

YOU MUST NOT MISS

"SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE,"
"SEXTON BLAKE, FOREMAN,"
"YORKSHIRE GRIT," & "THE BLOT."

(SEE
INSIDE
FOR
THESE
GRAND
SERIAL
STORIES.)

Printing Set Coupon
No. 13.
See page 403.

THE BOYS' FRIEND 1D

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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

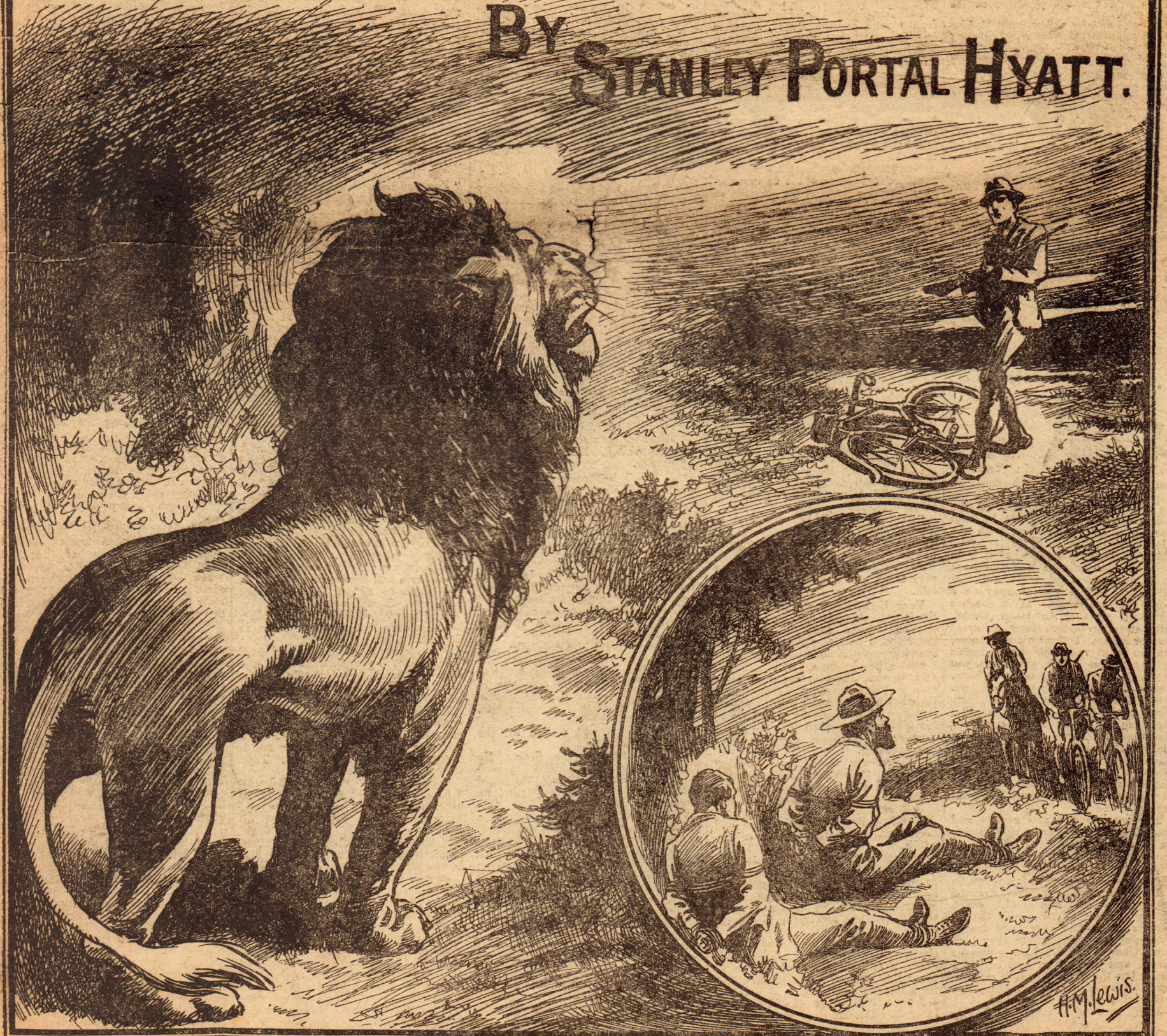
No. 494.—Vol. X. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY.

[WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 26, 1910.]

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

BY
STANLEY PORTAL HYATT.



"Soldiers of Fortune" is Our Superb New Serial, Specially Written by that Great Traveller, Stanley Portal Hyatt.



SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

Early Chapters of a
Superb New Serial,
Specially Written for THE
BOYS' FRIEND by that
Well-known Globe-trotter
and Author, STANLEY
PORTAL HYATT.

TO INTRODUCE YOU TO:

DUDLEY AND MARCUS SCARFIELD, two jolly young British boys who are setting out to find Mr. Douglas, a hunter who is beyond civilisation in the wilds of Matabeleland. And they have strong motives in finding the hunter, for he was the friend of their dead father, and holds the rights of a wonderful new rifle the British War Office are taking up, and which their father invented. If they can find Douglas and prove their claim, they will share in the enormous profits from the rifle.

JOSEPH SCARFIELD is cousin to the two boys. He comes to hear of the plan to trace out Douglas, and resolves to reach the hunter first, and steal the rights. He is well provided with money, whilst his cousins, after paying their passage money, have little but their adjustable bicycles. Motherless and fatherless, Dudley and Marcus have few friends to leave behind, and they sail cheerfully from Southampton third-class on their perilous quest. Their cousin is a first-class passenger on the same liner.

All goes well for a time, until Madeira is reached, when the two boys, going ashore to stretch their legs, are kidnapped by Portuguese at the instigation of Joseph, and

threatened with slavery

on the cocoa plantations. After marvellous adventures, they escape from their prison, and meet with Captain Batson, master of the tramp steamer Bulgaria, on which vessel they continue their journey to the Cape, their own ship in the meantime having proceeded on her voyage.

By the irony of fate, the liner breaks down, and the Bulgaria takes her in tow, landing Dudley and Marcus at Cape Town at the same time as Joseph Scarfield.

Upon making inquiries at the railway station they find that their cousin has already started on his journey inland, and there not being another passenger train for two days, the two lads travel as far as Vryburg in a goods train.

At Vryburg they come in contact with a sergeant of the mounted police, and, in opposition to his warning of the great difficulties they will have to face, they are determined to go on and face the worst.

An old Basuto native who has taken a liking to the two young Britishers, offers to travel north with them.

"I know a road across the veldt, if you will let me guide you," he says to the two boys.

(Now read this week's splendid chapters.)

THE 10th CHAPTER.

Joseph Takes the Lead.

Joseph SCARFIELD did not get a very great start on the boys after all. He had to wait a whole night in Vryburg, and, as a matter of fact, the coach on which he was travelling lumbered out on the northern road just as the police and his cousins rode in from the south after the affair with the Matabele.

If you want to know what it is to be really uncomfortable, if you want to be really worn out, dirty, and sick of things, take a long journey on a South African coach. These coaches are built on the American model, with swaying bodies slung on great leather straps. Ten mules draw them, and on an average you change teams every nine miles. Yet, even then, you are lucky if you do six miles an hour. There were two men on the box, the driver and the leader. The former, who is white, only handles the whip, whilst the latter, usually a Basuto, has the reins. There is no glass in the windows—it would never stand the jolting, much less the frequent capsize—and so you are absolutely smothered with dust—dust in your eyes, in your mouth, in your ears.

The coach sways and groans and creaks, jerking you from side to side on the hard, straight-backed seats until every bone in your body aches. You would give anything to stop and rest, to lie down on a bed, or even on the ground and rest your strained muscles, yet that abominable coach always goes on. True, now and then it stays for an hour at some uncleanly little wayside store, where they give you tinned meat, baking-powder bread, and bad coffee, and call it a meal; but the longest wait is only an hour. Then you jolt on again, day and night, perhaps for a week.

Joseph was not a strong man in any

way, and the constant travelling told on him terribly. But he was very much in earnest, determined to find Mr. Douglas the hunter first at all costs, and so he stuck to it grimly until he reached Mafeking.

There were not many passengers going north at that time. The air was full of rumours of native risings, and Joseph had more than one blunt warning at the wayside stores.

"You may get as far as Palapye, young fellow," a gruff old transport-rider remarked, "but you'll get no further—at least, not by coach. Old Lobengula can't hold his fighting men in much longer, and the whites up there won't want a new chum like yourself to look after. They've their work cut out to look after themselves."

Still Joseph went on. He had heard from a man in Cape Town, a dealer in skins and horns, that Douglas had a regular camp on the Great Sabi River in Eastern Mashonaland, and he was going to reach that camp by hook or by crook. He had been told, correctly, that the route lay through Bulawayo, the Matabele capital, and thence to Fort Victoria. There was a road—a waggon-track, rather—so far, but from the fort onwards he would have to go across the veldt with native guides. It was not a pleasant prospect for anyone of his nature, and he shivered a little at the thought of it. Then he remembered the fortune at stake, remembered, too, that he would be scoring off those hated cousins of his.

Still, it was rather a relief to him to be told in Mafeking that there would be a delay of twenty-four hours. He knew that he must be well ahead of his cousins now, and it never occurred to him that they might have come on by goods train. The rest did him good, and he was quite ready to go on again next morning.

When the coach left Mafeking—then a mere little border township which no one suspected would ever become world-famous, a collection of tin-roofed houses and stores on a practically level stretch of open veldt—Joseph was apparently the only passenger going on. But just as the driver, a stolid, black-bearded Boer, began to call to his mules, another man hurried out of the hotel, and jumped in.

"Just in time," he remarked to Joseph. "That's what comes of spending too long over saying goodbye to fellows."

Joseph nodded. He was feeling very tired, and was not in a mood to talk.

Very little more was said during the long day's trek. The road was, if possible, worse than it had been before, and at times the jolting and swaying was almost unbearable.

Once the stranger, who was tall and sinewy, dressed, as were most men in that country, in dungaree breeches and a flannel shirt, with no jacket, and with sleeves rolled up to his elbows, remarked on the small number of transport waggons they were passing.

"There are none going north," he said. "The forwarding agents are afraid to give them loads with the natives in this state. I'm surprised at that lot being sent up." And he pointed to a case which had been screwed to the bottom of the coach.

"What is that?" Joseph asked. The other looked at him curiously, as though trying to see whether his ignorance was real or not, then apparently came to the conclusion that Joseph was not trying to deceive him.

"I thought you were the man in charge of it," he said. "Why, it's gold. Some ten thousand pounds in sovereigns, to pay Khama, the chief, for a big mob of cattle."

Joseph looked at the box with interest. The idea of ten thousand

pounds at his very feet appealed to him greatly.

"I wonder they're not afraid of its being stolen," he said.

"They've sent money in safety by coach so often that I suppose they never gave it a thought. Now, if anyone were to hold up this coach, what would you do? Show fight? I see you've got a revolver."

An onlooker would have said he was waiting eagerly for the answer, and that he was distinctly relieved when Joseph shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"It would be no concern of mine. I've got something else to do besides guarding other people's money."

They reached a wayside store about sundown. The driver clambered down wearily, and stumbled a little as he made his way to the long, grass-roofed hut which formed the principal building.

"I've got a touch of fever, John," he mumbled to the storekeeper. "It was all I could do to get through this last stage. We shall have to stay here over to-night. I'm not fit to take her along this stretch of bad road in the dark."

A couple of minutes later he was lying on one of the rough skeleton beds, with half a dozen blankets piled on top of him, shivering with ague.

Joseph heaved a sigh of relief. So he was going to get another night's sleep, another respite from that abominable travelling. But his companion, on the other hand, was evidently deeply annoyed, for he began to mutter under his breath, then strode over to the squalid little bar, where he began to drink whisky freely. Meanwhile, the storekeeper, who was also coach agent, unscrewed the case from the floor of the coach, and, with the aid of his boys, carried it into his own hut.

"Safest plan with that," he remarked, as he passed Joseph. When he came out again: "You'll have to share a hut with Harry Collins," he said, indicating the other passenger with a nod. "We haven't very luxurious accommodation here, you know."

Joseph went to bed early, and, rather to his surprise, he was quickly joined by Collins, who showed a strong inclination to talk. He was a clever man, a far more clever man than the other, and he soon got the measure of Joseph's character. He even did more than that. He found out Joseph's destination, and though the rifle was not mentioned—Joseph had that amount of caution—Collins conjectured rightly that there must be some very great prize at stake to take a man of Joseph's fibre up country on such a dangerous journey.

They talked well into the night. The lights in the other huts were put out, and all the rest of the camp went to sleep. Then suddenly, from a low line of kopjes a mile away, came a sound which made Joseph start to his feet, white and trembling.

"What—that's that?" he gasped. Collins smiled. He was still smoking calmly.

"A lion," he answered. "You'll hear lots before you're through. There's nothing to worry about, so long as you're in a hut like this. But when you get out into the open—"

And he shrugged his shoulders meaningly.

Joseph sat down again, but there were big beads of perspiration on his face. It was the first time he had realised the dangers of the veldt, and he did not like the idea of what might be ahead.

Collins watched him carefully. "You want someone with you," he said—"someone experienced, like myself. I know a safe route up to the Sabi River, and if you liked to give me a share in your enterprise, whatever it is—"

He broke off and waited for the other to speak.

Joseph stared at the floor. He hated paying anyone for doing anything. Perhaps, after all, he could get through alone; at any rate, he would try. Besides—

Once more the lion roared, and a moment later another lion answered, apparently from just behind the huts.

"Cheerful company," Collins laughed. "Now, if you were out on the veldt with only half a dozen nigger carriers, how do you think you'd like it?"

Joseph gave in suddenly.

"I'll accept your offer, if we can come to terms."

"One thing first," Collins dropped his voice to a whisper. "If anyone makes trouble with the coach—you understand?—you are to take no part in it."

Joseph's beady eyes gleamed. He understood at once.

"If you share with me, I share with you, too," he said.

The other man nodded.

"There'll be enough to go round," he said. "And now tell me about your business. We must fix it all up to-night, because I shall have to make myself scarce for a while, and meet you further up country."

Joseph did not get much sleep that night after all. He haggled over terms with Collins almost till dawn, and at last turned in, having come to an agreement with him, and having still told only half the truth concerning the rifle patent, though he made up for the other half by telling a large number of lies.

At sunrise the storekeeper came in to them.

"The driver's better," he announced. "He's fit to go on now, I think. They're going to inspan the mules at once. Did you hear those lions last night? They got one of my oxen, the brutes! They're the curse of the country, or one of the many curses."

And he departed, grumbling.

Collins glanced at his companion.

"I expect you're glad you've got a partner now, Mr. Scarfield?"

THE 11th CHAPTER.

A Lonely Journey.

ARIFLE cracked out from the bush, and one of the front mules went down, shot clean through both shoulder-blades. A moment later the team was a wildly struggling tangle. The hind mules, striving to avoid the heels of their stable companions, swerved suddenly, one of the wheels caught a projecting stump, and the coach stopped with a jerk.

The driver was still feeling the effects of the fever, but he flung down his whip quickly, and reached out for his rifle, scanning the bush eagerly for a sign of the man who had fired.

"Come out, you fellows!" he shouted to his passengers. "I believe it's a hold-up!"

"It is, Piet," Collins said calmly. "You had better put that rifle down, or I'll shoot you through the head!"

And the driver looked round, to see Collins covering him.

The driver lowered his own rifle.

"Well, I'm dashed!" he said. "You've got me fairly! And you— are you in it, too?" He turned to Joseph, who was standing a little way off, looking very uneasy.

"I took the liberty of taking away this gentleman's revolver. It might have gone off," Collins answered. "I'll take your rifle, too, and then we'll tie you all up, where you can watch us shift the gold. I see my partner is coming. It was a good shot of his."

Another man, very similar to Collins in general appearance, was coming out of the scrub. The driver gave a little grunt of disgust.

"Hans van Zyl!" he exclaimed. "And I gave you a free ride last trip, when you was footsore."

Then, in obedience to an order from Collins, he clambered down slowly.

"I hope they catch you," he muttered, as they began to bind him with some of the mule reins.

"They won't catch us," Collins answered cheerfully. "The Transvaal border is only a few miles away from here, and there's no extradition. We shall be across before anyone finds you. Now it's your turn."

And he proceeded to bind Joseph.

The driver looked at the latter in disgust.

"A nice sort of skunk you are! You might have shouted out and warned me. Not your business, you say? Bah!" And after that he relapsed into disgusted silence.

Collins and Van Zyl lost no time over shifting the gold. They had some pack-horses hidden in the bush, and the money was quickly transferred to the saddles of these. Then they themselves mounted.

"Ta-ta, Piet!" Collins called out. "I hope you won't be too uncomfortable. Someone is sure to find you before dark. Au revoir, Mr. Scarfield."

A minute later they were out of sight, heading for the nearest point of the Transvaal border.

Joseph spent a very miserable day. The robbers had put their prisoners in the shade certainly, and had given each of them a drink of water before leaving; but still, as the hours went by the pangs of thirst grew very severe, whilst the lashings, which had been put on tightly, galled and chafed his wrists and ankles terribly.

Moreover, the driver, reckoning him a coward, treated him with sullen contempt, refusing even to notice his nervous questions.

Ordinarily they might have expected some transport waggons or a mule cart along about sunset; but, as Collins had said, there were few on the road at that time, whilst there were no native villages in the neighbourhood. The driver had done his best to loosen his bonds, then had given up the task in grim despair. The fever had come on again badly, and a night out in the open, without blankets, food, or water, might very likely mean death to him.

The sun had gone down behind a line of kopjes, and the short twilight was drawing to a close; a few minutes more, and it would have been dark, when the driver's ears caught the sound of a horse's hoofs. A moment later, to his intense surprise and relief, he saw two boys on bicycles, followed by a native on a wiry little Basuto pony, coming round the bend of the road. As he caught sight of the coach, the native gave a quick exclamation of astonishment. He understood at once. "It has been robbed, baas!" he cried to Marcus, who was the nearest to him.

A minute later the boys were busily engaged cutting the lashings on the driver's wrists and ankles, and seeing he was really ill, they gave him their whole attention, whilst Amous saw to Joseph, whom in the half-light they had not yet recognised.

"There is a bottle of dop (Cape brandy) in my box," the driver whispered. "Give me some neat."

Dudley hurried to obey, and then he saw who the other white man was. "Joseph!" he exclaimed.

Joseph knew him, too, but, for the moment, was too exhausted to say anything, even to feel much, perhaps. They gave the driver his dop, and then Dudley poured out another strong dose for his cousin, who drank it down eagerly. He was evidently so played out that all the boys' indignation against him faded away, for the time, at least. Amous had already set to work to light a fire, and it was not long before they had some food ready. The brandy had pulled Joseph together, and he ate ravenously; but the driver waved the plate away.

"I've got the fever on me badly," he muttered.

The boys exchanged glances. Malarial fever was a new thing to them, and they did not know how to deal with it. The man seemed very ill—in fact, he was very ill—and he might die for want of skilled attention.

Marcus turned to Amous. "Is there a doctor we can fetch from anywhere?"

The Basuto shook his head.

"Not for a hundred miles, at least, baas. There is nothing in this stretch of veldt, no mines, no towns, nothing—just bush like this. Only there is a police camp about ten miles on, and the sergeant there is a little bit of a doctor. I knew him when I was driving the waggons of my old baas."

"Ten miles," Marcus glanced towards his brother. "It wouldn't take me long to ride it, as there'll be a moon in half an hour or so."

Dudley shook his head.

"I'll go. I expect you're pretty tired."

But Marcus insisted, and finally Dudley gave way. Amous's pony had gone a trifle lame—in fact, they had been looking for a place to camp when they came on the coach; moreover, it would be far better for a white man to report the robbery and the driver's sickness to the police.

They had travelled very fast—much faster than they had expected to do, although, of course, in ordinary circumstances, they could never have dreamed of coming up with the coach; but the latter had now been delayed some forty-eight hours in all, and that had given them their chance. Then, too, in Mafeking Amous had been able to exchange his own tired horse for a fresh one with one of his fellow tribesmen, and that fact had helped them greatly. They had also been lucky in finding the road in good condition—for South Africa, and they had been able to ride the greater part of the way.

Their kits, which they had brought from home, proved everything they could want, although the first night they camped out on the ground both of them wished they had an extra blanket.

It is a strange sensation sleeping out on the veldt for the first time—in fact, I doubt greatly if anyone ever succeeded in getting much rest on that occasion, at least in the lion country. Every noise seems magnified enormously. A field rat scurrying through the grass becomes the stealthy tread of a leopard; a harmless jackal becomes a lion; the weird hoot of an owl suggests some nameless

danger coming on you. You think how easily your own natives could cut your throat, and make off with your kit without anyone ever hearing of it, for you have been told truthfully that before many hours were over the vultures and the hyenas would have finished all that remained of you, leaving only your skull.

You think of these things, and then you get up, throw some more wood on the fire, and sit beside it, with a blanket round your shoulders. You lie down again after a while, and perhaps doze off, to awaken soon with a start; your hip-bone feels horribly sore, and somehow you have kicked your blanket off.

At last, however, comes that faint trace of pink in the east. The cook-boy yawns, sits up—he is sleeping with his feet exposed and his face covered—then he shivers, takes snuff, rakes the fire together, and begins to make your morning coffee. By the time it is ready, daylight has come, and with it all your nervousness leaves you. After all, it is a very beautiful world in the daylight, and fear is an ugly child of the darkness.

The second night you sleep better, and, after a week, the only discomfort which remains is that soreness of the hip-bone, which usually continues for months. The cold—and African nights can be cold; I have had my water-bag frozen solid even in the Middle Veldt—may worry you a little, but after a time you cease to sleep near the fire, which only warms one portion of your body, and you find it is not nearly so bad as it seemed at first—in short, you have got used to it.

The boys had to go through all these stages, but they were fortunate in having an old hand like Amous with them, otherwise they might have fared badly. There was nothing about the veldt he did not know, and, moreover, he was an excellent cook. Unlike most natives who speak English and find themselves with white men new to African ways, he was always respectful, always ready to do anything without being asked. They might have searched from the Cape to the Zambesi without finding anyone more suitable than this wizened old Basuto, who had merely attached himself to their service, without being asked, and without any mention of wages.

Marcus waited until the moon was up, then, taking nothing on his bicycle except his rifle, he started up the road. It is never a pleasant thing being alone at night in Africa, and even old pioneers get a strange feeling of nervousness, especially when they are on foot.

Marcus was nervous, he himself would have admitted so much readily, and he had not gone a mile when he began to wish he were back beside the camp fire, but his sense of duty kept him going. He must fetch assistance for the coach-driver, and inform the police of the robbery; possibly it was not too late to follow up the thieves, hampered as they were with the heavily-laden pack-horses. He did not realise how close the Transvaal border was.

He pedalled as fast as his weary legs would allow, and so long as he was actually riding he felt safe, but when he came to a drift, and had to dismount, the loneliness and the silence of the veldt seemed to grip him. He hurried across, and drew a sigh of relief as he prepared to mount on the other side. Then suddenly he knew that he was not alone—something was walking stealthily through the bush a few yards from the road.

THE 12th CHAPTER.
Joseph Plays False.

MARCUS did not lose his head, and do what many, most perhaps would have done in his place—take his rifle and wait, with trembling hands, to make a certain miss when the chance to shoot came. Instead, he jumped on his machine and started off as quickly as he could.

He knew well what the danger must be. Only one heavy animal will stalk a man, and that animal is the lion.

He was riding fast now, and by the time he had done a couple more miles, he began to hope he had distanced it; but as he climbed slowly up a steep rise, he heard it coming along behind, crunching up the dead leaves and dried twigs.

It was dangerous work riding fast at night along what was the worst stretch of road he had encountered so far, but the lion seemed the

greater danger. Time after time he had to dismount for steep little water-courses, and once he had to wheel his machine through nearly half a mile of heavy sand.

Would he never reach his destination? Already it seemed as though he must have done, not ten, but twenty-five miles.

Every time he slowed down, he could hear those huge, soft paws padding along near by. His heart seemed to be in his mouth all the time. He was dripping with perspiration, and the salt sweat ran into his eyes, half blinding him. He never knew rightly how long his ride took him. Looking back on it afterwards, it seemed like a nightmare. It was the sense of absolute loneliness which was so terrible; it was as though in the whole world there were only himself and that horror in the bush. Moreover, he knew well that though he could not see the lion, the lion could see him, and that feeling, too, was terrible.

Would he never reach the police camp and safety, or even an outspanned waggon? Would he ever speak to a man again? Suddenly he found himself at the top of a steep drift, and there, below him, was a broad sand river, gleaming white in the moonlight. Marcus groaned. He knew by experience what pushing his bicycle through that sand meant. Surely the lion would seize the opportunity for an attack!

Now, for the first time, he took his rifle out of the clips, and slipped back the safety catch; then he started doggedly to cross the stretch of sand. He had gone just half-way when, glancing back, he saw it coming, loping along after him, a huge male lion. Even at that moment it struck him how low at the shoulders it seemed—a thing which strikes almost everyone who sees a lion on the veldt, for the first time.

Marcus knew now that there was no longer any question of going forward. He let his bicycle fall, and turned to face his enemy. As he did so, the lion stood, puzzled at the glint of the moonlight on the plating of the machine. Then Marcus fired, once, twice, three times, in rapid succession. He could not see his foresight, and so he had to chance it; but one at least of the shots got home. The great brute growled savagely, then turned abruptly, and made back towards the bank.

The relief was almost too great. Mechanically, the boy refilled the magazine of his rifle, and after that he found himself swaying a little.

Voices brought him to, the voices of white men on the other side of the drift, then a light flashed out from somewhere. It was the police camp at last.

They gave him some brandy, seeing how overwrought he was, and then the sergeant listened in amazement to his story of the coach-robbery.

"Saddle up!" he said curtly to his men; and whilst they were doing that, he asked the boy some more questions, this time about himself: "How far had that lion followed you? Oh, though you didn't mention it, I knew it was a lion by the row he made. From about a mile or so out? By Jove, I think I should have climbed a tree—in fact, I'm sure I should; and I've been in this country ten years. Are you ready?"

—to his men. Then, in reply to Marcus: "No, my lad, you're not going back with us. You've done quite enough for one night, and you'll have fever if I let you go out again. You can stay here with the corporal, who will be busy sending out telegrams about the robbery."

Marcus watched the little party, four in all, cross the drift, then he went back to find the corporal, who was also the telegraphist, lying on his bunk, smoking.

"No use," the corporal remarked tersely. "They've cut the telegraph-wires. I thought it funny we had had no message through to say why the coach was so late. They'll never catch those chaps."

The prophecy proved to be quite correct; and, though on the following morning the police found no difficulty in tracing the spoor of the horses, they did not dare to cross the Transvaal border. There were fully a dozen Boers camped just on their own side of it, and the sergeant knew better than to go on.

"Those fellows are there to stop us," he said; "and you can see they're full of fight."

Meanwhile, Dudley had found himself in an awkward position. He knew all about Joseph's treachery towards his brother and himself, and

yet now he had Joseph on his hands, apparently as an invalid. He had to do what he could for his cousin, to smother his own sense of resentment, and endeavour to pull the other round.

As a matter of fact, however, Joseph had almost recovered from his unpleasant experience, and was already making plans. He was a perfect example of a hypocrite, and though he would have avoided the boys if it had been possible, now he had met them again he ignored all former troubles. At first, he very skilfully kept the conversation off the reasons which had led the three of them to visit Africa; and though in his own heart Dudley knew what a villain he was, he could not help admiring his cleverness.

Then Joseph became profuse in his thanks for the service they had done him that day. He said, quite truthfully, that they had probably saved not only the life of the driver, but his own as well. He spoke so feelingly that Dudley, always impulsive, really believed that he meant what he said; then Joseph, seeing the impression he had made, led up slowly to his own object for being

the coach as far as the police-camp. Marcus heard him calling to his mules as he brought them through the sand river, and hurried down to the drift to meet his brother.

Dudley was all anxiety to hear about the lion, whilst Marcus was equal curious concerning Joseph.

"I think he's sorry now," Dudley said. "I believe he is going to turn back."

Marcus shook his head doubtfully. "I should be sorry to trust him."

At dawn next morning the two boys, accompanied by Amous and half a dozen more natives, went in search of the wounded lion. They found the blood spoor without trouble, and followed it up on to the bank and back into the river-bed again.

"He is not wounded to death," he said. "And if we follow him in, he will certainly kill some of us. Moreover, the reeds will not burn. You must shoot another lion later on, baas. Never fear, there are more than enough of those schelm where we are going."

The boys gave in reluctantly, and started to retrace their steps. However, before they had gone very far a dainty little klipspringer—an ante-

HOW BOYS CAN MAKE MONEY.

FROM the number of questions that crop up every day in your Editor's post-basket, it is very evident that almost every boy is eagerly looking for some means by which he can increase his pocket-money at the expense of a little leisure time.

This is certainly a very laudable ambition, and there are few boys who earn so much in wages that they cannot comfortably do with a trifle more. And when one comes to think of it, what a number of ways there are in which a bright, energetic lad can make extra pocket-money. So many ways are there, indeed, that I am going to write a short series of articles on the subject, embracing as many of the possible side-lines as I can.

First of all, I am going to deal with pets, and without a doubt it is quite easy to earn a good deal of extra pocket-money by this simple, interesting plan.

Pets will pay handsomely

if only you go correctly to work and give them painstaking care and attention. There must not be a trace of neglect, however, and the boy who wants to be often away when he should be looking after his charges is going to fail.

Rabbits are pets that will yield a good return. They may be kept with a view to selling, alive or dead; fanciers are always ready to purchase good live specimens, whilst fish-mongers and game-dealers will buy dead rabbits and pay a good price, too, for the right article.

Belgian hares are the breed mostly kept for table purposes, and a buck and a couple of does may be bought very cheaply at any animal shop. The does should be from eight to twelve months old, and the buck at least a year, and they should be strong, healthy animals. If well cared for they should rear four families each year, and as there will probably be half a dozen youngsters at a litter, you will soon see how profitable the hobby may become.

At this time of year the rabbit-hutches must be kept in warm, dry quarters, for cold and damp are the great troubles to avoid. There should be a hutch for the buck and one for each doe, though, of course, male and female must be allowed to run in one hutch for a time between the litters.

Hay and straw—or dry fern leaves from a common, if obtainable—make good winter bedding for rabbits, but the run part of the hutch may have sand in the summer time. Sawdust I do not believe in, as it is apt to encourage disease.

Fancy rabbits are profitable,

but I should advise my boy fanciers to buy at different shops, so that they may be sure their does are not related to the buck. And even then they should make it their business to frequently exchange with friendly fanciers, so that new blood is continually introduced. In this way, too, one can gradually improve the strain and work one's way up in the fancy till eventually there are rabbits good enough to send to the show bench.

To sell fancy rabbits it is necessary to know a good deal about the breeds, and this knowledge can only be obtained by mixing a good deal with rabbit breeders. Make a point of going to all the rabbit shows in your locality, and whilst there do your best to get into conversation with fanciers.

At this time of year I believe in giving rabbits warm dishes, and a mash made from barley-meal and boiled potatoes will be highly appreciated. Water coloured with a little milk should be provided for your pets, and all food should be served in metal troughs, which, apart from being easily cleaned, are also more serviceable than wooden ones, owing to the fact that the rabbits cannot chew at them.

Give your rabbits dry food

almost entirely, and you will not go very far wrong. Cooked potatoes, oats, turnips, carrots, and even an apple are good, and you know, of course, how important it is to give green food? Dandelions are very keenly appreciated.

(Another splendid Money-Making article next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

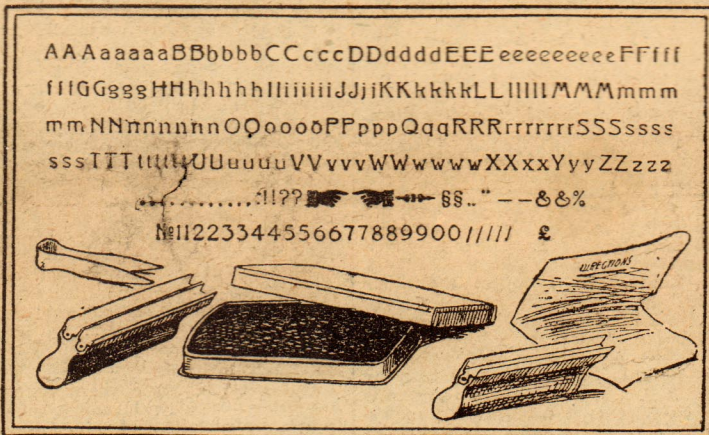
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in Africa, and without saying anything definite, gave his cousin to understand that he had now repented and would turn back.

It was at this stage that the police rode up, and from that time onwards the cousins had few chances of conversation.

Amous had already been in search of the nine surviving coach-mules, which the robbers had cut loose. He had a wonderful instinct for finding lost animals.

The sergeant recognised him at once. "Hallo, Amous! I thought you had gone back for good."

The Basuto shook his head.

"No, baas. I found I did not like my own country any more. Then I came across two baases who can shoot like warriors, so I thought I would journey north with them. Shall I inspan the mules now, baas, and drive the coach in? I can manage with the eight, for they have had a long rest, and are full of grass."

"Yes, you had better do that," the sergeant nodded approvingly. "We can put the driver inside." Then he turned to Dudley. "I left your brother at the camp. He was a bit done up. He had had a very close shave with a lion."

Amous was a splendid driver, and it did not take him very long to get

lope about the size of a small goat—darted across in front of them. Both the boys fired, and missed, then Amous fired, and brought him down. A little time was lost over gutting him, and altogether they had been absent from the camp over two hours before they finally got back.

As they climbed up the drift, Amous pointed to some fresh wheel-tracks.

"See," he said. "There is other spoor on top of the coach-spoor of last night. A Cape-cart has gone up towards the camp."

A few minutes later the corporal confirmed the news.

"It was the new deputy-commissioner," he said. "He took on the mail-bags, as though the coach-driver is better, he won't be fit to drive for several days; and he took that other passenger, your cousin, on with him, too."

The boys exchanged glances. So Joseph had gone north after all. They walked over to the hut in which they had slept, intending to have a wash. As they entered, however, they both uttered exclamations of dismay. Their bicycles were lying on the earthen floor with their tyres absolutely cut into ribbons.

(Another splendid instalment of this Grand New Serial next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

"THE NEW BROOM."

Two Superb New Serials that Start in the Giant Christmas Number of THE BOYS' FRIEND. Coming Soon!

"SEXTON BLAKE, SPY."



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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OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

DON'T want to reveal the full list of the contents of our wonderful Christmas Number yet, but I think my readers' curiosity will be aroused when they learn that a new serial by Maxwell Scott and one of Sexton Blake will start in that issue; that Allan Blair, Sidney Drew, Malcolm Dayle, and others will write short stories for this Christmas Double Number; that it will contain a whole page of Editorial Chat with a special portrait of your Editor, and that heaps and heaps of articles on extremely interesting topics—particularly about Christmas-time—will also find a place in it. Next week I hope to be able to give my friends a complete list of the contents, and I am sure that when they see it they will express their approval and satisfaction.

A VERY SAD LETTER.

The receipt of the following letter makes me feel very, very unhappy. I am printing it chiefly because my reader asks me to publish it, and also because I think it may serve as a very useful object lesson to those of my boys who feel discontented with their lot. If they can picture a lad of sixteen, who knows that he has but a few short months to live, they must realise that, however miserable they are, or however unhappy they think themselves, their condition is as nothing compared with the lot of the poor boy who penned this letter.

I can only hope that his apprehensions as to the future will not be fulfilled, and I certainly think that before he gives up all hope he ought to seek the advice of other physicians. I say this because I happen to know of a case, not exactly on similar lines, but one also connected with heart disease.

It was the case of a man in the prime of life, a fine, big, upstanding fellow, who looked as if he had forty or fifty more years to live; but he was told by his doctor that he was in a very dangerous state, that his heart was very seriously affected, and that he had but a few months to live. This man probably put his affairs in order, and made up his mind that he was to die. However, he was persuaded to go to another heart specialist, who discovered the cause of his trouble—and now he is as well and as sound as the best of us! And what do you think the trouble was, my friends? Just a tiny little stone pressing on a vein in the region of the patient's liver; but this pressure was affecting the working of his heart, so much so that had it not been removed he would undoubtedly have died.

So I say to my unhappy correspondent, seek all the advice you can possibly get before you give up hope, and I sincerely trust that you will find your worst fears unrealised.

The good advice which this reader gives to his friends, the other readers of our paper, is worthy of their serious consideration, especially

coming as it does from the pen of a lad who thinks that his stay upon this earth is going to be a very short one.

"My dear Editor,—I hope you will excuse me for taking the liberty of writing to you, as I have only been a reader of your paper for about two years. The fact is that I am dying, and as you have always been such a good friend to me—through your paper—I thought I should like to write to you. I have heart disease, and it is incurable. They tried to keep me from knowing it, but I found out. I cannot live long. Oh, if you could only imagine how the days seem to fly past! I am only sixteen. I thought at first it was wicked that I should die so young.

"When I first knew the worst, I used to go nearly mad, and at night-time I used to dream awful dreams; but now my brain seems to be numbed, and I don't seem to worry so much. I am writing to thank you for the good advice you have always given. I think your stories are grand, but none of them seem to do me so much good as your funny ones.

"I feel so much better after them, especially 'The Blot,' and the good tricks the Paulites get up against the other chaps. My only hope is that I shall live long enough to read some more like it. I hope you will not think it rude of me, but I should like to read another story, if it is only a complete one about the two soldiers—Walker, and I forget the other one.

"I think I will see the year out—it does not seem very long, does it?"

"Although I am only a boy, I should like to advise some of your readers. My first advice to them is not to swear. I used to once upon a time, but now I don't. If you could only imagine what it is like to think that you have made such a rotter of yourself, you would soon stop. I know some of you don't think what you are saying at the time, but you will later on. Good-bye to all of you!—Yours sincerely,

"W. R. H.

"P.S.—I should be obliged if you could find room to publish at least some of this, as I am sure it will do someone good."

SICK OF HIS JOB.

C. A. is a Preston reader who does not care very much about his job. He says that when he left school his school-master got him a berth in a solicitor's office, and when he has finished his day's work he has to attend a night school, with the result that often in the evening he feels very weary.

Evidently this lad is very unsettled; he does not care for the work he is doing, and he tells me he often feels as though he would like to run away from home and go in for farming—his great ambition.

The position of this boy is that of many another lad. I am afraid that most of us at times find ourselves compelled to do work we don't care about; in fact, which we dislike very much. Still, it is good for us, good for that sense of discipline which is essential to our welfare that we should do these things at least for a time, seeking all the while for some opportunity of being able to divert our labours into the channels which we wish to follow.

Now, my young friend, you must not get too discontented; you must try to make the best of things at present. Certainly, I think you ought to consult with your parents about your future. I am sure they would not wish you always to remain in a solicitor's office, and if you tell them of your desire to be a farmer, they

may help you to do something to achieve it.

You say you are afraid to speak to them on the point, for fear that your father may give you a thrashing. I am hardly inclined to think that this would be the case if you presented your point of view sensibly to him. Why not say to him, "Look here, dad, I don't want to go on in a solicitor's office all my life, because I don't think I am cut out to be a clerk. I want to be a farmer; I feel that that is the job I would like best, and into which I could put my heart." Your father may then see it from your point of view, and say, "Very well; have a look round, and see if you can get a place on a farm, and I will have no objection."

After all, the prospects of a boy in a solicitor's office are not very great, and unless you seriously mean to make yourself a solicitor, I would not advise you to go on with it. Then, again, if your mind is really bent on an open-air life on a farm, you will be only wasting your time in attempting to make a solicitor of yourself. Still, don't forget one thing, that the work you are now doing is experience which will be useful to you in after years; so for the present rest contented—though I certainly would broach the matter to your father on some suitable occasion, and see what he has to say.

Put it to him as a case; say to him one day, "Father, would you mind if I were a farmer?" so as to open up the question. He may not approve at first, but after a little while you may obtain his consent, and succeed in realising your wish.

ABOUT SNOBS.

This week I have a very interesting letter to deal with, and it comes from a young friend of mine, whose Christian name is "David." Now, "David" at present is working in a colliery as a miner. It seems that some years ago he won a scholarship for three years at a county school; he attended this school for two years, then he had to leave owing to lack of means, and earn his own living, because his stepfather could not keep him any longer. So poor "David" had to give up his schooling, and help keep up a home. Now he works, as I have said, in a colliery, and has been doing so for five years.

Latterly the county school which he attended has formed a Past Students' Society, and the secretary has written to "David," inviting him to become a member. This is where "David's" doubts come in. Ought he to refuse on the grounds that he is a working collier, and, therefore, not their equal, or ought he to join?

My friend very sensibly says, "I do not want to press myself upon them, because if I become a member they may ask me what is my profession, and I should have to say 'I'm simply a collier.'"

"David" goes on to say, "I think you will agree with me, dear Editor, that wherever you go you are sure to meet with a few snobs who look down upon a poor worker," and he is afraid that he may meet some in this Past Students' Society.

I have not the least doubt that if my young friend joins this society he will come across a few snobs, but he will also come across a good many men, real gentlemen, who will like him for the good qualities he possesses, and not worry about the fact of his being a collier.

I think "David" should join the Past Students' Society; he has every right to do so, and I think it will do him good, because it will show him something of life in circles with which otherwise he would not be mixing. I also think that as a member of this society he will prove

quite a shining light. Let him join, therefore, by all means, and let him put out of his mind the idea that one or two, or even more, snobs ought to prevent him from following the proper course.

A WOULD-BE POLICEMAN.

One of my friends, who signs himself "A Yorkshire Chum," tells me he is nineteen years of age, stands 6ft. 2ins. in his socks, and has a chest measurement of about 40ins.

"A Yorkshire Chum" is evidently a pretty big lad for his age. He is also, I am glad to hear, an abstainer and non-smoker, and he says that owing to this he finds himself a great deal stronger than most men.

Now my friend wants to join the London City Police. To gratify his wish he should write to the Applicants' Department, City of London Police, Old Jewry, London, E.C., for an official form of application, which will give him all the information he requires for entering this splendid body of police.

STOPPING SMOKING.

Here is the advice of one of my friends to a boy who wanted to know how to deal with his chums when they jeered at him for not smoking:

Upon reading **THE BOYS' FRIEND**, I notice in your 'Den,' some advice that a fellow reader has written to you, with regard to the temptation he feels for smoking. Will you allow me to add my sympathy to yours for F. H. K. I have been through the same school myself as F. H. K., and know what it is to be sneered at, and dared by one's friends; but I shut my ears to the cries, and after a short while, when they dared me to smoke, I would turn round and dare them not to smoke so that they soon got tired, and that was my opportunity. I could see I was winning, and I followed up my advantage until I succeeded in getting two of them to see the same way as me—namely, that smoking, instead of doing them good, was in reality doing them harm.

"S. W. H."

S. W. H.'s advice is sound, and all my friends who find themselves in the same difficulty should take it.

A BRADFORD FRIEND.

One of my Bradford readers is very delighted to hear that at last there is going to appear in **THE BOYS' FRIEND** a story about his district. He is all the more pleased because he is a wool-worker himself, and in the course of a very interesting letter to me, he tells me some incidents in connection with labour troubles in Bradford, which, strangely enough, you will find described in our new story.

My young friend, I am glad to say, is in the Territorials, and he wants me to tell him how to make his scarlet tunic a brighter colour. I expect that the tunic has become a bit dirty, and the best thing would be to send it to a cleaner's.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.)

JUST OUT.

3

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BOXING NOTES.

By J. G. B. Lynch.

Guarding.

SOME time back we discussed the all-important question of guarding, which, you will remember, I said should be done principally with the right hand and forearm.

But the left-hand guard should not be neglected, all the same. Your opponent, especially if he is of the slogging, windmill type of fighter, will swing with the right a great deal, and this, of course, is a very powerful blow if it does happen to land on your jaw. It is, however, comparatively easy to guard against.

When you stand up to box in the ordinary way, you have your left arm half extended, with the elbow slightly bent. You hold it fairly loosely also. When you see your antagonist is about to swing with his right, all you have to do is to straighten your left arm and make it rigid. Then it must stop any round-arm blow.

Another way is to make your arm rigid, but to bend the elbow outwards. In this case your opponent will most probably bring his arm

with all his force

in contact with the sharp, pointed bone, and will hurt himself badly. Indeed, it is safe to say he will be unable to use his right hand for some minutes afterwards, as the sharp point of your elbow, coming in contact with his muscles, has a temporary paralyzing effect.

These are perfectly fair tactics, because, when all is said and done, a man should swing very rarely. It is always better in every way to stick to the straight blows.

Another way of guarding against a right swing is simply to raise the left shoulder to protect the point of the jaw. Many good boxers hold their shoulder like this throughout a contest. It will be found very cramping and stiff at first, but you soon get used to it.

To guard a straight right-hand blow at your head, just bend your left arm towards you, and guard as you do for a straight left with your right. But here again, if you stand "edge-ways" on to your man and raise the left shoulder, it will be very difficult for him to bring off that straight right blow. Indeed, it is one of the hardest of all blows to deliver.

THE END.

SMART TRICKS FOR SMART BOYS.

BLINDFOLD a member of the company, place a marble on the table, and tell him to cross his middle and first fingers, and rub them over the marble. Ask how many marbles are present, and if the trick is a new one he will always say two.

Several peculiar tricks may be performed owing to the curiosities of touch. Have three cups of water, one containing hot, one just warm, and one cold water. Then dip a



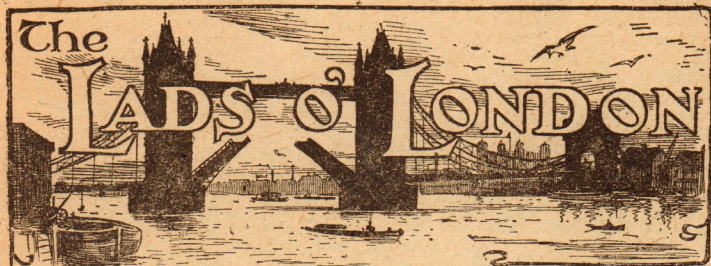
An Interesting Experiment with Water. (See our article "Smart Tricks.")

finger in the hot and one in the cold. After a few seconds withdraw them, and dip them alternately in the warm water, when to the finger that has been in the hot the warm water will seem cold, and to the one that has been in the cold it will seem hot.

A Variation of this trick may be obtained by dipping the finger into water warmed to about 100 degrees, and then plunge the whole of the other hand into water a few degrees cooler, with the result that the slightly cooler water seems the warmer.

THE END.

2 Grand New Sports Serials Start in the Superb Xmas Double No. of "The Boys' Realm" Next Saturday.



TIM MASON'S DISCOVERY.

FOR over three hundred years the vast building had stood in the Strand, one of London's greatest thoroughfares, but now it was in the hands of a gang of skillfully trained building-breakers.

A huge network of scaffolding was run up all round it; a great crane, that extended a hundred and fifty feet into the air, hoisted up the debris as the workmen filled its huge bucket.

When the old building—the palace of a famous Elizabethan noble of the old chivalrous days—had been pulled down, a new one, replete with modern conveniences, would be erected.

A whistle announcing the close of the dinner-hour screamed out, and a crowd of workers, men and boys, in corduroy trousers and dusty jackets, passed in through the gates. They were the staff of Messrs. Brooks & Putnam's breaking-down gang.

"Why so sad, sweet Timmy?" cried Fred Goslett, a lad of sixteen, smacking his chum, Tim Mason, heartily upon the shoulder.

Tim Mason turned a tanned, freckled face towards his chum.

"Get away wid yer blarney!" he grinned. "But you can take it from me, Fred, it's no joke poking about in underground cellars that smell of dead cats and decayed vegetables, where the rats scamper over your feet, and there's a chance of the roof toppling down and burying you any minute. Besides that, old Hawley's working down there. Ain't anything to be cheerful over, is it?"

"Bar Hawley, I wouldn't mind it," said Fred, shrugging his shoulders.

The boys separated. Tim secured his pick and shovel, and clambered down a partly-demolished staircase to a vaultlike chamber that was lighted by a huge torch stuck into the wall.

"Come along, you young whelp!" cried a man of about forty, with a broken nose and heavy scowling jaw, as the boy entered. "I've been waiting for you this half-hour."

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you some of it. So act on the square, and it'll be better for you."

"That's generous of you," sniffed Tim, "seeing as if I find anything, I reckon it belongs to Brooks & Putnam's, or the folks who own this place."

Tim slid down the rope to the bottom. There was a horrible, damp, musty smell, but the air was little worse than on the floor on which Hawley now stood alone. There was a tunnel at the bottom, and the boy had to go on hands and knees to crawl through it.

For an interminable time Tim crawled, with his nerves strung tight and tense, though only about a dozen feet had been covered; then his way led down a couple of steep steps. Raising the torch to look about him, Tim was amazed to find himself in a square chamber of about eight feet high.

He sprang hastily to his feet, and, as he did so, the light of the torch fell on what appeared to be a man resting against the wall. The next moment something struck the boy between the eyes, and he went to the ground like a log.

His shout went re-echoing with a deafening din round the hollow chamber, and startled Hawley, waiting anxiously at the top of the cavity.

"What is it?" he bellowed down.

"What have you found?"

Tim didn't answer. He lay for some time on his face, shivering with terror, whilst his torch continued to flare smokily beside him.

Then he sat up slowly and looked about him. Something was circling slowly round the smoke of the torch, and the boy recognised it. It was nothing more fearful than a bat which was flapping about with its weblike wings. The bat had evidently found its way into the chamber from some other part of the ruins, and had struck him on the forehead. Tim grinned.

"I'm a fine 'un," he muttered.

"To be afraid of a mere dicky-bird."

He jumped to his feet, seized the torch, and peered round the chamber. He started again as he thought of the man he had seen; but it was only a suit of old armour resting in a corner. In one corner stood a great oak chest, and upon it piles and piles of books inches thick with dust.

At the opposite side there stood a ladder reaching almost to the ceiling. Tim went to it and shook it. Like the chest, it was of oak, and seemed as strong now as when its maker had fixed it there.

Cautiously he groped his way up the steps. When he reached the top, Hawley's voice, still demanding what was the matter, could be heard quite distinctly. Then Tim found outlined in the massive brickwork a stout panel.

"Hokey! A secret door!" he muttered, his curiosity aroused at once.

Examining it carefully by the light of the torch, he at length discovered a spring catch in the centre of the framework. Immediately he put pressure on this, the panels, in two parts, began to roll stiffly back from one another. Tim gazed through at Hawley, down on his hands and knees, peering down into the cavity.

"I'll give him a fright," he muttered, grinning. "It'll serve him right for thumping my head against the wall."

He extinguished the torch and placed it on the top of the steps. By careful manipulation he opened the panels sufficiently wide enough to creep through them. Hawley still continued to gaze into the cavity. Tim crept

into the corner where the light from the torch did not reach. It was practically impossible to see him.

"Joseph Hawley," he began, in as deep and hollow a voice as he could command, "thou art a bad man!"

Hawley sprang to his feet and dashed his hand across his brow. He was pale and trembling.

He seized the torch in his shaking fist, and glared about him with terrified eyes. The sight of Hawley's fear was too much for Tim, and he broke out into a crackle of laughter.

The man recognised Tim's voice, and came lurching unsteadily towards the corner in which the boy crouched.

"H-his b-blood's on my head!" moaned he. "I—I've sent Tim to—his death, and he's come to h-haunt me!"

Suddenly he saw the boy grinning, and at the same instant his eyes lighted on the gap in the wall which he knew had not been there before.

"You young cur!" he began, then, his fright vanished, he raced to the secret door. "Where does this lead? What have you found? It's mine—whatever you've got!"

Tim stared at the man amazed, and did not answer. But Hawley thrust the panels back savagely, glared down into the chamber, saw the ladder, and, seizing the lighted torch from the wall, hurried down the steps with it, leaving Tim in absolute darkness.

"Well, that's a bit of all right," grinned the boy. "Old Joe's gone fairly off his chump this time."

He thought of running off and informing Mr. Forsyth, the manager, of the find, but before he could do anything, Hawley reappeared at the top of the ladder.

"Give me my pick," he shouted, "and come down with me!"

"I'm going to tell Mr. Forsyth," began Tim. "He—"

Hawley sprang through the opening. In a second his big hands were round Tim's throat, and the mad eyes were glaring into the boy's own. He dropped the torch to seize the boy.

Hawley used no threat, but his attitude was far more terrifying than mere words would have been. Step by step he forced Tim back to the top of the ladder, and pointed significantly to the chamber. Tim went down the steps, and Hawley, gathering up the torch, pick, and shovel, and followed the boy.

"Hold this," commanded the man, thrusting the torch into Tim's hands. The boy could not do other than obey. He watched Hawley's movements with dilated eyes. The bully swept the books from the top of the oak chest. He prised the pick-end beneath the lid, and strained and pulled.

Tim was just smiling and thinking that the stout old oak chest was going to keep its secret, that Hawley was to be baffled after all, when, with a report like a fired revolver, the lid flew up.

A wild shout from the man turned the boy's attention to the chest.

Hawley had lifted a peculiar unshaped jar—the sole object in the chest—up in his arms, and was staggering with it towards Tim.

"It's mine!" screamed Hawley. "I found it! Whatever it is, it's mine!"

His voice ended in a wail. The jar was heavy. It was slipping from his arms. He tried to lower it quickly to the ground. Then—

Crash! Down went the jar, a priceless piece of Damascus ware, and a shower of gold coins and orna-

ments and baubles of all kinds shot out at Tim's feet.

There were golden candlesticks, sword hilts, big gold buttons the size of crowns, lockets, rings, chains, many set with sparkling jewels, lying amidst a heap of coins that sparkled and glittered in the smoky light of the torch.

Mechanically, whilst a strange, guttural sound rattled in Hawley's throat, Tim stooped down to examine the coins. One was in his fingers, and he was turning it over when there was a shuffling noise behind him. He turned swiftly. Hawley was standing over him, his face distorted with maniacal malevolence, with the spade raised in the air.

"Don't, Hawley!" he screamed, putting up an arm to guard himself.

"For Heaven's sake—"

The blow fell! Tim shot forward on his face amongst the treasure-trove, and lay still. And Hawley fell on his knees beside his victim, and with foam bubbling around his lips and the chamber ringing with his wild laughter, buried his hands in the coins and ornaments, and again and again tossed the glittering, precious stuff in the air.

The great bucket attached to the crane rose slowly in the air, and then stopped. Most of the hands had gone. It was pitch dark.

"Is she all right, Hawley?" sang the engineer, from the wheelhouse, whose business it was to superintend all movements of the crane from start to finish of work.

"All right!" gasped Hawley hoarsely, glancing from the bucket, now a hundred and fifty feet high, to the parcel, covered with a big red handkerchief, pressed tightly under his arm. "Good-night, mate!"

A boy's figure came hurrying breathlessly through the debris.

"Where's Tim?" asked Fred Goslett shortly. "He promised to wait for me."

"Well, he ain't," shouted Hawley back at him. "He's gone home."

"What's the matter with you, man?" cried Fred, surveying the wild eyes and the quivering nostrils with amazement. "Have you gone mad?"

Hawley strode off without replying. Fred watched him nod to the timekeeper by the gate, then he was swallowed up amongst the crowd.

"Seen Tim Mason go off?" asked Fred, hurrying across to the timekeeper.

"That I ain't," answered the man. "His mate Hawley's just gone though, and he looks as if he's been on the booze all the afternoon."

"It's jolly funny," mused Fred. "That Hawley's a brute, and he's been up to something. Wonder if anything's happened to old Tim down in that cellar? I'm going to look."

Seizing one of the lanterns which the timekeeper would soon be hanging on different parts of the ruins, he lighted it and made his way to the floor from which Hawley and Tim had descended into the secret chamber. An almost exhausted torch still burned on the floor, but there came no answer to his repeated calls for Tim.

In the cunning of his madness Hawley had closed the secret panels together. Fred, therefore, in a quick glance round failed to discover the secret chamber almost below his feet.

By the time he returned to the surface, the crane engineer had locked the wheelhouse, and departed. Only the timekeeper and himself were in the partly demolished building.

"Why don't you clear off home, lad?" cried Birks, the timekeeper, an old soldier, and like most, kindly to their boy admirers. "Your pal may have slipped off afore I see him."

Fred shook his head dubiously. His face was white and worried.

"It's that Hawley—I'm sure of it!" he cried. "I've worked with him, and I know him. He's a rotten bully of a chap, and— What's that?" he added, in a gasp, looking up.

"Something fluttered down," cried Birks. "There it is, lad, at your feet."

Fred stooped and picked it up. It was a waistcoat. The two stared at it in profound astonishment.

"It's Tim's!" he gasped. "What does it mean? Where did it come from?"

He buried his fingers in the waistcoat pockets. Some string, a few screws, and a piece of blacklead were all that were revealed. Then suddenly from outside in the Strand there was a great roar, followed by a sudden hush, as the traffic came to a standstill. The next instant there was a violent thumping on the hoarding by the gate.

Birks and the boy hurried across with white, startled faces.

"For Heaven's sake, get him down!" cried a man in frock-coat and silk hat, whose features were terror-stricken. "He's trying to climb the chain from the bucket! If he slips— Oh, heavens!"

Fred was the first to realise something was happening in the bucket hauled to the top of the huge crane. From where they stood they could see nothing. Fred darted out into the roadway, at the risk of being run down by a passing vehicle. Then his heart stood still as he watched and understood.

A figure—surely it could be no other than Tim's?—was crawling painfully and ever so slowly up the arms of the bucket.

Fred ran back to the gate, before which the helmeted figures of policemen had now gathered. Birks was explaining that it would take two hours to fetch the engineer, who alone could work the crane.

Fred slipped past the group. His heart was beating wildly.

"I'll chance it!" he suddenly exclaimed.

Unperceived, he passed to the big wheelhouse. With the aid of a ladder he climbed to the roof. Then he commenced the giddy, perilous ascent of the huge crane.

He kept on with dogged persistence. He had reached a third of the crane's great length before the crowd—that now stretched across the Strand and completely blocked the traffic—observed him.

Roar after roar—the plaudits of the crowd—sounded dully in his ears, and he wondered why the crowd were cheering. He was soon to know.

When he had crept three parts of the length of the crane, a figure clambered slowly and stiffly to the top, rested there a moment, and then, to the boy's horror, began to roll with lightning-like speed towards him!

Fred shut his eyes as the sickening thought flashed through his brain. Blindly he threw out a hand as the figure dashed on top of him, and with the other clutched with the strength of desperation at the great chain. The shock seemed to pull his arm from its socket, yet he had stayed the flying progress of the figure.

"Good old Fred!" came a soft murmur.

He flung his arm across Tim's shoulders, and slid by degrees down the steel framework into the arms of the cheering crowd grouped round the wheelhouse.

Mr. Forsyth, the manager, who had been fetched to the scene, had both boys brought into his office. Birks had made a good fire, and some hot meat extract was ready for them.

Tim related all he knew. After the blow in the secret chamber he remembered nothing until he came to, stiff and frozen, high in the air in the crane bucket.

Tim's story was confirmed when the police went to Joe Hawley's lodgings. He had sold some of the golden ornaments, and was hurriedly making preparations for flight.

As for the coins and the rest of the golden baubles, they were handed to the Crown, the rightful owners of all treasure-trove, but in course of time a hundred pounds came along to Brooks & Putnam's as their share.

On the advice of Mr. Forsyth, seventy-five pounds was placed to Tim's credit in the bank, and the remainder was handed to Fred.

THE END.

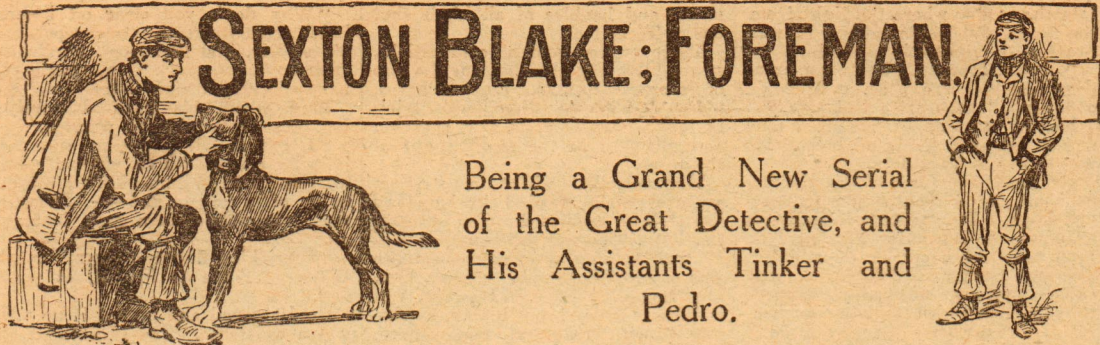


With a flaming torch in his hand, Tim watched. The bully prised the pick-end beneath the lid, and strained and pulled.

"THE NEW BROOM."

Two Superb New Serials that Start in the Giant Christmas Number of THE BOYS' FRIEND. Coming Soon!

"SEXTON BLAKE, SPY."



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 and his assistant Tinker, on the night previous to their embarkation to East Africa on a pleasure shooting trip. At the very last moment this long-anticipated holiday is abandoned. Sidney Temple is a young engineer, at present engaged in a large undertaking at Redcliff Dale to construct a scheme 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 disbevelled condition.

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

The detective, now known as Bob Packer, is promoted to ganger, or sort of petty foreman, and by his strong personality assumes control whilst Temple is on the sick list.

On Saturday afternoon, when all the boys were to leave off work for the day, Sam Bleek, a nasty sort of youth, approached Tinker, and asked him to bring his bloodhound into the woods to hunt a badger. This Tinker consents to do, and the two lads arrange to meet at Oakley Copse.

Sam Bleek, or "Slimy Sam," as he was called, instead of going home, as he suggested, makes his way to a waste piece of ground where the gipsy camp is pitched. He tells two of the ruffians in the camp how he had succeeded with his lying plot, and now all is planned ready for them to carry out their plans.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Setting the Trap.

RATHER wondering at Slimy Sam's change from morose enmity to sudden friendliness, but upon the whole not troubling his head much about it, Tinker left the woods and strolled home to dinner—sure now that there would be one waiting for him when he got there.

For things at Job Peckchaff's cottage had much improved of late. Mrs. Peckchaff was a changed woman. Silent and sad-eyed she might be, for the earth upon the gallant sergeant's grave was but newly-turned, and no doubt her eyes often strayed towards the open door, as she forgot, and looked to see his trim, soldierly figure enter, as so often before that fatal Sunday night.

But her tongue had lost its old bitterness, and she seemed as though she could not do enough to make the little home happy and comfortable for others, though she could not be happy herself.

Tinker found a snug little dinner waiting for him, and he did not permit it to wait another moment after he got in the house.

"Ever cooked a badger, Mrs. Peckchaff?" he asked, when he had finished the first course—steak and potatoes—and started on jam pudding.

The little woman shook her head. "No, they're not eatable," she said, with a smile. "At least, I've never heard of anybody eating them."

"Jolly pity that," said Tinker, "because I'm going to catch one—a whopper—up in the woods this afternoon, and I thought it would be ripping for dinner to-morrow, stuffed with sage and onions."

"You are going up to the woods?" asked Mrs. Peckchaff. "Alone?"

"Nother boy going with me," said Tinker, with his mouth full of jam pudding.

"And I'm going to take old Pedro." As though he actually understood, the noble bloodhound, who was stretched upon the hearthrug before the fire, got up and wagged his tail with delight.

"Oh, don't take Pedro! I shall miss him!" exclaimed Mrs. Peckchaff, who had grown extremely fond of the beautiful hound.

"I never feel lonely while you're all away, if only he is with me."

Tinker looked a trifle troubled. "Sorry," he said, "but I promised the other chap I'd take him. And you can't hunt badgers without a dog, you know. However, we sha'n't be gone long. Dare say we'll be back before it gets dark."

And, feeling rather ashamed of taking the dog away, he got up quickly, put on his cap, and left the cottage, Pedro eagerly bounding after him down the garden path.

Mrs. Peckchaff looked after them regretfully, and then went back to her work.

"Silly woman that I am!" she muttered. "I miss that bonnie boy far more than the dog. And I hope no harm will come to him up in those woods, for there are some of those dreadful rioters hiding there still, so they say. But he always keeps his word. He will be back before dark."

But darkness had long fallen, and she sat by the window, looking out into the night until the last gleam of twilight had vanished, and the stars shone above the dark woods; but Tinker had not returned.

But to follow Tinker himself, and see how this came about.

With Pedro bounding before him, or trotting along gaily at his side, he went down the road whistling cheerily. With a good dinner inside him, and the prospect of a long afternoon's fun in the woods, he felt particularly happy.

The only thing that troubled him was a feeling of regret at depriving

the lonely Mrs. Peckchaff of Pedro's company.

Afterwards, and not long afterwards, he was bitterly sorry that he had not yielded to her request, and left the bloodhound safe at the cottage.

But that is looking a little too far ahead. At present he thought of nothing but the chances of nailing that badger.

At the appointed spot, the corner of Oakley Copse, he found Slimy Sam waiting for him. He had a dog by his side, a small and extremely dirty mongrel, with a piggyish tail, and only one ear and a bit.

"Bin 'ere an orful time!" grunted the slimy one, as Tinker came up. "Thought you was never comin'!"

He had an extremely anxious look upon his sullen, ugly face, but Tinker put that down to sporting keenness, and eagerness to get at the hunting-ground.

"Why, I've just rushed my dinner, considering there was jam pudding," he protested. "What's that you've got there?" he asked, pointing to the mongrel.

"That's my terrier, Snapper," growled Slimy Sam, who for some queer reason was proud of the miserable cur. "Jolly good dawg, too!"

"Oh, it's a dog, is it?" said Tinker. "Thought it was something you'd made yourself out of odds and ends. But come along, let's get on the track of that giddy badger!"

And they went towards the woods. Slimy Sam was not very good company. He seemed to have something on his mind, and talked very little. But Tinker did not mind that; he didn't expect much of his companion, and they would have got along very well but for Snapper.

Being a bad-tempered little brute, he resented the big, sleek bloodhound's company very much, and seemed to think that his well-fed, well-groomed appearance was a personal reflection on his own half-starved, mangy condition.

He began dancing around Pedro, yapping, and making snaps at his legs. Slimy Sam tried to call him off, but he paid not the slightest heed to threat or coaxing.

Pedro, who was a splendid-tempered fellow, stood it as long as he could. Then he made a sudden sideway snap, caught the cur by the back of the neck, and trotted across to a pond they happened to be passing. There, he just gave a flick of his head, and flung the mongrel far out into the pond.

"He'll be drowned! He can't swim so far!" shouted Slimy Sam. "I'll kill that big brute o' yours if Snapper's drowned!"

Tinker laughed.

"He'll be all right—teach him a lesson," he said.

But it was evident that the wretched little mongrel could not swim to land. He made some effort, but the distance was too great, and he looked like going under.

"Fetch him out, Pedro!" ordered Tinker.

Without a moment's hesitation the hound plunged in and brought the half-drowned cur ashore.

Beyond an unaccustomed washing, Snapper had come to no harm. But he had learned a useful lesson. He let Pedro alone after that.

Slimy Sam became rather more sullen and silent after this incident. Several times he looked at Pedro malevolently; then turned away, his morose features breaking into a malicious grin. He hated the dog, because its nature was nobler and better than his own, just as he had long hated Tinker for much the same reason.

"I'd like to smash my fist in the chap's face, an' then take a big stone an' bash out the dawg's brains!" he growled to himself. "But it don't matter; I'll be even with both of 'em presently!"

And he laughed inwardly, thinking with evil delight of what awaited the boy he was about to betray, and the noble dog, in the depths of the dusky woods.

In the Woods—A Strange Incident.

REDCLIFF WOODS were of considerable extent, forming, in fact, quite a respectable forest. Part of it was unclaimed land, regarded as public property. Here the trees were sparse, and largely interspersed with patches of sandy heath. But beyond this the woods became dense and truly forest-like, and that portion which was enclosed was the property of Squire Ardoise.

It abounded in game, and, curiously enough, the poachers, who were chiefly gipsies, showed the place a wonderful respect, seldom taking even a rabbit, while they raided all other preserves in the neighbourhood unmercifully.

"Where does this badger of yours hang out—in the public woods?" asked Tinker.

"No, over beyond," answered Slimy Sam, nodding towards the enclosed portion of the woods.

"But that's the Gipsy Squire's preserves, isn't it?" said Tinker. "We'll be trespassing!"

"Wot o' that?" grunted the slimy one. "You ain't afraid, are yer?"

"You know jolly well I'm not!" said Tinker rather warmly. "I'm

(Continued on the next page.)

HOW TO DEVELOP MUSCLE.

A Superb Series of Articles Specially Written for the BOYS' FRIEND by the World-Famed EUGEN SANDOW.

THIS article I am going to devote to the subject of legs, and show those who are not satisfied with their leg measurements how they can be increased.

I have often noticed that many athletes, who are otherwise perfectly developed, possess very ordinary-size legs. Legs lacking both in girth and form.

And the reason is not far to seek.

Take one hundred boys or youths and give them their choice of exercises, and you will find that more than three-quarters of them will declare for arm movements—their first thought is to develop a fifteen-inch upper arm.

Give the same boys or youths a second choice, and this time the great majority will want a chest-expanding movement; and I am sure that if you have another shot you would find many of them would want a second exercise for the arms.

Now this is all very well. A pair of strong, shapely arms is a possession to be proud of; but, whilst these are necessary and useful, it must not be forgotten that the perfect athlete must be developed in an equal manner, and no part of the body can be neglected.

That is why this series of exercises I am giving you includes movements for the abdominal muscles, the muscles of the wrist, and the leg muscles—movements which are just as necessary as those for biceps and chest development.

Some may think that walking or running or footer gives all the exercise necessary for the development of the legs, but they are wrong. If this was the case, postmen and others who spend all their time on their feet would all have well-developed legs—and I know they have not.

Why? you ask.

The answer is given in my first article: Muscle building and development greatly depend upon the amount of will-power exerted whilst exercising.

The boy who is playing footer, the youth who is trying to do a hundred yards in one time, the lover of the country out for a walk, the postman on his round, are they thinking of leg-muscles, of gastrocnemius and soleus, of quadriceps, biceps, and flexors? Not a bit of it; and so they—or, rather, most of them—remain thin-legged until the end of the chapter.

Now, I want you to concentrate your mind on the leg-muscles exercised when performing the movement given last week, and also the following one. Make it one long, continued "think" throughout the exercises, and your legs will develop symmetry, the calves will be larger, and you will be able to set the muscles until your legs are as hard as the legs of an old oak table.

In Exercise No. 10, you were told to keep your heels on the floor, now I want you to remain on tip-toe throughout Exercise No. 11. This point is very important, for if you

let the heels touch the floor, you lose the strain on the calf muscles—which is fatal to results.

EXERCISE 11.—READY POSITION.

Arms by sides, heels together, toes pointing outward, rise on tip-toe.

Movement: Sink slowly down, knees apart, body upright. Heels must not touch floor. When the last limit has been reached return to first position. The heels must not at any time touch the floor in this exercise.

Muscles: Quadriceps of thigh, Gastrocnemius and Soleus.

As you lower the body mentally "tighten up" the gastrocnemius and soleus, and when you resume an upright position once more straighten out the legs, and put all the strain possible on the quadriceps until you feel them stand out hard and firm.

You will find this a little tiring at first, but "practice makes perfect," and a few weeks' practice of these exercises makes perfect legs.

EUGEN SANDOW.

(Another grand Sandow article next Tuesday.)



Fig. 11.

THE TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF A BOY SCOUT

Our Helpful Series That Will Interest All Boys, Whether Scouts or Not.

Fitting Up the Clubroom.

LAST week we were talking about getting a club-room. Supposing you have now got it, we must talk a bit about fitting it up.

Of course, the way you furnish depends on what you are going to do in the room. Scouts want to go in for gymnastics and boxing and rough-and-tumble games sometimes, as well as reading and playing draughts and dominoes.

The ideal club, of course, has two rooms—one for rough-and-tumble games and one for quiet ones.

But we can't all get ideal clubs, and if you have to make do with one room, the best plan is to try to get furniture that will fold up, or in some other manner pack out of the way. But, of course, if you can't get it, you must make do with what you can get. That's the scout's way.

A patrol-leader wrote in and asked me if I would advise his fellows to try to make their own furniture for their club-room.

I don't think I would. A fellow has to be a pretty good hand with tools to make a chair or table that will stand without wobbling or canting over to starboard or port.

It's very good practice for you to make your own furniture, but you are likely to waste such a lot of wood doing it, and turn out such a lot of wobbly things before you're expert enough to do really good work, that it becomes an expensive way of doing it. So unless you are a good carpenter I would not attempt it.

How to Get Your Furniture.

But you will most likely find each

fellow will be able to bring something or other from home—a chair, table, sofa, cupboard—anything. It doesn't matter how dirty and dilapidated it is; you can do wonders with it. And if each chap brings one thing, you will have quite a nice little set of furniture to start with.

Then if you look about among the cheap second-hand furniture shops, you will be able to pick up all sorts of bargains.

Things that are a bit groggy you can easily repair. Things that are dirty you can scrub and varnish. Upholstered furniture you can pad out with rags and newspapers, and sew up. You can patch it up very well with ordinary sacking. I own it doesn't look pretty, but it is serviceable, which is what you want.

Now here are the things you chiefly want for your club-room:

Chairs: Any you can get. Easy-chairs are a luxury, but if you can pick them up cheap, do. Ordinary wooden kitchen chairs you can often pick up for a shilling or eighteen-pence each. But forms are, in the long run, much cheaper than chairs and take up less room.

Tables: A number of small ones are much better for your purpose than one big one. The fellows don't get in each other's way when they are reading, playing draughts, and so on. You can buy small kitchen tables for half-a-crown each.

I will continue this useful and instructive article in next Tuesday's BOYS' FRIEND, and will give you some other tips at the same time.

THE SCOUTMASTER.

Sexton Blake: Foreman.

(Continued from the previous page.)

not afraid for myself, but I was thinking about our dogs. If there are any keepers about they'll be down on us for bringing dogs here, and are as likely to shoot them as not!"

"No keepers will trouble us," said Slimy Sam. "The squire knows—" He checked himself quickly, as though he had made a rather awkward slip of the tongue; then said: "There won't be any keepers about at this time of day, yer chump! Poachers don't work by daylight. Anyhow, if you're so precious funky about yer blessed dawg getting 'urt, take him 'ome, 'cos badgers is tough 'uns to fight, an' I s'pose you'd git a tannin' if yer took him 'ome with a scratch on his nose!"

He said this with another ugly sneer. If he was afraid that Tinker was going to back out of it at the last moment, he went the right way to work to prevent it, as he very well knew.

No boy can stand a sneer. Tinker reddened, and felt very much like letting the slimy one have a tap on the nose. But he conquered that impulse and said:

"Oh, come along! Let's step it out. That badger will perish of old age before we get near him at this rate!"

Slimy Sam grunted, but made no further remark. They quickened their pace, and were very soon within the woods. Here rabbits were plentiful, and Snapper made himself a perfect nuisance.

He couldn't see a bunny's tail but what he scuttled after it, making the woods ring with his incessant yapping; then, doubling back as another rabbit hopped the other way, only to leave it instantly to pursue a third.

Pedro began to get excited, and looked like wanting to join in the hunt. But Tinker just ordered him to come to heel, and the splendidly-trained fellow obeyed him instantly.

Not so with Snapper. His master shouted and raved at him. But all to no effect. The wretched little brute has never been used to obey any order not accompanied by a blow or a kick, and Slimy Sam couldn't get near him to administer either.

"If he goes on like that when we get into the preserves, he's bound to bring a keeper down on us!" remarked Tinker, who was sick of the cur's incessant noise. "Why don't you make the brute come to heel?"

This sort of thing went on until they got deep into the first portion of the wood, and, pushing through a closely-grown ring of trees, found themselves in a hollow dell with a sandy bottom.

Tinker remembered the place well, as he had good cause to.

It was the spot where the rioters had held their meeting on that memorable Sunday evening before the outbreak. The whole scene seemed to rise before him again as he caught sight of the huge dead oak-tree in the middle, with the stumps of the burnt-out torches still sticking in the crevices of its trunk.

He seemed to see again the great crowd pressing close about Squire Ardoise, as he stood with one foot upon a root of the tree, carelessly flicking his boot with his hunting-whip, and wearing a smile—actually a smile—upon his handsome, yet evil face, as he spoke those cunning, insidious words that sent many a man who heard them to rashly throw away his life.

Then again the picture rose before him of Sexton Blake carried in, bleeding, motionless, and deathlike, and he felt over again the pang that had shot through his heart at the sight.

All that had happened days and days ago; that dreadful night was over and past. But it was not done with; the heavy reckoning had still to be paid.

Scores of those misguided men were lying in Slaughter Gaol awaiting their trial. Some were fugitives still; in hiding in the great woods, or elsewhere in the wild country surrounding.

Each day saw fresh captures, but a few were yet at large, contriving somehow to baffle the county police in spite of their unceasing efforts to track them down.

Bates, the Gipsy Squire's groom, was one of these. He had completely disappeared, and Ardoise denied all

knowledge of the man's whereabouts, avowing that he had been discharged from his services long before he joined the rioters.

Cronk, the leader of the grinders, was also still at large, and there were several others.

All this passed swiftly through Tinker's mind, as he and his sullen companion went down the side of the hollow Snapper darting about like a gadfly in front, twisting his dirty little body into all sorts of complicated knots as he dashed hither and thither after the scurrying rabbits, and making racket enough for the casual ward of a home for lost dogs.

All Slimy Sam's efforts to catch him were useless. Tinker would have been rather glad if a keeper had appeared and potted the noisy cur with a dose of No. 2.

Once he got on the track of a big fat, fatherly buck rabbit, and bunny, who seemed to have been taking an after-dinner doze and not quite shaken it off, very nearly got a snap of the mongrel's teeth where his furry tail sprouted.

He dashed wildly to and fro as if he had forgotten the number of his house in the adjacent warren, and finally hopped up the sandbank on the further side of the hollow.

Snapper bunched his muddy legs and dashed after him, yelping like mad. Both plunged into a dense clump of bushes and vanished.

"Hang him! I'll cut his ears off if I catch him!" roared Slimy Sam, making a blundering run after the dog. Tinker followed more leisurely with Pedro. Then, as he drew nearer to that dense clump of bushes, he suddenly remembered it, and what lay concealed within it—the half-ruined hut into which Sexton Blake had been flung, bound, and apparently dead, by the rioters on that Sunday night.

Apparently Slimy Sam recognised it, too, and remembered its reputation of being haunted.

Swaggering bully he might be, but he was an arrant coward at heart, and he drew up within a respectful distance of the hut, his fat, flabby cheeks going a dingy white.

"Run on!" urged Tinker mischievously, for he saw this sudden halt, and easily guessed its cause. "Run on, Slimy! You're bound to catch him. He can't get out of that jungle!"

"I ain't goin'!" grunted the slimy one, retreating a little further back. "That 'ere place is 'aunted! There's ghosts bin seen in there!"

Tinker laughed. But the laugh suddenly died upon his lips, for Snapper's voice, raised in a prolonged series of violent barks, was heard from within the clump of bushes.

It was followed by a sharp howl of pain.

"Th-th-the g-g-ghost's got him!" cried Slimy Sam, going paler still.

"Rot!" snapped Tinker. "Ghosts couldn't hurt a dog! And that dog's hurt jolly badly!"

For proof of it, Snapper came out of the bushes, and rolled, rather than ran, down the bank. He was bleeding horribly from a wound in the throat, and no sooner had he reached his master's feet than he gave a lurch sideways and dropped—stone dead!

"He's found a fox or somethin', an' just got bitten!" cried Slimy Sam, shrinking from the dog because, coward-like, he could not bear the sight of blood. But Tinker stooped, and bent over the wretched little animal.

"That's no bite," he said tersely. "The poor little beggar has been stabbed in the throat!"

A Sensational Incident.

"**S**TABBED!" cried Slimy Sam, staring at Tinker, then at the dog, in round-eyed horror and amazement. "Stabbed! Killed by some'un, d'yer mean? Who could 'a' done it?"

Tinker's reply, if he had been about to make one, was checked by the arrival of three fresh actors upon the scene.

They were men of the county police, and had evidently been on one of their almost daily searches through the woods after the missing rioters supposed to be in hiding there; for they looked jaded and grimy, and their uniforms were stained with the reek of sodden coverts, their boots thick with clay from the swampy places in the depths of the woods.

"Ah, here's a couple of boys!" exclaimed the foremost, who was a sergeant. "What are you doing in here? And where's the dog that was making all that noise?"

"There he is," answered Tinker, pointing to the unfortunate Snapper,

"Why, he's dead!" said the sergeant. "Just killed. Some keeper shot him. Didn't hear any gun," he added, turning to the others.

They shook their heads.

"He has not been shot," said Tinker—Slimy Sam, what with the death of his dog, and the sudden appearance of the constables, who seemed to scare him, was too dazed to say a word. "He has been stabbed, and just this minute. He went into those bushes yonder and ran out all over blood, and fell dead."

Tinker spoke hurriedly, and in some excitement, for he was more than a bit alarmed himself at the little tragedy. It had all been so sudden.

"In those bushes?" said the sergeant. "Ha, there's Packer, the foreman's big bloodhound! Look at him! He scents something in there!"

Tinker had forgotten Pedro for the moment, and, looking round sharply, saw him at the top of the bank, creeping, belly almost to earth, and nose down, towards that clump of bushes.

Fearing that he would meet a similar fate to Snapper, Tinker called him back. For once the well-trained hound failed to obey, but crept on—

which showed that he, too, had come in for a taste of it.

But it had not daunted the gallant dog.

As Cronk, sighting the constables, turned to plunge back into the thicket, one of the men pluckily sprang upon him, and would doubtless have been struck at with the knife, but that Pedro, with a magnificent bound, bowled the big ruffian over and pinned him to the earth.

He struggled fiercely, but the bloodhound was not to be thrown off, and Tinker and the sergeant quickly coming up, the handcuffs were speedily upon the fellow's wrists.

In the meantime the other constable had accounted for Cronk's companion, who seemed too dazed or cowed to put up any show of fight, or even to make an effort to get away.

"That's two of 'em," remarked the sergeant, when Cronk was lifted to his feet, and stood sullen and scowling. "Whoof! But that's a splendid dog! See, you're Packer's boy, aren't you?"—this to Tinker.

Tinker nodded.

"Well, take my tip and clear out

But the Slimy one, who seemed to pluck up wonderfully directly the constables had gone, laughed at the bare idea.

"Wot!" he sneered. "You're a poor sort o' chap, ain't yer? Come out for a bit o' sport, and jest be'cos of this 'ere little affair yer wants to chuck it an' go 'ome! Wot's the matter with yer? Funky about yer precious dawg agen? Why, he's only got a little scratch, an' mine's bin killed, but I ain't makin' a fuss about it. Take the blessed critter 'ome an' wrap him in cotton-wool! Dawg or no dawg, I'm goin' to rout out that badger!"

And he strode off towards the preserves, but looking back anxious enough to see if Tinker was likely to follow.

And Tinker did. He had come out to hunt a badger for one thing, and he hated to make up his mind to a certain purpose and then not carry it out—that was Tinker all over. And for another thing, he couldn't stand Slimy Sam's taunts.

A glance at Pedro's shoulder showed him that the wound was a mere superficial cut, and already had ceased to bleed. There was nothing to trouble about on that account, and after all it would be fun to nail that badger.

"Come on, then," he said.

As before, Slimy Sam turned away to hide a grin of satisfaction. He had been in a rare stew those last few minutes, fearing that Tinker might take him at his word and turn back home with the dog.

He led the way deeper into the woods, and presently they came to the fence which marked the boundary of Squire Ardoise's preserves.

It did very little more than that, for it was so old and decayed and so full of broken gaps that it was of no use whatever as a protection. A child could have pushed through it easily in a score of places. Very plainly the Gipsy Squire relied on something better than fences to preserve his game.

Tinker and Slimy Sam were very soon on the other side of it with the bloodhound.

"Ware-ho for spring-guns and traps!" said Tinker, looking carefully where he trod.

"Needn't be afraid of that sort o' thing in 'ere," said Slimy Sam. "The squire don't go in for 'em. He doesn't need 'em."

In spite of this assurance, Tinker called Pedro to heel and made him keep there, once they were well within the preserves.

It was a wild place, a genuine bit of old forest-land, little changed for many a century. Game of all sorts abounded, and Tinker felt very glad that Snapper was no longer with them to get excited about it and make the place ring with his yelping. For, not placing much reliance on Slimy Sam's word, he was still afraid that the keepers might drop on them, and he did not want to risk Pedro being captured, or possibly shot.

The dim aisles of the wood were very silent and stilly. Save for the pit-pat of some skurrying rabbit's feet, the whirr of a pheasant's wings as it rose at their approach, or the alarmed, warning call of thrush or blackbird to its mate, there was very little sound. The fall of an over-ripe acorn, dropping through the dry, leathery leaves and plunging deep into the long, rank grass with a plump like the fall of a stone into water, made quite a startling noise.

In fact, Slimy Sam did start at all such sounds.

He evidently did not like his rather weird surroundings at all, and his nerves were quite "jumpy." Tinker felt inclined to laugh at him. He had never been out with such a nervous chap before, and he couldn't understand it. They might have been out in an Indian jungle, with the chance of a man-eating tiger suddenly appearing in their path, instead of in an English wood with no more formidable occupants than squirrels, birds, and rabbits.

He did laugh outright when Slimy Sam positively jumped as a fat horse-chestnut dropped and burst at his feet with a slight pop!

"What's up with you?" he asked. "You're all on the jump. Aren't you well?"

"Nothin' the matter with me," growled the slimy one. "I'm all right. Come on; we're nearly there!"

But there was something the matter with him for all that. He was intensely anxious as they approached the scene of action. For he was not a downright, hardy young villain, but only a petty, sneaking

(Continued on the next page.)

TWO SUPERB NEW SPORTS YARNS IN THIS NUMBER!**OUT ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26. BE SURE YOU GET IT!**

ward until he was close upon the bushes; then, with a ringing bay, leapt right into their midst.

Tinker raced up the bank, the three constables following. Slimy Sam did not move; in fact, he seemed to have no power to do anything but stand and stare in open-mouthed terror.

A second, a third ringing bay came from the dense thicket, mingled with the voices of men in loud oaths and cries of alarm. Then two wild-looking figures burst forth, crashing through briar and bramble in frantic terror.

The foremost was Cronk, the grinder; the other, the smaller man, who had been with him on that raid into Job Pecksniff's cottage several days ago.

Cronk had a long knife in his hand. It was red with rust, but its point and halfway down the blade was redder still, with something that was not rust!

Doubtless it was poor Snapper's blood. But Pedro, who came bounding out after them, had an ugly crimson streak upon his sleek shoulder,

of this," said the sergeant; "you and the other young chap. There's others of these gentry hiding hereabouts, and you might get that fine dog killed if you didn't come to any harm yourselves. Now then, we'll just get these chaps down to the lock-up. Get along there!"

And they marched off with their prisoners.

Tinker was half inclined to take the sergeant's advice and turn back home. He had had about enough of it. He had come out for an afternoon's fun, and this was no fun at all. For, ruffian though he knew Cronk to be, he was not at all pleased to have assisted at his capture.

To a boy like Tinker, as generous as he was plucky, there was something very much like kicking a beaten enemy in hunting these miserable fugitives down.

"Look here, I'm about fed up with this afternoon," he said to Slimy Sam. "I'm getting a lot more than I came for. I vote we chuck it and go home."

"THE NEW BROOM."

Two Superb New Serials that Start in the Giant Christmas Number of THE BOYS' FRIEND. Coming Soon!

"SEXTON BLAKE, SPY."

knave, who had been drawn into a plot and was now frightened as it became ripe.

More than once he hesitated, and actually half stopped in his walk.

Again and again it was on his lips to suggest that it was too late for badger-hunting that afternoon; the light was going—which was true enough, for it had grown quite dusky in the woods—and that they had better turn back home and try again another day.

But his courage failed him. He had made a bargain, and must keep to it now, or there would be an ugly reckoning with—somebody.

"Come on," he said again, rather hoarsely. "We're nearly there now!"

"Right-ho!" said Tinker cheerily. "Bout time! 'Grey as a badger,' they say, and—great pip!—if that badger of yours wasn't very young when we started, he must be snow-white by now!"

A Coward's Cruel Blow.

THEY walked on in silence as before; Slimy Sam because he was afraid that his voice would betray him if he spoke, and arouse his companion's suspicions at the last moment, and Tinker himself because he thought it was the proper thing to become mum when you were out hunting and close on the quarry.

Pedro, dropping into the spirit of the thing, stalked at his heel without a sound, like the very ghost of a bloodhound.

Presently Slimy Sam stopped, and held up his hand.

"Hist!" he whispered.

Tinker stopped also, and held up his hand to Pedro, and said "Hist!" as well, because it seemed the correct thing, and good hunting procedure.

Pedro likewise pulled up, and began to prick his ears and sniff the air, his mane bristling and his great tail stiffening like a rod. He would have growled, only Tinker said "Hist!" to him again, although these signs of keenness delighted him. "This is the place," said Slimy Sam.

They had come to a little glade, or hollow, in the very—very heart of the woods. It was so secluded that the shyest of wild creatures, furred or feathered, might have made its home there and felt itself secure; just one of those places which the poacher knows better than the keeper, and the prowling, dreaming boy, with a taste for lonely adventure, best of all.

"A ripping fine place!" nine British boys out of ten would have pronounced it. The sandy bottom was clear of growth, but the trees around, standing almost trunk to trunk, their roots and lower branches interlaced, hemmed it in like a solid wall, with just a gap here and there—little more than rabbit-runs—through one of which the boys entered.

At the back of it was a steep, sandy bank, honeycombed with rabbit-holes, and topped with a dense growth of hawthorn.

A deep, dry ditch ran at the foot of this, formed into little caverns by the thick bracken and sedgy grass which grew there.

"Now, where does the badger hang out—in there?" asked Tinker, pointing to the ditch.

Slimy Sam did not answer at once. He was staring at the ditch with a queer sort of intent look. It might have been merely sportsmanlike keenness, but it looked very like nervous funk.

"Hist! Don't make a row!" he said, in a thick, hoarse whisper. Then, curiously enough, he whistled—a couple of short, peculiar notes.

"What did you do that for?" asked Tinker, rather surprised, having just been told not to make a noise.

Slimy Sam started and flushed slightly.

"I—oh—er—I thought I was whistling to Snapper," he said confusedly; "forgot I hadn't got him now. Yes, that's where the badger lives," he hastened to add. "See that big hole in the bank up there?"

Tinker nodded.

"Well, that's his top run," said Slimy Sam. "He's got another run down there at the bottom of the ditch, and he lives in a kind o' cave at the back. See?"

Tinker nodded again. He was a town-bred boy, and though he was pretty wide-awake as to the ways of men, he was not well up in badgers. It sounded all right.

"Now, if I had old Snapper here I'd send him into that top hole to drive the badger out through the bottom run, an' if you put your dawg down in the ditch all ready he'd have him at one. See?"

"I see," said Tinker. "But you haven't got Snapper. So that part of it's off."

"Never mind. You put your dawg down into the ditch jest the same, an' I'll chuck stones into the top hole. That'll do as well. It's only to scare him an' drive him out of his burrow," said Slimy Sam, who was trembling all over, and could hardly speak because his chattering teeth played him such queer tricks.

Tinker thought it rather strange, but he put it down to excitement, being a bit strung-up himself. It was not every day that he had a chance of nailing a badger.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Only don't start chucking till I've got old Pedro down there ready for him, in case the beggar does a bunk too soon."

For once Tinker, the shrewd, level-headed pupil of Sexton Blake, was completely off his guard, completely carried away by the excitement of the thing. He was no longer the sharp-witted young detective, but just a boy-hunter out after big game.

The badger, and the badger alone, filled all his thoughts.

Otherwise, it might at least have crossed his mind that such a place as this dry ditch, with its thick growth of bracken, would have made a very possible cover for another of those fugitive rioters, and that in sending Pedro down into it he might be risking the dog's life.

But, strangely enough, he did not even think of that danger.

"Now then, Pedro! Down there—down there, old boy!" he said, pointing to the ditch.

Till that moment he had kept his hand upon the dog's collar, for the hound was powerfully excited, and he feared that he would break away too soon, or at least bark, and so cause the badger to cut away by his "bottom run" before they were ready with their arrangements.

The instant Tinker released him, Pedro, with a prolonged growl, leapt down into the ditch, boring his way deep into the undergrowth.

Then came a second fierce growl; then a smothered bark. The bracken was tossed about as though a desperate struggle were going on beneath it; then a series of deep growls with a strangely muffled sound, and after that, silence.

"He's got him!" cried Tinker. "Come on, Sam! Let's help him haul the beggar out!"

"Yes, he's got him!" muttered Slimy Sam, not moving towards the ditch, but rather backing away from it. "Yes, he's got him!"

At that very moment the head and shoulders of a man emerged from the bracken, lifting in his arms a kind of sack, from which the hind-quarters of Pedro protruded, dragging limply; the sack, which was provided with a running cord, being drawn tightly around Pedro's flanks.

The truth burst upon Tinker in a flash. The whole thing had been a plot to kill or capture the famous bloodhound!

Rage—mad rage, took possession of the boy.

Shouting in his fury, he ran towards the ditch, and would have sprang upon the man, but ere he reached it, a second fellow of the same gipsy type, leapt down from the top of the bank right in his way, flourishing a cudgel.

"Keep back!" cried the man, who was, of course, none other than Gudger, Jan the Tinman's unwilling ally. "Keep back, or I'll gie yer a taste of this!"

And he raised the heavy cudgel aloft threateningly.

But a naked sword, a pistol even, would not have daunted Tinker then in his fury. He sprang at the gipsy with clenched fists.

The big, sturdy boy, his eyes fiery with rage, looked formidable. Gudger backed, though still blocking the way. He was a coward, and the lad frightened him, man though he was; and like many a coward in a moment of fear, he did a needlessly brutal thing.

Dodging the drive of Tinker's fist, he swung the heavy cudgel round and down, catching the boy full upon his temple.

Tinker reeled backwards, and then dropped like a log.

Jan the Tinman clambered out of the ditch, and flung the dog—now limp and lifeless—down upon the ground. Then he removed the sack, put a strong leather muzzle over the animal's jaws, and tied his hind legs together with a piece of cord.

Then he rose up, his repulsive features all a-grin with satisfaction.

"Never did a neater job in all me nat'ral!" he chuckled. "Got the sack over his head afore he had a chance to nip me, an' he run his nose clean into the chloroform sponge, an' that settled him! I reckon the squire knowed wot he was about when he picked me for a job o' this sort!"

He then turned his attention to his mate, who was standing looking down upon the prostrate boy, white and scared.

"Wot 'ave yer done with the boy?" he ejaculated. "Knocked him out?"

He stooped and turned Tinker roughly over. Not a limb of the boy stirred. He did not even breathe a sigh or moan.

"Thunder! Yer must 'ave fetched him a crack!" ejaculated the Tinman. "Wot did yer go an' do it for, yer mug?"

"He—he ain't dead, is he?" faltered the other gipsy, with ashen lips.

"Dead, or as near it as makes no pertic'ler odds!" said the Tinman callously. "I wouldn't give a farden

in the plot broke upon him. He had betrayed the boy to his death! He was an accomplice in a murder!

Livid as a corpse himself, and trembling as if a deadly chill had struck him, the wretched lout stole away from the spot, and then began to run, blundering and stumbling in his blind, frantic haste to put it far, far behind him.

But fast as he might run, it followed him at equal pace—or, rather, went before him—that picture of the boy lying prone upon the sandy earth; the boy so full of life and vigor but a few minutes ago, and now so deathly still, because of him—because of him!

"Hang him, he's gone!" grunted Jan the Tinman, after a fruitless glance around the glade. "But I reckon he won't blab for his own sake. Now, come on Gudger! Pull yerself together, man, an' shake off that tell-tale take-me-an'-ang-me sort o' look, or you'll give the whole thing away! Let's git out o' this!"

He picked up the drugged bloodhound's limp and motionless body, flung it roughly over his shoulder like the carcass of a sheep, and struck off through the woods by a little-known path which led to the rear of the Gipsy Squire's secluded mansion. Gudger followed, but not without many a backward, shuddering glance over his shoulder as he went.

And Tinker lay where he fell.

Darkness came on; night mists gathered in ghostly shapes among the trees, melted and fell like tears from the slow-way boughs above his head. Then the stars came out,

At night he shut himself up in Temple's office—an iron shanty on the outskirts of Ginger Town—and applied himself to labour of a very different kind.

One effect of the riots had been to bring about quite a public clamour in the three towns for an early supply of water, if only to prevent similar outbreaks.

For the water famine still continued, and although it really arose from the prolonged drought during the summer and autumn, some of quite the better sort of people began to put it down to the new water scheme, and a strong feeling of hostility was setting in against its promoters and the young engineer who was to carry it out.

Public meetings were held, and there was talk of having the work stopped, the unfinished dam demolished, and the river allowed to flow as before.

That, of course, would have meant the ruin of Sidney Temple, and Blake was determined to prevent it.

There was only one way to get a supply of water to the towns at the earliest possible moment, and put an end to the growing agitation. But that involved a grave risk, a risk so fearful that Sidney Temple shrank from attempting it.

For the masonry of the great reservoir—the upper part, at least—was not yet quite set; the cement had not had time to harden. It might be filled to a certain level with safety, but should the water rise beyond that, there was a terrible risk that the still unset cement might be loosened, the walls give way, and such a flood pour down Redcliff Dale as would sweep it clear of town and village, and pile up such a tale of woe and destruction that the very name of the place would be breathed with whispered horror in years to come!

Yet Sexton Blake was determined to attempt it.

Alone in that little office, far from the nearest hut where the men slept, he sat at work night after night drawing up the plans of his scheme by which, and by which alone, the thing could be done with safety.

It was often far into the morning ere he ceased work to snatch a few hours' sleep in the little inner room adjoining the office, having first of all locked the plans away in the iron safe.

It was his constant dread that they would be stolen. For although since the riots there had been no fresh outrage, no fresh attempt to destroy the works, yet he was not lulled into any false sense of security. He did not for a moment dream that the plot against Sidney Temple had died out.

It only slumbered, to break out afresh later on.

He knew enough of Squire Ardoise to feel certain that he had not abandoned his dastardly scheme. He was only biding his time to strike a more deadly blow.

He had many spies, as Blake was well aware, and probably knew ere this that the new foreman was preparing those plans.

To get possession of them would be a grand stroke for him, and a fatal one for Sidney Temple!

Never did Sexton Blake guard his own life with half the care that he guarded those plans! So that he might take his brief sleep in security, he used to have Pedro brought to him by Tinker at night, and the bloodhound was left unchained in the outer office where the safe was kept.

With such a guardian, the detective knew that he might sleep at his ease. It would be a clever thief indeed who could deceive the vigilant ears and keen scent of that highly-trained dog, and a bold one who would dare to venture within range of those formidable jaws.

But on that particular Saturday night the hour for Tinker's arrival with the dog came, but no Tinker and no Pedro.

Sexton Blake, intent upon his work, did not at first notice the boy's non-arrival. Then, happening to glance at his watch, he was struck by the lateness of the hour.

"Tinker should have been here with Pedro long ago!" he exclaimed. "The boy is never unpunctual. Something has happened to him!"

Just as he muttered this, there came a sharp tapping at the door of the office. His mind full of forebodings, Blake jumped off his stool and ran to open it.

Job Peckchaff stood there, his usually sunset-red face very white, his sleepy eyes very wide with alarm!

(Another grand instalment of this powerful serial next Tuesday, in *THE BOYS' FRIEND*.)



Cronk, sighting the constables, turned to plunge back into the thicket, but Pedro, with a magnificent bound, leapt at the ruffian's throat and sent him staggering backwards.

rushlight for his chances of comin' round!"

"Wh-what are we going to do?" gasped Gudger. "I never meant to kill him!"

"That's as may be," said the Tinman. "It's done, all the same, an' talkin' won't mend it. Do? Why, leave him where he is! If he's found stiff, not 'aving come round, maybe they'll put it down to his 'aving run up agen one of those chaps that's hiding around here. All we've got to do is to get away from here an' keep mum about where we were this arternoon. You keep sober for a week or two, an' don't talk, an' it'll be all right. It's the talkin' as 'alus does it!"

"Yes; but there's young Sam Bleek—the boy as brought him here—wot if he goes an' blabs?"

"He musn't get the chance!" exclaimed the Tinman. "Where is he? Let me get 'old of him. I'll scare him so that he won't dare breathe a word to a soul! I'll tell him that it'll be a 'anging job for him, him bein' the last seen with the boy afore he came here. That'll shut his mouth!"

But when they looked round for Slimy Sam, he was not visible.

He had seen the blow struck, had seen Tinker fall, and lie as he fell, without a sign of life or movement. He had heard—concealed, but within earshot—Jan the Tinman pronounce those dreadful words: "Dead, or as near it as makes no odds!" and they struck into his soul like darts of fire.

Then the full horror of his share

and a shaft of their wan light touched his livid, deathlike face.

A belated hare, most timid of all wild creatures, came lopping across the little glade, feeding as it came.

Sighting that strange, dark object upon the ground, the hare stopped, sniffing in fear and suspicion. But the dark object did not move, and very soon the timid animal was boldly cropping the grass beside the outstretched, motionless hand.

Blake at Work—A Tap at the Door.

SEXTON BLAKE knew nothing of Tinker's doings on that

Saturday afternoon, for they met now but seldom during the day, unless Tinker had anything special to report, or Blake some particular order to give his young assistant.

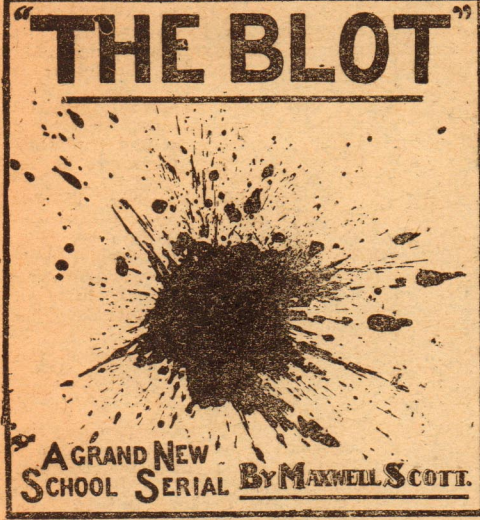
The detective, indeed, seldom left the works, and rarely came to Job Peckchaff's cottage.

Sidney Temple, although much better, was not yet able to resume the difficult work of management, and Sexton Blake still had sole command.

The detective-foreman was literally working day and night, and few men but he, with a frame of iron and an unconquerable will, could have stood the combined strain on body and brain.

By day he had entire control of that great army of workmen and boys, directing and supervising every item of their work.

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 revelation 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 humbog and a hypocrite.

No sooner is the train clear of Highfield than Mortimer stirs up trouble; but Phil than 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 snobbi-ness, Phil arrives at Rayton College, and is made Mortimer's rag.

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.

At last the long looked-for Berestord examination is to be held, and now every- body is anxiously awaiting the result. Is "The blot" going to win the prize?

Dr. Paul suddenly returns from London, and on the way to the college he sees Mortimer depart from a low public-house. He also overhears a conversation in the public-house bearing upon the plot to get "The blot" expelled.

Upon arriving at the school, Dr. Paul goes to the isolation room, where Philip is placed under close restrictions. He questions Ashley as to what he knows in regard to Jim Cocker, the man who has been blackmailing him.

Dr. Paul asks "The Blot" if he will do something for him, and Philip readily answers, "Only give me the chance, sir!"

"Listen, then," says Dr. Paul, "and I'll tell you one of the strangest stories that ever a head-master told to one of his pupils."

(Now read this week's instalment.)

The Doctor's Story.

WHEN I was a young and foolish undergraduate at Oxford," began Dr. Paul, "I fell desperately in love with one of the lady members of a musical comedy company which visited that city. Her stage name, I remember, was Mabel Vincent. She was only a chorus-girl, but she was extremely pretty, and although I never spoke to her, I wrote her a lot of very silly letters, full of protestations of undying love, and all that sort of thing. The infatuation only lasted a few weeks, and then I forgot all about her.

"Three years ago I became head-master here. In course of time I made the acquaintance of Colonel Goldie and his daughter, of Rayton Hall, and—and—well, to put it bluntly, I fell in love with Miss Goldie.

"I had every reason to believe that my love was returned, and I was on the eve of proposing to Miss Goldie—it was at the beginning of this term—when a man came to my house one night, and demanded a private inter- view.

"He said his name was Cocker, but he wouldn't tell me where he lived. Ten years ago, he said, he had married the girl I used to know as Mabel Vincent. He said his wife had just died, and among her belong-

ings he had found a number of love-letters written by me to her before her marriage."

"The letters which his wife asked me to burn!" exclaimed Philip.

"Of course!" said the doctor. "The woman had evidently kept them all these years. She wished to destroy them before she died, but Cocker, as you know, prevented her, and obtained possession of the letters. Can you guess what use he made of them?"

"Blackmail?" said Philip.

"Yes. Unless I gave him ten pounds, he said, he would ruin my career and cover me with shame and ridicule by showing the letters to everybody in the neighbourhood, in-

cluding Colonel and Miss Goldie. I was terrified by the threat, and gave him the ten pounds. I may add that I offered to buy the letters, but he said he wouldn't sell them for five hundred pounds.

"Before long he came again. This time he demanded twenty pounds, which I gave him. A week or two later he wrote, and demanded fifty pounds. I then made up my mind that I could stand the strain no longer.

"I knew that if I gave him the fifty pounds, it wouldn't be long before he demanded a hundred. The more I gave him, the more he would demand; and then, when he had fleeced me of every penny I had, he would probably carry out his threat, after all. So I decided to resign my appointment here and emigrate to Canada, where I should be free from his persecutions.

"I went up to London three weeks ago, and interviewed the governors of the school. They accepted my resignation, and agreed to let me leave at the end of this term—that is to say, next week.

"My successor has already been appointed," concluded the doctor, "and before I left London I made all arrangements to start for Canada in ten days' time. Whether those arrangements will ever be carried out, or whether they will be cancelled, depends on you."

"On me, sir?" said Philip, in great surprise.

The doctor nodded. "I told you I wanted you to help me, didn't I?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Philip. "And I'll be only too glad to do so. But how can I help you, sir?"

"If I could secure possession of those letters," said the doctor, "Cocker's hold on me would be gone. I could snap my fingers at him. There would be no need for me to go abroad. Now do you understand?"

"I am afraid I don't, sir," said Philip.

"Perhaps you will understand when I tell you what Cocker said when I asked him where the letters were. He said his wife had always kept them in a secret hiding-place at their house, and that since her death he had kept them in the same place."

"His wife kept them," said Philip. "in a hollow space under one of the boards of the living-room floor."

"So you have told me," said the doctor. "Therefore, if Cocker keeps them in the same place, the letters are now in that hollow space beneath the living-room floor.

"As I've already told you," continued the doctor, "Cocker would never tell me where he lived. He feared, no doubt, that I should engage a private detective to break into his house and search for the letters. So I never knew until you told me this afternoon that he lived in Highfield. And even now I don't know where his house is."

"It's in Frog Alley," said Philip.

"Do you know the number?"

"No, sir."

"But if you and I went to Highfield," said the doctor, "you could point the house out to me, no doubt."

Philip started. At last the doctor's meaning dawned on him. "You wish me to go with you to Highfield, and show you Cocker's house?" he said.

"Yes," said the doctor. "That's how I want you to help me. Cocker was arrested this afternoon for being drunk and incapable at the Blue Boar. He will be sent to prison to-morrow, certainly for not less than a week, and probably for longer.

While he is in prison, his house will be deserted. Now is my chance to recover the letters. If you'll come with me to Highfield, and show me the house, I—I'll find some way of getting in and securing the letters! Will you do that for me?"

"I'll do more than that, sir," said Philip eagerly. "You needn't go to Highfield. If you'll give me leave of absence for twenty-four hours, I'll go to Highfield by myself and get the letters for you."

The doctor rigorously shook his head.

"It is most generous and unselfish of you to make such an offer," he said, "but I couldn't dream of accept- ing it. Although the letters are morally and legally mine—although no honourable man would think I was doing wrong to take what belongs to me, in order to defeat a black- mailer—it is still an offence against the law to break into another man's house, even to recover your own property. I cannot allow you to accept such a responsibility. Come with me to Highfield and show me the house. Will you do that for me?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, sir," said Philip. "When shall we go—to-day?"

The doctor glanced at his watch. "Yes. Why not?" he said impul- sively and excitedly. "We've just time to catch the six o'clock train. I haven't unpacked my bag yet, so I can start at once. You needn't take any luggage, for you can take the next train back to Ray- ton as soon as you have shown me the house. I, of course, shall remain in Highfield, and wait for a favour- able opportunity to carry out my plans. How soon can you be ready?"

"I'm ready now, sir," said Philip, snatching up his hat and overcoat. "Come along, then!" said the doctor.

And he led the way downstairs. At the foot of the stairs they met Mr. Walker.

"Ah, just the man I want to see!" said the doctor. "I'm going away again."

"Going away again!" gasped Mr. Walker.

"Yes. I am going to run down to Highfield, and I'm taking Ashley with me. He will return by an early train to-morrow morning, but I may be absent for a few days."

Mr. Walker looked bewildered, as well he might. Only half an hour ago the doctor had told him that he had seen Mortimer come out of the Blue Boar, and had discovered that Mortimer and Heath had lied to Mr. Sopworth about Philip's presence in that same public-house.

"I will go now and see Ashley," the doctor had said. "After I have questioned him, I will send for

Mortimer and Heath and Mr. Sop- worth; and then, in your presence, I will explain what I have seen and heard since my return."

And now, instead of carrying out this programme, the doctor was "going to run down to Highfield," and was "taking Ashley with him."

"When do you leave?" asked Mr. Walker.

"By the six o'clock train, so we've no time to lose," replied Dr. Paul.

"Then are you not going to see Mortimer and Heath before you go?" said Mr. Walker.

"Humph!" growled the doctor. "I'd clean forgotten all about those two young scoundrels! But I've no time to deal with the matter now. They'll have to wait till I return."

"And in the meantime am I to say anything to Mortimer about being in the Blue Boar this afternoon?"

"No. Better not," said the doctor. "Just leave things as they are."

"Just as you wish," said Mr. Walker, rather stiffly.

Dr. Paul hesitated for a moment, then he laid his hand on the assistant-master's shoulder. "Don't be offended with me, Walker," he said, in a low voice. "I know my conduct must seem strange and erratic to you, but I can't explain at present. Bear with me a little longer. When I come back, if all goes well, I'll tell you every- thing."

Five minutes later Dr. Paul and Philip—the latter carrying the doctor's bag—had left the school, and were trudging down the road that led to the village.

The Tribulations of Tubb.

ON this same afternoon, as the reader may remember, Tubb and his chums had captured Holcroft; and, after sousing him under the pump in the yard of the deserted farm, had bound him, seated him in an old barrow, and wheeled him to the gate which led into the main road.

The gate being locked, they had lifted Holcroft over and had dumped him down in the ditch, and were just about to hoist the barrow over, when they saw Dr. Paul coming up the road from the direction of the village.

This, of course, was before the doctor interviewed Philip and decided to go to Highfield.

As there was no time to lift Hol- croft back into the field, and as honour forbade them to leave him in the ditch, to be discovered by the doctor, Tubb and his chums had no choice but to set their prisoner free. Tubb accordingly hastily untied the handkerchiefs with which Holcroft

was bound. Then he and his chums concealed themselves behind the hedge, while Holcroft, thankful to have escaped from his tormentors, and thirsting for revenge, raced up to the school.

"Jee-rusalem!" gasped Ruther- ford, meeting him at the school gates. "What on earth have you been up to now? You're wet through, and your face is as black as a sweep's!"

"Tubb and his louts!" panted Hol- croft, tearing up the drive with Rutherford at his heels. "Tell you all about it later. We can catch 'em if we're quick; but, first of all, I must have a wash and change my things. Collect as many of our chaps as you can find, and wait for me in Big Room. I'll be with you in a tick."

Holcroft could be as rapid in his movements as most folk when he liked, but even he couldn't bath and change in a "tick," however long that may be. As a matter of fact, it was a quarter of an hour later when he made his appearance in Big Room, where Rutherford and Pettigrew and Carfax and fifteen or sixteen other Paulite juniors were impatiently awaiting his arrival.

"Heard the news?" cried Carfax, when Holcroft appeared. "The doctor has come back!"

"Chestnut!" said Holcroft. "I knew that half an hour ago! It was the doctor's comin' back that saved me."

"Saved you from what?" inquired his chums.

In reply to this question, Holcroft briefly related how the Walkerites had captured him, how they had mal- treated him, and how he had been saved from further indignities by the unexpected appearance of Dr. Paul.

His story was received by his followers with shouts of indignation and cries of vengeance.

"You said that we could catch the rotters if we were quick," said Rutherford. "But how can we? They'll have left the farm by now, and we don't know where they've gone."

"He means," said Carfax, "that they'll be on their way up to the school now, and we can be in wait for them and catch them outside the gates."

"He doesn't mean anything of the kind!" said Holcroft.

"Then what do you mean?" Holcroft explained that he had overheard his captors talking about a sum of six shillings and threepence which Tubb had generously agreed to expend on a blow-out at Wragg's, the village tuckshop.

"They were on their way to Wragg's when they spotted me," he said. "That caused them to post- pone their visit, but after they set me free it's a hundred to one they would go down to Wragg's and gorge. There are only twelve of them, and there are twenty of us. If we sprint down to the village we shall either nab them in the tuckshop or comin' away."

"Come on, then!" cried Ruther- ford; and a moment later the "Army of Revenge," as Holcroft dubbed it, was marching to the fray.

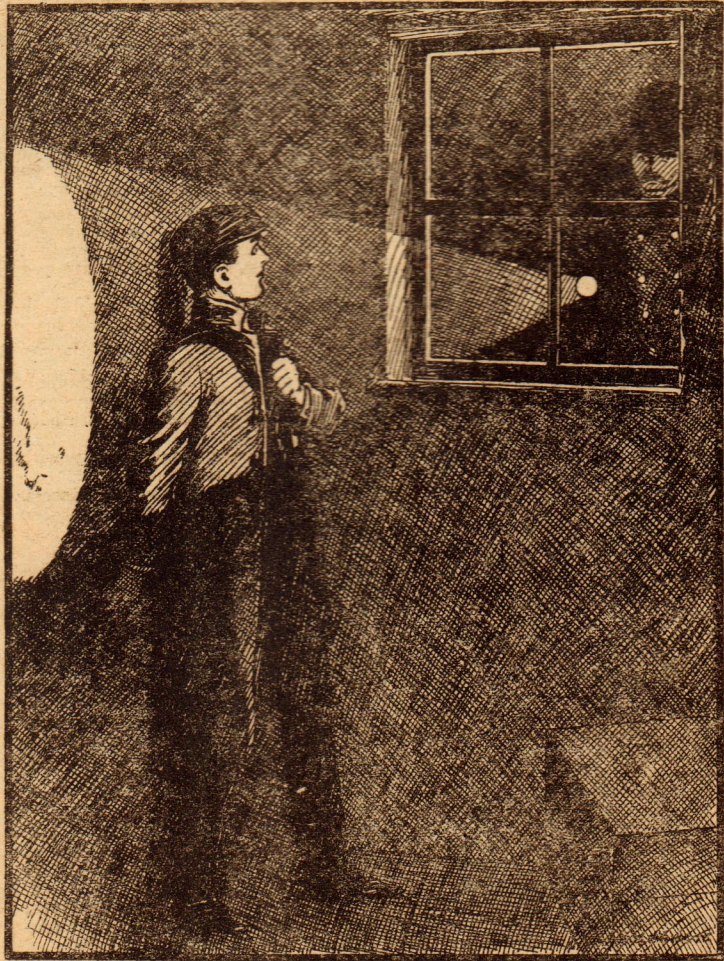
Holcroft's surmise was correct. After Tubb and his chums had re- leased Holcroft, they concealed themselves behind the hedge until the doctor had disappeared; then they strolled down to the village, turned into Wragg's, and proceeded to re- gale themselves at Tubb's expense.

It must be here explained that the village tuckshop was an old-fash- ioned, low-roofed building, with two ground-floor windows facing the street. One of these windows, the larger of the two, was the window of the shop. The other, an ordinary house-window, was the window of a small refreshment-room, set out with chairs and little tables.

There was only one door at the front, and this opened into the shop. Out of the shop a side-door led into the refreshment-room. At the back of the shop a third door led into Wragg's private dwelling apart- ments.

There were two windows in the re- freshment-room. One of these, as stated above, looked out on the street. The other looked out on a square patch of lawn at the back of the house where refreshments were sometimes served. This lawn was en- closed by a high brick wall, beyond which was a plot of waste ground.

Six shillings and threepence, when divided among the twelve hungry schoolboys, does not go very far nor last very long. At the end of a quarter of an hour Tubb's exchequer was empty, though his chums, as Card expressed it, had only had enough to give them an appetite.



With a gasp of alarm, Philip drew back from the window. The next instant the burly figure of a policeman strode into the yard, and the dazzling glare of a bullseye lantern flashed through the window.

"Well, if you want any more, you'll have to pay for it yourselves," said Tubb. "I'm broke."

"Perhaps we might coax Jerry into standin' tick," suggested Riden. They tried, but old Jeremiah Wragg, the one-legged proprietor of the tuckshop, was proof against their blandishments. It was the end of the term, and some of the boys he might never see again. No pay, no grub was his verdict.

"Old skinkint!" growled Card. "However, there'll be tea waitin' for us when we get back to the school, and goodness knows I'm ready for it! Let's get a move on."

"We'd better all keep together," said Hepworth nervously. "Holcroft will have told his crowd by now how we rotted him at the farm, and some of 'em may be lyin' in wait for us."

"Let 'em!" said Tubb valiantly. "Who's afraid? Come on!"

He led the way out of the refreshment-room into the shop. Wooden-legged Jerry had just stumped up from the kitchen with a large tray of jam tarts which he was about to put in the window.

Tubb, at the head of his followers, opened the shop door, and was about to step out into the street when he pulled up with a gasp of dismay. For at that moment his eyes fell on Holcroft and eighteen or twenty Paulite juniors, who were running down the street, evidently making for the tuckshop.

"Hurrah! Here he is!" roared Holcroft, catching sight of Tubb. "Now we've got him! Charge, my merry men, charge!"

With a shout of alarm Tubb hastily stepped back into the shop. In doing so he trod on the toes of Riden, who was just behind him. Riden leaped back with a howl of pain and collided with Card, who, after falling over Hepworth, cannoned into Jeremiah.

Jerry, having only one sound leg, was not particularly steady on his pins at the best of times, and when Card cannoned into him he went down like a skittle, dropping his tray and scattering its juicy contents all over the shop floor.

The uproar and confusion were indescribable. Jerry, lying on his back on the floor, and waving his wooden leg in the air, bellowed like an infuriated bull.

"The himps! The warmints!" he roared. "Five bob's worth o' fresh-made tarts all ruined. An' who's goin' to pay for 'em? That's wot I want to know."

Riden, nursing his injured toe, hopped about the shop and howled at the top of his voice.

"You clumsy lout!" he moaned. "You've crippled me for life! Why did you do it?"

"Holcroft and his crew are comin' down the street," said Tubb excitedly. "Twenty of 'em, if there's one. What's to be done?"

"Shut the door!" yelled Card. "Lock it! That'll give us breathin' time."

Tubb hurriedly closed the half-glass door, and turned the key. He was only just in time, for even as the key turned in the lock Holcroft and his followers dashed up to the outside and hurled themselves like a tidal wave against the door.

"P'leece! P'leece!" bellowed Jerry, still struggling in vain to get up off the floor. "The shop'll be wrecked! Help! Murder! Fetch the p'leece!"

"Come out and fight like men!" hooted Holcroft, flattening his face against the outside of the glass door, and gesticulating wildly. "Come out and be skinned alive!"

Finding that his rivals did not dare to burst the door open, Tubb's spirits began to revive.

"We're safe for the present," he said.

"But we can't stay here for ever," objected Card. "And the brutes won't go away till we come out."

"Well, they can't smoke us out, like we smoked Holcroft out of the hayloft, that's one consolation," said Tubb. "Oh, shut up!" he added, turning to Jerry, who was filling the air with his lamentations and reproaches. "How can a chap think when you're makin' that row?"

"Is there any way out at the back, I wonder?" suggested Riden. "It would be a great spoof if we could quietly slip out at the back while they're rantin' and ravin' at the front."

"There's the back window of the refreshment-room," said Card. "We could climb out through that window on to the lawn. There's a door in the wall at the end of the lawn. With a bit of luck we could be through the door and half-way up to the school

before they twigged that we'd escaped."

"Good notion!" said Tubb. "That's what we'll do. Come along!"

In the meantime Holcroft and his chums were also holding a council of war.

"Of course, we could smash the door open easily enough if we tried," said Holcroft; "but I don't want to do that. We might get into trouble with the police if we did. How can we get at the bounders?"

"We'll just have to sit tight and wait," said Pettigrew. "They can't escape, and they're bound to come out sooner or later."

"But I want to get at 'em now," said Holcroft. "I don't want to—Hollo! What's the giddy move now? They've all gone back into the refreshment-room. Take a squint through the window, Carfax, and see what they're after."

Carfax darted to the front window of the refreshment-room, the lower edge of which was five or six feet above the level of the pavement. He raised himself on tiptoe, and peered through. Then he let out an excited yell.

"They've opened the back window!" he yelled. "They're climbin' out on to the lawn!"

Holcroft uttered a roar of fury and rushed to the window. He was just in time to see the last of the Walkerites vanish through the back window.

"Drat 'em! They've spoofed us after all!" groaned Carfax.

"Not yet!" said Holcroft grimly. "Is this front window fastened? No! Hurrah! Why didn't I think of this way before? We could have got into the house through this window, while they were in the shop, and taken 'em in the rear. But it's not too late to catch 'em yet. Follow me!"

He pushed the window open and hauled himself into the room. His companions quickly followed his example; then they dashed across the room, and climbed out through the window at the back.

Meanwhile, Tubb and his followers had made a discovery which had filled them for a moment with consternation and despair.

The lawn, as already stated, was enclosed by a high brick wall, on the other side of which was a plot of waste ground. In the wall at the end of the lawn there was a door, through which Tubb and his chums had hoped to make their escape. And it was the discovery that this door was locked which filled them for a moment with consternation and despair.

The wall was not only too high to climb, but was decorated along the top with broken glass set in cement. For the moment, therefore, it seemed as if the Walkerites were trapped.

However, there was a means of escape at hand, which Tubb was the first to think of. On one side of the lawn, quite close to the wall, there stood a tree, several branches of which projected over the top of the wall into the waste ground beyond.

"That tree!" panted Tubb excitedly. "We can get out that way. Shin up the trunk, you know, crawl along that branch, and drop off on the other side."

With hope renewed the twelve boys raced across to the tree. One by one they swarmed up the trunk, worked their way along the branch that projected over the top of the wall, and dropped down on the other side. Tubb, as their leader, insisted on taking the last turn; and he had just begun to swarm up the tree-trunk when Holcroft leaped out through the back window of the refreshment-room.

Just for a moment Holcroft and his chums were nonplussed by the mysterious disappearance of their rivals. Then they suddenly caught sight of Tubb, who by that time had reached the projecting branch, and was rapidly working his way along it.

Uttering threats of vengeance, Holcroft bounded to the foot of the tree with his yelling comrades at his heels.

"Too late, my love, too late!" bawled Tubb derisively. "You're fairly diddled this time! You thought you'd got us, but—"

The sentence ended in a cry of alarm, for at that moment Tubb slipped and fell.

At the point where he fell the branch was fully twelve feet from the ground on the other side of the wall, and a nasty accident might have resulted. Luckily for Tubb, however, his jacket caught on the end of one of the lower branches, and the next instant he was dangling limply in mid air at the end of the creaking

branch, about six feet from the ground.

The shout of alarm which had burst from Holcroft's lips when he saw Tubb fall changed to one of gloating triumph when he saw his rival's ignominious plight, for the sharp end of the branch had gone right through the tail of Tubb's jacket, and without assistance, or unless his coat gave way, it was utterly impossible for Tubb to reach the ground.

As his companions, one by one, had dropped to the ground on the other side of the wall, they had made off in the direction of the school. Most of them were already out of sight, and by the time the remainder discovered that their leader was not following them, Holcroft and his men were shinning up the tree, and crawling along the branch, and dropping to the ground in ever increasing numbers.

"Rescue! Rescue!" yelled Riden, who was one of the few who witnessed Tubb's predicament. "Come back, you chaps! Tubb's caught in the tree! Rescue! Rescue!"

Those who heard him nobly responded to his call. But they were only five, all told, and what could five do against twenty? They made a gallant attempt to reach their leader, who was still dangling from the end of the branch; but they were easily beaten off, and were compelled in the end to take to their heels to avoid being captured themselves.

Tubb was now at the mercy of his rivals, though it was little mercy that they showed him.

"Shall I pull him down?" asked Carfax, laying hold of Tubb's ankles.

"Not yet," said Holcroft. "We'll make him show some sport before we cut him down. See that washin' over there?"

He pointed to a number of sheets and other articles which hung on a clothes-line on the other side of the plot of waste ground.

"It belongs to old Mother Tucker," he said. "She always dries her washin' here. Fetch one of those sheets. I'll make it all right with Mother Tucker afterwards."

Carfax fetched the sheet; then he and three others, each gripping a corner of the sheet, held it under Tubb.

"That's to catch him when he drops," explained Holcroft. "And now, my merry sharpshooters, out with your weapons!"

A dozen peashooters were produced from as many pockets.

"Now, toe this line!" commanded Holcroft, drawing a line with his heel on the ground about ten yards from the dangling Tubb. "Load! Present! Fire!"

A dozen peas smote Tubb on various parts of his anatomy. His agonised squeals and his ineffectual squirming and wriggling were received with howls of rapturous laughter.

"That was for kipperin' me in the hayloft!" shouted Holcroft. "This is for soursin' me under the pump. Fire!"

Another volley of peas stung Tubb like a swarm of bees. Another volley followed, and yet another. Then, as the result of an extra-violent struggle, his jacket gave way, and he dropped into the sheet.

"Now we'll toss him," said Holcroft. "After so long a rest, a little gentle exercise will do him good. All hands to man the sheet!"

Five on each side, the Paulites ranged themselves around the sheet, each boy gripping the edge with both his hands.

"Now, then, all together—up with him!" cried Holcroft.

The first toss was not a success. Tubb hardly left the sheet. At the second he went up to a height of four or five feet. At the third, he soared upwards like a rocket. And as fast as he fell back into the sheet, his tormentors sent him flying up again.

Poor Tubb! He had had his fun earlier in the afternoon, but he was paying for it now. By the time his captors had tired of their sport, every bone in his body felt as if it had been broken, and he hadn't as much wind left as would have blown out a candle.

"Now what shall we do with him?" inquired Rutherford.

"We'll tie him up in this sheet, and carry him back to the school," said Holcroft.

Again he pointed to the line of washing on the other side of the ground.

"Fetch one of those clothes-props, there's a dear!" he said to Rutherford.

While Rutherford was fetching the prop, Holcroft and the others gathered the four corners of the sheet

together, and tied them into a huge knot, thus converting the sheet into a sort of pudding-bag, with Tubb inside. When the prop arrived, they slung the bag on to it, by passing the prop beneath the knot. Then Holcroft shouldered one end of the prop, and Carfax shouldered the other; and in this fashion, with Tubb inside the sheet, swinging from the middle of the prop, and with nine of his captors marching on one side of him and nine on the other, they started off for the school.

All went well till they reached the street. In fact, all went well till they were opposite the station, when, on turning a corner, they saw Dr. Paul and Philip, who were hurrying to catch the six o'clock train to Highfield, coming down the road.

"The doctor!" gasped Holcroft, dropping his end of the prop.

"The doctor and the Blot!" gasped Carfax, following Holcroft's example. "Thank goodness he hasn't seen us yet!" said Holcroft hurriedly. "I'm off!"

"Same here!" said Carfax.

Unlike Tubb and his chums, who had released Holcroft to prevent him being discovered by the doctor, Holcroft and his followers retreated round the corner and took to their heels, leaving Tubb still in the sheet, lying on the pavement.

"Dear me! What is that?" exclaimed Dr. Paul, suddenly catching sight of the odd-looking bundle on the pavement.

Philip, who had seen and guessed everything, wisely held his peace. The doctor hurried forward and bent over the bundle.

"Why, I do believe there's a human being tied up in this sheet!" he exclaimed.

He hastily untied the knots, and discovered the limp and sorry-looking figure of Tubb.

"Tubb," he thundered, "what—what is the meaning of this tomfoolery?"

"It—it's a joke, sir!" stammered Tubb.

"A joke!" said the doctor sternly. "What—"

Suddenly he caught sight of the train coming over the bridge which spanned the river.

"There's the train!" he cried, snatching his bag from Philip. "We'll have to run for it!"

He shot a parting glance at Tubb. "Return to the school at once, and report yourself to Mr. Walker," he said. "I will inquire further into this matter when I return."

Then, with Philip at his side, he bolted into the station, and had just time to book two first-class tickets for Highfield before the train drew up alongside the platform.

Trapped!

IT was a quarter past ten, and very dark, when the doctor and Philip reached Highfield.

"The next train back to Rayton leaves at 11.55, I see," said the doctor, consulting a time-table on the station platform. "How far is Frog Alley from here?"

"About a quarter of an hour's walk, sir," answered Philip.

"Then you will be able to take me to Frog Alley, and show me Cocker's house, and return to the station in time to catch that train?"

"Easily, sir."

"Where is the nearest good hotel?"

"The Station Hotel, sir, just over the way."

They crossed the road outside the station, and after the doctor had engaged a bed-room for himself at the hotel, and had given the hall-porter his bag, he and Philip set out for Frog Alley.

Their way led them into one of the lowest and slummiest quarters of the town. At the end of a narrow, squalid lane, Philip paused.

"This is Frog Alley, sir," he said. "Cocker's house is about half-way down on the left-hand side."

"We'll walk down the lane," said the doctor, "and as we pass the house, you tell me which it is, but don't stop, and don't point, and don't do anything to attract attention."

They trudged along the uninviting thoroughfare, and as they passed Cocker's house, Philip said in a low voice, "This is it, sir."

The doctor shot a rapid glance at the house, then he and Philip walked on to the other end of the lane.

"The house is empty," said the doctor, when they halted at the other end of the lane. "There's a 'To Let' notice in the front window."

"So I saw," said Philip.

"Cocker must have removed since you left Highfield," said the doctor, with a gesture of despair. "When he removed, he wouldn't leave the letters

behind, of course. He would take them with him to his new house. That means that the letters are no longer in that house we have just passed. My errand has failed. My dream of recovering the letters is shattered."

"Shall I go and make inquiries among the neighbours," suggested Philip, "and try to find out when Cocker removed, and where he removed to?"

Dr. Paul did not answer. He was crushed. The old haggard, careworn look had come back into his face. Just when success had seemed to be within his grasp—just when the end of his troubles had seemed to be in sight—the cup had been dashed from his lips.

Philip repeated his suggestion. The doctor gloomily nodded his assent. "Please do," he said. "I'll wait here until you return."

Philip retraced his steps along the lane, and accosted a man who was standing in a doorway opposite Cocker's house.

"Has Jim Cocker left here?" he asked boldly. "His house is to let, I see."

The man grinned.

"Cocker went away about three weeks ago," he said. "He said as 'ow he'd be back in a day or two, but he 'asn't come back yet. He was owin' three months' rent when he went away, an' yesterday the landlord got a distress-warrant, an' broke into the 'ouse, an' sold 'im up, lock, stock, an' barrel!"

Philip's heart gave a great bound. The landlord, of course, would not know that there was a packet of letters concealed beneath the floor of the living-room. If it was the landlord who had cleared the things out of the house, without Cocker's knowledge, and in Cocker's absence, the letters, in all probability, were still in the house.

Philip was about to return to Dr. Paul, and tell him the good news, when a sudden idea occurred to him. Why not get the letters himself, and take them to the doctor?

He crossed the road and glided down the covered passage which led into the yard at the back of Cocker's house.

The yard was deserted. There were two windows on the ground floor at the back of the house. One of them was the window of the scullery. To Philip's delight he found that this window was not fastened. In little more time than it takes to tell, he opened the window and crept into the dark and silent house.

He groped his way into the living-room, and struck a match. How well he remembered the room! There had stood the couch on which the dying woman had lain. There had stood the box which he had dragged away from the wall. And there was the loose flooring board which he had prised up.

Quivering with suppressed excitement, he dropped on his knees and prised up the board. He thrust his hand into the space beneath. Then a stifled cry of triumph rose to his lips. The letters were still there.

He drew them from their hiding-place, and thrust them into his pocket. Having blown out the match, he groped his way back into the scullery, and was just about to climb out through the window, when the tramp of heavy footsteps in the passage struck a chill of terror to his heart.

With a gasp of alarm, he drew back from the window. The next instant the burly figure of a policeman strode into the yard, and the dazzling glare of a bullseye lantern flashed on the window.

(Another grand instalment of this ripping school serial next Tuesday.)

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THE RIVAL APPRENTICES.

A Tale of the Printing Works and Football Field. Don't Miss It!

THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Wood Lane Gym—The Rival Apprentices—A Cur's Trick—The "Accident"—Joe Watkins' Narrow Escape.

SQUAD classes at the Wood Lane Gymnasium were over for the evening, and general practice on the various apparatus was in progress. Most of the lads—fine specimens of young manhood, with health showing in their glowing faces and strength in their bulging muscles and graceful movements—were compositor, machine-room, and lithography apprentices, for Wood Lane was situated in the heart of Fleet Street, London's great printing centre.

Sidney Bell, a good-looking lad of seventeen, whose fine physical proportions showed to advantage in his leader's singlet and flannel trousers, placed his hands on the parallel bars, and with a graceful sweep of his legs, turned himself upside down. With many an admiring glance from the boys in the gym., he proceeded to move along the bars, hand by hand, easily and gracefully, with his feet still held above him, and then completed the feat by a hand-spring off the end on to the mat.

"Look at the swanker!" muttered Joe Watkins, a powerfully-built but scowling-faced youth, who was called "Ginger," on account of his hot temper as well as his auburn hair. "Anybody'd think from the airs he puts on as he was doing a wonderful feat before Royalty. Any kid can walk the parallels and spring off the end. I've seen my young brother, only nine years old, do it better without any swank in the Council school playground."

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"There ain't a chap in the gym, with Sid's style," he replied. "That's where he's got the pull over us—style, grace, ease of movement. None of your straining and puffing with Sid! What's the good of being jealous of him, Ginger?"

Joe Watkins turned away. Sid Bell was very popular. Joe found it hard to get sympathisers.

Both Joe and Sid were apprentices at Bambridge's Printing Works—Joe in the machine-room, where the big rotaries and wharfedales thundered and rattled unceasingly, and turned out thousands of printed copies every hour—and Sid in the composing-room, where the type was set up, and fixed in big iron frames ready for the machines.

Sid had just finished a flying cut-away off the end of the bars, and was about to repeat the performance, when Harry Wells came running up.

"Just half a tick, Sid," cried the lad, who was the secretary of the Blue Excelsiors Football Club, of which Sid was centre-forward, "we want to fix up things for next Saturday's match with the Dulham Swifts. I've got all the other committee chaps together."

"Right you are, old boy!" returned Sid, taking the other's arm. "We must give Ginger's club a good game. They've been playing up well lately. We must get our strongest team."

Joe Watkins saw the chums turn into the games room, where he knew it was their custom to hold meetings of their footer club, and he sauntered to the parallel-bars and sat on them with compressed brows and curled lips. He was the centre-half for Dulham Swifts, and he was wondering if he could discover any means by which his team could decisively defeat the Blue Excelsiors.

"Unless something can be done," he muttered, "they'll win again. But they're only a one-man team. They're nowhere without Sid Bell—confound him! If I could only keep him out of it next Saturday, and the Swifts could knock 'em out of the Printers' Junior League, I'd get a bit of my own back."

Since Sid Bell had beaten him at the close of the previous season for the leader's sash and the gold medal offered to the best all-round gymnast, Joe Watkins had been particularly bitter against his fellow-apprentice. They had never been chums, but since the night of the competition Joe had regarded the other as an open enemy.

It was getting late. Only a few enthusiastic beginners still remained

hanging on the trapeze, or boxing with the gloves in a corner. For quite five minutes the apprentice sat on the bars with a frown on his surly face.

Suddenly he leapt down, and his teeth showed in a vicious grin. He examined the parallel-bars closely. They were what are known as the telescope kind—that is, they could be raised to varying heights by means of pegs fixed in holes in the struts running down into the hollow legs. They were now raised about eight inches, and so enabled Sid, who was tall, when swinging, to avoid touching the bottom boards with his feet.

"I'll do it, I'm hanged if I won't!" muttered Joe Watkins, glancing cautiously round the gym. "He's bound to have another go at the parallels, for he's practising for the bar prize. And if I clear out sharp, they won't know I've had anything to do with it."

He raised the end of the bar carefully, whilst his eyes roved round the room, and his fingers pulled the stout steel peg almost from the hole. Then he lowered the bar. It remained steady with the pressure of his hand, but he knew that as soon as someone came to swing on it with all his weight, that it would come crashing down suddenly, pitching the gymnast headlong.

It was a dastardly trick, a deliberately-planned crime; but the lad was in the grip of a venomous hatred.

Joe Watkins, making no noise in his rubber shoes, hurried from the gym. As he passed the games-room, the Blue Excelsiors' committee were just rising to their feet.

"Just in time!" he chuckled, and passing into the next room, took out his clothes from the locker, and began to hurriedly dress himself.

Meanwhile, Sid Bell paused at the door of the gym, to answer Harry Wells's remonstrance.

"Turn it up and get dressed, Sid," he had said. "See, it only wants five minutes to ten. You've had enough exercise to-night, surely!"

"You begin dressing," answered the leader. "I only want a couple of turns on the bars."

A group of six lads, all members of the Blue Excelsiors, and employees in the various departments of Bambridge's Printing Works, stood watching at the door whilst Sid Bell ran across to the parallels.

It was the leader's intention to do a short-arm swing, vaulting foot by foot to the end of the bars, and then to finish up with the customary hand-spring.

Two swings he made successfully, but in the middle of the third the peg shot out from the strut, and down went the bar with a crash! Almost simultaneously a cry leapt from Sid's lips. He shot over the fallen bar, and, with a thud that awakened the echoes in the big room, pitched on the flat of his back on the wooden flooring.

Joe Watkins, his fingers feverishly fastening his collar about his neck, heard the thud and shivered. At that moment it occurred to him that his cowardly action might result in Sid Bell's death, which, to be fair to him, had never entered his mind.

The group of lads at the door, with white faces and hearts beating violently, rushed to the figure upon the floor. In a second Sid Bell was lifted to his feet. His face was ashen; he was trembling violently, and he gasped for breath. Fortunately, he was not seriously hurt.

"It's all right," he panted. "Don't worry! I shall be better—in a moment."

They led him to a chair with grave, concerned faces. Lads came hurrying into the gym, from all parts of the institute, for that crash had resounded throughout the building. Joe Watkins, unable to keep down his curiosity, poked his head through the doorway.

"How on earth did it happen?" asked Harry Wells anxiously, amidst a dozen similar inquiries. "Sid might have broken—Anything might have happened," he added hastily.

Sergeant McKie, the instructor, who had been giving a private lesson in the use of the foils to a student in another room, turned from a careful examination of the parallel-bars to his leader.

"Feeling better, sonnie?" he asked anxiously. "I can't make it out exactly. The bars are all right. How did you come to meet with the mishap?"

A smile spread over Sid's good-looking, but pale face.

"Don't bother, sergeant," he said, rising to his feet. "I'm only winded and a bit sore round the back of the head. It'll soon go off. The peg must have worked out of the bar."

"Who raised them?" asked the instructor.

"I did," answered Sid. "I thought I put 'em up all right, but I couldn't have done. I've only got myself to blame."

Sergeant McKie was not satisfied. "Who was using the bar before you just now?" he inquired. "The

peg would never have worked out if put up properly, and I can't believe, Bell, you'd have made a big blunder like this yourself."

The leader confessed that he had not seen anyone using the bar, but one of the beginners declared he had noticed Watkins sitting upon them a few moments before the accident.

Joe Watkins, however, had hurried back to the dressing-room immediately he had seen that no serious injury had resulted from his villainy, and he was about to scurry downstairs, when the instructor caught him by the arm.

"Half a minute, Watkins!" he cried. "Have you been using the parallels to-night?"

"Only to sit on, sir," answered the lad, the colour leaving his face. "You don't think I—I'm responsible for—Bell's accident, do you? I—I know nothing about it," he added with a jerk.

"I'm not accusing anybody," replied the instructor. "I thought, maybe, as someone might have started to lower the bars, and then was called away. That's all! Good-night, my lad!"

Harry Wells, who had witnessed the interrogation, turned to his chums. His jaws were set hard, and his eyes were dilated.

"Look here, you chaps, there's something fishy about this accident," he exclaimed. "If Ginger didn't shift that peg himself, he knows something about it. Did you see him start when the sergeant taxed him about it?"

The Blue Excelsiors nodded in agreement, but Sid himself only laughed when they mentioned their fears.

"I know he doesn't like me," he said, "not even a little bit, since I beat him for the gold medal; but he's not a downright cad. A chap who's keen on gym work and footer 'd never think of a cur's trick like that." And he hurried off with the others to the dressing-room, making light of a head that ached fearfully, and felt as if it were cracked.

"Old Sid's a sport," murmured Harry Wells to a companion. "You never can persuade him to believe anything against a chap unless he knows it's absolutely true, then he's ready to make excuses for him. If it'd have been me, I'd have given Ginger a jolly good hiding, and chanced whether I was right or not in doing so."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The North Midland Contract—In the Composing-room—Sid in Trouble—The Fight in the Machine-room.

SID BELL'S head was still aching the following morning when he made his way to his frame in the composing-room at Bambridge's.

Three months before the firm had secured an important contract from the North Midland Railway Company, and it was getting near the time for the work to be completed. Much to the surprise of Printland, the James Printing Company had lost the contract, after having had it for years and years. It was rumoured that Mr. Mattox, the manager of the James Company, had lost the contract through carelessness and neglect.

But it had been a great scoop for Bambridge's. It had doubled the number of hands in nearly all the departments, and had raised the firm from an ordinary commercial printer's to an important contract house.

"If we can only manage to get this contract out to time, and so obtain an agreement to do the work for the North Midland for a term of years," Mr. Millsam, Bambridge's manager, had explained at a composing-room meeting, "there'll be good billets going for the right men, and bonuses for everyone who deserves them."

And the men and boys, encouraged by these promises, had worked loyally and enthusiastically. They were doing their best to get the contract out to time, and so retain the North Midland's work.

Yet, on the following Monday, the last forme of type had to go on the machines or the contract could not be completed in time. And it was now Friday, and there was a terrific amount of work to be done.

"I only hope they won't want me to go on overtime on Saturday afternoon, and so stop my going to the match with Dulham Swifts," thought Sid, as he took up his composing-stick, and his nimble fingers began to travel from box to box, as letter by letter he set up the type in lines.

Hour after hour he slogged away at the type-setting, lifting the type, as each stickful was completed, on to a galley beside him.

Sid's frame—the stand on which his cases of type were placed before him—was in a direct line with the lift, in which the formes of type were lowered to the machine-room.

Not until the middle of the morning did Sid see anything of Joe Watkins, and then the machine-room apprentice was the means of getting his rival into trouble. The composing-room was noisy with a great bustle at the time. At the stones (the big iron tables) men were fixing the type in iron frames with wooden wedges, which they hammered tightly into the sides with mallets, and the other hands were passing to and fro with columns of type from which they were taking inked impressions upon the hand-press, and handing into the reading-rooms to have corrected.

The lift came up, the sliding-door was pushed along its grooves, and Joe Watkins, and a layer-on named Dan Gregory, peered round the room to see if the overseer were in sight, and then at Sid Bell.

"There he is, bless 'is 'eart!" grinned Dan Gregory, nodding towards Sid, who in the noise going on and in his attention to his work, had failed to notice the presence of the lads. "He's goin' to marry 'is master's daughter an' share 'is millions like all the good apprentices in the book—I don't think," added the layer-on. "More like he'll starve in the workhouse."

"You're wasting all your eloquence, Dan," grinned Joe. "He don't take no notice of nasty, dirty machine hands."

"Don't he—we'll see," said Dan, with a leer and a wink.

He picked up a lump of oily waste that happened to be on the floor of the lift, and, with another cautious glance round, aimed it full into Sid's face.

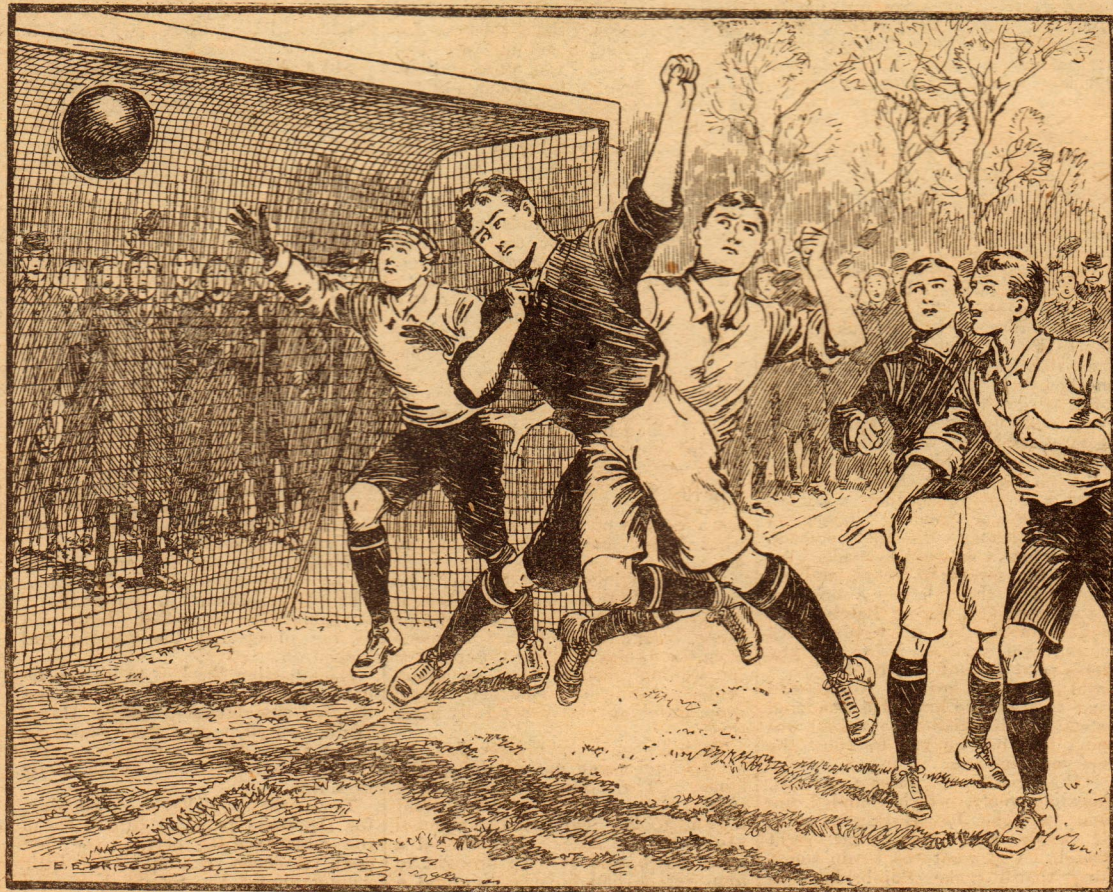
The apprentice happened at that very moment to be emptying his stick of the type with which he had filled it. Thoroughly startled, he made a quick movement to get the type on the galley, but was too late. It shot out in a shower upon the floor.

"Here, turn it up, you chaps!" cried Sid, lifting a face that was both black and oily above his frame. "A joke's all very well, but—"

He said no more, for the door had suddenly opened, and Mr. Bunyard, the overseer, appeared with a frowning face. Joe and Dan wandered silently off into the next room for the formes of type they had come to fetch.

"Who's that trying to make us lose the contract by throwing his type all over the floor?" cried out the overseer.

"Here, sir!" answered Sid readily, wiping the oil from his face with his



The left back of the opposing eleven jumped to head it, but Sid jumped higher, and meeting it, thrust it goalwards with a quick turn of his neck. The next instant the ball was in the net.

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rushed up to Fred Ginnett's goal. For a few seconds there was a hot scrimmage just outside the posts, and then a roar announced that the ball had gone between them. The Swifts' inside-right had kicked wildly at it, and it had bounced in off the back of Watkins's boot.

"Goal! Good on you, Swifts! Put it on 'em, boys!"

The supporters were fairly evenly divided, and they were watching the game with keen relish. When the players separated after the melee, it was seen that Sid Bell was limping.

"Was it that rotter, Watkins?" asked Harry Wells, running across. "He's not content with trying to break your neck in the gym, now he's

Sid twisted his face, painfully screwed up, towards his chum.

"I didn't see him do that," he moaned; "but there was no doubt about this. He hacked me across the shin."

For the rest of the half he was merely a passenger, and when the whistle sounded, and Sid's leg was examined in the dressing-tent, a big blue and yellow patch was discovered where the brutal centre-half had kicked him.

When Harry Wells had rubbed his injured leg with embrocation, Sid threw away the piece of lemon he had been sucking, and passed out of the tent.

"Old Sid's gone to give Ginger a good dressing down," murmured the Blue Excelsiors' secretary to Ginnett, the goalie.

But he was wrong. Actuated by a noble motive, though he was compelled to clench his teeth with the pain from the kick, Sid poked his head into the Swifts' tent, and called Joe Watkins outside.

"What's your game?" blurted the centre-half. "If you think I kicked you purposely you make a big mistake. Ask any of these chaps."

"Come out here!" said Sid quietly. "It's for your own good. It's something more important than footer."

The machine-room apprentice scowled, and opened his mouth to make an angry retort, then his face became puzzled, Sid Bell was looking so extraordinarily serious and grave. Finally he got up, and allowed the centre-forward to draw him aside.

"W-what is it?" stammered Watkins.

"Only this," explained Sid, "that if you'll take my tip, you'll have nothing to do with Mr. Mattox."

As if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet, the cad stared at Sid, and he remained as if rooted to the ground, with an ashen face, after Sid had returned to his companions.

"What ever have you been saying to Ginger?" asked Harry Wells. "He's standing like a stuffed dummy. You haven't hypnotised him, have you?"

The suggestion raised a laugh, but Sid preferred to keep his own counsel. A few seconds later they trooped on to the pitch for the second half.

The last half opened with a rush, though neither Sid nor Watkins were particularly prominent at first.

The Swifts had made some changes in their forward line, and they were now more dangerous in the goal area.

Gradually, as the stiffness and pain wore off, Sid's true form began to show itself. Soon he was twinkling in and out of the twisting, dashing players with bewildering rapidity. He was never still; always on the alert, always snapping up opportunities or making them for his wings.

Time and again he got hold of the ball, but the backs never allowed him to shoot, though all the fire seemed to have gone out of Joe Watkins's play. Both goalies were kept busy, and for nearly twenty minutes the defence on both sides was too good for the attack. The Swifts, however, then began to fall away.

Wild kicking and reckless charging had exhausted them, and the combination and pretty play of the Excelsiors, who kept the ball swinging from toe to toe, flabbergasted them. Added to which Watkins, the life of both attack and defence in the first half, seemed now to possess legs of lead.

"Come along, the Excelsiors; you're all over 'em!" cried a lusty supporter. "Let's have a goal!"

One was soon to be forthcoming. Trapping a pass from a Swifts' half-back, Sid sprinted off with the leather past Watkins, and turned the sphere over to the left wing. This gave a chance to all the forwards to get up and speed along in full flight. Over came the ball to Sid, who,

before the back could reach him, sent it out to Harry Wells, unmarked, on the touch-line. Back it came as the centre-forward reached the penalty-line, and, as it pitched, so Sid got his toe to it and drove it forward like a stone from a catapult.

The Swifts' goalie flung himself to the ground, but the sphere flew just inside the post a foot beyond his reach.

The Blue Excelsiors had notched their second goal!

"Grand! Hurrah! Bravo, Bell!" yelled the spectators.

"That's football, that is!" roared one jubilant enthusiast. "You wouldn't see a better goal than that at Tottenham!"

"That goal was worth two to the Blue Excelsiors, for it drove all the sting out of the Dulham Swifts' play. They had run themselves off their legs, and hardly had a kick left in them. Even the referee was mopping his perspiring forehead as he was made to jump about."

And then the game settled down into a bombardment of the Swifts' goal. Not once more did Fred Ginnett in his goal have a visit from the opposing forwards. Indeed, he came up to the half-way line and watched Sid and his forwards rain in shots at the fagged-out goalie.

Sid shot two through, and then, just before the long whistle sounded, Harry Wells headed another.

"Well played, the Excelsiors!" roared the spectators. "Bell's the boy for goals!"

The Blue Excelsiors had won by five goals to one, and had gone to the top of the Printers' Junior League. They had given the holders of the silver shield the biggest licking they had had for two seasons.

And the delighted Excelsiors raised their sharpshooter, Sid Bell, to their shoulders and danced with him round the field. But in the Dulham Swifts' tent, a few yards away, the players were rating their captain upon his inferior play in the second half, and accusing him of having sold the match to their opponents.

After an angry scene, Joe Watkins stalked from the tent with a livid face. Dulham Swifts had there and then accepted his resignation of the captaincy.

THE 5th CHAPTER.

A Downward Career—The Plot in Action—A Coward's Fears—Sid's Suspicions—Caught in the Act.

IT would have been difficult to have found a more wretched individual than Joe Watkins during the remainder of that day and the Sunday that followed.

He did not get on at all well with his parents, who were thoroughly respectable and good-natured people, but who saw many faults in their son, and endeavoured to check them—a process Joe bitterly resented. In the row after the match he had offended his friends, so that he was left to his own devices for the remainder of the week-end. He, however, knew where to find a welcome.

Just off Kennington Lane there was a small confectioner's, whose proprietor, an Italian, kept a roulette wheel in his back parlour, and here, with several foolish lads as limps as himself, he stayed for the whole of the Saturday evening, smoking cigarette after cigarette, and losing not only every penny in his pocket, but running up a debt of fifteen shillings besides to the scoundrelly confectioner.

On the Sunday he walked about all day without a penny in his pocket, and dared not confess to his parents that all his money had gone.

"I'll have to do that job for Mattox now, or Giovanni'll be splitting to the old man!" he mused, as he hurried along Citywards on the following Monday morning. "I'm sick of it all, sick of work, sick of everybody! Even my own pals turn on me for the slightest thing! I'll wait till I get Mattox's money, then I'll join the Army. I ought to have done so months ago before I ever entered a rotten machine-room!"

Even now it was only a quarter to seven, and he was not due at Bambridge's until eight o'clock. To his mother's inquiry, Joe Watkins had replied that he was required to get at the works by seven.

"If you'll take my tip, you'll have nothing to do with Mr. Mattox!"

That remark of Sid Bell's seemed burned in his brain. Wherever he had gone on the Sunday he had seen it painted in big letters. It worried him because he did not know the

reasons which had prompted Sid Bell to utter it.

"He can't know anything!" he kept telling himself. "Supposing he did see me talking to the James Company's manager, that proves nothing. I'll be able to wriggle out all right. Besides, he's one of those good, story-book sort of chaps who think it wicked to split on a fellow."

He chuckled sardonically. He despised lads of Sid's type. They were "mugs!"

"As old Mattox says," he went on, "if nobody sees me do the trick, nobody can accuse me!"

It was striking seven as he hurried across Blackfriars Bridge, and he slackened his pace. He had mapped out his plan of action. He would enter through the gate where, at this time, he knew the reels of paper were being lowered from the carts. He would thus be able to slip up the back staircase unobserved, carry out his villainous project, retire the way he had come to the street, and then lie low until the hooter should announce the beginning of a fresh day's work at eight o'clock.

"Twenty quid is not to be sneezed at," he murmured, "and should I ever be hard up, old Mattox'll have to fork out a bit more, or I'll know the reason why!"

All the luck was with him. When he reached Bambridge's, after cautious glances about him, two big lorries were unloading their reels of

of the alley-way between the frames in which Sid Bell worked, made him start, and the perspiration to pour down from his ice-cold face.

"Old Mattox'll only say I'm a chicken-hearted, mild-and-water sort of chap!" he muttered.

Led by a sudden impulse, he lifted his foot and crashed it right into the middle of a page of type. The type shot out into a shower, and seemed to rattle on the boards of the silent room with the noise of a thunderstorm.

For those few moments Joe Watkins was a lunatic. His mind was unbalanced, controlled by the will-power of the crafty, drink-sodden manager of the James Printing Company.

"It's all or nothing now!" he muttered. And again his foot rose from the floor.

But ere it could crash again into another page of type, a figure burst in through the doorway and flung itself upon the young scoundrel. The two pitched headlong to the floor, where they struggled and fought and rolled like a couple of wild cats.

The new-comer was Sid Bell. Joe Watkins' home was not very far from his own, and the young centre-forward had been looking out of his bed-room window when the cad had gone by in the direction of the City.

Overtime at night was frequently the rule at Bambridge's; before eight in the morning, even in the

replying. He knew a little about jiu-jitsu, and, bleeding though his hands were from Joe Watkins' scratches, he fought gamely for a master-hold. And at last he succeeded in turning his adversary over on his face, and by gripping his wrists as if in a vice, held him upon the floor so that Watkins was unable to move.

"You fool!" Sid cried now. "I warned you to have nothing to do with Mattox. I overheard your conversation in the coffee-house."

Watkins gulped. He altered his tone after that, and begged to be released. The bully had changed into a whining cur.

"Too late!" cried Sid, with set lips. "If I let you go, how shall I explain this smashed page of type?"

It seemed an eternity before the hooter sounded at last, and the men and boys began to troop up the staircase into the big composing-room. The astonishment of everyone was great when they discovered Sid Bell sitting upon the machine-room apprentice.

Sid's fellow apprentices were greatly indignant.

"Caught the rotter kicking the middle out of a forme of type!" gasped one of them. "Why, if he'd been long at that game, we'd have lost the contract for a cert!"

"Let's give him a jolly good pasting!" suggested another.

Without further ado, and despite Sid's protests, a rush was made for the roller of the presses. Not until the lads had piled up and down Joe Watkins' head, that he was as black almost as a negro, would they desist, and then it was only the arrival of Mr. Bunyard, the overseer, who saved the scoundrel from a further ragging.

By this time Sid had been relieved of his responsibility of holding Joe Watkins, and was wearing his usual long, white apron. A police constable was sent for. Protesting bitterly that it was not his fault, but that Mr. Mattox, the manager of the James Printing Company, was the real culprit, Joe Watkins was marched off to the station.

"You've done very well, my lad!" cried Mr. Bunyard, patting Sid on the shoulder. "There's no doubt that if the scoundrel had smashed many formes we should have got into serious trouble with the North Midland Company. As it is, we've got our work cut out to make up for the damage the young blackguard has done. I'll see that the firm treats you handsomely for this."

Later in the morning Sid Bell was called down into the manager's room, where he was compelled to tell of the plot he had overheard in the coffee-house. He ended by pleading for Joe Watkins, suggesting that he was but the dupe of the James Company's manager.

"The case will have to come on for trial now," replied Mr. Millsom, Bambridge's manager, "if only as a warning to apprentices and employees in other printing firms. But you've got a good heart, lad, and the suggestion does you credit. I'll be as lenient with the young scoundrel as the magistrate will permit. I've just rung up the James Company on the telephone, and have been told that Mr. Mattox has mysteriously disappeared. To do them justice, the James Company know nothing about the matter. They would never countenance such villainy."

"And now on the advice of Mr. Bambridge, Bell, we're going to open a banking account for you with fifty pounds, and if you prove yourself always as capable and diligent a worker as Mr. Bunyard says you are at present, I can promise you a very rosy future at Bambridge's."

Sid thanked the manager, and returned to his frame. He hadn't thought of payment until the overseer had mentioned it, and he could scarcely realise his good fortune.

He had to appear at the police-court to give evidence against Joe Watkins, but Mr. Millsom was as good as his word. The machine-room apprentice, having spent several days already in the lock-up, was released with a sound lecturing by the magistrate. He was further punished by Bambridge's cancelling his indentures, and so he joined the Army, where they are certain to make a decent man of him.

All that now remains to be said is that the North Midland contract was got out in good time, and, being satisfactorily completed, was renewed by the great railway company for a term of years.

THE END.

(Another magnificent, long complete story next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)



A figure burst in through the doorway and flung itself upon the young scoundrel. The two pitched headlong to the floor, where they struggled and fought and rolled like a couple of wild cats.

paper. The rotaries and Wharfedales were silent. The building and the neighbourhood bore a neglected and noiseless aspect.

When the men had gone off with a reel of paper, he slipped quietly through the door. Not a sound came from anywhere. The very silence of the place, so vastly different from the throbbing, rattling bustle he was accustomed to, almost terrified him.

He laughed at his fears, and climbing to the top floor, the biggest composing-room, listened again. Again no sound disturbed the silence. Cautiously he crept in and peered about him with dilated eyes.

It was strange that his eyes should first of all move towards the frame at which he knew Sid Bell worked.

He quickly found what he sought. Standing on the floor, resting against the iron tables, were a number of formes of type. Each forme represented roughly the day's work of fifty compositors, and the formes stood in readiness to be carried down to the machines for printing from.

Joe Watkins raised his foot as he hovered beside the group of formes. For every forme he kicked to pieces, he reflected, he would delay the fulfilment of the North Midland contract by a whole day. But, somehow, now that success to his scheme seemed an absolute certainty, he felt very timid and nervous.

A slight noise from the direction

machine-room, it was practically unknown. With a strange foreboding, Sid hurriedly dressed himself and knocked at the door of the Watkins' house.

"Why, Joe's gone this quarter of an hour," replied Mrs. Watkins to his inquiry. "He's getting there at seven to do an hour's overtime."

Sid thanked the good woman, and returned to his own house. Not stopping for breakfast, but scrambling up the lunch cut for him, Sid left the house and ran all the way to Kennington Lane. A Council tram carried him to Blackfriars, and then he ran again to Bambridge's. The timekeeper had not seen Joe Watkins, nor could Sid, of course, find him in his search for the scoundrel in the machine-room.

He was climbing the staircase to the composing-room, and beginning to persuade himself that he had alarmed himself unnecessarily, when there sounded the heavy fall of type from the direction of the big room.

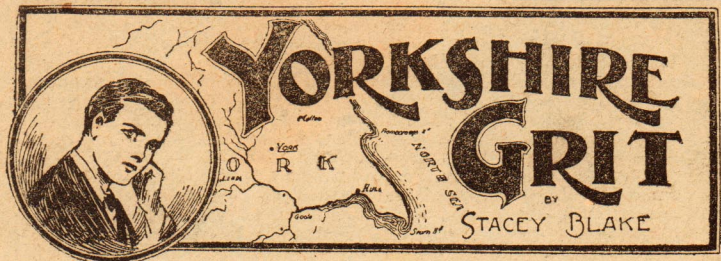
Joe Watkins fought like a madman. He scratched and bit and kicked so savagely for quite five minutes, that Sid, who was hampered in his movements by an overcoat, could not obtain the mastery over the scoundrelly apprentice.

"Let me go, hang you!" bellowed Joe Watkins. "You meant to do me in, but I'll defeat you yet!"

Sid didn't waste his breath in

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 the owner and idle employees, Dick saves the life of Mr. Trimble. 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 does all he can to get Dick from his uncle's favour.

Ackroyd owes a certain money-lender a large sum of money, and in order to clear this debt he forges a cheque for £150. Later, Mr. Trimble discovers this deliberate alteration, and so overwhelmed is he at finding his nephew to be a rogue and thief he is suddenly taken ill with heart trouble.

Thinking of what will be left him at his uncle's death, James Ackroyd withholds Mr. Trimble's medicine, and so the great mill-owner passes away, death being caused by his nephew.

Dick is dismissed from Trimble's, and one day he is taking the valuable document which shows that he is entitled to one-fourth share of the mill in a few years' time to Mr. Sylvester, a young lawyer.

The document is suddenly snatched from his hand by Widdop, a big lout who is working for Ackroyd. This unscrupulous youth disputes all knowledge of the lost paper, and Dick is left alone in the world, nothing but unemployment and starvation stares him in the face.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Dick Finds a Champion.

DICK wandered aimlessly up and down the Manchester Road with a sense of utter despair upon him, his eyes searching everywhere swiftly and eagerly—along the road, in the gutters, upon the pavements, and into the faces and

the hands of every passer-by, to see if anyone had picked up the precious envelope that had been plucked from his grasp and thrown away. But it was nowhere to be seen. The crowd poured along, cruelly indifferent to his trouble.

He was almost dazed by the loss of that paper, which had meant a fortune to him some day. He felt it was just the very limit of his endurance, and that the whole fabric of his hopes and ambitions was tumbled down and broken.

He hardly knew how long he wandered up and down in the vain hope to find what he had lost. He knew now that all his dreams must be put aside; that he must make up his mind to be a mill-hand all his life, and that little Jessie must look forward to the same prospect.

At length he went back to Dr. Moor's. He remembered with a start that he had been entrusted with some medicine to deliver, but that he had smashed both bottles when he fell off the tram. The doctor himself opened the door, and he cried out cheerfully, before Dick could utter a word:

"It's all right; it's found! I've got it here!"

"The long envelope—the paper?" gasped Dick, hardly believing his own hearing.

He rushed into the consulting-room on the doctor's heels, and to his amazement and his great joy, he saw the very envelope that had been snatched out of his hand by Widdop on the tram-top, and flung over into the road, lying on the writing-table, unharmed, save for a stain of mud evidently picked up in the road upon it.

"But how has it got here?" Dick cried.

Dr. Moor turned it over, and showed on the flap of the envelope his own name and address stamped in relief.

"Someone picked it up who was honest. This address was the only clue to the ownership of it, and a very good clue, too. It was brought here about twenty minutes ago. What on earth were you doing to lose it?"

And Dick told him the story of Widdop's snatching it from the top of the tram as one car passed another, and of the breaking of the bottles of medicine in his hurried leap from the moving car. Dick was regretful and apologetic about this disaster.

"Perhaps I could pay for them in a while," he said. "I should like to,

if I could. It's not fair for you to lose it."

"Um! That sort of coloured water does not cost much, thank goodness. It's our skill we charge for—and often don't get paid. I'll mix you up some more, and you can have another try. But go inside the tram this time, and put your document into an inner pocket, and keep your coat fastened."

Dick went off again with a thankful heart, and he found better luck this journey. He delivered the medicine safely, and duly found himself in the office of Messrs. Sylvester & Son, solicitors, in Cheapside.

He found Mr. Sylvester, junior, who had defended him that morning in court, enjoying the daily paper in front of a fire with the chair tilted back, and his feet on the low mantel-piece.

"Hallo! You, Dick Allen? So you're soon round! Now, what's your trade this time? Oh, I say, but a few minutes after I left you this morning I ran against Mr. James Ackroyd. He seems to dislike you. He made critical and personal remarks about my volunteering to defend you in court. He thought, considering we were the solicitors for his uncle's estate, my giving a hand to defend you was indiscreet and in bad taste. I gave him some plain Yorkshire at that, and then he talked to me in a way I won't let any man, let alone a weedy cub like that!"

"He said he'd move the business out of our hands at the earliest possible moment. I said I should be glad if he would, because then I should feel able to thrash him in a way he deserved. Then he went off, saying things. I expect he will be back here from the funeral soon with the gu'nor to go into the matter of the old man's will."

"Then I'd better go," said Dick, "and come another time. It's a bit about the same thing I want to see you. I mean Mr. Trimble, a little while before he died—to be exact, it was during the strike—made me certain promises. I have had so many disappointments lately that I wondered how far what he promised stood good."

"You mean he verbally promised you—that is, by word of mouth?"

"He wrote it down."

"By Jingo!" ejaculated Sylvester. "That's interesting! Speak up!"

In a few words as possible Dick related the circumstances of the strike at Trimble's mill, of his seeking employment there, and of the manner in which he virtually saved Henry Trimble's life, and doubtless prevented the destruction of the mill.

He told of the old mill-owner's gratitude, and that in return for what he—Dick—had done, a share of the mill was to be his when he grew to manhood.

"And it's written on this paper in Mr. Trimble's handwriting, signed by him, and witnessed," Dick said, putting the folded paper before the young solicitor.

Mr. Sylvester, junior, devoured the written words with his eyes, and then he behaved curiously. He danced

round the office in a very juvenile and inelegant manner.

"It's beautiful!" he said. "It's a spoke in Mr. James's wheel that will fairly jump him off the track! It's a fair fo-hoiling of the villain, like a Prince's Theatre drama!"

Dick shook his head.

"I thought of keeping it quiet," he said. "That was my sister Jessie's idea. She's only a kid, but she's awful cute. You see, it's going to be a long time before I can come into anything, and, meanwhile, if he knows of that document's existence, and knows that I'm going to take a bit of what he will look on as his rightful property, he'll give me a pretty bad time."

"But if he doesn't know, and you make no claim in anticipation, what's to prevent him either selling out, or, if he goes on acting the fool, jiggering up the whole business? He could do that in one year, let alone seven. It wouldn't be much good your coming along with a claim if there wasn't anything to claim on. This paper, when it is stamped, will be good in law; only the claim must be made now. And if Mr. James Ackroyd starts any hanky-panky, you'll have to start hitting out yourself. Listen! I fancy he's here now with the gu'nor! Just slip into my private-room here, and I'll turn the key on you. By the way, the ventilator is open there. You needn't bother to close it. If you happen to hear anything through it, you needn't call it eavesdropping, because as a future partner I fancy you've a right to hear anything that is said touching the matter of Mr. Trimble's will."

Mr. Sylvester, junior, was busy at his desk as his father, a grave, old gentleman, entered with James Ackroyd, still wearing funeral black, on his heels. Ackroyd gave the young solicitor no more than a curt nod, and then plunged impatiently into the business which apparently had been already discussed in some degree, for Mr. Sylvester, in accordance with old-fashioned custom, had read the will after the return of the funeral-party.

"Look here," said Ackroyd impatiently, "there's something wrong about that last bit of the will—that added on lump or codicil, if that's what you call it."

"My dear sir," returned the old lawyer, with dignity, "that last addition to the will was made out by myself in obedience to the instructions of my late lamented and respected client. It was duly signed and witnessed, and is perfectly in order."

"But he must have been weakening when he did it. It doesn't sound sense. Fancy a man in his right mind declaring in his will that a particular mill-lad, irrespective of his skill or industry or behaviour, is to be given employment for practically as long as he likes to stop."

"But the circumstances were peculiar and exceptional. Mr. Trimble considered that this boy saved his life—though, poor man, he was not fated to last long afterwards

—and that he was instrumental in saving the mill at a critical time."

"My uncle was doddering!" snapped Ackroyd coarsely. "He did not know what was what towards the finish. He was not capable of judging. This was just one of his delusions. It is absurd to suppose this mere boy could have done so much."

"Your uncle thought so."

"Which is proof that he was not responsible—I mean that his brain was going. I knew that lad was no good the moment I saw him. Can you want any further proof than this last charge against him—this of setting the place on fire?"

"That wasn't proved!" observed the young Sylvester.

"No; you did your best to prevent it, and to prevent his getting what he deserved, which was five years in a reformatory!" retorted Ackroyd, who had probably taken more of the funeral wines than were good for him. "I've told you what I think of you!"

"And I mentioned my opinion of yourself," observed Sylvester sweetly.

"Hush, gentlemen!" protested the old lawyer. "Well, the thing is on paper, Mr. Ackroyd. You might appeal to the courts to vary the will on the ground that your late uncle was not responsible when he made this addition to it, but I could not advise you to do so, for you would lose."

"And you mean I am to have this little guttersnipe on the place whether I like it or no?"

"The exact terms of the will are that he is to be given employment at Trimble's mill at the current rate of wages so long as he is willing to stay."

"So long as he is willing?" echoed Ackroyd. "That's a good point! Suppose he's not willing? I can make him not willing! I can make him want to clear out!"

"How can you do that?" asked Sylvester, junior.

"I can give him such a dog's life that he'll wish he'd never heard of Trimble's! So long as he is willing! He won't be willing to stay there after the first day!" laughed Ackroyd, with an oath. "That mill is all mine! I can do as I like with it!"

"Not exactly all yours!" commented the young lawyer pointedly.

"Well, when I have satisfied all claims on the estate—Oh, yes," he added, turning to the elder man, "that's a bit in the codicil to the will that I couldn't understand, which again points to the fact that the old man must have been balmy towards the end! 'All claims on the estate made within seven years are to be satisfied.'"

"Seven years and three weeks," corrected the lawyer. "Yes; that is so. I did not understand what nature of claim or claims were likely to be made in so long a time, but there it is."

"I think I had better tell you," said the younger Sylvester. "That mill isn't all yours. You had better get that into your mind. In seven

(Continued on the next page.)

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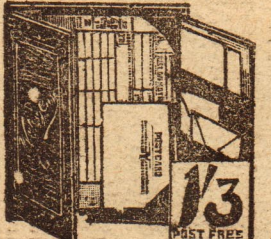
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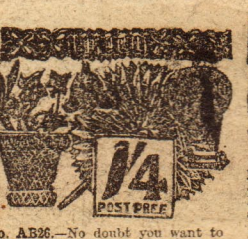
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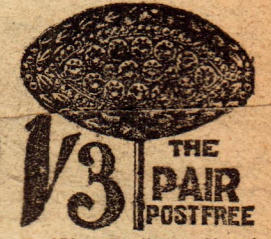
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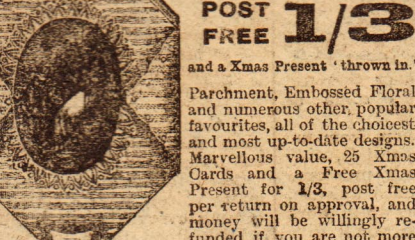
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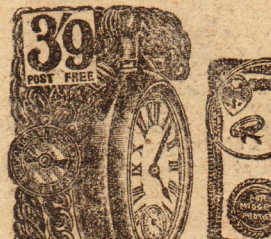
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