist whom he could consult on the matter.

Care of our teeth is one of the most important things in connection with our bodies, because sound teeth mean good health and properly masticated and digested food, and properly digested food means plenty of nourishment to support the body. The only cure for decaying teeth is, first of all, to keep them regularly and perfectly clean. This can be done with the aid of a toothbrush and some powder, such as camphorated chalk, used night and morning—and remember that it is more important to clean the teeth at night on going to bed than in the morning, although, to keep them in condition, they should certainly be cleaned twice a day. This will possibly stop the decay, but the damage which has already been done can only be repaired by a visit to the dentist. If there is no dentist in my young friend's district the best thing he can do is to get a holiday, or to take advantage of the earliest holiday possible to him, and go to some dentist in a town near by. He must remember two things—the teeth must never be neglected, but always kept scrupulously clean, and an occasional visit to the dentist should be made.

NO SMOKING.

It is some time since I had a cigarette paragraph in **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, but this week I have two letters to deal with—one from a boy who wants to give up smoking, and the other from one who has given it up.

"All for Ireland" is a chum of mine who says he is very fond of smoking, and consumes from ten to fifteen cigarettes a day. He asks me to tell him if I think this is too much. Curiously enough, he also wants me to give him some information about Australia, and for this I refer

him to a preceding paragraph. I am informed by the Emigrants' Information Office that there are openings for farmers, farm labourers, market-gardeners, or orchardists under fifty, and for these cheap passages can be obtained from £2 to £5. Fares ranging from £6 to £10 (third-class) are charged to bona-fide emigrants with a little capital, but the ordinary fare to Australia is £12 (third-class) and upwards.

Now, to get back to my young friend's smoking question. I certainly do think that fifteen cigarettes a day for a young man of twenty-two is far too much, and the sooner he knocks it down to five the better. On this point, let me read him a little extract from the letter of W. T. R., a Sunderland reader, who says: "About five weeks ago I broke off the cigarette habit, and during the past five weeks I have only smoked one cigarette, while before then I had smoked heavily for years. I didn't make a promise to anybody to give it up, but I told myself to try, and, with the exception of that one cigarette, you will see that I have succeeded."

This is what I advise my correspondent "All for Ireland" to do—to tell himself he is going to stop the habit. In order to make the task as easy as possible, let him start the first week by limiting himself to ten cigarettes a day, the next week to five a day, and if he finds he really must smoke, let him stick to five, though, personally, I think this is too much—a couple of pipes would do him a great deal less harm.

A WOULD-BE SAILOR.

"Petty Officer" is a young friend of mine who is very much down in the dumps. He wants to join the Navy, but on application to the recruiting-office he was told he did not come up to the required measurements, and he is not made any happier by the thought that the older he gets the more difficult will it be for him to come up to the standard.

My young friend does not go into details, so I am unable to advise him properly, but if, as I suspect, it is a question of chest measurement and height, he should join some gymnast

sum, and go in for regular exercises. This ought to improve matters considerably, and possibly give him the chance of enlisting in the Navy which he so much desires. I may tell my friend that his suggestion as to writing to Whitehall, and asking them to make an exception in his case on the ground of his being in good health otherwise, is quite useless. He had much better try the gymnasium cure, which will soon develop his body and bring him up to the standard.

HOW TO STOP BLACK EYES.

R. T. tells me he would like to know how to stop black eyes. He says that he goes in for boxing, and now and again he gets a punch which marks him, and when he goes to work his chums all jeer at him.

My young friend has another trouble. He says that he does a lot of walking, and at night when he gets home his legs ache so much that he can hardly stand.

Well, to deal with R. T.'s first question, I would say the best way to cure black eyes obtained through boxing is to stop the other man from hitting you in the eye. You must learn to be a little smarter, my boy. It is evident that you are rather careless in the defence of your head, and you ought to improve yourself in this respect.

With regard to your legs aching after doing too much walking, it is quite possible that they are a little weak. The best remedy I can suggest is to try and avoid overdoing this form of exercise, and, if you cannot do so, to bathe your legs in cold water every night before going to bed. If you add a little common salt or sea-salt to the water, it will help to strengthen them.

I WANT YOUR HELP.

This week there will be published the first part of a wonderful encyclopædia specially prepared for every woman in this country—for every woman, whether she be a mother, wife, daughter, sister, or just a sweetheart—and in order to spread the fame of this book, and to bring it to the notice of all women, I want to enlist the services of my young friends. I know that if I ask them to help me they will, and so I am making a special appeal to them this week to show this paragraph either to their mothers or to their sisters, and to tell them that Part I. of "Every Woman's Encyclopædia," price 7d., contains something which will interest them immensely.

It is the most wonderful book of its kind ever produced. It has coloured plates, diagrams, pictures galore, and information on every possible subject that women can want to know anything about. It is an extraordinary book, and if my young friends' mothers and sisters buy it they will find they are getting enormous value for their money.

As I have said, it is not often that I ask my chums to do me a favour, but this week I do want them to speak about "Every Woman's Encyclopædia," Part I. of which will be on sale Thursday, November 3rd, price 7d.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.)

BOXING NOTES.

Early Difficulties.

WHEN you first begin to learn boxing, you will find that there are several unpleasant little worries that you must put up with. There are two special ones to deal with first—bleeding at the nose and running eyes. Both of these are usually caused by a blow on the nose. It not infrequently happens that a boy who has no real experience of boxing will think he has scored a magnificent victory when he sees your nose bleed. The truth is quite otherwise. In the excitement of the moment you will very likely not even be aware that it is bleeding, and as a matter of fact, the flow of blood is a considerable relief to the pain. In later days you do not have the benefit of this relief, as very often this sensitive spot becomes used to ill-treatment, and does not bleed any more. In any case, bleeding at the nose is hardly ever important, as it is extremely rare for anyone to lose enough blood in that way to make him weak.

Running eyes, however, is a different matter. That you do not get used to so easily, and the hardened boxer of many years' standing is liable to it when he receives

a really good punch

on the nose. When the eyes stream, it is sometimes hard to see clearly what your opponent is doing. Some people's eyes are weaker than others, and for these constant bathing in cold water is recommended. Bathe the face every morning and every night when you go to bed, and besides this, before and after boxing. An excellent plan is to open the eyes under water. This requires some determination at first, but afterwards is quite easy. If the cold water cure does not good, make a little mud with Fuller's-earth, and dab it on the eyes with the corner of a towel.

If in the middle of a fight or competition your eyes water so badly that you are practically blind, keep on the retreat for a moment or two and "cover up"—that is to say, keep your forearms well up on either side of your head, and your elbows down to guard the "mark," and try and rub the moisture away before your opponent can hit you.

(Another boxing article next Tuesday.)

YOUR DOG,

And How to Physic It.

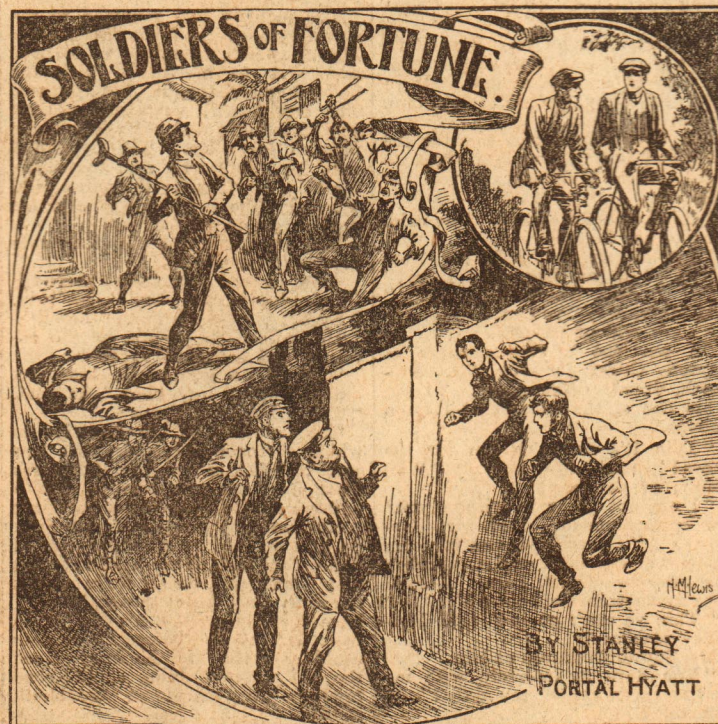
IN giving a dog liquid medicine people frequently open the animal's mouth fairly wide, and then pour in the physic, and expect the poor creature to take it peacefully. By taking this course the pet invariably struggles, and then splutters the whole contents of its mouth over the ground.

The correct way of giving a dog liquid medicine is to hold the animal's head up a little way, draw the lower lip away from the teeth near the cheek, and then pour the medicine in. The dog will remain quite still and drink quite comfortably.

After a disease, such as distemper, never allow the dog to return to the kennel or bed until you have well disinfected it, otherwise a fresh attack may break out. And should you keep more than one dog, never on any account keep the suffering one near the others, or the disease will quickly spread.

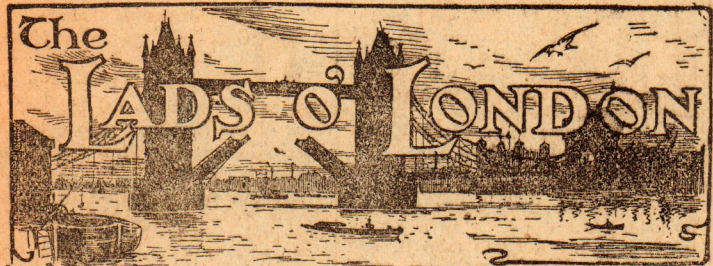
Mange is another very common complaint among dogs, and in this case the trouble is very easily detected. The disease may be brought about by high feeding or by simple neglect. It is a skin affection, and the animal will continually be scratching itself and scabs form on the skin. The hair of the affected parts becomes broken and falls off. Small pimples appear, and the skin looks red from the irritation and scratching. As the disease spreads, the legs, back, and even the whole body become denuded of hair. The treatment consists in thorough washing with anti-parasitic soap, followed by an application of the following lotion: Olive-oil, one pint; creolin, one ounce; bicarbonate of potash, one ounce; and two ounces of powdered sulphur. This will, when repeated three times at intervals of three days, generally effect a cure. A good lotion may otherwise be obtained from any live-stock dealer.

(Another dog article next week.)



A Reduced Facsimile of Our Front Page for Next Tuesday, when "Soldiers of Fortune" Commences in **THE BOYS' FRIEND**. Please tell your friends.

"Lonesome Len," by HENRY T. JOHNSON, "The Boys' Herald" on Wednesday, Nov. 9th. starts in



No. 1 of Our Grand New Series of Complete Stories.

"PAUPER TIM."

"HALLO, Pauper! What luck?"

It was a big, warmly clothed errand-boy who spoke. The lad addressed, whose poor rags were wet through, and clung close to his thin frame, flushed at the word "pauper," and seemed as if he would make an angry reply. On second thoughts, however, he did not do so. He had been called "Pauper Tim" ever since his mother died in the workhouse, and he supposed he would continue to be called so as long as he looked the part.

"No luck at all," he replied huskily, for a bad cold had settled on his lungs, and made it hard for him to speak.

"Hard lines!" cried the errand-boy, though he did not look very sympathetic as he shouldered his basket and went on his way.

"I dare say he'll go home to a jolly good hot supper," reflected Tim, looking after him enviously. "Golly! I wonder what it feels like to be full? It's weeks since I had a square feed, and a good three months since I slept in a bed."

Just then a gentleman came out of a hotel in the Strand, and Tim darted towards him.

"Paper, sir?" he said eagerly. The gentleman paused irresolutely, but when his eyes fell on Tim's wet bundle he quickly made up his mind.

"No, they're dripping wet!" he snorted indignantly. "It's like your cheek to offer them."

It was useless to take shelter under doorways, for if he did not sell his papers soon the chance would pass by. Already the streets were getting deserted. He ran through the driving rain towards the theatres near Charing Cross in the forlorn hope of getting some customers for his damp papers. But, as before, there was nothing doing.

"Hi, there, my boy," said a policeman sternly, "you leave off bothering people! Who d'you think wants your dirty papers? They look as if you'd picked 'em off the streets. You go off home."

"All right, gov'nor," Tim replied chirpily, "you'd better call my car. I'm stopping at the Cecil."

Then he bolted for dear life till he reached the Thames Embankment, where he squatted on a seat and looked up at the blazing lights of the Savoy and Cecil hotels.

"The very look of 'em does you good," reflected Tim, as he stared up at the covered balconies where the richest folk of Europe and America were strolling in evening-dress.

"Why shouldn't I be rich one day like them?" he asked himself. "If only I had a chance, I believe I could push my way like Carnegie and Lipton and other poor boys have done. What I want is a start."

Turning this thought over in his mind, he rose to his feet and walked vigorously towards the steps which lead up to Waterloo Bridge.

"What I want is a start," he said, aloud, as he began to climb the steps.

There was a policeman sheltering from the rain in the bend of the stairway, and he heard Tim's exclamation.

"What's that you say you want?" he queried.

"A start, that's all I want!" declaimed Tim, with flashing eyes. "I s'pose you can't give me one, can yer?"

The policeman was a good sort. "I don't know what you mean by a start," he said, with a grin; "but if a bit of bread and cheese is any use to you—"

"What-ho!" cried Tim joyfully; and the next minute his teeth were busily employed upon the policeman's supper.

"My word, you are hungry," said his kind friend. "I s'pose you haven't got no home to go to. Is your father in prison?"

"Not much! He's a hero, my father is! Saved lots of folks from drowning in his time. Best chap that ever walked, my father, I can tell you."

"Well, then, why doesn't he do something for you?"

"'Cause he can't. He went to sea eight years ago, and the ship was never heard of again. Mother wouldn't have it that he was drowned, though. When she was took sick, and we had to go into the workhouse, where she died, she used to say she was certain he'd turn up again some time, and I was to keep straight so's he shouldn't be ashamed of me."

"And have you?" asked the policeman, looking at him piercingly. "Yes, gov'nor, I have," declared Tim, staring him fearlessly in the eye.

The policeman laughed heartily, and bade him a cheery good-night. Then Tim raced up to the level of the bridge and began to run across it to the south side, where he knew of a railway-arch, which made a very fair sleeping-place on such a night as this.

"Golly! We're going to have a storm," he murmured, when a sudden crash of thunder burst over the great city and a flaming lightning-flash lighted up the river, and flung into bold relief the majestic Houses of Parliament at Westminster.

Only a few seconds later there was another flash which seemed to leap straight down from the vault of heaven like a bayonet-thrust. Tim's cheeks turned pale as he saw that it only missed the Waterloo Shot-tower by a matter of a foot or two. Near the summit of the tall chimney-like structure he observed an outside gallery, on which stood a speck, which his sharp eyes distinguished as the figure of a solitary man.

"Golly! He must have some pluck to stand up there with forked lightning all round him," Tim said admiringly. Then he added, with conviction: "I wouldn't be up there, no, not for a thousand pounds."

But Tim proved a very bad prophet. Events soon showed that he had a lot more courage than he himself supposed.

Tim had grown too used to exposure since taking up the precarious job of a newspaper-boy to worry much about wet clothes, or such a trifle as a hacking cough. Bending his head to the whistling blast he raced over Waterloo Bridge, and was not sorry to reach the shelter of the railway-arch.

Flinging himself down on a bed hastily improvised from the straw of a packing-case housed underneath the arch, he settled himself down to sleep with his bundle of papers for a pillow.

It was a pity he turned in just when he did, for it made him miss a superb though terrifying spectacle.

On account of the violence of the weather there were few in the London streets who saw the commencement of that drama of the night. But the loungers on the balconies of the Savoy Hotel saw it and shuddered.

They saw the forked lightning strike the shot-tower. They saw the moving speck, which they knew must be a man, rush wildly hither and thither, and they heard an awful cry of dreadful terror ring out upon the night.

But, first, who was the man, and what was he doing in such a situation?

The man was William Bennett, who acted as night-watchman and workman on the tower. It was his duty to tend the furnace which burned by night and day at the summit of the tower, to melt the big piggots of lead stored up there.

Night and day it was necessary to tend the furnace, but this left him plenty of spare time, and it was a relief to him to step out of the stifling atmosphere of the furnace-room on to the dizzy balcony.

A glance at the face of William Bennett would have revealed to the most casual observer the fixed look of grief stamped on his weather-beaten face.

"Somewhere or other," he muttered to himself, "they are hidden in yon maze of streets—my wife and

son. How have they fared, I wonder, all these years?"

His mates understood that Bennett had been a sailor, and that he had gone to sea in a vessel that had been wrecked on an uncharted island. They knew that he had only been home two years, most of which time he had spent searching vainly for his wife and child, and they thought his hopeless quest had turned his brain.

Be that as it may, it was of his dear ones that the sad-faced man was thinking on this night. Being a sailor, used to climbing to the mast-head in the worst of gales, the lightning had no terror for him, even when it came so close—until the unexpected happened.

With a fierce crackling the heavens split open, and a blinding flash of brilliant white light flashed in Bennett's eyes, and sent him staggering backwards. Simultaneously the great tower rocked on its foundations. Back and forth it swayed, till those who watched from across the swirling river expected to see it come toppling, crashing down.

Rising to his feet half stunned, Bennett recognised his danger. He feared lest the tower should fall. Would there be time for him to race down the spiral staircase which wound about the inside of the tower?

Opening the door, he sprang into the furnace-room, and there he made a terrible discovery. Whether it was the lightning which had set the tower on fire, or whether its severe shaking had split the furnace and caused the conflagration, he did not stop to guess.

All he realised was the fact that a dreadful fire was raging and he must flee at once. But when he opened the trapdoor in the floor which gave admission to the spiral stairs an awful cry escaped him.

"By Heaven, the stairs are gone!" he screamed. "Nothing on earth can save me!"

The rocking of the tower had, indeed, dislodged the old iron brackets which held the stairs in place, and they had dropped in a ruined heap to choke the tower. On them had fallen fire and molten lead from the furnace, and the wood-work was already burning. As yet the flames were low, but soon they would leap and lick up the tower's straight walls to join the other fire above them.

This fact William Bennett realised, and rushing back again to the dizzy

balcony, he sent forth that awful cry of utter horror into the night.

"Hallo! What was that?"

Tim was a light sleeper, and the cry from the tower brought him like lightning from the railway arch. A quick glance round and upwards revealed to him the source of the sound which woke him, and in a moment he was running hot-foot towards the foot of the great tower.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The sharp, imperative summons of the firemen's bell cleared a passage like magic, and Tim caught hold of the back of the escape and got a lift to the very centre of operations.

"Golly, I do hope that chap'll get down safely!" he said aloud in his excitement.

"Then you'll jolly well be disappointed," said the hoarse voice of a bystander. "The inside's a flaming inferno."

The firemen ran out their hose and pumped water as well as they could upon the conflagration in the base of the tower, but the whole structure was rocking on its foundations, and it was perilous work.

"Clear the people out of the houses near by!" the inspector of police commanded. "The tower is going to fall."

And the man was still upon it.

But he no longer stood upon the balcony. That was now too hot for him, and he had forsaken it to make a desperate bid for safety.

By the light of the flames the anxious watchers saw that the man was trying to climb down the outside of the shot-tower. He was descending by means of iron steps set far apart, which the steeplejacks who built it had left in position many years before.

Like the others, Tim stood with white face upraised, watching the man's progress.

"He'll do it!" cried some.

But their eyes were not so sharp as Tim's. They could not see as he could that four steps were missing halfway up the tower. Many years before, probably, they had rusted out, and nobody had troubled to replace them.

Vainly he tried to draw the attention of somebody in authority to his discovery. They were all too busy to attend to the suggestions of a ragged newsboy.

"Raise the escape!" cried many voices urgently.



Tim stood perilously balanced as the man stretched down till his feet rested on the boy's shoulder. How was he to descend further?

"It wouldn't reach half-way," replied the firemen despairingly.

Besides, the tower was rocking. Slowly, back and forth, like the pendulum of a clock it swayed, and each time recovered itself.

"It'll fall soon," said the inspector anxiously. "Clear the people back, men!"

Not unwillingly the folk retreated—all save Tim, who ducked between a policeman's legs and bolted towards the tower.

"Hi, there, come back!"

In vain the police bellowed. Already the little newsboy had gained the burning tower, and was climbing the iron steps to meet him who swung above.

Another groan rose from the people when they saw the brave lad venture on his perilous errand. Past embrasures in the tower he had to climb, from which they saw smoke and flame belch as if to lick him up.

"Hang on! I'm coming!" he shouted hoarsely, and in the silence of apprehension which prevailed, all heard his words.

At last he gained the topmost rung of those which remained in place.

A cheer rang from those who watched, but Tim saw with despair that nearly six feet intervened between himself and the boots of the man who swung above him.

So he took a desperate course.

Searching with his fingers for weak spots in the mortar, he picked out places which afforded a slight grip, and went on climbing till his feet rested where his hands had been a moment or two before.

Now, he stood perilously balanced, with nothing to keep him from smashing to the ground except the grip of his fingers in the interstices between the bricks. And the tower was so hot that his palms could hardly bear the contact.

Nevertheless, he did not flinch.

"Lower yourself on to my shoulders," he called in a steady voice to the man above him. "And be quick, for the tower is going to fall."

None but a man of amazing nerve could have done what Bennett did. Without hesitation he stretched down at full arm's-length till his feet rested on Tim's shoulders.

Those in the street drew in a breath of apprehension as they saw his hands let go. They cheered like madmen as they saw the ex-sailor lower himself with the agility of a monkey or a cat. Making use of Tim's body as a ladder, he slipped down him and gained the iron rungs.

Mad huzzas rent the air as the pair raced down to ground and bolted out of range less than half a minute before the ruined tower fell.

But the best is still to be told.

When Bennett had reached safety and turned to hold his heroic saviour's hand and thank him in broken words, those who stood by saw a strange look leap into his eyes.

Seizing the ragged newsboy he turned his face to the light and stared at him like one demented. Then in a shaky voice he cried:

"Her eyes, her face, her look! Am I mad, or have I at last found them?"

Puzzled, the newsboy regarded him with astonished wonder.

Keeping strong control of himself, the man said:

"Boy, tell me your name."

"I'm Tim."

"Yus, Tim, the Pauper, that's 'im," put in a bystander.

A gasp of joy broke from the saved man.

"And is your other name Bennett?"

"Yes, Tim Bennett," admitted the lad in amazement. "But how did you know that?"

"Because you are the living image of your mother, my dear boy. For two years I have hunted for you, and now at last I've found you, Tim. I am your father!"

Words cannot describe the joy of that happy meeting.

In future Tim was no longer without a home. His father's employers found a good situation for him, and a public subscription in recognition of his heroism has provided a nest-egg to ensure him the "start" he has long wished for.

Tim is a lad of ambition, and it is not likely he will ever go back to poverty and rags. If, indeed, he does become another Carnegie in time, he will owe his success to the start in life he won for himself when he risked his own life to save that of a stranger. But Tim himself thinks less of mere prosperity than of the fact that at last he has found his father.

(Another "Lads o' London" complete story next Tuesday.)

"Soldiers of Fortune," a Superb New Serial, by a Grand New Author, Next Tuesday, commences in THE BOYS' FRIEND



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. 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 for 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 Peckchaff 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.

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 has been dismissed from the works for making a merciless attack upon the great detective and his assistant.

Help is asked for from the military barracks situated some distance away from the workings. There in the workings a small party of faithful navvies await silently for the threatened attack of the grinders, and the soldiers are armed and alert.

In the distance Sexton Blake can see huge numbers of the ruffians emerging from the dense woods.

Then, all being ready, they wait in silence and darkness for the coming of the attack.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Storm Breaks.

THE sound of the oncoming men had again ceased, as though they had halted to form up or hold a conference.

Sexton Blake clambered up the sloping inner side of the barricade, and, lying down, peered over.

He easily made out, in spite of the darkness, a mass of men, irregular in form, as a mob would be, drawn up at no great distance away. Conspicuous in front was a smaller knot, in which he recognised the short, squat figure of Bates, the groom, and the burly, giant form of Black Jock.

They were evidently holding a council of war.

He saw Black Jock raise his arm and point to where the villain knew the magazine lay, plainly indicating that the attack must be made there.

A pause; then, as though in response to some command, the whole mass began to stir and move down the valley directly towards the line of the barricade.

Blake leapt down.

"Steady, men, steady!" he ordered, as he passed the crouched line. "Not a movement, not a sound till I give the word!"

He strode quickly to the back of the line, where, at the door of the dynamo shed, a boy stood eagerly waiting.

"All ready, Dick?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then stand by the switch. You'll get the signal in a minute."

"Right, sir."

The detective returned to the barricade, and again cautiously peered over the top edge. The main mass of the mob had halted again, and presently a body, consisting of some four or five hundred, was marshalled in front, and,

headed by Black Jock, began to advance swiftly, but as noiselessly as it was possible for so large a number to move.

"They intend a surprise," laughed Blake softly. "but I rather fancy the surprise will be t'other way round."

Black Jock held up his hand, and they halted; so close now that the detective could easily distinguish the faces of the foremost. And being chiefly the half-gipsy grinders, they were a wild, tough-looking lot.

Not all were armed with sticks or cudgels; here and there he caught the glint of steel, and could have sworn to at least one gun-barrel.

Black Jock marshalled them in a long line some five or six deep. Then, at another wave of his hand, they began to run forward at the double.

"Steady, men! Keep down!" whispered Blake.

He sprang to the top of the barricade, then raised a shrill, peculiar whistle.

With the last note a blaze of light flooded the scene. It came from a row of powerful arc lamps which Blake had arranged behind the barricade, so that their reflectors cast the rays over it, leaving all behind in blackest shadow.

A chorus of yells broke from the advancing rioters.

Blinded by the white, concentrated glare, they pulled up in confusion. Sexton Blake was quick to seize his moment—for he still hoped to avert bloodshed, if that was possible.

"Now, Sir Richard!" he said, helping the magistrate up beside him.

The gallant old fellow sprang up lightly as a boy, and stood erect, his tall, commanding figure strongly marked against the electric glare, which glistened on his bare, grey head like moonlight on frost.

Fearlessly he ran his eye over the sullen mob before him; then his clear, manly voice rang out:

"You know me, my men. I'm old Richard Blaise, who's done many of you a good turn in his time, though you choose to forget it at the word of a few misguided scoundrels and fools. I'm here to do you another good turn now. Go home. That's my advice. Let this bad business end where it is!"

He was heard in silence thus far, for the mob was taken by surprise. But Black Jock swung round upon his men, and roared out:

"Are you going to listen to him, the mealy-mouthed old rotter! Why, it's him that started these very works—to ruin you an' fill his own pockets. Rush the place, boys! We've got our work to do!"

There was some movement, but Sir Richard checked it, so powerful was the appeal of his ringing voice.

"Stop! For goodness' sake, stop! We are not surprised! We are prepared! There are a hundred picked men here—all armed! And the troops at the barracks have been warned! Disperse! Disperse, before this leads to bloodshed!"

There was a sort of wavering murmur, as though his impressive words had gone home to some. But Black Jock's bull voice broke out again:

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By

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starts in

Hard Knocks Going.
"NOW, lads, up and at them!"
Sexton Blake's voice rang out above the din, just as he drove his fist between the eyes of the first man who scaled the barricade, sending him reeling back among his fellows.

His call was answered by a cheer as his men leapt to the top of the breastwork to meet the rush.

"Hoo-roo, ye fiends, come on!" roared the voice of the man from Tipperary at the end of the line. "This way if ye're tired av loife, ye thaves o' the world! Hoo-roo!"

And some head was none the better when his pick-handle came down.

"By goome! This is better fun than being jawed by the missus!" remarked big Job Peckchaff, as he floored two men together with a side sweep of his table-leg. "It's all the pleasure in life to hit back for once!"

But it was fun of a doubtful kind.

The battle along the ridge of the barricade was grim enough to satisfy the hungriest fighter there.

The rioters attacked with savage fury, as men will who have made their first plunge into a desperate venture, and think to carry it through with sweeping violence. With weight of numbers to back them, it looked an easy matter to clear the ridge of that thin line of men.

But they speedily found themselves mistaken.

Blake's lusty fellows stood like a wall of rock, and the first wave of the attack broke upon it in vain.

Maddened at the unexpected resistance, and driven on by the pressing mob behind, the front line of the rioters plied their cudgels and hedgestakes, and even iron bars, with murderous fury.

Many of Blake's men dropped—some knocked out of further fighting for that night at least.

More than once the thin line wavered, and it looked as though the human wave in front would pour over the barricade and sweep its defenders away like wreckage.

But again and again Sexton Blake's voice, clear as a trumpet-call, rallied them and put new fire into their hearts, fresh strength into their flagging arms.

Erect upon the highest part of the ridge, his athletic figure was conspicuous above all, and a special mark for attack.

The thickest of the fight surged round him, and he was often confronted with half a dozen foes at once. His lightning glance seemed everywhere; his movements had the speed of thought. The cudgel, the iron bar, aimed at his head, somehow missed its mark, and as often as not struck friend instead of foe so closely they hemmed him round.

But his fists—his sole weapons—never failed to get home.

On brow, on jaw—always on some telling mark—his iron knuckles crashed. And none who got one of those convincing drives ever came up to risk a second.

Yet he did not come off scathless.

A ruffian, armed with a scythe-blade, short handled like a sword, struck at him over the knot of foes that then hemmed him in.

The jagged blade missed his head, but the curved point struck deep into his forearm.

The fiery pain stung Blake into momentary fury, and gave him giant strength.

With a mighty sweep of his unwounded arm he cleared the way before him and drove his fist—a fearful blow—full between the maddened villain's eyes.

The man went down as though a thunderbolt had struck him, and fought no more that night.

On either side of Blake, but not quite so high or prominent, stood Temple and Sir Richard Blaise.

The plucky old knight, with a blood-stained handkerchief tied round his wounded forehead, wielded his knobkerrie with telling effect, and accounted for many who managed to get past Sexton Blake.

Temple did good work with his teak war-club. Of but slight build, his strength was hardly equal to his pluck, and the strain of that wild, fierce work soon began to tell upon him.

His arm wavered; his guard was beaten down. A heavy hedge-stake descended upon his head, and he reeled down the slope, stunned.

Then Sir Richard lost his footing and went down, and but for Blake, who sprang to drive the rabble back,

would have been trampled under foot.

The mob howled with delight as the erect, grey head vanished at last.

The crowd at the back pressed harder at the shout of triumph, and the fight waxed hotter still.

Ash pick-handle rang upon oaken club or iron bar, or fell with a dull, sickening thud upon its human mark.

Blake's men cheered, the mob shouted and yelled.

The attacking wave of men surged and beat against the front of the barricade. Heads appeared above it, to fall back—often reddened—and give place to others.

It was strange—Blake thought of it in the hottest of the fight—but neither of the mob's leaders, Bates or Black Jock, were visible in that first attack. Either they preferred to egg the others on and save their own skins, or they were engaged in worse mischief elsewhere.

It was Cronk, the big grinder, who led that first rush. And he did it well.

Seeing readily enough that Blake was the life and soul of the defence, he again and again tried to force his way towards him, but was as often swept away in the confused eddies of the fight.

At last, in a momentary parting of the struggling mass, the two came face to face.

Cronk was armed with an iron bar. With this he struck a fearful blow at the detective, which, had it reached him, would have shattered his skull like an eggshell.

But Blake stooped sideways, and closing in, gripped the ruffian around the waist.

In spite of his wounded arm, from which the blood-drops flew in showers at the movement, he lifted the big fellow above his head, swung him high, then hurled him headlong into the mass below.

This threw the centre of the mob into confusion, and Blake was quick to seize the moment.

"They're giving, lads! Welt into 'em!" he cried.

And down rattled the pick-handles like flails on a barn floor.

"Hoo-roo, yez haythens! Here's one to remember the power o' me arm by!" roared Tipperary Tim, sweeping the last man off the ridge at his end.

They broke all along the line, reeling anyhow, all legs and arms, down the slope on to the others, and something like a panic seized the entire mob, which began to sway backwards, and even to break up, as if about to retreat.

The first rush was over. The barricade was not taken yet.

Tinker's Plan of Action.

BLAKE'S fellows sent up a ringing cheer, and, flushed with triumph, would have leapt over the barricade and carried 'the battle into the enemy's country, but Blake checked them with a shout to "Stand fast!"

It was well that he did.

The breathing-space was brief indeed. The backward movement of the mob ceased, as upon either flank of the disordered mass fresh parties of men appeared; the one led by Black Jock, the other by Bates. Sweeping round to the front, the two gangs united and spread out; then, headed by their ruffianly leaders, poured down upon the barricade.

"Wipe 'em out, boys! The game's ours now!" roared Black Jock. "There's a third of 'em down, and the rest are about knocked! Come on! Rush 'em—rush 'em!"

Blake ran his eye down the thin line behind the barricade, and saw with dismay that the scoundrel's words were all too true.

Less than seventy of his fellows lined the ridge now; the rest had been knocked out in that terrible three minutes' work—for the whole thing had taken no longer.

Those that remained looked cruelly spent and battered, but they stood up gallantly to meet the second rush.

"They'll sweep us away like chaff before a gale," muttered Blake, eyeing the oncoming mass. "Four times our number could not stem this rush. It will be bitter work. Thank Heaven Tinker is out of it!"

The men stood silent, husbanding their breath. Even Tipperary Tim made no battle-cry, but stood erect at his end of the breastwork, like a rugged statue outlined against the white glare. His brawny arms were bare to the shoulder, and they, like the stout ash-stave he grasped, were bloated with red.

"Rush 'em, boys—rush 'em!" shouted Black Jock again.

The mob answered with a wild chorus of yells and cheers. The dense mass behind pressed hard upon the fresh men in front, and the entire horde came on like a tidal-wave.

"Stand fast, lads—stand fast!" cried Blake. "Hit hard, and we'll beat them back again!"

But he doubted his own words. Upwards of a thousand strong, the beat of their feet sounding like the fall of tropical rain upon the dry, hard earth, the rioters swept to within ten yards of the barricade.

But they got no nearer. Suddenly a shrill whistle sounded, and a burst of boyish cheering followed.

Blake looked up, eager, anxious. Just in front of the barricade ran the miniature railway, upon its

light wooden trestles some fifteen or twenty feet high.

Its whistle going merrily, and a column of sparks flying from its tiny funnel, the little engine steamed out of the distant shed. Tinker was on the footplate. Blake could just see his face by the light of the furnace that played upon it, and smiled himself at the delighted grin it wore.

A train of a dozen trucks followed, and everyone carried a number of boys, all shouting and yelling as though it was the great hour of their lives.

"Rush on, you fools!" shouted Black Jock. For the mob half stopped to stare upwards.

The charge began again.

"Now, kids, give 'em socks!" came Tinker's voice from high above.

It was answered by a chorus of whoops and yells a party of Red Indians might have heard with envy.

Then down upon the advancing mob came a volley of clay balls, rolled hard as iron, and hitting like cannon-shot from that height.

Thud, thud! Splodge, splodge!

Those chunks of clay got home every time—chiefly on head or face—for Tinker's merry men were capital hands at throwing straight, as most boys, barring the blind or crippled, usually are.

The effect was tremendous.

The front line of the mob seemed to curdle up under that amazing volley, which came upon them like a flight of thunderbolts out of the sky itself.

It was not deadly, of course, but it was mighty effective.

If it didn't kill him, it took all the fight out of a man when he got one of those balls square in the middle of his face, and it spread like a mask, choking up his eyes, nose, and mouth.

The foremost ranks staggered, reeled, kicked, and plunged in their efforts to get away from that hail of clay, bringing the whole mob to a halt, and throwing the mass behind into wild confusion.

"Keep it up, kiddies!" shouted Tinker. "They want the earth—let 'em have it!"

The boys hardly needed edging on. It was just nuts to them, as Tinker himself might have said, and they made the play sharp and hot.

Clay was cheap in Reddell Dale, and every truck was well supplied with ready ammunition. Tinker kept the train of trucks slowly steaming up and down the wooden viaduct so that his men could sweep the whole front of the mob below.

The boys yelled with delight at each successful shot—and few missed. The rioters howled in rage and panic, while Blake's men cheered lustily.

In vain Black Jock and Bates tried to rally their men to the charge.

As fast as they tried to form, the storm of clay broke out with redoubled violence and crumpled them up.

Then Bates got a two-pound globe of moist clay fair in the middle of his ugly face, and he had to retire to dig his countenance out of it.

"Grand, Tinker—grand!" ejaculated Sexton Blake, proud and delighted at the boy's smart move. "If he can only hold them in check till help comes, we may save the works yet."

And Tinker seemed equal to the task. Wherever his quick eye noted an attempt to rally along the broad front of the mob, he ran his train thither, and concentrated the fire of his two hundred marksmen upon the spot, and the rioters broke in an instant. They never got a chance to form or rush a yard nearer the barricade.

That respite was a blessed boon to the spent and weary little band of defenders. Parched throats were slaked with water Blake had placed handy. Cracked heads were bound up, and broken pick-handles replaced with new ones. The detective got his wounded shoulder bound up, and the bleeding stopped.

Sir Richard Blaise, having recovered a trifle, insisted upon rejoining the fighting line.

"Splendid, splendid!" the stout old fellow delightedly exclaimed, when he saw what Tinker and his merry men were doing. "By Jove, I'll see that every lad of 'em has his breeches-pocket well lined when this is over!"

"It's not over yet!" muttered Blake grimly to himself. "Where is Black Jock? And what fresh evil is he devising?"

For, running his eye over the front of the mob, he could see nothing of the burly ringleader, who seemed to have vanished. The whole mass of the rioters had drawn back out of range of Tinker's volleys.

There was a pause—a lull in which even the shouting ceased.

Then the mob parted, opening into several lanes, and small parties of men came running through, each carrying a large bundle of what looked like dried bracken, pulled from the hill-side.

Blake speedily guessed their intention, but he could do nothing to defeat it.

His first thought was to call upon his men to leap the barricade and drive the ruffians back. But, fearing to risk their slender numbers in the open, he hesitated—a rare thing for Sexton Blake!

That moment of indecision was fatal.

Running swiftly, with their bundles of furze and bracken held so as to cover face and head, the men raced across the narrow space between the

front of the mob and the wooden viaduct.

Tinker, from above, saw their object, and called upon his men to fire their hardest.

The clay balls hailed down in showers, but in vain! Well screened by their strange shields, the rioters covered the short distance at the double, and were soon sheltered by the railway itself.

There they cast the bundles down in heaps around the tarred trestles, and then dashed back.

Most of them got well peppered on their return run. But they had done their work.

Blake was about to order his fellows to dash out, but he saw that it was too late.

Fire burst from each pile of tinder-dry furze and bracken, and catching the tarred trestles, instantly shot up in huge tongues of flame.

In a few moments the railway above—all of wood, save the actual rails—was wrapped in winding, hissing serpens of fire, that coiled along it rapidly in each direction.

"Heaven help Tinker and those poor lads!" gasped Sexton Blake in horror.

For their position was one of appalling peril.

With fiendish cunning, Black Jock had divided his men into two separate gangs; one of which, invisible from the railway almost to the edge of the swamp. There they piled the dry stuff and lighted it simultaneously with the gang in front of the barricade.

Tinker and his boys were thus literally caught between two fires!

Cries of amazement and alarm broke from the lads, who were little prepared for this new peril.

Tinker himself gave a gasp of dismay as he saw the flames leap up before and behind him, and rapidly rushing to meet, already coiling and hissing around the train of trucks!

A huge tongue of fire suddenly curled up and swept across the engine, singeing his face and head.

The boys, full of pluck though they were, gave shrieks of pain or terror, as sheets of flame, driven by the rising wind, burst over the trucks like fiery waves!

Some of them, made mad and reckless by this new and unlooked-for terror, began to climb out of the trucks, as if to leap from the lofty viaduct.

Tinker saw this, and shouted at the top of his voice, to be heard above the roar of the flames:

"Don't try that! It's certain death down there! Stand fast, boys! I'll bring you out of it!"

But he hadn't much faith in his own words, brave as they sounded.

(Continued on the next page.)

A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.*

Being Some Further Adventures of Stanley Portal Hyatt. Author of the New BOYS' FRIEND Serial that Starts Next Week.

My First Hippo.

THE kraal of the Mashonas was not a cheerful place.

An hour or so after we got there, although it was still broad daylight, a couple of leopards began to growl in the kopje near by. Just before sunset one of our boys came in to say that a flock of guinea-fowl was down in some old lands beside the water-hole, and I reached the spot in time to see a huge crocodile dive off one of the rocks into the pool. I was still watching the bubbles rising when something stirred at my feet, and I looked down to see a twelve-foot long python uncoiling himself. He finished the process with his head blown off, wagging a shapeless stump to and fro.

"Most people would have reckoned the spot too prolific in scelm, and have detested it accordingly. Not so with my boys. They forgot the leopards and the crocodile, and ignored altogether the hyena which turned up shortly afterwards. Had I not killed a python, an N'hlatu, a great snake, and did not every sane person know that when you killed a snake you were going to have luck in hunting?"

"The greater the snake, the greater the luck, and they spent half the night discussing what I should shoot on the morrow. They even went so far as to give the local witch

doctor a snuff-box and the promise of a shilling to throw the bones, and so discover which side of the Lundi River would be lucky. He decided that I must cross, and so in the morning—a chilly winter morning—the guide took us down through the dew-laden grass on the river bank, through the bitterly cold stream itself, into the mopani scrub on the other side. Usually we took some food with us—cold guinea-fowl and bread—but on this occasion so sure were our boys of

the luck of the great snake

that they carried only a small bag of monkey-nuts.

"The first thing I struck was a duiker, who dove into the scrub and was lost. A few minutes later a dozen vague grey shadows, seen indistinctly against the thorn bush, materialised suddenly into so many waterbuck cows, then, before I could shoot, disappeared again. The boys laughed. The luck of the N'hlatu would be something far better than mere waterbuck, tough and strongly-scented. A mile further on there was a sudden crashing amongst the bush, and an eland bull, the buck of all buck, was away in a cloud of dust, followed by a badly-aimed bullet from my rifle. Then I saw the horns of a sable antelope just disappearing behind some mimosa bush, and after that again a troop of impala really out of range.

"I was beginning to get sore at my ill-luck, as well as hungry.

Suddenly Tom, who was carrying a Metford carbine, gripped my arm.

"There, baas, there is the luck of the N'hlatu!" he whispered.

"I followed his pointing finger, to see in the pool, about a hundred and sixty yards away, the head of a huge hippo, a very giant amongst giants, sticking clear out of the water.

It was my first hippo.

Had I been older I should have gone closer, and, as I crept up, I should have remembered that I only had soft-nosed bullets in my belt, and then I should have left the animal alone. As it was, however, I fired from where I was, hit him in the exact place, behind the ear, and ran forward, reckoning I had got him. Just as I reached the edge of the pool there was a sudden bellow, and the great beast came out of the water with ponderous deliberation, as though utterly dazed—as in fact he was—and began to push his way through the reed bed.

"An instant later Tom's Metford carbine spat out its vicious note just beside my ear, a wholly futile body shot. Then he and I were in the water, forcing our way through it, waist deep, breast deep, whilst the big bull was moving so slowly, lurching a little as he went, that we got to the other side of the pool almost at his heels.

"Tom fired again and yet again, uselessly as before, into the hind-quarters. I was waiting for a head shot—I had that amount of sense left. Suddenly

the hippo turned at right angles

back to the pool, and I got him again in the head. He gave a bellow, lurched forward into the water, and for a few seconds was

lost to view. I thought he was done, and when he began to dive down into the sand at the deep end of the pool, and root that up, I took it to be his death flurry.

"I was squatting on the bank—I never kneel to shoot; down on your haunches, Kafir fashion, is a far better position—waiting for him. At last he came within ten feet, out of the water suddenly, roaring at me. I took him fair and square in the forehead—I saw where the bullet had struck before he dived again—and being, as I have said, young and foolish, I imagined my soft-nosed bullet had finished him. He got into a real flurry then. . . . The bull spouted blood till the water was red half across its width, and then he became very quiet.

"Tom rubbed his stomach gently, as though in anticipation of a huge gorge. 'He is dead,' he said.

"I will say this much for Tom, that, though he made

a big mistake,

he took the same risk as myself; in fact, he led the way into the pool when he suggested that we had better get back to the north bank. We must have been half-way across when Tom gave a cry. That hippo was still alive, very much alive, and he was coming for us. We were waist deep at the moment, and only those who have tried to hurry through water with their clothes on can understand what it means.

"We had thirty feet to go to safety, and the bull was within twenty feet. One snap of his jaws would have sufficed to cut a man in half. I had the butt-end of my rifle ready

to drive into his mouth

if he gave me the chance, but I knew that, according to all ordinary rules, my game was played out; and then suddenly, when he was within ten feet of me, he seemed to lose his sense of direction, turned round in a semi-circle, and blundered into a reed bed. He was still absolutely dazed from my last shot.

"Yet, in a way, he got his own back. Fate evened up things, for as I clambered out of the pool I slipped on a big rock, and twisted my knee, injuring the muscles. For a fortnight I was dead lame, trekking became a perfect misery, and the knee has never got really strong since. Now, after ten years, I dare not get on a restive horse, whilst if I stand about for an hour or so—say, waiting for a South-coast train—that knee begins to remind me of my first hippo, six thousand miles away, in the Lundi River.

"The bull is there yet, for all I know. In the morning I was too stiff to move, but Malcolm went, with big knives and ropes, and axes and a camera, to do the cutting up, but the quarry had vanished. There was not a trace of him, and no nigger down that river found a dead hippo, so I imagined my soft-nosed bullets merely stunned him, and, after a bad headache, he went on his way rejoicing."

("Soldiers of Fortune," our grand new serial, by Stanley Portal Hyatt, commences next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Please tell all your chums.)

Stanley Portal Hyatt

* From "The Diary of a Soldier of Fortune," by Stanley Portal Hyatt. T. Werner Laurie, London.

"Soldiers of Fortune," a Superb New Serial, by a Grand New Author. Next Tuesday. commences in THE BOYS' FRIEND

For all that, portions of the frail-looking structure behind him was already a mass of living flame, in which the twisted iron rails stood up writhing like fiery snakes.

In front, between them and safety—which meant the shed within the line of the works—all was seething, leaping tongues of red, showing how fearful was the hold of the fire upon that portion too!

Tinker had halted the train of trucks midway between.

He well knew that the viaduct, burnt nearly through, would be likely enough to crumble like charred sticks under the weight of engine and trucks, with certain death for all who fell with them.

But there was just one chance—one forlorn, desperate chance! And he meant to risk it.

A Race Through Fire and Flame.

CROUCH down, all of you!" Tinker shouted to the boys. "And hold on tight! I'm going to whiz her through!"

He had kept a good head of steam up, and he was thankful for it now, for the sole hope lay in speed—to skim rather than to bear upon the charred structure.

He started the engine, then opened the throttle wide.

With a ringing whir, the wheels skidded, then bit, and the tiny locomotive seemed to dart forward like a shot from a gun.

His hand on the lever, Tinker bent himself almost double to screen with his body his face and head from the fiery blast they had to bore through.

The boys huddled together, head down, in the trucks, like sheep in a hailstorm. Crash and rattle! Whiz and whir!

The engine seemed to leap along rather than run upon the metals, jolting from side to side as it gathered way, and threatening, if any rail was warped by the heat, to plunge off the viaduct, hurling every one of them to destruction.

It was a miracle how it kept to the rails, as Tinker afterwards thought—he dared not think about it then.

It was a wild, mad ride! Once, twice, a score of times, the engine, meeting a buckled rail-end, bounded sideways, and nearly flung him off the footplate over the side of the viaduct.

But always, by the luck that governs plucky, desperate deeds, it righted itself, and flew on, dragging the jolting, bounding train of trucks after it.

Not a sound, not a movement, was made by the mass below.

Friend and foe alike stood motionless, breathless; a thousand faces upturned in the vivid crimson glare, watching that awful race with fire and death!

Upon the ridge of the barricade Sexton Blake stood like a figure cast in bronze. He seemed not to breathe; his chest no longer rose and fell, as though his very pulses of life were held in check by the agony of his suspense.

Only his lips moved slightly; perchance in a whispered prayer for the gallant boy he loved like a son!

And now they had reached the very climax of their peril, where the viaduct was invisible—wrapped in a sheet of red-stained yellow flame.

The engine, the trucks with their living freight, plunged into it, and were lost to sight. Flakes of fiery fragments, shaken loose by the thundering wheels, flew up and out upon the rising night wind. The flames, drawn down by the rushing train, seemed to stoop like dragons of fire to blast the life out of those it was bearing beyond their power.

Sexton Blake, with eyes straining in their sockets, watched the slender line of that bridge to life and safety.

He saw the engine emerge from the fiery curtain, looking a thing of fire itself in the ruddy glare.

And then—Ah, merciful Heaven! He saw the lower line of the viaduct bulge downwards! The timbers parted and fell, wrapped in flame and smoke. The last truck leapt a chasm just spanned by two white-hot rails, that an instant later were seen to twist and writhe like wounded serpents, then plunge hissing through the air.

Then the whole centre of the structure, five hundred feet in length, swayed from side to side as though shaken by a giant hand.

The trestles—mere glowing charcoal—seemed to crumble into fiery dust, and the whole mass crashed down in a cataract of flame and sparks.

The rear wheels of the last truck were seen to hang for a breathless

moment over the fiery abyss, then were drawn up on to the sound rails beyond, and the entire train clattered on into safety.

Then Blake and his men let loose their pent-up breath in a mighty cheer.

An answering burst of cheers came from the distant shed, where engine and trucks were now safely pulled up. Tinker let his whistle go in a long, piercing whoop of triumph.

As an echo, Black Jock's bull voice was heard to roar out:

"Now's our time, boys! Down on 'em an' sweep the beggars away, an' we'll blow that scum sky-high along with what's left of 'em!"

"Ay, rush 'em now! Rush 'em now, before the sogers come!" shouted Bates, who had got rid of the clay, and was quite his rascally self again, ripe for any deed of violence.

The mob responded with an outburst of shouts and yells that blended into one great volume of sound, much like the rising of a gale at sea.

Then once more they came on at the charge.

"Stand to it, lads!" cried Blake. "It's the last round, and if we can't win, make 'em remember we were here!"

"By the great gun of Athlone, an' so we will, Bob, darlin'!" cried the six-foot-four of Irish pluck, from the end of the line as he spat on his big fists and took a fresh grip of his pick-handle.

And the sturdy fellows cheered for the last time before the rush came. After that they would have little breath for it.

The rioters were checked in passing the fallen viaduct, and this gave a little space for Blake to look around. Temple was still hors de combat. He had been carried to the rear, and was not likely to join the fighting-line in time to help. Sir Richard Blaise had taken his place, as before, at Blake's side, but with him there were fewer than seventy men all told.

"Seventy men against upwards of a thousand! Long odds!" was the detective's grim mental comment.

Just then, hearing a patter of running feet behind him, he glanced round.

Tinker came up at the trot, followed by his two hundred light infantry.

They were a sinned, smoke-begrimed, sooty-looking lot, but they were not a bit down-hearted, far from it! As full of grit inside as they were grimy out, each boy, having done his best, and done it well, was eager to do a bit more.

Tinker himself looked like a chimney-sweep who had been trying to clean a flue with the fire going. The back of his jacket and one sleeve was quite burnt away. The hair on one side of his head was singed to half its length, and his face would have earned him coppers on Margate sands without his singing a note.

But he wore a cheerful grin that cracked the grime into white cobwebs round his mouth and eyes.

"Here we are, guv'nor!" he sung out cheerily, leaping up beside Sexton Blake. "Just made another goal! Three to nix! Line-up, kiddies. Half-time!"

"No, no!" cried Blake, waving the boys back. "I'll not have you lads here. It will be stern work for men, and bitter, hard blows going."

"Right-ho!" said Tinker sweetly. "We're well cooked on one side, guv'nor, and can do with a bit of basting! Here we are and here we stay, as the chap remarks in the play!"

"Don't send us away, Bob!" pleaded a boy who had most of his hair burnt off and his clothes toasted brown down one side. "We ain't 'ad our whack of the fun yet!"

"Not 'arf!" chorused the others. Blake looked severe. But he secretly admired the sooty little beggars' pluck, and had not the heart to order them off. He placed them in the rear, as a sort of reserve, out of range of the first fierce encounter.

Tinker, however, calmly placed himself at the detective's side, and refused to budge.

"No, guv'nor!" he said firmly. "I've booked this seat for the show, and I'm going to stick to it!"

Then, by way of changing the subject, he said:

"Where's old Pedro, sir? He'd be worth another dozen men to us in this scrap!"

"I am not going to risk his life in an affair of this sort," answered the detective. "I've tied him up behind the sheds in the rear."

"And he don't seem to like it!"

remarked Tinker. "Great pip! How he's carrying on!"

For now that the din of the fight had lulled for a time, they could hear the bloodhound baying angrily in the rear.

"Poor old chap! It's rough on him that he can't have his bit of fun along with the rest of us!" observed Tinker.

"It will be no fun, my lad!" said Blake gravely. "You and I have seen many a tough fight through, Tinker, but never one as grim as this. Hark! They're coming!"

Then, raising his powerful voice to a stirring shout, he cried:

"Steady, lads, all along the line! They're down on us once again!"

For the rioters, having picked their way through the flaming wreckage of the fallen viaduct, were now forming up on the nearer side.

Marshalled in better order than before, as though the two ringleaders had got them more in hand, they advanced in a solid mass for the attack they meant to be final.

Sexton Blake glanced once more at the signal light upon the pump-tower.

"A few minutes more," he murmured, "and help will come too late!"

Redcoats and Rifles.

SHOUTING as only an infuriated mob can shout when the moment of its triumph seems at hand, the densely-packed mass of men came on!



The engine seemed to leap along rather than run upon the metals, jolting from side to side as it gathered way, and threatening, if any rail was warped by the heat, to plunge off the viaduct, hurling every one of them to destruction.

Some who had been unarmed before, had found weapons to their hands among the wreckage of the little railway. Heavy iron bolts, jagged rods and bars, broken in the fall, were to be had in plenty.

The little party behind the barricade did not answer their fierce yelling by a single shout or cheer.

They stood one and all in grim silence, like men who knew they were bound to be overpowered at last, but meant to make the price of victory a bitter one for the enemy!

Nearer and nearer they came! And now a sea of faces seemed to surge and heave before the barricade—faces hot and flushed, begrimed with the smoke of the smouldering ruin they had clambered through, and often made hideous with streaks of clotted blood from wounds gotten in the earlier fight.

Fierce eyes glared hate at the gallant band that had held them at bay so long, and murderous threats were hurled at them.

"Now then! Smash 'em down an' tread 'em in!" shouted Black Jock, making a spring for the front of the barricade.

Sexton Blake sprang to meet him. But suddenly the ruffian stopped, and the mass of men behind him

wavered and swayed, then came to a standstill, all staring as though a spectre had appeared upon the summit of the barricade.

Blake and Tinker turned quickly. Their eyes met a glow of scarlet and the flash of arms, as a body of soldiers came up at the quick step and fell into line behind the wrecked work.

"Thank Heaven, they have come at last!" breathed the detective.

It was but a company of infantry, about a hundred men all told. But the well-ordered line, as they dressed a pace apart and grounded arms—the red coats, and perhaps above all, the glinting rifle-barrels as the hundred touched the earth with a sound like one—had an electrical effect upon the mob.

The whole mass stood spellbound, awestruck.

Soldiers they had seen many a time, and delighted to watch the scarlet coats swing down the broad, white, country roads, crested with steel and making the earth shake with their tread, the fifes shrilling a gallant quick-step, and the drums making music that stirred the heart of the oldest man like that of a boy—delighted to think that all that splendid power was theirs, ready at any hour to defend their hearths and homes!

And now they saw it arrayed against themselves, and were thunderstruck at the bare thought. The rabble thousand covered before that mere handful of disciplined men!

"Make way, you fellows, please!"

The mass began to sway backwards, and some on the flanks commenced to drift away. It wanted but the turn of a hair for the entire mob to break up and disperse.

But Black Jock was quick to check that movement.

"You hear old Blaise!" he roared, in a voice that could be heard on the farthest fringe of the throng. "You hear him! He's brought the sogers here to shoot you down like dogs! That's his way, the old villain!"

The mob halted again, and a hoarse murmur showed the effect of his words.

Bates quickly took it up. "Ay, boys, are yer goin' to turn tail an' bolt afore a 'undred sogers when there's up'ards of a thousand of yer—ten to one? Are yer goin' to sneak 'ome an' tell yer wives an' kids that yer've done nothin' arter all, but talk?"

"And they'll only bang off a few blank cartridges over yer heads!" shouted Black Jock. "They doesn't do more!"

"By thunder! I've a mind to dash out and floor that villain where he stands!" cried Sexton Blake. "He'll cause bloodshed in terrible earnest presently!"

"No. Stay here, guv'nor!" exclaimed Tinker, seizing his arm. "You'd only start the fighting sooner by that! And look!"

Lieutenant Halford turned and gave some order to his men in that queer, jerky language which only soldiers understand, at the same instant leaping down to the ground in front of the barricade.

The soldiers followed him over, and lined up, two deep, with their backs to the barricade, facing the mob.

Blake and Tinker pressed to the front edge of the ridge, anxiously watching the dramatic scene.

Tinker saw his friend Sergeant Rodd at the near end of the front rank. Job Peckchaff, whose brother-in-law he was, also saw him, and called his name. But Rodd—a splendid type of the British sergeant—never turned his head. His eyes were fixed upon his officer.

Young Halford drew his sword and strode within ten paces of the mob, and Black Jock moved as if to meet him.

The movement of the burly ruffian, no less than his looks, was so menacing that the lieutenant, who so far had not displayed his sword, now drew it from its scabbard, intending probably to beat the fellow back with the flat of the blade.

But Black Jock read a more deadly threat in the action.

No sooner had the glittering blade flashed in the electric light than he sprang upon Halford, and with no great exertion of his gigantic strength wrenched the weapon from his grasp, shortened his arm, and plunged it deep into the lieutenant's breast!

Halford dropped without a cry, the blade sliding from his chest as he fell.

It had all happened in a single breathing space. One moment, and Halford stood erect, full of vigorous young life; the next, he lay upon the earth a corpse.

It was the first man slain. Fierce blows had been struck and ugly wounds given, but this was the first life taken, and the effect was to strike dumb every man there, friend and foe alike.

It was the voice of Sergeant Rodd that broke that deathly silence, shouting a sharp order.

No one knows how it came about. Whether the sergeant, made mad to see his young officer struck dead before his eyes, thought only of swift vengeance; whether he forgot that the men in his own files had been served with ball cartridge—these things will never be known. But he gave a swift succession of orders, and they were all too swiftly obeyed.

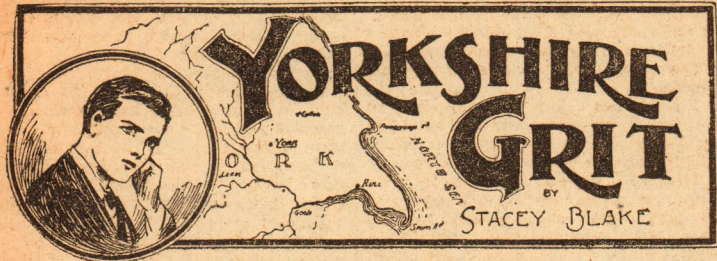
The files opened, the rear rank passed rapidly to the front and formed.

"Present!" The rifles came to the shoulder in a glancing line of light. "Fire!"

(Another splendid instalment next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND, when "Soldiers of Fortune" commences.)

SUPERB NEW SERIAL.

START TO-DAY.



New Readers Start Here.

Mr. Trimble is the owner of a great cotton mill in Vulcan Street, Bradford, where all the employees are on strike. At Trimble's mills new machinery is being fitted up which will when completed turn out work with wonderful rapidity. The workers fail to see what advantage it will be to them, and they are under the impression that this machinery will cause the discharge of many hands.

Dick Allen, a plucky and determined thirteen-year-old Yorkshire lad, is left to fight the great battle of life, parentless and almost penniless. He resolves to get on in the world, to cheer up his young sister Jessie and to provide for her. He will live a life of poverty no longer.

In defiance of the strikers, this plucky little fellow succeeds in getting employment to help fit up the machinery in Trimble's mills.

The strikers become furious, and in their rage they attempt to force a way into the mill and break up the machinery. In the fight between mill-owner and idle employees, Dick Allen saves the life of Mr. Trimble, and in recognition of this brave deed he is given a written document showing that he will be entitled to a one-fourth share in the mill when he attains the age of twenty-one.

Dick meets a great enemy when he is introduced to James Ackroyd, the unscrupulous nephew of Mr. Trimble. Ackroyd has a power in the management of the mill, and he complains to his uncle about Dick's conduct. Widdop, a lad working in the mill, is another great source of trouble to Dick, and he helps Ackroyd in bringing these accusations against Dick. "You're wanted below in t' office," says Widdop to Dick. "There's t' sack waiting for thee, lad!"

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Rogue and Fool.

"HOW do you know I'm going to get the sack?" Dick said, turning on the grinning Widdop.

"Because I've been in t' office and heard what t' old man has said. Oh, ay, he's got it weighed up for thee! This fine little run o' thine in t' mill here has soon come to a finish."

"I'll believe that when I hear it," returned Dick.

"Right-ho! You'll hear it all right!" sniggered the big fellow as Dick turned away.

Dick went down below not a little fearful and troubled. He had done nothing really that would merit dismissal. The first trouble he had been concerned in as victim more than aggressor, and the second had been the purest accident. But he had a powerful enemy who would twist things against him, who would not scruple to use any base means to injure him. His heart sank when he saw James Ackroyd in close talk with Mr. Trimble as he entered the office.

"Well, here he is, uncle," Ackroyd said. "Perhaps you'll ask him a question or two yourself. I don't want to unduly prejudice you, of course, so I leave it with you."

"I'm sorry to hear this extraordinary tale about you, Dick, lad," began Mr. Trimble not unkindly, though perhaps a little sternly. "Now, what have you got to say?"

"About what, sir, please?" Dick asked, meeting the old man's gaze with unwavering eyes.

"Well, the first is that you threw a skep of bobbins down on Mr. Ackroyd's head this morning."

"I was going down the stairs, sir, as Mr. Ackroyd was coming up, and I fell because someone at the top put a foot out and tripped me up. And I let the skep fall because I fell myself."

"Ha, you did not throw the skep exactly. You fell with it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Er—you didn't mention it quite like that, James."

"He came jumping on the top of me when I was down," said Ackroyd sullenly. "I couldn't see whether he fell accidentally or not, because I was thrown down; but I doubt it. He took good care to fall on the top of me, so that he shouldn't be hurt. And about his being tripped up—who did it? And who saw it done?"

"You yelled out, sir, a lot after I fell on you!" said Dick, quite respectfully to Ackroyd.

"Rather!" said Ackroyd with emphasis. "I yelled out hard. I thought you'd about killed me."

"And almost instantly somebody put a head over the edge of the floor above, and yelled out that he was coming to your assistance."

"Yes, rather; he thought I was hurt."

"Well, he tripped me up. There was no one else near at the time."

"You young beggar, you want to turn your spite on him, do you? Because, I suppose, you know he was a witness of the whole thing, and heard your threats to me afterwards. Will you deny you said you would get your own back?"

"I said that—after you and Widdop had thrashed me with a piece of belting."

"Oh, you thrashed him, James, did you? Ha, yes, you mentioned it! Perhaps I should not have advised that."

"But he was insolent, uncle, and that is the only thing to teach kids like this discipline. I thought it was better than complaining to you."

"Well, I suppose a bit of belting does not hurt anybody."

"It hasn't hurt me, sir. Only it made me mad at the time," confessed Dick, "and it made me say what I am sorry for now."

"I am glad to hear you are sorry, lad, because getting your own back means having some sort of revenge, I suppose; and revenge is not a good thing. Now, what about this other complaint, this hoisting Mr. Ackroyd at the end of the hook to the top floor—a most dangerous and terrifying experience for him?"

"By Jove, yes!" interposed the young man, who judged his case to be getting on well. "My nerves feel all racked up. I sha'n't be right for weeks."

"It was an accident, sir, pure and simple," protested Dick. "I am very sorry, but it is not true to say I had any intention to do it."

"But it is suggested that this was the getting your own back that you had promised."

"It is the last thing in the world

that I would do, sir. It was an accident. I did not even know Mr. Ackroyd was in the yard. Did anyone see me look over?"

"I guess they were all too busy to spend their time looking up for you," growled Ackroyd.

"Um, well, I hope this sort of thing won't occur again!" Mr. Trimble said mildly. "I don't want to hear of it any more. Go, Dick, and be more careful in future, so that accidents don't happen."

"And you're going to let the little beggar stop on the place, uncle," said Ackroyd, his face flushed with disappointment as Dick closed the door after him. "I tell you he's a little demon, and I don't feel very safe with him."

"You must learn to forgive, James," said Mr. Trimble gently. "I'm convinced these mishaps were accidents. I think he is a good boy, for he practically saved my life, and he certainly saved the mill at very great risk to himself. Another thing, though, I wish the affair of that strike to be a bygone, and to treat it as such. I can't help remembering that one or two of the hands possibly might bear the lad ill-will on account of that. It will wear down, I have no doubt; but just at the moment it may exist, therefore, I don't wish to take too much count of this Widdop's readiness to give evidence against Dick Allen."

"You're suggesting that I am lying, uncle?"

"No, nothing of the kind. It has just been an unfortunate incident. But you will forgive, I know, because you are my dear nephew."

James Ackroyd was quick to realise where his advantage lay. "Right-ho, uncle!" he said with assumed warmth. "Because you say so, I'll let it drop and cross the incident off. But it has shaken my nerves up a bit, so I hope you won't be hard on me if I don't feel up to the mark."

"Have a walk out, James, and get a breath of air. That will pull you together."

"Is there anything I can do, uncle?" he said tentatively. "Shall I go to the bank? That foreign cheque might be paid in."

"Why, yes, do that."

"And the passbook—shall I bring that back?" he asked with a shrinking look in his eyes.

"Yes—yes, do. I want to have a look at one or two recent payments."

James Ackroyd gave a half-suppressed sigh of relief that was very real, and he felt almost a momentary thankfulness to Dick Allen for having given him this excuse for going out. For he particularly wanted to get hold of that bankbook before his

uncle, and he had been puzzling his brains all day how it could be done without his eagerness and anxiety seeming unnatural, or exciting suspicion.

In that bank passbook would be recorded all the payments into Henry Trimble's account, and all payments from. In the latter column would be recorded that three days before a payment had been made to him, James Ackroyd, of £150, upon a cheque which the old man had originally made out for £50. It was Ackroyd's intention, as it had been all along, to get hold of the passbook before it came to Henry Trimble's hands, and to alter those figures from £150 to £50.

He started out, very much relieved that the opportunity had come so easily. He fancied he could alter those figures all right—enough to deceive his uncle whose sight was not quite so good as formerly.

All the same, with that difficulty as good as finished with, his mind was not quite free from anxiety, for with one burden thrown away, it gave greater chance for another to bear heavily upon him. That afternoon there was a particular horse race being run, upon the result of which depended his ability to pay a number of very pressing debts. He was forcibly reminded of the pressure of these latter liabilities by encountering not very far from the mill gates the tall, shabby man, Scrimshaw, who was tout to Mr. Percival Paling, the moneylender, of Southfield Square.

"I thought I should see you, Mr. Ackroyd, sooner or later," gurgled Scrimshaw.

"What! Confound you, you're starting that—eh?" snapped Ackroyd. "You're starting waiting about for me—dunning me—eh?"

"The guv'nor's wondering whether you're going to call round with some money, Mr. Ackroyd. He's been expecting you, as you promised, but you ain't been round. Hexcuse my looking after you. But I do my dooty quietly and hunostentatiously. Now, as you've been drawing an 'undred and fifty quid from the bank, the guv'nor calculates you ought to come and pay up."

"A hundred and fifty? You scoundrel! What do you mean? My uncle's cheque was for fifty. I showed it to your rascally employer, and he knows it was for fifty."

Scrimshaw tapped the side of his nose with his forefinger in a mysteriously cunning manner, but he did not commit himself to speech on the matter.

"I may have been fool enough to borrow from your thieving office, but I'm not fool enough to alter a

cheque," Ackroyd said, with the assumption of great virtue.

"O' course not—o' course not!" Scrimshaw hastily added. "I didn't see the cheque. The guv'nor just said something about it. You wouldn't alter a cheque—not likely! You're a bit too sharp for that, eh? You know your way about, don't you, Mr. Ackroyd? There ain't much anybody could teach you."

"Not likely," responded the gratified Ackroyd. "Here, come and have a drink, Scrimshaw! There's just time for one. I have to run along to the bank before it closes."

"Oh, well, o' course, as you're so pressing."

"The fact is, Scrimmy," observed the foolish youth, opening out under the influence of a drink, "I shouldn't be surprised if I was able to come along and pay your rascally guv'nor right down bang on the table everything I owe him."

"You don't say so!" gurgled the tout over the rim of his glass. "You're a cunning one, you are. Now, I'll bet you've got something up your sleeve."

"Scrimmy, you've tipped it right bang on the inner. I stand to draw £1,800 to-day."

"By ginger, you've got a straight tip, then! My word, if I had your opportunities, Mr. Ackroyd! What's the gee-gee that's going to win? I might not be too late to put on a humble bob myself. And if it was my last one, Mr. Ackroyd, I'd put it on a horse you recommended—with your opportunities to get to know things."

"I don't know. You might work it," said Ackroyd, growing still more gratified under the other's touching confidence in him and admiration of his cleverness. "The race is run at 3.30. Hallo, it's that now! But there'd be time to get a bob on with Jerry Strang, in Thornton Road. The horse is Fly Away. Back him for a win. You'll very likely get twelve to one. That's what I got."

"You got twelve to one against?" echoed Scrimshaw thoughtfully. "Twelve to one against, and you stand to win, if it comes off, eighteen hundred pounds? Then you must have put on a hundred and fifty pounds. I thought you said that cheque was for only fifty?"

"Here, don't you try to pump me, Scrimshaw!" snapped Ackroyd, furious that he had been beguiled into talking. "Do you think I haven't a bit of money of my own I can lay my hands on?"

"Is that so? The guv'nor would be glad to hear that. But look here, I'll go and put that bob on."

He did nothing of the kind, however, mainly because he wasn't such a fool, though incidentally it was worth mentioning that he hadn't that coin at his disposal. He went, first of all, and telephoned the result of his conversation to Mr. Percival Paling, in Southfield Square, and from that gentleman he received some instructions. Then he went out and waited about to watch for the first evening paper.

Meanwhile, James Ackroyd had got to the bank, and after paying in the foreign cheque, he asked for the firm's passbook.

"I'm not sure that we have it," said the cashier. "I fancy it was posted direct to you this morning. It is our new system. I expect it will have been delivered by now."

Ackroyd's heart stood still. The place seemed to be going round.

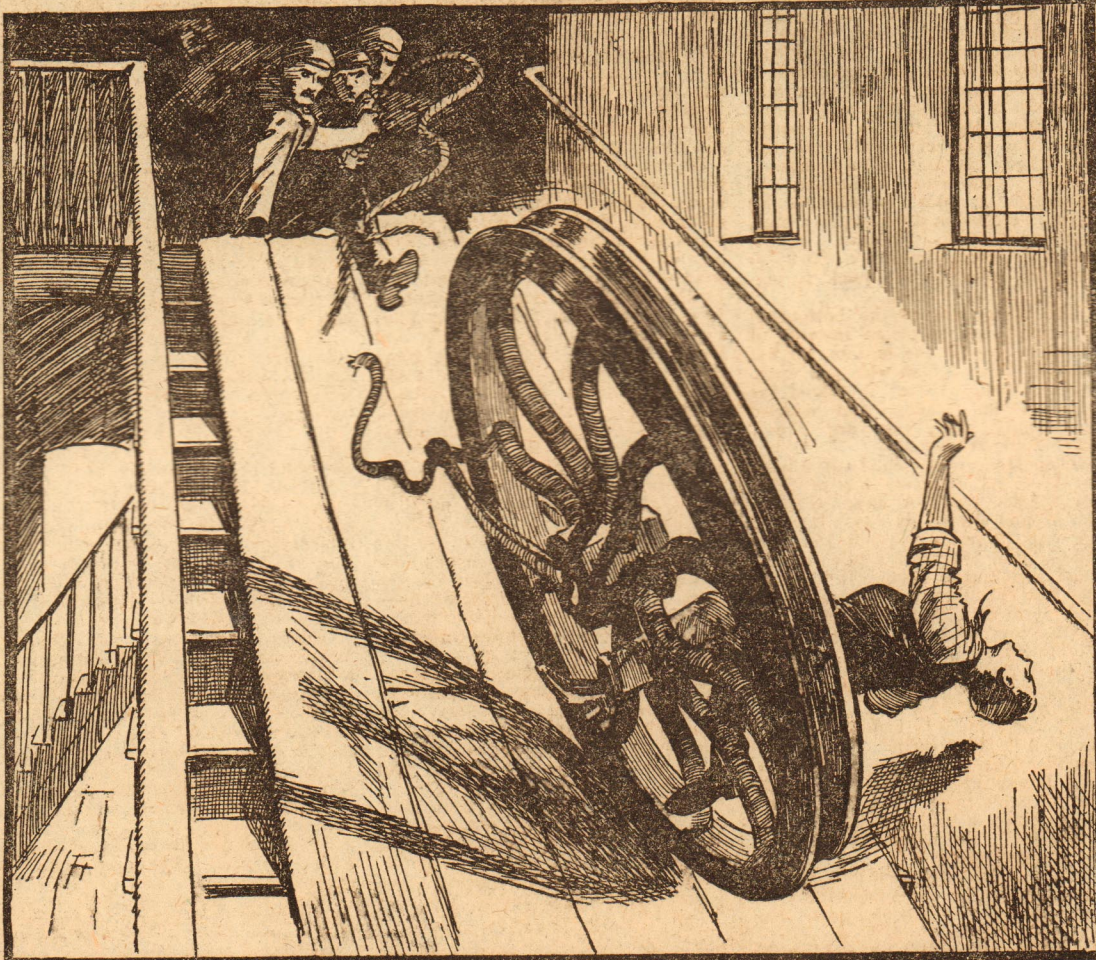
"Are you quite sure?" he asked hoarsely, with a vision before his eyes of his uncle opening the packet in his absence and discovering the entry in the book that would reveal him a thief. "Would you mind inquiring if it really has gone?"

The cashier went to the back. He returned a moment later with the book in his hands, and many apologies on his lips.

"It was to have been sent this evening," he said.

Ackroyd could have felled the man for causing him such a moment's agony of fear. He went outside through the swing doors with the book in his pocket clutched in a damp hand. He felt weak at the joints; his tongue was dry like wood.

He stepped into an archway just off the pavement and pulled out the book and opened it at the last written page. On the debit side he saw his own name. The entry recorded that one hundred and fifty pounds had been paid to him. He had to take out the figure one, making it read "fifty." It would want careful doing. It would have to be done at home that night. He would have to tell his uncle that the book was still at the bank—that he



The long rope by which the huge wheel was being lowered, broke with a loud twang. Away down the boarding went the massive piece of machinery with Dick entangled in the spokes, and a fearful accident seemed inevitable.

had left it because it was not made up.

He was occupied with these considerations when he again ran into Scrimshaw, who was evidently looking for him. The tout had in his hand a copy of the "Argus," damp from the press. A boy was selling them at a street corner thirty yards away, and his voice pierced Ackroyd's ears:

"Evening Argus! Result of t' races!"

But Scrimshaw thrust the paper into his trembling hands.

"It's a good job I was a bit too late to put my bob on," he gurgled. "That horse of yours must have developed corns suddenly. It's come in last but one."

The street seemed to be going round to James Ackroyd. He felt as though something were hammering on his head.

Touch and Go.

WHAT! Do you mean to say you haven't got the sack?" Widdop exclaimed, when he met Dick on the stairs.

Dick intimated that he was still in the employ of Trimble's, and that he was likely to so remain. He had no desire to irritate this bully, yet at the same time he was not going to cower to him for the sake of his self-respect, and for the reason that he knew it did not pay to be too humble before a fellow of Widdop's type.

"I'll bet you crawled all round t' office on your stomach," jeered Widdop, "piped your eye a nice bit, eh? And snivelled about the baby sister wot you had to keep from starvation!"

"Look here, you big beggar, you hold your tongue about my sister!" cried Dick furiously. "She's a lot too good for you to talk about."

"Oh, ay, you should send her to t' mill instead o' you, and you stop at home to wash up t' pots, little sneaky! But, look here, I'm right glad you haven't got t' sack. I want you to stop, now I come to think of it, so's I can give you a rotten time. You wait a bit! I'll make you wish you'd never been born!" And he turned away with a leering grin.

But his grin died the next moment. A big compact of very oily waste, with something heavy concealed inside it to give it weight and carrying-power, came hurtling down the stairs from above, landing Widdop full on the open mouth. The missile was not only well-greased, but it had been dipped in soot, so that it made a decided mark on the amiable youth's features. Likewise, as it caught him unawares, just as he was on the twist to mount the steps, he lost his balance, got mixed up with his own long legs, and rolled violently down the half-dozen steps to the first landing just as the foreman of the spinning-room happened to be coming out.

This foreman, who was a big fellow named Billings, had little speech. When he was annoyed he blew in his black beard. He was very annoyed at this moment, for he was always down on every kind of larking during work hours, so he blew hard. He seized Widdop without a word, and quietly hammered him with a hand like an ironing board.

Dick, meanwhile, had shot up the steps, only to run into Bulgy Fry, the stout boy, with the head that looked bald because he kept his light hair so short.

"That's how we get our own back," cried Fry, dancing a silent but excited hornpipe on the steps. "Good shot of mine, wasn't it? Couldn't have been timed better. Billings hits like a stamping-machine. Talk about

laffin'! That's why I can't get thin because I laff so much—laffin' and porridge, you know. Scoot! He's coming!"

All parts of the mill were not yet fully working, for changes in the machinery were still in progress, much of the old-fashioned plant being gradually weeded out to give place to new. In consequence, Dick had not got a settled job, but was occupying himself at many tasks here and there, which at the moment suited him as well as anything, for it was his purpose to get to know as much about the general work of the mill as he could.

It chanced that during the afternoon he was put on to help some of the men who were engaged in moving piecemeal a set of heavy machinery from the second floor, where space was wanted for new spinning-frames.

Down the straight stretch of stairway which led from this level right into the open yard a layer of planks had been laid, forming a sort of smooth slope, down which the pieces of machinery, held at the top by ropes, were allowed to slide to the ground. The planks did not entirely cover the stairs, a couple of feet at one side being uncovered so that people could go up and down.

It was Dick's job to walk down this two feet of stairway, and to guide, by means of a wooden lever, when necessary, the cumbersome pieces of machinery that were being slid down the plankway.

Among the stuff to be lowered was a monstrous pulley-wheel, which was too big to be lowered on its side, and which had to be rolled down. Through the bearing—that is to say, through the centre where the axle had been fitted—was looped a rope, upon which it turned, the other end of the rope being held by strong hands above.

"Here's a rare bowling-hoop for thee, lad," cried one of the men at the top of the sloping way as Dick walked down a step at a time, guiding the monster wheel. "Steady now! A bit at a time."

Dick had to abandon his lever in guiding the wheel, and to use his hands.

It was halfway down when of a sudden a dreadful, unlooked-for thing happened.

The wheel somehow got jammed against the opposite wall, with its edge just touching a crack of the brickwork. He tugged at the spokes with both hands, but without stirring it.

"I can't get any purchase," he said. "Half a moment. Hold tight. If I just put my foot through on to the wall, I can lever it off."

Then it was that the long rope by which the wheel was being lowered broke with a loud twang like a giant banjo-string, with Dick there a prisoner in the wheel. He was only conscious of what had happened in the swift, fleeting way a man may know for a fraction of a second that he is shot dead. The wheel leaped down the slope of boards with this living body entwined in its spokes.

How shall his sensations be recorded? It was as though his brains were being flung out in a mad, whirling circle. Round, round, round he went, almost too quick for thought, infinitely too quick to permit his freeing himself.

The wheel was at the bottom of the boarded slope in an instant; it leaped a step at the bottom, all but running down a man who was working the trolley there; it grazed the edge of the trolley, and whirled quivering across the yard like a child's monstrous hoop.

Then Heaven stretched out a hand to save. Its direction was straight for a brick wall. A loose stone on the ground altered its way. It rolled on with decreasing speed, and bore with a dead blow into a pile of sacks filled with cotton waste. It mounted the first one, tumbled over sideways, and lay there with Dick Allen underneath, very dazed, and not a little frightened.

Quick hands were soon at work rescuing him, and a dozen questions were hurled into his ears.

"I don't know! I don't know!" he cried to all of them. "I can't tell whether I am hurt! No, I think not. But I haven't got my brains back yet. I can't think. No, no, I don't think I have a bruise on me, but I'm frightened. The whole yard seems to be spinning round!"

They got the wheel off him, and let him lie upon the waste sacks for a few minutes, and someone gave him water to drink.

"That's all right," he said, at the end of five minutes. "I'm through. Let's get on with the work."

"Well, tha't a good plucked 'un,"

said one of the machine fitters admiringly. "Hasn't tha got a headache, lad?"

Dick confessed that he had a little, but that he thought a bit of work would soon rid him of it.

"No; what you want is a bit of a blow in the country, lad," said the man. "You're sure to feel nasty and shaken, and very likely you'll have a sickly feeling for days. Look here, I'm gahn to Keighley to meet on a motor-waggon with some of this old iron. Wilta come and have t'ride with me?"

"I'd like to!" cried Dick eagerly. "But when do you come back?"

"So soon as we've unloaded t' stuff at t' other end. We shall be back in Bradford by nine o'clock at latest."

"Right-ho, I'm with you. I can't afford to miss a ride in a motor-car, and I haven't a mother to tell," Dick added. "I've only a little sister. She's gone with a lot of nippers from the school for a day in the country, so she's not at home. They've gone to Skipton to the moors."

"Eh, and it's been a fine autumn day for them an' all. To Skipton, eh? Well, we're going the same way. Happen we'll meet 'em coming back."

"No; they've gone by train."

"Oh, I thought mebbe they'd gone by waggonette. There's nothing like a day in t' country to buck you up. How's your head, lad? Is t' ache any better?"

"It still buzzes a bit," confessed Dick.

"Oh ay; but some country air will put it right. It isn't air in Bradford; it's nobbut soot."

They rattled along past the big gates of Lister Park where the lights were twinkling, and down the road to the right where the going was smoother. The waggon was a great, cumbersome affair, built for carrying weight rather than making speed, but still going was pleasant, and Dick found pleasure in the journey.

On a spot somewhere beyond Shipley, Jenkins pulled up at a roadside inn, complaining of great thirst.

"You stop and mind t' waggon, lad," he said. "I don't believe i' lads going into publies."

"That's all right," laughed Dick. "I'd rather stay here and enjoy the view, anyhow."

Up the dark hill on one side lights glittered here and there. Down below he could see the coloured signal-lights of the railway. Above, a myriad stars spangled the sky. He sucked in the fresh evening air. It was all very sweet and peaceful.

He saw trains pass along the railway. He idly wondered where they went, who they contained. There were many trains passing both ways. He saw their lighted windows like rows of wide-awake eyes run away into the darkness.

He watched a little vacantly, for his thoughts kept wandering back upon the incidents of the very full day, and he watched with only passive interest a train with a long tail of lighted windows come swinging round the curve upon the down line.

It was a train going to Bradford, but contemplation of them had about exhausted his interest, when all at once, though he did not understand for a moment what was happening, he saw the engine swerve suddenly, then buck and jump up jerkily like a cart running over the furrows in a field. Then all at once there was a curious glare of fire, and he saw, yet only half-believing what he saw, the engine jerk sideways and fall over amid an eruption of fire and steam. Save the hissing of the steam, there was comparatively little noise. The great thing seemed to have quietly and softly turned over.

He was too far away to understand it all. He knew that an accident had happened, but he knew nothing of the cause or extent of it. But help would be needed, that was very certain, and he was down on the road, over the fence of a narrow field, and down by the edge of the line in almost as short a time as it takes to tell it.

A man from an adjacent signal-box flew by him, yelling frantically to an engine-driver, who was gone beyond hearing upon the grass at the side of the line, that the signals had been against him, so that he had jumped the points.

"And there's another train due, you fool!" he shrieked madly, shaking his fist at the unmoving form on the grass. "What shall I do? Oh, Heaven help me, there's going to be a worse smash in a minute!"

And then he saw Dick.

"For the love of Heaven, lad, take this light!" he cried, in an agonised voice, thrusting a red lamp into Dick's hands. "Run up the line with it this way as far as you can,

and wave it so to stop the express that's coming."

"Yes, yes; but what train is this?" cried Dick, with a sudden fear at his heart, for from an overturned carriage came wild shrieks in childish voices.

"It's the kids' excursion to Skipton," he answered. "There are some hurt. Gad, but there'll be more if yon express comes along!"

Dick ran, with a great terror gripping his mind, for little Jessie was in that train. Perhaps she was in that overturned carriage. He felt a wild, almost irrepressible desire to go to make sure, but there was this duty to do.

He hastened wildly up the line. He heard voices, and he knew help was coming from somewhere. It was his task to avert a bigger disaster.

He ran till his lungs were almost bursting, his throat burning and dry, and his legs and ankles aching. He heard the murmur of the express in the distance. The murmur grew to a roar. He presently saw its lights.

He stood there in the middle of the way, waving his red light and praying out of a fearful heart that it would be seen. He yelled frantically, but it was no good.

He imperilled his own life by staying so long between the metals. The great engine dashed by him. Then he heard a grinding noise.

The brakes were on. The train was stopping.

The guard's van came level with him. He yelled out news of what had happened. Then he raced back to the scene of the accident.

Helpers had appeared as if by magic. From the overturned coach next to the engine little forms in their holiday frocks were being carried. Some were shrieking, some too frightened to even sob.

"It's only cuts and bruises so far, I think," one helper answered in reply to his frantic question. "I dunno. We shall know soon."

"My sister's among them," he said anxiously.

"Better look first among those that aren't hurt," suggested the man.

"Look, they're over in that field."

Dick climbed the low railing, and ran in among the crowd of frightened children who were being shepherd by anxious teachers; but he did not see Jessie.

"Jess! Jess!" he yelled through funnelled hands.

"Is it Jessie Allen you want?" cried one little girl. "Why, it's you, Dick! She's in that front carriage!"

In an agony of fear Dick ran back. He cast a swift eye over the rescued ones who lay on a tarpaulin by the side of the rail. She was not there. He scrambled upon the overturned carriage.

"Jess! Jess!" he cried, going from one compartment to another, whence the rescuers were lifting out the bruised and terrified little ones.

"Jess, where are you?"

And then he heard a feeble reply from out one dark compartment, which apparently the rescuers had abandoned.

"Are you there, Jess? What are you doing alone? Are you hurt?" he cried hoarsely.

"I'm all right, Dick," answered the little girl faintly. "I'm not hurt much. I told them to go and help those who were hurt worse than me."

"Oh, you brave kid! I'll have you out in half a tick!"

He struck a match, and looked inside. The little girl lay at the bottom, which was the side of the overturned coach, and he could see blood on her face.

He got her out and carried her in his arms to the improvised bed of tarpaulin on the railway bank.

"Look here, there's a nasty cut on your forehead, and it's bleeding," he said. "It's no good your lying here. You ought to be seen to. And there may be bumps and bruises on your body as well. We've got a motor just on the road there. It's loaded up with stuff, and we're on the way to Keighley, but that won't matter. We can turn round again. I'm going to take you to the Bradford Infirmary."

"What's that you say, boy?" cried a voice at his elbow. "You have a motor—a car? There are half a dozen urgent cases here that I'd be relieved to have inside the infirmary. The line is all blocked up here, and I don't know when a train will be through."

"It's a motor-lorry, sir, filled up with iron stuff. But my word, we can chuck it out! Yes, sir, I'll take as many as it'll hold. Follow me. And I shall want help to unload the iron stuff."

He went across the narrow field, carrying Jessie in his arms. He took her first of all into the roadside inn, and laid her on a couch in the bar.

"I want a couple of feather beds!" he cried out to the landlady. "I want to put them in the waggon for some of the wounded to lie on. I'm going to run them in to the Bradford Infirmary."

He ran outside to direct the operation of unloading the iron. He anxiously kept a look-out for Jenkins, the driver. All he could learn of him inside was that he had run down to the scene of the accident in company with the other customers in the bar at the first moment the calamity was known.

"I want him!" Dick cried. "He's the driver of the motor-waggon! We shall be ready to start in a minute, and every second is precious."

Someone went down to the railway bank to cry out Jenkins's name, but there came no response. Meanwhile, the waggon was waiting, with the poor injured children groaning upon the feather beds laid inside it.

"Can you drive it yourself, lad?" asked somebody.

"Dare he? Dare he risk it? He could steer—yes, but the engine required managing. There was a trick in slipping in the gears."

Still Jenkins did not come. Yes, he must risk it. And might Heaven guard his hands aright.

He got the engine going. He started off. There was a little cheer given as he went.

He kept on safely up hill and down dale. Now he was through Shipley. The motor was going bravely. He put on the best speed he could get. As he saw the lights of Frizinghall on the left, his courage grew. Soon he would be in Manningham.

Then all at once he was conscious that the engine was slackening. He looked at his throttle and his spark. Both were at maximum. The pulsations were slowing and growing feebler. The engine knocked complainingly, and then stopped.

He flung open the metal doors to look at the engine, but it was all meaningless to him. He did not know what was wrong.

Then of a sudden he heard in the distance the pop, pop, pop of a motor-bicycle. He stopped the rider.

"It won't go," he gasped, indicating the engine. "I don't understand it. Perhaps something is broken. There are lives, very likely, depending on it."

The man shone his lamp upon the stubborn engine. He ran his hand over various wires and connections. He looked at the carburetter.

"Great Scott, no petrol!" he said. "Ha, here's your tank! No, there's nothing in it. But you'll very likely have a tin in your locker."

They found one, and filled up the tank from it. The engine started away at the first pull, and Dick, with a thankful heart, leaped into his seat and started off again.

At the infirmary he found all prepared, for word had gone through by telegram.

"Kiss me, Dick!" cried Jessie, as she was being carried in. "You're a dear, brave boy!"

"Not as brave as you, kiddy!" he cried, with a lump in his throat.

"Yes you are. I shall be all right in a day. Good-night, Dick!"

He waited about till some report came of the condition of the sufferers. A kindly doctor came and told him afterwards.

"The poor little things have been knocked about a bit, and there are some cuts and bruises, but there's only one broken bone among them, and that's only a rib—painful, of course, but not dangerous."

"And who is that, sir?"

"A little girl named Jessie Allen."

"My sister, sir!" cried Dick. "And she said she wasn't hurt. Talk about courage, sir! That little kid beats anything I've ever known. When can I see her, sir?"

"Come to-morrow, boy. You needn't be anxious. She'll be all right."

There was the motor-waggon outside which Dick had to do something with. He thought the only thing he could do would be to take it back to Trimble's Mill. Indeed, he remembered it was to return there after going to Keighley. The yard gate was open, as he expected, but the mill was in darkness, save in the office, where a bright light burned.

He supposed Mr. Trimble was still at work over his books, and it struck him that he would go up and tell him about the accident. He ran up the flight of stone steps, knocked at the office door, but getting no response, pushed open the door.

There a terrible sight met his eyes.

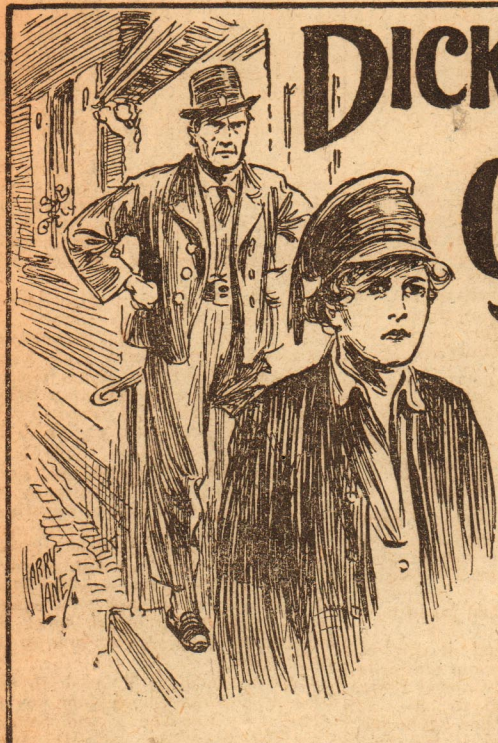
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DICK LITTLEWOOD'S QUEST

BY MORTON PIKE

A Splendid Long, Complete Story by the Author of Our Famous Robin Hood Tales.

THE 1st CHAPTER. How Dick Started Out to Find an Uncle Whose Name He Did Not Know.

THE attic had a sloping roof, with a dormer window in the middle of it, and the bed was in the shadow at the far end.

The doctor replaced a great turnip watch in his fob, and coming back from the bed to the window, glanced down at the lad who was looking up at him so eagerly.

"What is the matter with her, sir? Is she very ill?" he said, in a whisper; and the doctor's grave face was kindly as he looked into the pleading, anxious eyes.

"Your mother is very weak," he replied, in a low voice. "She wants nourishment, good meat soup, and some wine."

Dick Littlewood groaned, and made a helpless gesture with his hands.

"We haven't a penny left, sir!" he said. "What in the world shall we do?"

The doctor looked round the attic-room, which was scrupulously clean, although poverty was written all over it, at the pinched profile of the woman on the bed yonder, and the utter hopelessness in the open face of the lad beside him, and drawing forth a netted purse from his breeches-pocket, he placed a crown-piece in the lad's hand.

"Get your mother all the comforts you can," he said. "She may not be with you very long. I will come again this evening." And he went quietly out, knowing the case was hopeless.

Dick started to the door, realising that he had said not a word of thanks, but a low voice from the other end of the room checked him, and he went to the bed.

"Mother," said the boy, "look what the doctor has given us!" And held up the five-shilling piece stamped with the effigy of King George the Third. "Tell me what you would like most. It is all for you!"

The hand that stroked his cheek and rested lovingly on his brown curls was painfully transparent, and so weak was she that it was an effort to lift it from the coverlet. "I do not want anything now, dear, but I have something to tell you," she whispered.

Was it the shadow which the afternoon light threw across the end of the attic that gave that curious greyness to the sweet, sad face, or was it the shadow of an unseen wing as the Angel of Death hovered above the trundle-bed?

"You know, Dick," said the dying woman, "that your poor father was pressed on board a King's ship when you were a baby in arms, that he sailed with Nelson, and never came back. The name under which we have passed is not our own, for I was ashamed of our poverty, and wished to hide it, but you have an uncle living at Maldon, in Essex, and if anything should happen to me you must go to him, for he is your only relative—Come a little closer, my dear boy; speaking is an effort."

Dick, kneeling beside the bed, drew nearer to the mother he loved so well, and who had striven so hard with her needle to keep a roof over their heads until that illness smote her.

"Your uncle was angry with me for marrying as I did," she continued, pausing painfully between her words, "but when I am gone he will give you a home, I know, my poor Richard. His name is—"

Dick passed his arm about her with a sudden sense that something awful was going to happen. The curious greyness seemed to deepen, and passed like a wave over her face, leaving it strangely white and still.

He held her to him for a few moments, entreating her to speak, but there was no response. The tired eyes looked rigidly at the bare wall in front of her with a vacant expression there was no mistaking, and laying her gently back upon the pillows, the friendless lad flung himself down upon his knees and burst into a passionate flood of weeping.

His mother had gone from him, and the name she had struggled to tell had died with her.

Dick's mother was buried by the parish, with a haste that was almost indecent, in a common grave in a corner of the grimy Bermondsey Churchyard, and Dick was the only mourner.

There was a week's rent owing for the attic, and the landlord seized the few things it contained, only permitting the boy to carry away a little silhouette portrait of the father he had never known.

It was barely larger than a playing-card, and with that and the doctor's coin he went forth into the unsympathetic world to find that uncle whose name he did not know, and whose address was, vaguely, "Maldon, in Essex."

An ostler at one of the then numerous coaching inns in the Borough told him that it was over forty miles, and that he must go by way of Stratford and Romford and Chelmsford—which was the county town. Anybody would tell him the way then, but if he would take his—the ostler's—advice, he'd creep into the hedge if he saw anybody coming, for there were some rum characters on the Yarmouth Road; and the ostler winked knowingly, and bustled into the stable.

Dick Littlewood—he had always known himself by that name—passed over London Bridge, a handsome, fair-haired lad not quite fifteen, leaving the greatest trouble of his life behind him, with all the unknown world to face.

He got a lift in a haycart by great good luck—a lumbering four-wheeled tumbrel drawn by five horses—and when the man set him down, for he was turning aside to his master's farm, Dick shouldered his bundle and trudged off manfully.

The April sky was full of hope—a shower had laid the dust—great sunbursts came out every now and then from behind the masses of white cloud, and the shadows chased each other onward as if beckoning him to follow.

A stage-coach overtook him and went by, the guard sounding merrily on his horn, and a little later he fell in with some drovers driving a herd of cattle, for to-morrow would be market-day.

They were rough fellows, but not unkindly, and in return for some help he gave them they took him to a little tavern where they told him he could have a bed for the night

for a few pence, it being too late for him to reach his journey's end before nightfall.

The straggling old town of Chelmsford was full of soldiers, for within the walls of the gaol some thousands of French prisoners were confined, two infantry regiments being stationed there to guard them, while a troop of the 7th Hussars were kept on the alert to pursue any who should attempt to escape.

Half a dozen of these dashing light horsemen were cantering down the London Road, their white-braided pelisses dangling loose from their left shoulders, and their tall brown bushies set rakishly askant.

Dick stopped on the pavement to watch them, and a gentleman in a green tail-coat, wearing top-boots and breeches, made an exclamation in a foreign tongue as he watched them too.

Dick thought he had addressed him, and said very civilly:

"I beg your pardon, sir!" Whereat the gentleman, who had a blue shave extending high up on his cheekbones, looked at him sharply and forced a smile.

"I said it was a fine evening," he explained, turning away abruptly; and Dick was perfectly certain that he had said nothing of the kind.

He strolled about the town until it was dusk, feeling woefully friendless and lonely, and then went back to the inn, where he had his supper and went to bed.

He was up betimes the next morning, and took the road through Great Baddow and over Danbury Hill, which he thought was the most beautiful place he had ever seen; and so he tramped, sometimes flinging himself to rest by the roadside, until he came within sight of the red roofs of Maldon rising above the valley.

Suddenly he stopped, for a man

who had been sitting on the top of a gate hidden by the hedgerow, jumped down and confronted him, and he thought instinctively of the advice which had been given him by the friendly ostler.

He recognised him at once as the gentleman who had made the exclamation as the Hussars rode by, and although there was no sign of a horse anywhere, it was evident that he had been riding, for he was booted and spurred, and carried a heavy whip in his hand.

"Well, my friend," he said pleasantly enough, with a slight foreign accent, "so we meet again, do we? Are you going into the town yonder?" And the eyes that took stock of him, from his dusty shoes to the crown of his head, were very bright eyes that seemed to pierce him through and through.

"If yonder be Maldon, sir, I'm going there," said Dick, feeling rather ashamed that he should have had any fear of his questioner, who seemed a kindly gentleman, to judge from his smile.

"Sapristi!" said the gentleman, rather taken aback. "I was in hopes you knew the town, and might feel inclined to earn a shilling by carrying a message from me to Mr. Mortimer, on Market Hill."

"I will carry the message willingly, sir," replied Dick, holding out his hand for a letter, as he thought.

"Nay," said the stranger, smiling, "'tis not in writing, but just these four words. Go to Mr. Mortimer's house—you will find him at breakfast in all probability—and say to him: 'The moon is up.'" And taking a shilling from his pocket, he handed it to the boy.

The strange gentleman threw back his head and laughed aloud as he saw Dick's eyes looking vainly round the blue sky for any sign of the aforesaid moon.

"'Tis a simple fellow!" he cried.

"Where is thy home, lad?"

"I have none, sir," replied Dick, with a heavy sigh.

And the man, setting his head on one side, as though a sudden idea had struck him, drew forth his story by a question here and a question there, after which he took out another shilling, held it meditatively in the palm of his hand, and said, at length:

"You will live to thank your stars that I came across your path, always providing that you prove yourself trustworthy and can keep a secret. Oh, you need not look alarmed! Mine is nothing more than a little private business with Mr. Mortimer yonder, but in these days there are so many busy folk about ever thrusting their noses into other people's concerns that we have agreed to take precautions. To tell you the truth, I am a Government

agent, but more of that anon. Make your way now to Mortimer's house, deliver my message, and add this to it: He is to find you food and shelter. Tell him I said so."

There was a most delightful air of mystery about the whole proceeding, and it flattered the boy's vanity that he should have been entrusted with an important mission on sight, as it were.

"But you have not told me, sir, who you are. How will Mr. Mortimer know that I am speaking the truth?"

"He has only got to look into your honest blue eyes," laughed the strange gentleman. "Sabre of wood! And is not my message sufficient? Still, you may tell him that Mr. Hopkins sent you. Now go!"

Although he smiled and nodded pleasantly, Dick realised that there was a tone of command in the way he pronounced these last words; and gripping the ash stick he had cut in a plantation on his way from London, he set off at a run.

"Ma foi!" said the strange gentleman, in French, as he returned to the gate in the hedge, and he spoke half aloud. "We are in luck's way. The one thing we have wanted was a trusty messenger who could come and go without attracting observation. If the pig Mortimer is of my way of thinking we shall push our business through without delay."

There were not many folk abroad in the quiet High Street of the old-fashioned town so picturesquely situated on the hill above the tidal river, but Dick found Market Hill without much difficulty, and inquired of a mahogany-faced man in a short jacket with a hanger dangling at his side where Mr. Mortimer resided.

"Fourth door down the hill," answered the man, who was standing on the steps of the old Custom House; and as he watched the boy he frowned thoughtfully and pursed his lips.

"What's in the wind now, I wonder?" thought John Brace. "Mortimer is up to his old games as usual, I suppose. 'Twill be worth while to keep an eye on that lad, who no doubt brings the old smuggling rascal some secret tidings."

Meanwhile, all unconscious that he was being watched, Dick Littlewood rapped on the knocker of the fourth house down the hill, which was presently opened by a very clean maidservant in a snowy mob-cap and a check apron, who said that Mr. Mortimer was at home, and, if you please, what was the message?

"I am to deliver it in person," said Dick, his nostrils quivering at the savoury odour of breakfast that met them; and bidding him come in and wait, the maid went down the panelled passage and tapped at the door of a room whose windows looked out upon the hill.

"Show him into the office," said a harsh voice, "and I will come there presently."

And scarcely had he been ushered into a small room on the other side of the hall than the door was opened briskly and closed again by a stout, well-fed man in a bright blue coat and nankeen small-clothes, who had evidently come straight from the breakfast-table, for his mouth was full.

"Now, sir, what is it?" said Mr. Mortimer. "And who sent you to me?"

"If you please, sir," replied Dick Littlewood, "Mr. Hopkins bade me tell you the moon is up."

"The deuce it is!" exclaimed the stout man, pushing his brown tie-wig back and scratching his forehead. "Where did you leave him?"

"About half a mile along the high road, sir," said Dick, wondering why Mr. Mortimer should look so confused, and why it should be necessary to speak so crossly.

"I know—I know!" he ejaculated. "By the lane that leads to Beeleigh! Very well, tell him I'll be there as soon as I can get my horse out." And lowering his voice, he muttered: "Confound the fool! Didn't I tell him it would not be safe for at least a week, and this man Brace following me about like my own shadow?"

"If you please, sir," said Dick, "Mr. Hopkins said I was to stay here until you had seen him, and that you would give me some food." Mr. Mortimer looked at him angrily.

"Oh, he did—did he? Well, the maids will look after you. Or, no, stop! You had better come into the parlour." And pushing him before

(Continued on the next page.)



As Dick sank on to the grass, the Hussar sergeant stood in his stirrups. Up went the keen, curved sabre, and down came the avenging blow.

him, Dick found himself in the opposite room, where a vulgar-looking woman and two pert daughters sat at the breakfast-table.

"Give this rogue something to eat, Maria," said Mr. Mortimer, emptying his coffee cup as he stood. "I have business, and I don't know when I shall be back!" And banging the door behind him, Mr. Mortimer went out.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. How the Colonel Put on the Screw.

MOST people, seeing Dick's sad face and the dust of his long journey on his neatly-patched clothes, would have asked him whence he came and who he was, and been kind to him, but it was not in the nature of Mrs. Mortimer and her two pert, gawky daughters to be kind to anybody but themselves, and an iceberg might have been introduced into the room so frigid was their stare and so arctic the silence that greeted Dick's coming.

Mrs. Mortimer reached across the table for her husband's cup, poured the thick dregs of the coffee-urn into it, and pushed it towards the boy.

"There's the bread in front of you, and be sparing of the butter—it's mighty expensive these days!" she said. And she sat there like a dragon, watching every bite and sup, whilst Sophia and Augusta drew a little back from the table and sat bolt upright, as though their visitor's presence were contamination.

Poor Dick drank the muddy mixture, not daring to ask for any sugar, and munched the slice of bread-and-scraps.

There were some roast kidneys in a dish on the table, but they were not for him.

"Where do you come from, boy?" snapped Mrs. Mortimer, after a long pause.

"From London, ma'am."

"Not all that way to see my husband, I know!" said the dragon. "You are not from Mr. Hopkins, are you?"

"That was the name of the gentleman that sent me, ma'am," replied Dick.

"There, I knew it!" she exclaimed, flashing a glance at Sophia and Augusta. "One of these days I know there'll be awful trouble! And what was the message you brought?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I was to tell nobody but Mr. Mortimer." And Dick could not help a little feeling of satisfaction at being able to thwart this imperious dame, and beard her on her native heath, as it were.

Mrs. Mortimer snorted, and was about to let her temper loose, when a hollow sound seemed to pass the wall of the room as Mr. Mortimer rode out under the archway that led from the stable.

"There's your father!" she said. "Oh, there's going to be trouble—there's going to be trouble!"

"Law, ma," said Augusta reprovingly, "don't take on so! Father knows what he's doing!"

"And before this young man, too! How can you be so indiscreet, ma?" said Sophia.

Dick, with his quiet, observant eyes, looked from one to the other, and wondered as he finished his bread-and-butter what it could be that agitated Mrs. Mortimer so strangely.

The house, both outside and in, bore a look of undeniable prosperity which could not fail to strike any passer-by who had eyes in his head. The brass knocker and the door-knobs shone like gold, there was evidence of new paint and clean curtains, and a solidity about the mahogany chairs with their horsehair seats that pointed to Mr. Mortimer being a man of substance.

The house was his own house, the twelve barges unloading under the quaint red tower of St. Mary's yonder were his property, and rumour had it that all one side of the High Street and half the other belonged to him.

He was coal-merchant, corn-factor, lime-burner, miller—followed, in short, every profitable calling possible to a dweller in a quiet country town—and whatever he put his hand to turned into money.

But for all that there were rumours, and sinister ones, that whispered of another and a darker side to Mr. John Mortimer's speculations.

The bluff-nosed barges, with their huge red sails, that floated backwards and forwards on the ebb and flow by the winding shores of the Blackwater, were honest, daylight craft enough, but not so those rakish luggers that crept up into the lonely

creaks of a black night, and were met by well-horsed waggons which galloped their contents inland, guarded by mounted men who could, and did, use their pistols when the Preventives got wind of them.

That Essex shore, all the way round from Thames mouth, was the haunt of smugglers in those days, and it was said that John Mortimer—but there! Well, well, I was never a scandal-monger myself, and perhaps some of the local backbiters put about the reports from sheer envy.

John Brace, the smartest Excise officer in the Eastern Counties, saw Mr. Mortimer ride forth on his strong bay gelding, and returned his short nod.

"I thought so," muttered Brace to himself; "but it's no good following him now—I'll watch for the boy."

But though he leaned against the lintel of the Custom House door, his strong arms akimbo and his pipe in full blast, he was disappointed, for there was no sign of our hero, who sat wondering when Mr. Mortimer would come back, and whether he would prove as bad-tempered as his spouse, who sat all the while in an opposite chair, knitting with steel needles, and looking at him sharply every time he moved an inch.

Meanwhile Mr. Mortimer had ridden out along the London road, down into the dip where the new cemetery now stands, and up the hill beyond it, till he came to the pretty lane that winds down to the weir, where he found "Mr. Hopkins" awaiting him.

"Ah, my dear friend," said that gentleman, speaking voluble English with a strongly-marked French accent, which was a dangerous thing for anyone to possess in those days, unless he happened to be a refugee or a dancing-master, "you have then received my message?"

"Yes, colonel—and a plaguey risky thing of you to send it, after my warning," replied Mr. Mortimer, shifting uneasily in his saddle, and looking round him with a very surly face.

"Bah!" said the Frenchman. "When needs must, you know who it is that drives, hein? Is not that so? It is not our own convenience we must study, but that of those poor enfants yonder in that horrible grey gaol. Listen!" And he came close to the horse, dropping his voice. "I have good news and bad—the good first. They have succeeded beyond their utmost expectations. The tunnel is made. They can see daylight through the earth at the other end, and, listening at night, the murmur of the river is distinctly audible. But now, the other side of the picture. Orders have come for eight hundred of the prisoners to be marched to Norman Cross, where escape will be impossible. That is in three days' time, so you know now why I am here this morning."

The naturally rubicund visage of John Mortimer, with its bloated, over-fed cheeks, lost its colour, and he licked his lips, which had suddenly become parched and dry.

"It's a hideous risk, colonel," he said. "In a week's time we might have attempted it with comparative safety, for then this confounded fellow Brace will be away to Harwich, where he has to give evidence concerning a seizure of brandy which they made off Bradwell. But I tell you to try it now is too hazardous. I am watched, my house is watched, my servants are watched. I know what I know, and if I were discovered in this matter it is high treason—hanged, drawn, and quartered! Think of that!"

"It means two thousand guineas in your pocket—a thousand down, and the rest when you land those five men on French soil. Remember that!" said the colonel, tapping Mortimer's fat thigh with an impressive forefinger to emphasise each word.

"Hang it, you press me hard!" gasped the man, taking off his hat and wiping the sweat of fear from his brow on the cuff of his riding-coat.

"I forget nothing," said the colonel, drawing himself up and looking with stern contempt at Mortimer.

"I remember that these five men—brother officers of mine, mind you, and all members of the Legion of Honour—have wives and daughters of their own yonder in France. I do not wish to say it, only you compel the words to my tongue, but I have your promise of assistance. Eight escaped prisoners you have passed over already. I have only to give one little line in writing to the commandant at Chelmsford—or, better still, to the King's Ministers—and where will you be, Monsieur Mortimer?"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed the cornered traitor.

"Not at all, my friend—quite the other way," said the colonel, with an amused laugh. "I am simply doing my duty, risking my liberty to free my brave comrades from a horrible captivity and the treatment of galley-slaves. You traffic with your country's foes for the paltry guineas with which your treason fills your purse. But, come, I do not wish to quarrel, and we waste precious time. Make up your mind that the thing must be done, and that in three days it will be too late."

As John Mortimer's bloodshot eyes met the stern, hard gaze of the French colonel, the smuggler realised that he meant every word he said, and that there was nothing for it but to obey, although detection would mean the scaffold.

The Frenchman remained silent for a little while, letting it all sink into the man's troubled brain, and then he said suddenly, in a pleasant voice, as though nothing had happened:

"The messenger I sent you. He is a nice boy that. He is unknown in the town, and he will be very useful to us. Let him come here to me—or, better still, he will find me yonder—down by the river."

"Can we trust him?" said John Mortimer. "Who is he?"

"Never mind who he is—send him to me," was the decisive reply. "He is to be trusted, even as I am myself."

Mortimer made no answer, but turned his horse round.

"I will see you to-night at the old place," he growled.

"Come, that is better!" laughed the colonel. "I see, my friend, that you are returning to your senses."

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Plot to Free the French Prisoners.

THE colonel lay on his elbows in the lush grass, watching the water slide over Beeleigh Weir, and Dick Littlewood lay beside him, keenly interested in the colonel's conversation, and conscious of a growing sense of indignation in his honest young heart.

The colonel was an excellent judge of character, and he was not mistaken in his estimate of our friend Richard; moreover, having artfully drawn the boy's history from him—as much of it as Dick himself knew—he found a very tender spot on which to play for his own purposes.

"I will help you to find your uncle, poor child," said the colonel, in his deep, impressive voice, "but first of all I want you to help me. You loved your mother, Richard, better than anything in the world, hein?"

"She was all I had in the world, sir!" replied Dick, bursting into a passionate fit of sobbing.

The colonel waited patiently until he had had his cry out, and then laid a gentle hand on the quivering shoulder.

"I have a friend, Richard," he said slowly, "who loves his mother as you did yours. She is ill—dying—and she has written to him to come to her, but he cannot do so without your assistance."

Dick looked at him wonderingly. "I do not understand, sir!" he said.

"No," said the colonel, with a gloomy frown, "it is very difficult to understand how any Government can be so cruel. You were in Chelmsford yesterday, and you saw that grey stone prison down by the river, with the palisades set about it, and cannon pointed down upon the wretched men in the yellow prison garb, ready to kill them if they should try for liberty. My friend is there, torn with anguish because they are deaf to his entreaties. His only crime is that he was a brave soldier, fighting against his country's foes—his misfortune, that he was taken prisoner, and is treated like a common felon."

He saw that his words had made a profound impression on the boy so recently crushed by his own deep sorrow, and he went on to tell him of the French prisoners who were confined within the gaol to the number of several thousands—men of all ranks and station, but all compelled to wear the hideous convict dress, and guarded night and day by horse and foot.

A vivid picture he drew of their miseries—how they were reduced to carving toys and trinkets out of the beef-bones in their meagre rations to procure a few pence for the purchase of luxuries—even necessities—and how the muzzles of three-pounders frowned on them from the circular block-house in the centre of the gaol, ready to fire grape-shot should they attempt to overpower their guards.

He forgot to add that the British

prisoners in France were treated even worse, but what he said about his own countrymen, whom the fortune of war detained in this country, was perfectly true, and will ever remain a standing blot on the British Government.

"And now I am going to let you into a great secret," said Dick's new acquaintance. "My friend and four of his companions are attempting their escape. After months of toil, they have burrowed a passage beneath the prison wall to the river. Monsieur Mortimer will send them safely to France in one of his smuggling vessels, and you must help us, for the memory of your dead mother, and for the sake of that mother in France who will never see her only son again without your aid!"

"Here is my hand on it, sir!" cried Dick impulsively. "Tell me what it is, and I will do it this minute!"

"My brave boy!" exclaimed the colonel. "I knew I was not wrong!" And he embraced him after the French fashion.

For an hour the French agent talked volubly, and when they rose from the grass a little before noon Dick's heart beat high with the excitement of it all, and the immense responsibility that he had taken upon his young shoulders.

Not that he shirked it for an instant, but it was a serious matter to be told that the life of Colonel Levic, of Mr. Mortimer, and the lives of those five prisoners he had yet to see, would all be forfeited if he, Dick Littlewood, made a single mistake.

"Above all," were the colonel's last words, as he left him to go in search of his hidden horse, "keep out of the way of the Custom's officer, whose name is Brace. He is the mortal foe of Mr. Mortimer, and consequently he is our enemy."

Dick set off for Maldon again, his mission being to buy for himself a pair of stout shoes, and the colonel had given him more money than he had ever possessed in his life before.

When he had bought the shoes he was to get speech with the smuggler, without going to the house again, and after that he must return to Chelmsford, where the colonel would meet him at a certain address, which was a tobacconist's shop in the High Street.

Dick kept his weather eye open for the Preventive man, but he was nowhere to be seen, and after sauntering about for a couple of hours along the river-bank, by the lime-kiln, and on the bridge that crosses the Chelmer at the bottom of the hill, he chanced upon Mr. Mortimer, whose fat face betrayed the anxiety of his mind.

"The most prosperous man in Maldon"—for so his fellow-townsmen dubbed him—brushed past the boy without taking any notice of him, but he said in a low voice: "Follow me slowly along the road, and I'll speak to you as I come back."

The tremendous air of mystery which surrounded the whole business made it a most romantic adventure in the eyes of Dick Littlewood, and, feeling at least a couple of inches taller—perhaps owing to the thick soles on his new shoes—he walked along in the direction of Heybridge.

Presently Mr. Mortimer turned and came back. There was no one in sight, but to avoid any suspicion he fumbled in his pocket that it might be thought he was giving the lad alms.

The coin his fingers closed upon was a shilling, which he discarded for one of those huge Georgian pennies, and this he handed to the boy.

"Tell Mr. Hopkins—I mean the colonel," he said, in a husky whisper, "that the tide will not serve to-morrow night, but the night after I will meet him and his friends on the Goldhanger Road about a mile from this place. Don't forget that—the night after to-morrow. You are going back to Chelmsford now, and you needn't return through the town. Keep straight along this road, and when you've passed the houses on your left you'll see a field-path that will take you across the Chelmer to Beeleigh. You know your way from there."

He made a step as though he were passing on, but changed his mind, and, grasping the boy by the shoulder, looked him searchingly in the face.

"You're not a spy, are you?" he hissed. "Because, by Jupiter, if you play any pranks with me, you'll find yourself at the bottom of that river with a stone round your neck!"

Apparently, regretting his sudden outburst, he loosed his hold and walked rapidly away, but as Dick turned to look after him several times he saw that Mr. Mortimer had turned too.

"I don't like you," said the lad to himself. "You're a brute, and a bully, and a coward! If I were that brave colonel and his friends, I should not care to trust my life in your hands!" And with a sudden feeling of disgust, he flung the great penny he had given him into the dyke by the roadside.

He passed through Heybridge, and found the path of which John Mortimer had spoken, which led him through green meadows, where the larks were singing, and the red-and-white cattle browsed by the rushy dykes.

It seemed strange, after having come all that way to the town on the hill there, that he should be retracing his steps and tramping back along the London road once more, but far stranger things were to happen before Dick Littlewood had finished the extraordinary business on which he was bound.

He took his time, for Colonel Levic had cautioned him not to reach the county town till dusk, and sometimes he lay in the cool grass by the roadside, counting over his little hoard of silver pieces that seemed quite a fortune, and when he reached Danbury he sat a long time on a square tomb in the churchyard until the lengthening shadows sent him on the road again.

"Amos Diddler, licensed to sell tobacco and snuff, pursuant to the Act," etc., was the legend painted over the shop-door, and Mr. Amos Diddler in person stood with his arms akimbo on the cobbled pavement in front of his establishment, looking casually up and down, just as any respectable citizen might do who breathes the fresh air previous to putting up his shutters for the night.

He wore a blue coat with large side-pockets, and his own hair tied with a ribbon, and he was a cunning, crafty-looking, gipsy-faced man, who received most of the goods he sold through the hands of Mr. Mortimer.

Very little of that tobacco which he retailed across his little counter "pursuant to the Act" paid any duty to the Government, and Mr. Diddler still further increased his income by letting furnished apartments on the first floor.

He looked sharply at the boy as Dick came into the lamplight that streamed out through the open door.

"Well, young man," said the tobacconist, "what time does the moon rise to-night?"

"The moon is up, sir," replied Dick, whereupon Mr. Diddler followed him down the two steps that led into the shop, and lifted the flap of the counter.

"Go right through, lad," he said in a low voice. "It is the door at the top of the stairs in front of you, and tap three times."

In the darkness Dick trod on a cat, which miaowed loudly and bolted away down the passage; then he tripped on the landing and knocked over a flower-pot with his elbow, and the pot rolled down the stairs, making an infernal clatter; to crown all, his new shoes clumped heavily, so that it might have been a dragoon, and he heard the shuffle of feet behind the door at which he tapped.

"Come in!" said a voice, and the young conspirator entered.

It was a small room, and green curtains were drawn over the windows; there was a circular table in the centre, and wax fruit under a glass shade on the chimney-piece, but the tall figure that stood on the hearth-rug with his arms folded was Colonel Levic, and he was smiling good-humouredly.

"Ah, my dear lad," said the colonel, "I knew you would not disappoint us! But, ma foi, you gave my companion a fright!"

Dick looked round the room, and saw nobody, until the colonel, still smiling, said: "Doctor, you can come out," and from underneath a sofa between the windows there appeared a little gentleman with a white wig, who grinned as he rose to his feet and wiped the dust from the knees of his small-clothes.

"Lacretellier, this is the brave British boy of whom I spoke," said the colonel by way of introduction.

"Enchanted, I am sure!" said the little doctor. "But, sapristi, you frightened me out of my life! Ven you make the great clattaire, I thought it was the Hussars coming upstairs!"

He was a French physician who had fled to England to escape the Revolution years before, and settling in Chelmsford, had stayed there ever since.

When the prisoners were confined in the town, the little doctor was allowed to attend such as were sick, and having thus the entree to the

gaol, he was able to act as go-between without being suspected. "Tell me, Richard," said the colonel, "what message from yonder?" And he pointed with his thumb, for names were dangerous things to deal in under the circumstances.

Dick repeated Mr. Mortimer's words to him, and the two conspirators scowled blackly.

"Does he speak French?" said the little doctor. And the thing being so unlikely, the colonel shook his head, taking the fact for granted.

"It is perhaps as well he does not," he said, in his own tongue. And Dick, who had been on the point of speaking, said nothing.

In the tenement house where they had lived for three years an old Frenchman had resided, and from him Dick, being more than usually intelligent, had picked up a good many French words and phrases, and though he would have been hard pushed to have carried on a conversation, he found himself listening as the two men talked, and understanding a good deal of what they were saying.

They were greatly enraged, of that there was no doubt, for delays were dangerous. The tunnel that the prisoners had made after months of arduous toil might be discovered—the convoy might even start earlier than was expected—and the colonel's face was a fine study in anxiety and wrath.

At last he looked at his watch, and said in English:

"Well, the beast may be right after all, and we must make our preparations hoping for the best. Richard, my friend, you are going to convey some necessary things to the gaol, and I am going with you."

Dick's eyes opened very wide as the colonel lifted up the sofa cushion and produced five packages wrapped in paper.

"Put these in your pocket," he said. And as Dick bestowed them about his person he felt that they were heavy, but he did not know that they were five pistols, each loaded with a double charge.

"Now, give me your attention," said Colonel Levic. And dipping his finger into a glass of red wine that stood on the table, he proceeded to draw a diagram on the table-top itself. "Look!" said he. "This is the gaol, this is the river, here"—and he rested his finger on the spot—"is the end of the tunnel, between forty and fifty paces east of the palisade. That is the great danger, for if anyone walking along the bank should step aside less than the length of this room, he would sink into the earth, and all would be found out. My friend is waiting there now—waiting for my signal. We must proceed with extreme caution, and I will keep watch. You, who are small, can creep to the place, and I will tell you exactly what to do."

It was a dark night, the good folk of Chelmsford were for the most part abed, and, taking opposite sides of the street, the colonel, wrapped in a caped coat of English cut, led the way, treading softly.

THE 4th CHAPTER.

In Which Dick Finds Himself Involved in the Business.

IT was so dark that when the colonel whispered "Here we are!" Dick marvelled how he could have found the spot. But lying flat down on the bank of the river, he was at last able to make out the faint form of the prison in front of them—an irregular black blur against the cloudy night sky.

A stiff breeze was blowing, rustling the bents and rushes, and making the river audible as the wavellets lapped the shore.

"Listen attentively," said the colonel, placing his lips to Dick's ear. "Your head is straight for the spot. Take this, my walking-stick, and creep forward four times your own length, then pass this stick carefully across the grass, backwards and forwards. If you have reached the spot, it will strike another stick pushed up through the ground, but you must exercise the greatest care that it makes no sound. When you have done that, stretch your arm forward and move the stick up and down three times. You will feel an answering pull, and you will have communicated with the man who is dying to see his mother!"

He whispered these words very expressively, bestowing a significant pressure on the lad's shoulder, and even in that place of danger Colonel Levic could not repress a smile at the boy's expense.

"What do I do then?" queried Dick.

"Why, then," said the colonel, "the stick will be withdrawn, and in its place a hand will come up from below, and you will place within it, one after the other, the five packages I have given you. One of them contains a letter which will tell them all. And then you will come back to me."

Dick's heart was in his mouth, and he started on that strange task, measuring the distance as he went.

He had accomplished his third length when he heard a sound out of the darkness in front of him which even his unpractised ear told him to be a sentinel grounding his musket-butt inside the palisading.

He waited a long time, glueing himself to the ground, until the slow footsteps died away, and he knew that the sentinel had proceeded on his beat again.

He was gathering himself together for another start when the sentinel's voice cried gruffly:

"Halt! Who comes there?" And after a pause and some mumbled words which he could not catch, the man called out again: "Pass, rounds, and all's well!"

He saw the swing of the sergeant's lantern as he accompanied his officer to the next post, and then he crept forward and began to grope in the darkness with the colonel's walking-cane.

At the first sweep he encountered the thing he sought, not a foot before his nose, and signalling as he had been directed, he felt an answering tug, and the stick was withdrawn.

A moment or two elapsed before a hand came up through the loose

earth. Creep after me on all fours!"

The astonishment and dismay of Colonel Levic when Dick returned with the five prisoners at his heels was too deep for words, and he could only gasp:

"You fools—you fools! You have spoiled everything! The escape is planned for two nights—hence! You must go back!"

"Parbleu! Not I!" said one of his compatriots. "They may kill me if they can catch me, but I do not return to that accursed spot though the Emperor commanded it!"

The conversation was conducted in French, Dick only gleaning a word or two here and there, but the others were all of the same mind, and the colonel literally wrung his hands in despair.

"Well, as it is, so it is!" he said at last. "Follow me!" And surely a stranger procession never crept on tiptoe through the quiet streets of Chelmsford than that!

The tobacconist's door opened at the first tap, and closed again noiselessly when they were all inside. Not a word did the colonel speak till they had mounted the stair and gained the front room, where the little doctor was pacing up and down in an agony of suspense.

Haggard, unshaven, wildeyed, and excited, those five men drew a simultaneous breath of relief, for the first stage of their flight had been successful; and seizing upon the decanter of wine, they drank greedily, passing it from mouth to mouth until it was empty.

"Do you know what you have done?" said the colonel, in a stern whisper. "You have increased the

difficulties ten thousandfold. Tomorrow at daybreak, which will be in less than five hours, your escape will be discovered. The troops will turn out and search every house in the town; the Hussars, with drawn swords, will scour the roads and the woods. I do not know what to do with you!"

He spoke so seriously and was so evidently in earnest that their momentary triumph was cut short, and they looked from one to the other, as did also Dick Littlewood, who was wondering which of the five it was whose mother was dying.

"You are a Job's comforter, colonel!" said one of the prisoners, who had a purple scar seaming his cheek from eye to chin. "May I have the indelicacy to remind you that though we are not welcome, still we are starving?"

"My dear vicomte!" said the colonel, shrugging his shoulders; and opening a cupboard he produced food, on which they fell ravenously. "The fault is your own, and I do not know how to repair it."

He explained to them rapidly how the position stood, uncorking another bottle of wine, and he and the doctor talked at a great rate, the five prisoners listening eagerly, for their liberty hung upon the words.

"Take off that hideous garb," said Levic at last, going into an adjoining bedroom, and returning with a portmanteau, and presently they were fitted out with clothes, the yellow convict dress being thrust up the chimney.

"Oh, I had forgotten!" said the colonel to the man with the scar, with a glance at Dick. "You alone of the others speak some English. Remember, if this boy should question you, you are summoned to the bedside of your dying mother!"

"Hein!" said the vicomte, with a short laugh. "I am glad you told me. My venerated parent has been lying in the family vault for the last twenty years."

After carefully weighing up all the possibilities, it was decided that two things were essential. One, that they should put some miles between themselves and the town; the other, that the refugees should be concealed within easy reach of John Mortimer's vessel, and as the leafy solitudes about Beeleigh Abbey offered abundant hiding-places little likely to be searched, Dick was deputed to guide them thither and communicate the position of affairs to Mortimer, while the colonel remained in Chelmsford until the following night.

It was striking twelve when Dick and his five companions were passed one by one through the yard at the back of the house, and glided like shadows across the meadows to the Maldon Road.

Once out of earshot of the town, they ran steadily for a couple of miles, dropping into a walk so as to recover their breath, and creeping with excessive caution when they came to a house, lest the inhabitants should be able to say that they had heard anyone pass during the night.

Not a soul did they meet. The country was even more lonely than that it is now, and it was still dark when they hid themselves under a thick hawthorn hedge a little distance from the ruined abbey, which was then used as a farmhouse.

There was a dry ditch, and the spot was so secluded that three times their number might have lain there and no passer-by been the wiser.

Once, about the middle of the fore-

ment which one may find in many of those old-fashioned houses whose nearness to the water made them convenient for the smuggling trade, and before he was aware of it, he found himself confronted by a piece of panelling in which was a narrow slit.

He would have retraced his steps had not the voice of Colonel Levic fallen upon his ears, and the colonel's words were sufficient to arrest his attention.

"The boy is all right," he was saying. "I have won his heart by a trumped-up tale about a widowed mother in France and a deathbed message."

Dick's eyes opened very wide as he applied them to the opening, and saw that the colonel and Mr. Mortimer were alone in the office, both standing before the fireplace.

"Well, I say nothing about that," returned John Mortimer, whose face was looking strangely haggard; "but you must tell him nothing of my plan for the killing of this meddlesome dog Brace. That fellow once out of the way, we will get your friends on board to-night, and save me a lot of trouble when I shall see the backs of you, which I've seen very much prefer to your faces."

The colonel smiled grimly. "Your plan is a good one," he said; "but are you sure it will not rouse the suspicions of the Preventive men?"

"Leave that to me," said Mortimer huskily. "I have a lugger which will lie off the Point at eleven o'clock to-night. Six men will pull across to Heybridge Creek. You know the spot where a ruined shed stands on the edge of the creek itself, a pistol-shot from the roadway. A corn barge has sunk there, and you can either lie in the shed or go aboard until the boat comes for you. I shall be there to receive my thousand guineas, which is half the price of the risk I run, and my skipper has orders not to land you on the other side until you've paid the other half. Understand that, Mr. Frenchman! After to-night's work I wash my hands of this business. 'Tis a plaguy sight too hazardous for my liking."

"My friend," said the colonel, "spare yourself the pleasure of losing your temper until we have gone. I am more concerned to hear about the coastguard, and how you propose to despatch him."

"If you want to know," said Mortimer, lowering his voice, "a note has been dropped on the steps of the Custom House already, warning him that two of Mortimer's men are landing a bale of lace in the saltings beyond St. Mary's Church. He will go alone, for he is brave as a lion, and he'll never come back! You understand?"

Dick Littlewood repressed a cry with some difficulty as he heard these cold-blooded preparations for murder, and as he saw the colonel's approving smile, all that was British and manly stirred in the lad's heart.

He had been deceived. Colonel Levic had played upon him and his sorrow; but, that apart, what were the liberties of five French prisoners in comparison with the life of one gallant Britisher?

He shivered as he thought he had been made a tool of, and treading softly as a cat, he stole back into the still empty kitchen, his mind fully made up.

No one saw him, and to his great joy when he reached the Custom House there was the same bluff, red-faced Preventive of whom he had inquired the way.

"Avast, my little man!" hailed the sailor cheerfully. "I've been looking for you."

"Let me come in," said Dick, in a whisper. "I've something to tell you."

John Brace led the way along the passage to a room looking into the garden, which commanded a fine view of the Blackwater, and the distant fringe of flat shore, and Dick told his tale.

"Now, boy, what is to be done must be done promptly. You say there are only five of them, but more may have escaped that you know not of. The light will be gone in half an hour. Can you find your way to Danbury in the dark, think you?"

"Ay, that I can," said Dick, smiling.

"Then come with me." And he took him by the arm and led him out into the garden. "Look yonder," he said, "and mark the place well. There is the causeway that leads to Heybridge, and if your eyes are sharp, you can see a black spot on



"Hush," whispered the boy, as the escaping prisoners scrambled out of the hole, the loose earth pouring in about them. "Do not speak above your breath."

earth and grasped his own, and the feeling was strangely uncanny, for the hand was cold as ice.

One after another those precious packets were conveyed below, and, his mission ended, Dick was just preparing to retire feet foremost, when there was a curious sound, and the earth in front of him subsided.

The prisoners had burrowed so close to the surface that it only wanted the pressure of Dick's elbows to break the soft crust of turf, and had he not started back the chances are he would have been precipitated into the hole.

"Halt! Who comes there?" hailed the watchful sentinel again. "Speak, or I fire!" And poor Dick lay flat as a playing-card, expecting every moment that the man would discharge his piece.

The moments seemed an hour, and he felt his hair rise on his head, but the soldier evidently thought that he had been mistaken, and, after lingering some time, slouched heavily away once more.

This was the signal for another strange thing. Dick knew that the tunnel had fallen in, but it was so dark that he could not tell exactly what had happened, nor could he see the anxious faces of the men who waited there, even when they began to crawl, one after the other, into freedom and the open air.

The boy realised now what was taking place, and he had the presence of mind to whisper "Hush!" for as the escaping prisoners scrambled out of the hole, the loose earth poured in and threatened every instant to betray them.

"Ah," said a voice in his ear, "you British, then? Where is the colonel?"

"For mercy's sake, sir, do not speak above your breath!" replied the terrified boy. "He is on the bank

noon, they heard the gallop of hoofs down the lane that led to the mill, and knew it was the cavalry in pursuit, but after a breathless pause for the listeners, they heard them go back again up on to the road to carry the alarm into Maldon.

The Frenchmen slept heavily, exhausted by the excitement and their midnight labours in the underground tunnel where they had burrowed like moles for months past, and always at night time.

THE 5th CHAPTER.

Lost and Found.

ABOUT dusk next day, after making sure that there were no watchers, Dick Littlewood left the hollow and walked boldly into the town, where he found groups of people talking in the High Street and a general scare in the place, for the escaped prisoners had been magnified from five to fifty, which had rapidly increased to five hundred.

Old women hid their silver; there was talk on every side of the "mounseers," and the Maldonians could scarcely have been more excited had a French fleet been off the mouth of the Blackwater.

Colonel Levic had told the boy how he could get into John Mortimer's house unseen, without the publicity of knocking at the front door, and holding his breath as he passed the Custom House, where, as it chanced, no one was about, Dick turned up the way to the stable and pushed the kitchen door open.

The prim servant maid was not there, and another door standing ajar, he went in on tiptoe, mistaking it for the passage.

In reality it was one of those artfully-contrived places of conceal-

the right which is the old shed where the sunk barge lays. The Hussars are at Danbury watching the road. You must guide them to that spot, so that they reach it a little after eleven of the clock. Is that a bargain?" And Dick shook hands on it.

The click of a carbine brought him to a stand half a mile short of Danbury Hill, and there was excitement in the quiet little place as the trumpeter called in the pickets. "Egad, that boy will burst if he eats any more!" laughed the lieutenant in charge of the half troop there. "Now, young man, get up behind the sergeant; it is time we were off. Stand to your horses, men."

The clocks were striking eleven as they turned down the steep Market Hill, and as the horsemen jingled past, Dick saw the curtain drawn aside, and Mrs. Mortimer's white face glued to the window.

They crossed Fullbridge at a walk, and wound along the level causeway.

Dick, sitting on the croup of the sergeant's horse, holding on to the high brass-bound cantle of the saddle, was explaining as best he could in the darkness where the ruined hut stood, when a volley of pistol-shots rang out ahead of them. "Draw swords!" cried the lieutenant. "Right shoulders forward! Gallop!"

"Sit tight!" cautioned the sergeant, as he touched his mare with the spurs.

Shots, shouts, savage yells, and now and then a howl of pain showed that a fearful fight was in progress, and some litter in the shed catching fire by the overturning of a dark lantern, the combatants soon had light enough and to spare.

The six Frenchmen fought with the greatest desperation, determined rather to die than be retaken, and John Mortimer, who had been in the very act of receiving the money for his treachery when the revenue officers burst in upon them, fought as hard to gain the lugger's boat, knowing that the game was up.

Up and down the bank, in and out of the sunk barge, the Preventive men chased the would-be fugitives, the colonel using his sword-stick with deadly effect.

With a shout and a whoop the Hussars wheeled round the blazing

hut and cut in to complete the capture, but not until the colonel had been badly wounded, two of the Preventive men killed outright, and three of the smugglers' gang who made a determined attempt to rescue their employer.

"Drop down," cried the sergeant to our hero, "and look to yourself!" But before the lad could jump clear of the mare's heels, John Mortimer drew a last pistol from beneath his coat, and with a fearful imprecation fired point-blank at him.

"You shall die, you little serpent!" he hissed; and as Dick sank on to the grass, the Hussar sergeant stood in his stirrups.

Up went the keen, curved sabre, and down came the avenging blow, cutting the coward to the eye-socket and stretching him lifeless on the trampled bank, forestalling John Brace's hanger by a second's space!

Into the Anchor Inn across the creek the revenue officer carried the wounded boy, and laid him tenderly upon a table.

Dick had swooned, and when he opened his eyes he saw the French prisoners, securely handcuffed, at one side of the room, the colonel sitting in a chair, severely wounded, and the vicomte with a scowl like a fixed bayonet.

"Where did you get this?" said a voice. And, looking up, there was John Brace bending over him with the black silhouette portrait in his hand.

It had fallen out of his pocket when they unfastened his threadbare jacket to examine the hurt, which, after all, was only a flesh wound, the bullet having passed out.

"That is my father, sir," said Dick faintly, for he had lost a good deal of blood.

The stout sailor reeled, and then gave a curious laugh.

"You saved my life, my poor Dick, to-night," he said. "And as for your only friend in the world, you are better without him. The man who shot you was your mother's brother—the scoundrel! He swore to me that Mary died when I was a prisoner in France, living on putrid liver and eating my heart out. You have lost your uncle, my dear boy, but you've found your father!" And the strong man burst into tears.

THE END. ("Soldiers of Fortune" starts next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

HOW TO DEVELOP MUSCLE.

A Superb Series of Articles Specially Written for the BOYS' FRIEND by the World-Famed EUGEN SANDOW.

I HAVE no doubt there have been many sore wrists and forearms this week, but what a difference it makes to one's forearm, doesn't it? If you will practise that exercise regularly every day you will have a forearm as firm and strong as a sturdy branch of oak. When you go in for weight-lifting later on—the great majority of boys have a turn at this one time or another, and, provided they do not over-exert or strain their strength, they will find it beneficial—you will experience the benefit of last week's work, as the forearm has to do most of the performing in many "lifts." It may interest you to hear of some



How to Perform the Splendid Exercise Described in Sandow's Article This Week.

of the feats of strength I performed when first I came to London and their novel nature in order to keep me ahead of other strong men who claimed to be as powerful as myself.

After I had defeated Samson at the Royal Aquarium, there was a tremendous boom in weight-lifting, and

strong men were as plentiful as Boy Scouts on a Saturday afternoon—almost. My heaviest lift then was 280lb.; others claimed they could lift 300lb. I practised, and increased my lift to 300lb.; they advertised 320, and so it went on. They were prepared to lift almost any weight but mine.

I determined to do some novel weight-lifting, so novel that I was assured of having no imitators. My first feat was to lift a horse at arm's-length above my head and march round the stage with it.

Then I took a long bar with a large ball at each end, placed a man in each ball, and raised the whole slowly over my head. When the human dumb-bell was put down, the balls opened and the men tumbled out.

The total weight of this bell was well over the 300lb. My next item was a musical turn. I lifted and supported on my chest a grand piano-forte, with an orchestra (no pun intended) of eight performers on top of the instrument. I don't think I ever heard men play so slowly as those eight did—or so it seemed to me.

The concluding feat, one which I was confident no one could copy, was to turn a somersault whilst holding a weight of 50lb. in each hand, and I can give you my word it wants a deal of practice to do it.

Some time afterwards I introduced another novelty. Three horses stood on a plank, one at each end, and the third in the middle, whilst I gave them a see-saw on my chest.

Now, I don't suppose any of my readers will ever want to accomplish these feats; in fact, I advise them not to attempt to do so, but I know that the series of exercises I am setting them will give them superb muscular development and strength far greater than that possessed by the average man.

No doubt there are many of my readers who take more than a passing interest in boxing, and will be glad

to get an exercise which will improve their skill with the gloves.

This exercise will teach you to master the lead off, and enable you to get a stinging hit well home. As you will notice, there is a difference between this movement and the lead off proper, inasmuch as the right foot is brought forward when the left is shot out, and vice versa, but it is a wonderfully good exercise for those practising the noble art of self-defence.

EXERCISE 8.—READY POSITION.

Stand with left toe pointing to left, and right foot to front, the left arm flexed, forearm horizontal, elbows close to sides, eyes front.

MOVEMENT: Lunge three feet to front with right foot, right knee bent, left leg straight, and at the same time strike vigorously forward with left bell, stretching forward the shoulders as far as possible. Do not allow the heels to leave the ground. Smartly recover to position, bringing the right heel close to left. In lunging with the bell the arm should be straightened just before the right foot touches the ground—i.e., the movement of the arm should slightly anticipate the movement of the foot.

Muscles: Serratus, pectorals, deltoid, latissimus dorsi, and quadriceps.

After performing this movement about a dozen times, take up your original position, but with the right toe pointing to the right, and the left foot to the front.

Then lunge forward with the left foot, at the same time striking vigorously forward with the right bell. Smartly recover your position and continue the movement.

Now, you have completed one month's work, and I want you to have your measurements taken very carefully, and feel sure you will be very gratified with the progress you have made in such a short time.

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THE RAILWAY WAIF. BY PATRICK MORRIS.

Concluding Chapters of Our Stirring Poor Boy Serial.

On the Track of Rip Kelly.

THE hunchback lapsed into silence, and for a moment or two the Dodger's attention was fully occupied keeping to his feet on the uncertain ground. But he was not to be easily baffled in his thirst for knowledge.

"You're not exactly what you would call a cheery travelling companion," he commented. "I suppose you're one of those who are agitating for silence carriages, aren't you?"

"I'll silence you if you are not careful," Hepwick answered.

"Well, just give me time to ask one more question," rejoined the Dodger. "What happened to Lady Helen Harty's jewel-case?"

"The Rip's got it, drat him," promptly replied the hunchback, with a gesture. "Got it with him now—the whole blamed lot of it."

"Oh, that's your grievance, then, is it?" commented Jack calmly.

"That's one score I got up agen him, and there's plenty of others."

At length they reached the far side of the open space, and struck off along a disused and deserted track that had at some time in the far past been an occupation road of a farm homestead before the ever-encroaching tentacles of the Midland town had stretched out and devoured the countryside. For a mile or more they plodded on between what had once been two trim hedges, now nothing but great overgrown tangles of rank vegetation, broken by long gaps at frequent intervals.

"Cheerful neighbourhood this," remarked the Dodger.

The hunchback merely grunted. Suddenly a turn in the road brought them in sight of the abandoned farm.

"Now go quiet, and stop that clattering tongue of yours, if you can," hissed out Hepwick under his breath.

Advancing noiselessly, they clambered over a tumbledown gate into the farmyard, a very wilderness of nettles and hemlock, through which they pushed their way to the opposite corner.

The Dodger saw that the house itself was evidently occupied. Lights shone from more than one of the windows, and there was a general air of habitation about it in strange contrast to the neglected aspect of the rest of the homestead.

Hepwick reached a door leading apparently into an outhouse of some sort—a disused dairy or wood-shed, in all probability. With cunning stealth he opened it an inch or two, sufficient just to get his fingers inside, and then, exerting his enormous brute strength, lifted it bodily from its hinges to avoid the possibility of making the smallest noise. Depositing the door with infinite care leaning against the wall, he turned to the Dodger, and in a harsh whisper, said:

"I told you I'd show you the Rip. You follow me, and you will be able to look right through, and see him, and probably what he's got with him, but don't you make a noise, or he'll hear you."

Into the darkness of the outhouse the Dodger plunged after his malicious guide. Cautiously he made his way forward, feeling with hands and feet before each step. The room, whatever it might be, was evidently a narrow one, for he discovered that he was passing through a doorway into an inner apartment. He could still hear the faint rustle of Hepwick's footsteps and the brute's hard breathing as he crept forward.

Then suddenly he came abruptly against a wall. He turned to his

right. A wall again confronted him. He stopped, and "Which way?" he whispered. There was no response. He strained his ears to catch the least sound, but no longer could he hear any trace of Hepwick's movements. The stillness was heavy and oppressive as the stillness of a tomb, and the darkness was that thick darkness that may almost be felt.

With hands outstretched, he crept cautiously round inch by inch, feeling the wall as he went. He came to the next angle, followed the wall on, came to an angle again, and half-way across the third wall found a doorway, but the door was shut on him.

He paused to think. This was the third wall. If the apartment were rectangular, this should be the wall in which was the door that they had entered by, opposite the point at which he had been brought to a standstill. But this door was closed. It seemed to him impossible that Hepwick could so suddenly and so swiftly have doubled back to it, got out, and closed the door without the smallest sound.

Carefully he felt the whole length of the wall to see whether it contained another door, but at length he was satisfied that there was but the one door to the room. He had been shut in, whilst no doubt Hepwick made good his escape.

Cautiously, with both hands, he felt over the door until he came to the latch, and tried to lift it. It was clearly blocked on the outside, as it refused to move to his touch. For a moment he knew not what to think. Had he been entrapped—deliberately brought here into the clutches of Kelly? If so, the hunchback was still in league with him; but the more he thought of Hepwick's obviously unassumed hatred of Kelly, the more certain he felt that the two were at enmity.

It was quite possible, of course, that this was merely the hunchback's subtle way of getting clear, and that he had spoken the literal truth when he said that he had guided the Dodger to Kelly's hiding-place. In this case it was all important that Jack should not betray his presence by making any undue noise; and whatever the situation might be, he had to proceed with caution. His first step was obviously to get out.

When he had satisfied himself by cautious and protracted circuits of the walls that there was no other opening to the room other than the one door, and that therefore there was no danger of a ray of light disclosing his presence, he carefully struck a match.

The room had clearly been the inner of two larders, or dairies. It was bare and devoid of windows, and the door was furnished with a simple latch, fastening on the inside. The thumb-lift of the latch had been apparently wedged on the outside. The Dodger saw at once that by removing the hook, he could effect his escape. He blew out the match, and quickly but silently set to work with his knife to undo the screws holding it in place.

The task was more difficult than he had anticipated. The screws were worn, and rusted into the wood, but at length it was accomplished. Cautiously he opened the door. Through the doorway of the outer apartment shone the dim light of the outside world. He crept across, and once more breathed the free air of heaven.

His first thought was to retrace his steps as quickly as possible to Cowden, and enlist the assistance of the police. Next moment he decided first to make certain that Hepwick had not misled him. He stepped on tiptoes to a window close at hand, from which light was still streaming

even in these advanced hours of the morning.

He found himself looking into a comfortably-furnished room, in the centre of which the unmistakable back of Rip Kelly was seated at a table. On it was a lady's handbag, roughly slit open on one side, and littered round were a number of jewels and trinkets. Kelly was busily engaged prising the stones from their settings and crushing the latter into confused and unrecognisable tangles of precious metal. There was evidently no time to be lost. The man was clearly on the point of realising his haul.

Swiftly Jack stole away, and once he had regained the road, started to run as fast as his legs could carry him. He raced back the way he had come, stumbling once more across the open waste, plunging headlong over the rubble and rubbish, guided by an outlying street lamp of the town. He gained the other side, and made for the first street opening on to the waste. As he reached the corner, he dashed, breathless, headlong into the arms of a constable.

"Hallo, where are you off to?" cried the latter.

"It's all right, my friend," answered the Dodger thankfully.

"Oh, is it? I am not sure about that," retorted the policeman. "Let's have a look at you."

"Oh, look as much as you like," exclaimed the Dodger, "but for goodness' sake, don't waste time. Show me the nearest police-station."

"What's up?" cried the constable. "I want help at once. Have you ever heard of Rip Kelly?"

"Ay, that I have!" answered the constable, with conviction. "Well, we can catch him if you are quick. My name is Postern."

It is safe to say there was not a member of the police force in the Midlands to whom Jack's name was not known.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" at once replied the constable. "I will show you the station. It is not four hundred yards from here."

In a few moments Jack was explaining all to the inspector in charge, and before day had begun to dawn, the lone farmhouse was completely surrounded.

An entry was effected through a scullery window, and then, on tiptoe, Jack, with the inspector, a sergeant, and a constable at his heels, led the way towards the room in which he had seen Kelly seated. It was the Dodger himself who threw open the door. Kelly sprang to his feet and simultaneously drew his revolver.

"Your game's up, Rip. Put that down!" the Dodger called out.

Something in the Dodger's manner, or a glimpse caught of the opposing force behind him, convinced Kelly of the truth of the words. He made no attempt to fire, though he still retained the revolver in his hand.

"One trick to you, I admit," Kelly sneered sarcastically.

"Ay, and the last trick in the

game," retorted the Dodger. "My rubber, I fancy."

"If that is true, I will pay you the stakes," rapped back the Rip; and as he spoke his revolver barked, and a bullet whizzed past the Dodger and lodged in the doorpost.

Before he had time to fire again, all four were upon him. The revolver was wrenched from his hand. He was overpowered, and at last was safely in custody, though not without a struggle, of which all bore the traces.

They stood for a moment to recover their breath. Their handcuffed prisoner was the calmest of the group. He turned to the Dodger.

"How did you find me?" he asked. "Never you mind," replied Jack.

"I don't in the least," retorted Kelly. "I know what has happened. That dirty little scoundrel Hepwick's sold me. You would never have got me if someone had not given me away. By James, if I swing, he'll swing, too. He said he would do it, though I never thought he would have the pluck to."

Even the inspector's caution as to the use that would be made of his words failed to check him.

Whilst Jack and one detachment had been busy effecting Kelly's arrest, another body of constables was scouring the town and the country-side for some trace of Hepwick and Captain King, who, it was obvious, were keeping him company. But not a sign of them could be found. They had vanished as completely as if they had dissolved into air.

"It is impossible," reiterated the inspector for the thirtieth time, "for a man, as physically deformed as Hepwick is, to escape for long."

"You don't know him," answered the Dodger. "He is as slippery as a crateful of eels."

"But he must be somewhere close by. He can't get away without our hearing word of him."

"Well, you'll see," the Dodger said; and at length, after day had fully broken, he retired to his well-earned rest, but not before he had telegraphed news of his success to his chief at Calworth.

Lady Helen's bag and her precious possessions, now most of them broken and distorted beyond all recognition, but not, fortunately, beyond all hope of repair, were safely in the hands of the police. He was deprived, therefore, of the satisfaction of personally returning them to her; but when he awoke he was determined that none other than himself should announce the news of their recovery. After only a few hours' sleep, he caught the south-bound train, and the same afternoon presented himself at Harty Towers.

Lady Helen was at home. Once again when he found himself in her presence the same unaccountable feeling of tongue-tied awe assailed him. There was a curious restraint in their meeting, utterly different from what he had anticipated or planned, and utterly unlike the frank comradeship which had existed during the days of these exciting adventures.

When away from her, he thought of her only as the poor, distressed girl, leaning absolutely on him for support and protection, and obeying implicitly his every injunction, with blind confidence in his ability and strength. Little did he know of the sudden flush which had mounted to her cheeks as she heard his name announced. Little did he know that for the moment she had had to stand almost suffocated by the violence with which her heart leaped at the news that he had arrived, or the anxious haste with which she had hurried to greet him.

When they actually met it was with an awkward "How do you do?" on each side.

"I have come," Jack said with some slight embarrassment, "to bring you good news."

There was something stiff and formal in his manner which caused Lady Helen a momentary pang of apprehension.

"I have discovered your jewels," he went on, and instead of the flush of pleasure and the exclamation of delight that he had anticipated, his great announcement was greeted with an "Oh!" of palpable disappointment.

"Aren't you glad?" he said, almost angrily.

"Oh, yes, I am—I am! It is so good of you—"

"You don't seem to be. You probably won't be when you hear all. As a matter of fact, they are all smashed up."

She didn't seem to mind.

"Kelly was busy ripping the stones out of their settings when I lighted

on him, but I think they're all right. The bag's all slit to pieces, though."

The disjointed sentences were forced from him by a strong desire not to give time for any embarrassing pause. Lady Helen was quick to notice his manner, and realised that her disappointment had hurt him.

"Do forgive me," she cried penitently. "I really don't know how to thank you. It is sweet of you to have taken so much trouble, and to have risked so much for me. I had so little idea what you had come to tell me that it simply took my breath away. But do believe how grateful I am."

She was so penitently sincere, her voice had so pathetic a little break in it, that the Dodger in one moment relented. Those words, spoken as they were, were worth ten thousand times more than the rapturous delight which he had looked for.

"I am only so glad I have been able to do anything for you," he said. "Please don't talk of risks. All's well that ends well."

"Has it ended, then?" she asked, looking up at him from under her great long lashes. "I mean," she went on, "I hope your friendship for me—with us, that is—has not ended."

"Of course, it hasn't," he replied through clenched teeth, then he looked at her.

She was deathly pale, and as he watched her face two tears slowly formed, hung for a moment on those heavy lashes, and trickled down the soft, round cheeks.

In a moment, before he knew even what was in his own mind, he leapt up and seized her hands.

"Don't—oh, don't, please!" he cried.

And then it seemed the most natural thing in the world to find her head nesting against his chest, his hand smoothing her brow.

There was a long silence. She looked up at length with a roguish little smile.

"It isn't ended?" she asked.

"No, darling, nor ever shall be as long as life lasts, if you are willing," he answered in tones of suppressed intensity, pressing her closely to him.

The little duke insisted that his future son-in-law should stay the night.

"You might show a little surprise, father," Lady Helen protested, his arms about her neck in the library just before dinner.

"Surprise, my dear? I have long since given up being surprised at anything you do, and the only thing that surprises me about Jack is that a young man of his ability has not more sense than to get married."

"You are perfectly horrid," she said, with feigned indignation, breaking away from him. "I think it is hateful of you."

"But don't you know that fathers are always hateful? That's what we're for. The only good of parents is invariably to do the wrong thing in their children's eyes. What do you want me to do, faint or have a fit, or what? The thing that concerns me most is when the wedding is to be. I suppose the whole place has got to be turned upside down for it, and when you two have quite made up your minds as to which is the least inconvenient day to yourselves, you might perhaps oblige me by giving me a day or two's notice. Hope it won't put you out in any way."

The little old man for all his apparent cynicism was obviously pleased at the news. The unusual character of the engagement appealed to his sense of the bizarre, though he felt more than a little trepidation as to how the arrangement would be viewed by other members of his family.

"There is just one thing," he went on; "you have got to face your uncle yourself. I am not going to tell him, I can promise you. It is your arrangement, and you must carry it through. I can see him when he hears of it quite vividly enough in my imagination to want to be there in the flesh, though I would give my head to be an unseen looker-on. By James! Won't he have some things to say about wild Irishmen and their irresponsible daughters?"

Jack was not the type to rest with his work half done. He tore himself away from the seductive delights of Harty Towers and what it held for him early next morning. Lady Helen, looking fresh and fragrant, was up to see him off.

"Now, mind, Jack," she said, looking into his eyes as she clung to his arms; "you belong to me now, and I

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can't have you running any risk. You are too precious."

"That's all right, my darling!" he answered, pressing her arm. The old, familiar phrase clung to him still. "But I must catch that little scoundrel Hepwick."

"You are worth more than all the Hepwicks in the world," she answered impulsively. "Why bother about him?"

"That scoundrel Hepwick—and his friend," he went on meaningly, and looked at her. His teeth were set. She paled a little.

"Yes," she said very quietly, "I should like him caught. The brute!" And she shivered. "But not if it means any risk to you, my love."

He reported at Calworth, and then left again for Cowden. The inspector in charge met him with a crestfallen face.

"Well," exclaimed the Dodger, "caught our friend Hepwick yet?"

"No, Mr. Postern; I'm afraid he's escaped us again."

"Oh, but it's impossible!" rejoined Jack chaffingly. "Impossible! A man as deformed as he is couldn't by any chance get away—he couldn't avoid attracting attention!"

The inspector smiled bitterly. "Yes," he said, "you are quite right to make fun of us. You knew him better than we did."

"Well, now, let's see," answered the Dodger briskly; "we know he's stony broke, we know he was somewhere in the neighbourhood, we know that he appeared to be so deformed that anyone would spot him if he tried to move about or get away. What does that suggest, eh?"

"I don't know," replied the other slowly.

"Why, surely, either that his deformity is put on as a disguise or that he only moves about by night, or possibly both. As he's hard-up he'll have to tramp—take to the road. He'll stick to King, you'll find, because he wants someone with wits."

"And they are both fugitives. Now, see what your men can find out about tramps the last few nights. Have every farm and village scoured, every casual ward searched for two men, one about five feet tall, very upright, with long arms and a large head—those things he can't alter—and the other from 5ft. 10ins. to 5ft. 11ins., and very dark—almost black—beady eyes. Get all the chief constables of neighbouring counties to do the same. We'll soon catch them if my theory is right."

Meanwhile Jack himself made a careful inspection of the waste ground they had crossed that night on the way to the farm where Kelly was hiding. It was obvious to him that the hunchback was strangely familiar with the place. He made an unostentatious survey of every inch of the ground, finally inspecting the ruins of the old cottage.

As he neared it he started. The ground around it, raised by succes-

sive dumps of rubbish to almost half the height of the walls, was strangely disturbed. In places it was trodden in mud, in others there were evident signs that someone had either by accident or design quite recently shifted much of the refuse; weeds were trampled down or torn up, old cans were rolled over and their less rusty sides were exposed, rags or scraps of linoleum obviously previously buried were now on the surface.

He gave no indication of having noticed anything unusual. With hands in his pockets, kicking the rubbish idly as he walked, he sauntered round the ruin. But his eyes were keen, and nothing escaped him. Someone had very recently been coming and going repeatedly in the neighbourhood of those crumbling walls. The trampled appearance was more marked just by a gap in one that gave access to the interior.

He could not see inside without too pointedly craning in. His movements he felt sure were being watched. The day was fast closing in. He did not intend to be taken unawares, unarmed and alone, again.

Very casually he strolled off again towards the town. Avoiding speaking to the constable on point duty on the edge of the waste, he made his way by a detour to the police-station.

"Now, then," he said casually, "if you'd tell off about a dozen constables, we'll go and arrest Hepwick."

The superintendent's incredulous surprise delighted him. In a few moments he had explained the situation. Police were quietly posted all round the open waste, making their way to it by roundabout roads, with strict injunctions to avoid attracting attention. They were all to be in position by 9 p.m., at which time Jack, armed with a heavy ash plant and a revolver, set out for the ruins.

Stealthily he crept across the waste, keeping in the shadow of the rubbish heaps, and working from one to another nearer and nearer to the old cottage walls. A group of constables was in hiding close at hand to give help when required.

At length the Dodger reached the ruin, on the side furthest from the gap. He crept along noiselessly, crouching down to avoid observation. At that distance not even the tumble-down building could be made out by the police round the waste. They had simply to wait and keep their eyes open for Jack's signal—one shrill whistle, if the quarry bolted, two if he wanted help.

He was surprised at the extraordinary quiet of the place. If he had not been spotted he had expected to hear some signs of life within the cottage walls. He stole round to the other side and crept on to the very edge of the gap in the wall. Not a sound!

He hesitated before showing himself in the gap, but after waiting a long time and hearing nothing, he at

length peered in. It was pitchy dark. Not a thing could be seen inside the walls, though he knew well that anyone within would be able to make him out against the sky. It was no good trying to keep up the concealment any longer.

He pressed the button of an electric torch he carried in his left hand and flashed it round.

Through the gap the old walls dropped sheer down to the original floor level eight or nine feet below the surface of the ground outside, forming a kind of well of what had once been a living room. The ground inside and the walls were thick grown with a dense tangle of weeds and ferns, mosses and creepers. Here and there an abutment or a heap of ruins showed where the inside walls or a fireplace had previously been.

Plainly evident was it that human feet had constantly and very lately trodden amongst the rank vegetation. There were regular tracks across it, trampled down and sodden, and all converged to one point, where an old doorway still stood, leading no doubt in the past to some backyard or outhouse, long since buried under the accumulated rubbish outside.

Instantly the Dodger realised that Hepwick, and also King, no doubt, were living like rats in some cranny through that doorway, down there under the heaps of rubbish.

At the same moment a flash and a sharp report came from the darkness of their burrow, and a bullet whizzed past him.

He stepped briskly back. Obviously to take the fugitives by direct assault would mean to court the loss of many lives so long as they had ammunition. A single man in that dark recess could defend the gap against a hundred, picking them off as they showed themselves, with a dozen chances at any he missed as they lowered themselves down the wall, or dashed across to the doorway.

On the other hand, a single man at the gap could equally prevent the hiders from escaping.

He stood out from behind the protection of the wall, and called out to Hepwick that he was armed.

"I advise you not to try any tricks!" he shouted. "I've got a score of men here, and we are going to take you. Will you come quietly or not?"

No answer. He blew twice, shrilly. A moment afterwards he heard the police stumbling and blundering across the waste to him. Just as he began to be able to make out their figures in the darkness, there was a sound of scrambling beside him, a rumble of falling stones, a clatter of masonry, and the whole world seemed to come crashing about him.

Hepwick and King had climbed to the top of the wall behind him, and sent a mass of the crumbling ruin down upon him.

Then they leapt to the ground, and without waiting to see whether he was killed or not, bolted like rabbits

across the waste away from the hurrying posse of police.

But as they stood on the wall to leap they had been seen against the faint light of the sky. Three of the constables gave chase, sounding their whistles shrilly. A revolver barked with a spurt of flame in the darkness, and one of the pursuers dropped, shot in the leg.

That spurt of flame gave the police the cue they wanted.

Once more King fired as he ran. The foremost of the two remaining constables chasing them fell heavily forward, with a bullet in his stomach.

King, with the experience of war to guide him, was shooting low. But three of his cartridges were spent. He fired at the remaining man, missed, fired again, then a yell from the hunchback made him turn again, and he found Hepwick struggling in the clutches of two burly policemen, whilst other two dashed forward towards him. His game was up. He placed the barrel of his revolver in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. With his last cartridge he made a final end of resistance.

The Dodger was more startled than hurt by the avalanche that had descended. So close had he kept to the wall that the bulk of it had shot over and passed him, and after the first surprise was over, he picked himself up, and ran after the fugitives, coming up just after that last grim scene.

"The Dodger" No Longer.

IN the end, it was the duke himself who, despite his protests, told Lord Trimley of his daughter's engagement. The interview, as he had seen, was heated on his brother-in-law's part.

"Outrageous! Impossible! A little whipper-snapper picked up in the streets, and employed out of charity by the company on a beggarly wage, to marry Helen! I never heard of such a thing. You must be mad!"

For five minutes his tirade had continued unchecked, whilst the duke sat back in an easy-chair, his thin legs crossed, his eyes half-closed, deliberately, and with apparently deeply engrossed attention, experimenting on new forms of thumb-twiddling.

"No, not mad," he said at length, when Lord Trimley paused to take breath—"not mad; only silly. But after all, my dear boy, you seem to forget, in the first place, that Helen's my daughter, and not yours; in the second, that I can at least provide bread-and-butter for her whoever she marries; and thirdly, though perhaps not least important, that it is she who is marrying him, and not you. If it amuses her, I don't see that it hurts me, and really, you know, it will be a most interesting experiment."

"Of course, I am only a fool in these things, I know, but I have a dim recollection that when all you

clever business men were gnashing your teeth for Jack's blood, I ventured to point out that there was something in the lad. Of course, you ridiculed it then, but I don't think that subsequent events were altogether in favour of your views; and that emboldens me to hope that possibly he may make a good husband. And really, you know, my dear chap, even if his father was a ganger or a platelayer, or whatever you call the particular overpaid sinecure which he had the privilege of holding, families must have a beginning somewhere.

"I am afraid that even yours or mine, if we look back a little way, would not be altogether above reproach. I believe that more than one ancestor of mine enriched himself by what in these days would be termed robbery with violence, and was sordidly dealt with in a police-court, whilst I cannot help thinking that a great part of your own fortunes sprang from a lady who sold oranges in Drury Lane, and subsequently kept a milk shop in Chelsea.

"Look at the thing in a proper light. Jack, curiously enough, has, I find, succeeded in making a certain amount of money in the employ of your over-generous and charitable company. It proves him to be a financial genius, and it also has enabled him to become a not inconsiderable shareholder. I think I hold a certain amount of stock myself, and I am going to propose at the general meeting that Mr. Jack Postern—I don't think he is Mr. John Postern—be elected a director of the company.

"Sh! Steady a moment!" he went on, as Lord Trimley attempted to interrupt him. "Keep quite calm. I am no hand at dealing with emergency cases. What I was going to suggest is that you had better back up the proposal, because I believe that actually at the present moment I am rather a larger stockholder than you are, and it would be such a pity if the chairmanship passed out of the family. I never can for the life of me see why it should be considered to be more respectable to draw £2,000 a year from the shareholders without doing anything except eating a certain number of luncheons, than it is to work hard for the benefit of those same shareholders at a wage of £16 a month. But the fact remains that in this curious society of ours a railway director is thought more of than an assistant traffic-superintendent."

"Added to which, I myself should feel far happier about my holding in the company if a man with Jack's ability and energy has a say in the direction of it than I even do now whilst it is under the control of the eminently respectable society luminaries who grace the board by their presence."

THE END.

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How to Make a Signalling Lamp.

A LITTLE while ago I promised to tell you how to make a lamp for Morse signalling at night. Now, when the evenings are long, is the time to go in for this sort of thing. So here goes!

To start with, if I were you, I would buy what is called a "Morse Flashing Disc." It costs two shillings at most shops where they sell scout things.

The flashing disc consists of a square piece of wood with a hole in it. An iron shutter, worked by a brass lever, covers the hole. Press down the lever and the shutter lifts. Let go, and a spring closes the shutter. And so, you see, you can make long and short flashes corresponding to the dot and dash of the Morse alphabet.

This flashing disc put in front of an ordinary bicycle-lamp makes a jolly good little signalling-lamp to learn with. But you will find, after a little while, that you can't go quickly enough with it. The lever has to be pressed down such a long way that you are obliged to go slow.

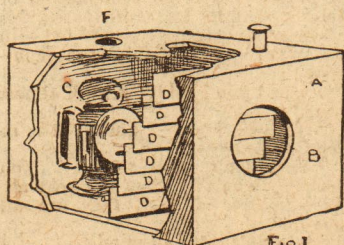
So I'm going to tell you how to make yourselves a lamp with which you can signal as quickly as you can with a telegraph-key. There is a

good deal of work in it, I confess, but any boy who is fairly handy with tools ought to have no difficulty in making it

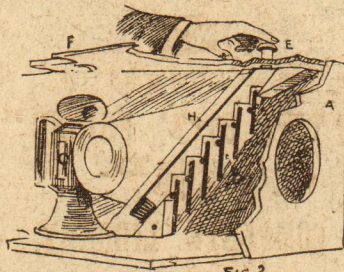
with a bicycle lamp.

First, make yourself a box. Its size will depend on the size of the lamp you are putting inside it. You cannot have anything better than a good bicycle-lamp—an acetylene one for preference, as the light is so much sharper. You want comfortable room for your lamp, and about three inches clear space in front of it. A box about six inches long, six deep, and four wide ought to be about right.

In one end, which will be the front, cut a round hole, fix in a bullseye from a lantern. You can, if you like,



This shows how the shutters are placed.



Shows the shutters before the key is pressed.

just leave it as a hole, but a bullseye gives you a stronger ray of light.

The hole should be about the same size as the bullseye of your lamp, and should be placed exactly opposite it when it is put in the box, as shown in Fig. 1. In between the lamp and the hole you fix your shutters—which are the ingenious part of the whole concern.

Cut six strips of tin, about half an inch shorter than the width of the box, and about an inch and a half wide. Solder a thin rod right along each—not on the edge, but about a quarter of an inch from it. This side is the top of the shutter.

In the sides of the box bore small holes exactly opposite one another for the ends of the rods to go in. The holes should be large enough for the rods to turn easily in them.

The holes should be so placed that the top shutter is just a little way in front of the one below it, and its bottom edge a little higher than the top edge of the next one. Fig 2 will show what I mean, but the shutters should be closer to one another than

they are drawn there. I had to exaggerate the distance between them to make it clear.

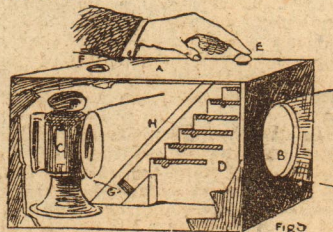
The straight strokes marked "D," you see, are the shutters, looking end on, and the round dots on them represent the rods.

To Work the Shutters.

Now, cut a thin strip of wood, the "plunger," marked "H" in the sketch, with six notches along one side corresponding to the shutters.

This plunger, you see, slides up and down in a sloping direction in grooves—a long groove on the upper side, and short ones on the under side, above and below the shutters. You can make these grooves by nailing strips of wood on the side of the box, cut with a slightly-bevelled edge that overlaps the side of the plunger.

At the bottom of the plunger you put a small, strong spring—marked "G" in the sketch. At the top of the box, above the plunger, bore a hole and put a round peg through, the bottom resting on the plunger, but not joined to it. On the top end of the peg put a little round knob. The peg should work quite freely in the hole.



Shows the shutters after the key is pressed.

Now then, in its normal position the plunger is at Fig. 2, the notches just above the upper edges of the shutters at that end. The shutters are hanging down, and shutting out the light of the lamp from passing through the bullseye in front of the box.

When you press down the knob "E" with your finger, the notches in the plunger catch the edges of the shutters and press them down, turning the whole shutters into the horizontal position shown in Fig. 3. The light then, of course, streams through. Release the knob, and the spring forces plunger and shutters back into the Fig. 2 position.

So, you see, pressing the knob down quickly and releasing it gives you a short flash—a "dot"; pressing it down and holding it a moment gives you a long flash—a "dash."

Do You Want Help?

I'm glad to find that you fellows are writing in and asking my advice about things. Believe me, I'm only too glad to hear from you, and to do all I can to help you. Don't think that because it is only little things you want to know that it isn't worth while troubling me. It's often the little things that count. So whenever you want to know anything, write to me.

Don't forget that if your inquiry is personal, or if you want an answer at once, to enclose a stamped addressed envelope. If it is something that will interest all scouts, I will answer it on this page.

THE SCOUTMASTER.

(Another splendid Scout Article in our bumper number next Tuesday.)