

OUR SPECIAL NEW YEAR AND 500TH NUMBER.

Free Picture Coupon
No. 5.
Available till Monday,
January 9, 1911.

THE BOYS' FRIEND 1^D

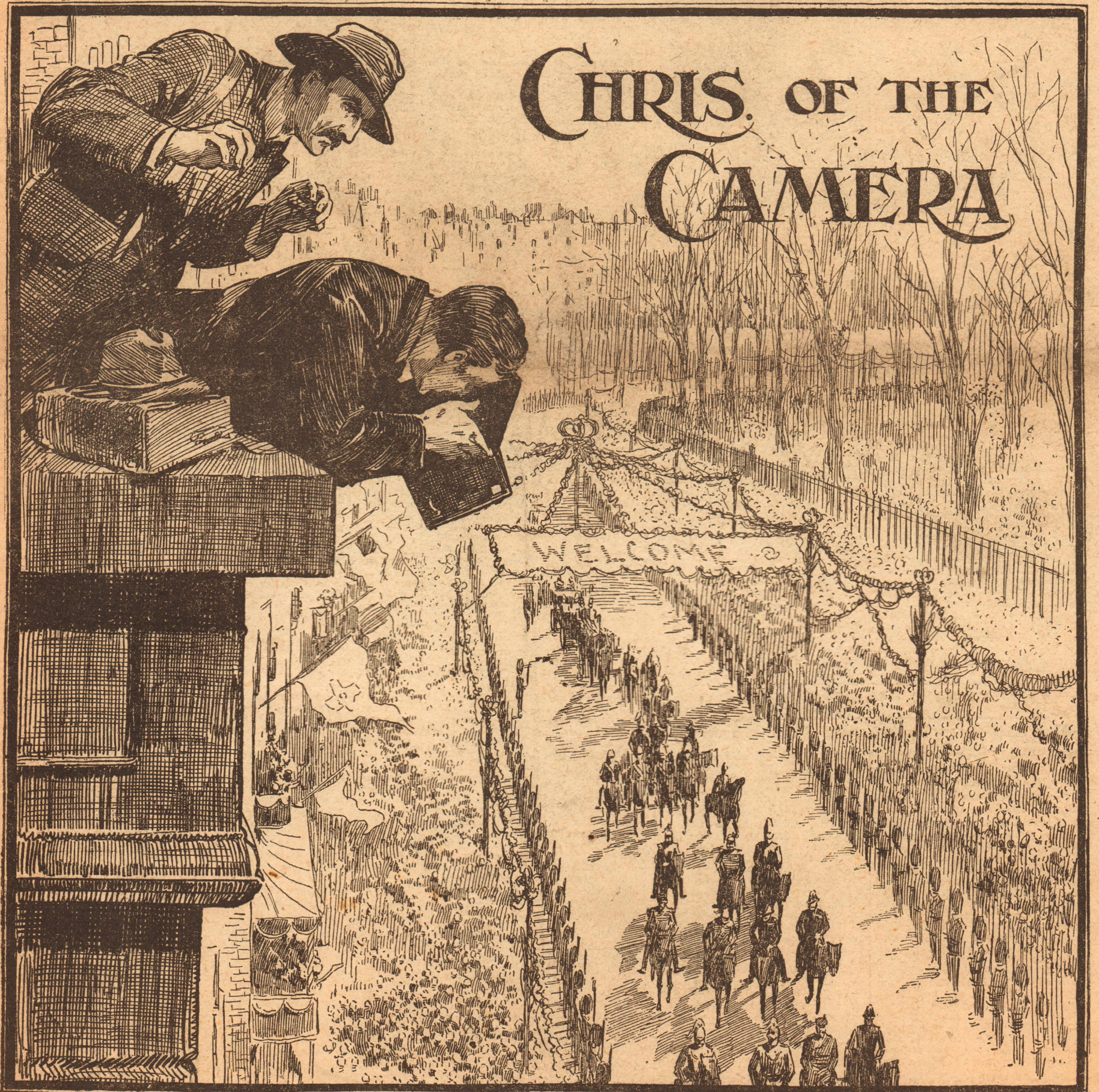
EVERY
TUESDAY.

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

No. 500.—Vol. X. NEW SERIES.]

ONE PENNY:

[WEEK ENDING JANUARY 7, 1911.]



A Stirring Incident from "Chris of the Camera," Our Superb New Serial of a Young Press Photographer. Starts To-Day.

CHRIS OF THE CAMERA.

A Stirring Adventure Serial, Dealing with the Life of a Young Press Photographer.

Written by MALCOLM DAYLE,

Author of that Popular Story, "The Odds Against Him," etc.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

A Woary Wait—Missing.

CHRISTOPHER MAYNE bent eagerly over the developing-dish that he was swaying gently to and fro, his eyes fixed on the black patches that gradually began to appear on the white of the plate.

First the skyline, then gradually the rough outline of a house was distinguished. The words "To Let" showed up distinctly on a bill in one of the front windows, and Chris gave a little cry of joy.

"This is by far the best I've done," he murmured. "Jobbins ought to pay me for this."

Mr. Charles Jobbins was a small builder and decorator, for whom Chris worked hard in the little office near the station from six in the morning until six at night for eight shillings a week.

Lately he had added a house agency department, and on Chris taking up photography, he had sent him round to secure photos of the houses for which he was agent to place in his window, promising the youngster a shilling a print when good results were attained.

But although six photographs were exhibited in the window of the little office, Chris had not received a penny, his employer remarking that they were not yet up to the standard he required.

"I shall have a jolly good try to get paid for this," said Chris, as he placed the negative into the fixing. "I don't see why the mean beggar should have them for nothing. There are a lot more interesting things I could take if I've got to pay for everything myself."

He started to wash his dishes out and tidy up; then putting his watch close to the red lamp, he saw that it was five to nine.

"By Jove," he cried, "I must hurry up! If I keep uncle waiting for his supper there'll be an awful row."

Christopher Mayne was an orphan. At the age of fourteen he had lost his father, and his mother's death had followed with tragic suddenness. Now he was seventeen, a well set-up, good-looking young fellow, though a little pale for want of fresh air and exercise. For the last three years he had been living with his mother's brother, Mr. Paul Stanger, in three small rooms in a gloomy house at Forest Gate.

Don't let the reader be led away by the name, and imagine that it is a neighbourhood with giant oaks, green swards, and leafy glades. Many years ago it might have been, but Forest Gate, London, E., is an overcrowded district with rows of houses and shops, clanging electric trams, and to the stranger there is nothing to suggest its close proximity to the borders of Epping Forest.

The cheap clock on the mantelpiece struck nine as Chris came into the sitting-room. A small fire burned in the grate, for it was a cold late January night, though Chris, after having been cramped up in the hot, unventilated cupboard that formed his dark-room, was warm enough. On the table was some bread and cheese, and a bottle of beer for his uncle.

Chris paced up and down for some minutes. He felt hungry, but did not care to commence until his uncle came in. Mr. Stanger was, as a rule, a most punctual man. Very often he went out after supper, sometimes not returning until after midnight, but unless he had told the youngster that he should not be in, he was always at the table at nine o'clock, and angry and impatient if the humble meal was not served punctually.

At half-past nine Chris started on the bread and cheese, vaguely fearing that his uncle must have had an accident, though he told himself it was absurd to be worried just because a man was half an hour late for a meal.

He had no great affection for his uncle, who treated him with disdain, often sitting at the table without speaking, save to give a sullen, unintelligent grunt if Chris addressed some remark to him. He was a strange man altogether. Save that he said he was a book canvasser, and worked such hours as he liked, having a small income of his own, Chris knew nothing of his work, and had been severely snubbed when he had suggested he might be of use in answering some of the letters that engaged his uncle often until late at night.

There was something mysterious about his uncle, something that puzzled Chris considerably, and although, particularly during the last year or so he had lost his affection for him, he was grateful for what he had done for him, and hoped that nothing had happened to the strange man.

Suddenly the door opened, and a middle-aged, hard-featured woman entered.

"Uncle's late, Mrs. Jobbins," said Chris.

"I don't want no tellin' to see that!" snapped the woman. "Come to clear away, but can't do it now. I want to 'ave a word with 'im w'en 'e comes in, too. Bringin' dirty foreigners in 'ere kickin' up a row and disturbin' my first floor front what's an invalid, and needs 'er afternoon sleep. Pay more than—"

"What foreigners?" cried Chris.

"Three dirty-lookin' fellers, who talked a queer lingo. 'E brought 'em in 'ere about two o'clock, an' they stopped nigh two hours, and then they all went off together. 'Bong jaw' ses one ruffian to me as they went out, an' I told 'im if I 'ad any of 'is jaw 'e'd—"

"He was only saying 'Good-day,'"

said Chris, with a smile. "But I expect that accounts for uncle being late. They must have been foreign customers of his."

The landlady sniffed as she cleared the table, putting the bread and cheese on the sideboard for Mr. Stanger to help himself when he came in.

"That's as maybe," she said. "I've my own opinions. An' I'll ask you not to sit 'ere wastin' the gas."

She went out of the room, and Chris shrugged his shoulders. Mrs. Jobbins was the sister-in-law of his employer. Her husband was a good-for-nothing loafer, who did odd jobs at the docks when he wanted money for beer or tobacco, so she had had to take in lodgers. Few stopped for long, but she managed to live, and whilst the youngster felt sorry for her, he often wished he could persuade his uncle to go into lodgings where they would receive more comfort and consideration.

He sat up trying to read until half-past ten, and then, as his uncle had not come in, he turned out the gas, lit his candle, and went to his cupboard-like bed-room on the next floor. As he undressed he listened intently, and for some time after he was in bed he lay straining his ears to try and hear his uncle's footsteps on the stairs. Surely if he was going to be as late as this he would have left word.

Just before midnight he dropped off into an uneasy sleep, to wake with a start in the dead silence of the night. He struck a match, and looked at his watch. It was three o'clock.

For some minutes he lay in bed wondering if his uncle was asleep in the next room. Something seemed to tell him that he was not, and at last, unable to go to sleep, he rose, lit the candle, and quietly stole out into the passage. The door of the next room was closed, but on Chris turning the handle the door opened.

The room was empty, and the bed unslept in. Chris closed the door again, and went back to his own room, his heart beating quickly. He got back to bed, but slept but little.

Where was his uncle? What did it mean?

The alarm-clock woke him at half-past five, just as he was in a troubled sleep, and he got wearily out of bed. Then he gradually realised what had happened, and after he had washed in the icy-cold water and cleared the remnants of sleep from him, he went to his uncle's room, only to find that it was in the same condition as when he had looked in about a couple of hours previously. He finished dressing, and taking his candle with him, put on his cap and overcoat in the hall, and then let himself out into the cold, dark, dreary street.

He was only just in time at the office to let the men in, book down their times, and give them the instructions that Mr. Jobbins had left him overnight, for the builder scarcely ever put in an appearance until after breakfast during the winter months, and just now they were not busy.

Having fixed up with the men, Chris lit the gas-stove, went out into the yard to see the foreman, and then went back to the office to wait until half-past seven, when he was free to close it up and go to his lodgings for breakfast.

And never was he more anxious for breakfast-time than that morning, for he felt certain there would be a letter

from his uncle explaining his strange absence.

But when he entered the room in which breakfast had been laid for one, there was no letter, and the untidy servant girl, who brought in a very thin and badly cooked kipper, sidled up to him with an air of mystery.

"Missis is in a rare state," she said. "No words ain't bad enough for your uncle, Master Chris. I 'ear as 'ow 'e's gone off to foreign lands owin' money, and missis is goin' to put the police on 'is track."

"What do you mean?" cried Chris angrily. "Where's Mrs. Jobbins? I want to know what this means."

The girl was frightened by his manner.

"There, don't take on so," she said soothingly. "You 'ave your breakfast. The missus will be up presently to tell you all about it."

And before the dazed youngster had got half-way through the thin kipper, nearly choking himself in the process, Mrs. Jobbins sailed in, her face harder than ever, her eyes gleaming.

"Nice thing!" she said. "Oh, a very nice thing, but I'll 'ave the police on 'im. If there's any justice for a poor down-trodden woman, 'e'll suffer for this!"

"What's happened?" asked Chris anxiously.

"Appened! I'll tell you what's appened, young man. Your precious uncle's gone off owing me two weeks' board an' lodgin'. What's more, 'e's borrowed a couple of pounds from my brother-in-law. 'Im that gave you a start an' 'elped you, an' now 'e's off on a ship bound for foreign parts. A nice disgrace to the 'ouse, if this comes out!"

After a lot of trouble, Chris got the whole story. It appeared that immediately on leaving the lodging with the three foreigners, he had gone to the private residence of Mr. Jobbins, found that gentleman at his tea, and on the strength of some plausible story had borrowed a couple of sovereigns.

Then Mr. William Jobbins, the landlady's husband, hanging round the docks, had seen him with the three foreigners on board a tramp steamer sailing for Brazil. At first he had thought that he had gone on board to see his friends off, but now Mr. Jobbins, sober and penitent after a carouse, that had prevented him giving his wife the news until that morning, was convinced that the ship had sailed with Mr. Paul Stanger on board.

"But it's impossible!" cried Chris.

"He would have written to me!"

"Bah!" said the landlady. "'E might 'ave written to me. 'E might 'ave paid me the money 'e owed w'en 'e was in, in the afternoon, but 'e didn't. Your precious uncle's flitted, young man, that's what's appened, an' 'e don't want anyone to know 'is address."

Chris stood in the middle of the room looking like one who had received a heavy blow and is dazed by it. Surely even if his uncle had been called away suddenly, without having time to write to him, he could have paid the landlady in the afternoon, and have left a message for him. It was impossible to think that—

"As to you, my lad, I don't want to see you again. You can pack your traps and quit—the sooner the better. Birds of a feather flock together, they say, an' I sha'n't be sorry to be quit of you."

"But, Mrs. Jobbins," gasped Chris, "surely you'll—"

"I ses pack and quit immediate. I can soon let these rooms. Such rubbish as your precious uncle as left I claim to go towards the rent. 'E took a small bag with 'im, after 'avin' been in 'is room for some time, but 'e evidently got one of the foreigners to carry it, or I should 'ave tumbled to 'is little game. I'm treatin' you generous in lettin' you go off with your things. Go an' pack straight away; I want the room. The card's up now, an' I'll soon let it."

"But I've got to be at the office in ten minutes," said Chris.

"Office! There's no more office for you where Charles Jobbins is concerned, my lad. Do you think 'e's going to 'ave the nephew of a scoundrel 'oo coolly does 'im in for a couple of quid 'angin' round 'im? 'E's furious with the pair of you. 'E arst me to tell you that you was discharged an' that 'e wouldn't give you a reference. It's only Tuesday, so you ain't got any wages due, an' 'e ses you'd best not try to get 'em if you think you 'ave."

The angry woman swept out of the room, and Chris stared blankly after her.

Discharged! Turned out of his lodgings with but four shillings in his pocket, with little useful experience and no character—what was he to do?

His uncle gone, like a thief in the night, with no word to him. He was friendless and alone in that city of London—so sweet when she smiles on one, so hard and pitiless when she frowns.

What was he to do?

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Turned Out—A Ray of Hope.

CHRIS MAYNE, with his camera in its case slung across his shoulder, and a shabby bag in each hand, came down the steep stairs into the narrow dirty passage that was dignified by the name of hall.

His packing had not taken him long. His other suit, in a little better condition than the somewhat shabby one he wore, his linen and underclothing were in one bag, and in the other were his photographic things—a miscellaneous collection that had altogether cost him a lot of money, but which, he reflected sadly, would only be worth a few shillings when he tried to sell them.

Mrs. Jobbins came up from the basement, presumably to see him off the premises.

"Will you tell me, please, how much my uncle owes you?" Chris asked quietly, as she appeared.

The landlady stared at him.

"Yes, if it gives you any pleasure," she snapped. "Two weeks' board an' lodgin' at one pound ten a week for the two, is three pounds. Knock off, say, ten shillin' for the rubbish 'e's left, an' it's two pounds ten; then there's poor Charlie's two pounds, which—"

"Thank you," said Chris, as the pale-faced maid-of-all-work opened the door. "I'm going to try and get on, Mrs. Jobbins, and as soon as I have earned the money, I will send it to you."

Then the door closed, and an astonished landlady stared blankly ahead of her, scarcely crediting her own hearing.

Meanwhile, Chris walked rapidly down the road until he came to an

(Continued on the next page.)

PICTURE REPORTERS.

How the Press Photographer Does His Work.

THIS week, in our splendid 500th number, there starts a serial story that deals with a theme new to a boys' journal. It is called "Chris of the Camera," and its central figure is a young Press photographer, a type of hero that has never before appeared in fiction.

On thinking matters over, it will be obvious to my readers that the good and sufficient reason why there have been no such stories before, lies in the fact that the Press photographer is a new class of journalist created only since the advent of the morning newspaper copiously illustrated by clever photos.

Now, to be a Press photographer a young man must have a knowledge of many arts. First of all, he must have a "nose" for news, and understand just what readers require to know of events of the day. He must be a capable reporter, able to give graphic details of things he sees. He must be an artist, able to compose a clever, pretty picture. He must be a first-

rate photographer, of course, and a born hustler.

Gifted with these many accomplishments, the young man gets a post on an illustrated daily, such as the "Daily Mirror." He receives salary, expenses, and is paid also for the photographs that actually appear at what are known as "space rates," that is, according to the size they occupy. Perhaps for one photograph used, he has taken a dozen, but he is only paid space rates for the one published, naturally the

pick of the bunch.

The Press photographer cannot really call his time his own. At two in the morning he may be summoned to take an immediate journey to Scotland, to the Continent, or even further. Over lunch or a cup of coffee, a call may come to go to a fire or a terrible railway accident. He may be dragged from a party or the theatre to take photographs by flashlight of a scene near the House of Commons.

At all times he has his camera fully

charged and ready for instant use. It will be one of the finest instruments money can buy, with a lens costing a small fortune. Nothing is left to chance with the Press photographer.

When President Roosevelt was on a hunting trip in Central Africa, a photographer from a London illustrated daily accompanied him. A photographer-reporter was hustled off to Messina at the time of the fearful earthquake. The Berlin strikes, the Portuguese revolution, the floods in Paris, the railway strike in France, the visit to South Africa of the Duke of Connaught—these are just a few recent happenings to which London Press photographers have been sent.

In almost every case news photographs have to be sought for in a great hurry. It is the unexpected that always happens, and men are dispatched at a moment's notice directly an inkling of news comes to hand. And if the men have to travel at express speed, so do their photographs. Hardly has the shutter of

the camera clicked than the plate is on its way to London to be hurriedly developed and dried by the dark-room staff, and made into a metal printing plate without an instant's delay. Motor-car,

special messenger, special train if needs must, no expense is spared to get a good photo through in time for the hour the paper goes to press.

Naturally, there is the keenest rivalry between Press photographers, sometimes between men engaged on the same paper. A short time ago a Press photographer set out for the White City Exhibition in London to get some pictures of a private visit of the Queen. Whilst waiting for her Majesty, he saw some very gaily dressed Indians, and as he knew there were several native princes in London, he determined to take their photographs.

Walking up to one of the group, he raised his hat and asked politely for permission to make the snapshots. The Indians stood in a row, and soon the ordeal was over. Then the photographer set about getting details of his illustrious subjects.

"Pardon me, your Highness," he said to one, "but which highness are you?"

To his surprise, the Indian answered: "We are not 'highnesses' at all, sir. We are writers at Lipton's tea stall."

And, in the meantime, her Majesty the Queen had passed!

This was a "scoop" that failed, but it is not often the Press photographer gets left in the lurch.

On one occasion a "Daily Mirror" man waited for three weeks on the South Coast with a motor-car at his side and a motor-boat in the water. His reward was an exclusive picture of

Latham's wrecked aeroplane in the middle of the Channel.

Another photographer was sent to St. Petersburg to get a picture of the Tsar of Russia. He took up a position in a window, but just before the Royal procession came along, a zealous detective spotted him and disclaimed his camera as a bomb. The pressman was hauled off to prison, and it was two days before the authorities would let him go.

"Chris of the Camera," our new serial, will be very largely founded on fact, and Mr. Malcolm Dayle, who is himself an experienced pressman, is thoroughly conversant with his subject. Altogether our grand new serial deals with a fascinating and romantic phase of life, and boys who read it will gain a keen insight into the thrills and excitement of modern illustrated journalism.

THE END.

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.

even gloomier street than that which he had just left. He had heard that lodgings could be obtained cheaply there, and as he did not want to carry his bags far, he thought he might as well put up there until he had time to look round for some employment.

And at a fairly clean little house he arranged for a bed-sitting-room, with breakfast and a bread-and-cheese supper, for seven and sixpence a week. He left his bags in his new room, and then, with his camera still slung over his shoulder, he set out to walk citywards, and to try to form some plan for the future.

But as he walked along the Romford Road, his head still full of the mysterious disappearance of his uncle, he found it difficult to plan out his future. With only four shillings in his pocket, he realised that the first thing to do was to obtain some money by selling his camera, and the second to try for a job in a builder's office—work that he was not keen on, and felt that he would never be a success at.

He had saved every penny he could for over a year to buy his camera. It was a half-plate instrument, with a splendid lens, and had been a wonderful bargain for five pounds second-hand. Chris realised that he would not get anything approaching its value at any of the local shops, so he intended going to a place he knew of in the City to try and sell it there.

"If I can only get three pounds for it it will keep me for over a month," he muttered, "and by that time I ought to get a job of some sort. Surely Jobbins won't be such a mean beast as to refuse me a character because uncle treated him badly. When he's cooled down I'll write to him, or go and see him."

He strode on, walking rapidly, trying to think calmly, and finding it very difficult, and then found, to his surprise, that he had already reached Whitechapel. He had intended to take one of the huge electric cars earlier, but now, glancing at his watch, he saw that it was barely twelve, so he thought he might as well walk the whole way to the City.

Then he saw a little group of people outside a cheap lodging-house just ahead of him, and increasing his pace, he saw that a couple of policemen were standing at the door. "What's up?" he asked a bystander.

"Don't know," grunted the man. "Coppers makin' an arrest of a couple of foreigners, I was told."

Foreigners! Chris thought of his uncle's visitors, forgetting that foreigners congregate in thousands in the East End of London, and went up to one of the constables.

"What's the trouble, constable?" he asked, speaking quietly but boldly, as though he had a perfect right for an explanation.

The officer turned round and noticed the youngster's camera.

"Oh, you blooming Press photographers!" he said with a grin, "you pop up everywhere. It's the arrest of a couple of Anarchists, who've been plotting against the Prince of Adolfa, if you want to know, young 'un, and it ought to be a good scoop for you!"

Chris's heart leapt. Press photographer! Good scoop! "Yes, why not a Press photographer?" he thought. He loved photography, and he would love the excitement of the chase for exclusive and new pictures. Here was a great chance thrown in his way, and he must make full use of it.

Quickly he took his camera from its case, remembering, with a great thankfulness, that the dark slide in the camera contained a plate—the plate he had intended for a second attempt at the house he was taking for Mr. Jobbins if the first proved a failure. He fixed his shutter to instantaneous, stationed himself so that the door with the policemen were in focus, drew up the slide, and with his eyes fixed on the view-finder, regardless of the interest and chaff of the little crowd, he waited for the men to appear.

The kindly policeman who had given the information, thinking that Chris must be a beginner on a paper, and wishing to do him a good turn, twisted his moustache and assumed a stern, official air; the other cuffed the head of a small boy, who craned forward, anxious for the fame of having his dirty face produced in the papers, and then suddenly five figures came out of the narrow doorway, and a cab came lumbering up from a little way down the road.

The first man was an inspector of police, with a bag in his hand, and behind him came two pale-faced,

wild-eyed men, each handcuffed to a policeman.

Chris waited until they were all out on the pavement, and in a decent light, then click went the shutter. The crowd, pressing round the cab, almost knocked the camera from his hands, but he held it tight, struggled out of the crowd, folded it up, and, with his brain in a whirl, hurried along.

If only the photo was a success! He had followed the papers pretty closely, and he knew that next week the Prince of Adolfa was visiting England. He knew, too, that those Anarchists must be pretty desperate men, with a carefully-planned plot, or the police would not have arrested them, as, with the ordinary Anarchist, they were content to keep an eye on anyone suspected, and take care that they did not get anywhere near the royal personage whose life they were suspected of seeking.

Certainly, the exclusive photograph of such an arrest, when the papers were full of the forthcoming visit, should be of great value to him.

"I must get it developed and secure a print," said Chris. "They'd laugh at me if I took the plate and asked them to let me do it in their own dark room. Oh, how I wish I'd got my old little cupboard!"

The only thing to do, he decided, was to find a chemist's shop where there was a dark room, and develop the plate and take two or three gas-light prints there. Until lately, he had been content with daylight prints, but he was thankful now that he had taken up the more difficult branch.

Near Aldgate he found a shop, and, by expending a couple of shillings in chemicals and bromide paper, he secured the use of a very decently-fitted-up little dark room, and after mixing up his developer and fixing and getting everything ready, he took the plate that might mean so much to him out of the dark slide.

Success or failure? His hands trembled with excitement as he swayed the dish to and fro. Never did a photographer wait more anxiously for the image to appear than did Chris Mayne wait in the little dark room at the chemist's shop in Aldgate.

Then gradually it appeared, and Chris caught his breath sharply. It was an excellent photo—he had been doubtful of the focus, but everything stood out sharply. He covered up the dish to keep it in darkness, half afraid of the dull red light.

What a relief it was when he took the negative from the fixing, washed it, and then turning on the light, poured methylated spirit over it to dry it quickly, and then went out into the shop to get a little fresh air.

He took four gas-light prints—two good ones and two poor ones—but he hoped he would only need one. His plan was to get a good price from one paper—the great "Morning Mercury"—with the hope that he would get other work from them; and by the time the prints had been developed, washed and made nearly dry by the same process as the plate, and he had packed up his things in his case, it was half-past one, and he realised that he was very hungry.

So, knowing that there would be no need to hurry, as important people on the great daily would not be back until half-past two, or so, at least, he went across to a coffee shop and had a good meal, carefully examining the prints as he ate, delighted to see that the expression on each face was beautifully clear—the pompous look on the inspector's face, the rage and hate in the faces of the two prisoners, and the calm indifference of the constables.

"What luck!" he muttered; then suddenly, as he rose and walked out into the street, his face fell slightly. Would the editor of the "Mercury" have the same opinion of his picture as he had? Then, too, he had heard that the men who had power on the great daily were very difficult to get an interview with.

He climbed on to a 'bus, impatient to get to Fleet Street, and learn his fate. Then he saw the offices of the "Mercury," with the big clock standing out over the doorway, announcing that it was half-past two.

"Here goes!" he said, as he jumped off the 'bus, and, with a wildly beating heart, entered the building where the great halfpenny illustrated daily was produced.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Accepted—A Great Chance in Life.

"CAN I see the editor, please?" said Chris to the uniformed man in a little boxlike cupboard at the foot of the stairs leading to the Editorial Department.

"No, you can't!" said that official shortly. "Cos why? 'Cos 'e ain't here. 'Cos why? 'Cos he don't see anyone without an appointment."

"Well, I want to see someone in authority," said Chris. "I've got a big scoop."

"Scoop—eh, youngster?" said a cheery voice behind him. "We've almost forgotten the meaning of the word lately. Better let him go and see Mr. Rolands, Griggs. Oh, I'll take you up!"

"He's very busy, Mr. Escott," said the commissionaire. "He only stopped out to lunch for half an hour, and—"

"Oh, I'll risk it!" said Escott, the good-natured special correspondent of the "Mercury." "Come along, youngster; but if your story's no good, don't be surprised if you get thrown downstairs."

A few minutes later Chris was in

Rapidly a message was being printed on the long, narrow ribbon of white paper, and the news editor of the "Mercury" kept his glance fixed upon it until it stopped as suddenly as it had began, then he turned to Chris.

"Yes," he said; "I'll take this photograph. The two men have been remanded at Bow Street. A bomb was found in the house, and they are well known as dangerous Anarchists. Leave me your name and address, and half-a-guinea will be sent you in payment. Of course, we want it to ourselves."

"I'm sorry," said Chris quietly. "I can't let you have it exclusively for that sum. I could sell half a dozen or more prints of the photo. I want five pounds now for the exclusive rights."

The news editor glanced at him sharply.

"but I'll mention it to him. Be here soon after four."

Chris went out into Fleet Street, that great hub of newspaper life. He had been behind the scenes of a great newspaper office—had seen the reporters' room, the whirring tape machine, and the bustling messenger-boys. For the first time he saw some of the romance of the great journalistic world, thought of the huge army of eager news seekers, dotted all over the world, and what work and brains went to the turning out of a paper—often to be only glanced through, and then tossed on one side.

Up to the moment he had only thought of becoming a Press photographer as rather more pleasant work than that which he had been doing, but now he longed to be taken on the staff of the "Mercury," to put his brains against those of his rivals, to see, if he could, that the "Mercury" got the best pictures.

He was feeling anxious as he ascended the stairs again, this time passing old Griggs with the intimation that he had an appointment with the news editor. A boy took him to the great man's room.

As Chris entered he almost collided with the reporter who had befriended him on his first visit. "A column, at least, of good descriptive stuff, Escott!" he heard Mr. Rolands shout after him.

And young Escott, at a moment's notice, was off on a rush to Leeds, to obtain particulars of a brutal murder, the news of which had just been flashed to London.

The news editor was working against time, and had none to waste on the young photographer; but Chris's smartness and the businesslike way he had stuck out for a good price for his photo impressed him.

"Here's an order on the cashier for five pounds," he said; "we're using your photo. You can take prints to the weeklies, if you like; they won't hurt us. I've got your name and address, and if there's a vacancy on the staff, I'll remember you. If you get anything good, let me see it."

He handed Chris a slip of paper, and the youngster stammered his thanks, found his way to the counting-house, drew the money, and found himself in Fleet Street.

It had turned in a cold, raw evening—London was looking at its worst—but to Chris Mayne, as he set off back to his lodging, the world was a very bright place indeed.

He was out before breakfast the next morning to buy a copy of the "Mercury," and when he saw his photograph, greatly enlarged, on the front page, he could have shouted with pride and joy. As he ate his breakfast, with the "Mercury" propped up in front of him, he felt wonderfully happy. The only thing that troubled him was the disappearance of his uncle, but as he had little real affection for him, and Mr. Paul Stanger was apparently quite capable of looking after himself, he did not worry.

His first thought had been to pay off, at least, some of the money his uncle owed; but he had seen that such a course would be folly, for he realised that he had had wonderful luck in securing the photo, and that it might be a long time before he had another accepted, as there were so many experienced photographers trying hard to make a living.

The five pounds, he calculated, would last him for nearly a couple of months, if he remained in his present humble lodging, and by that time he ought to be able to find a job of some sort. After breakfast he set off with half a dozen good prints of the photograph which he had obtained by working in his bedroom in the dark.

After tramping about all the morning, and having many weary waits in offices, crowded with travellers from the big agencies and photographers of varying degrees of prosperity, from the well-dressed, self-assertive-looking man with a large album of prints, who was immediately ushered into the presence of someone in authority, to the shabby, nervous, little man, with a few snapshots he had taken on the previous day of a fire in Brixton, hoping to place one of the photographs and secure a welcome half-a-guinea, the usual price for photographs reproduced under about six inches square, Chris had sold two prints, and the four others had been left on approval.

He went into a cheap restaurant near Ludgate Circus and ate a frugal lunch, and then went back to his lodgings, walking a part of the way, and stopping at a coffee-shop near Stratford for some tea.

Free Coupons for the Picture Theatres.

GREAT ADDITIONS TO "THE BOYS' FRIEND" LIST THIS WEEK.

On the front page of this number you will find a coupon, and below there is a list of theatres. By presenting a BOYS' FRIEND Coupon at the booking-office of any theatre mentioned you will be admitted at Half-Price to any part of the house at the performances specified.

This week's coupon is available only until Monday, Jan. 9th.

List of Theatres Where BOYS' FRIEND Half-Admission Coupons are Accepted.	When Accepted.
Electric Picture Palace, the Square, Walsall Electric Picture Palaces, High Street and Paradise Street, West Bromwich Prince's Theatre, Horwich, Lancs.	Any day except Monds. and Sats.
Park Picture Palace, Sankey Street, Warrington Gymnasium Royal Pictures, Duke Street, St. Helens Royal Picture Palace, Ashton-in-Makerfield Central Hall, Pemberton	Any performance except Sat.
The Picture Palace, Whitehaven The Athenæum Picture Palace, Maryport	Wednesday evenings.
Palace Theatre, West Hartlepool Boro' Theatre, North Shields New Picture Palace, Gateshead Tivoli, Laygate Circus, South Shields Picture Hall, Sunderland Picture Hall, West Hartlepool Empire Theatre, Coventry	Saturday Afternoons.
Cromwell Hall, Lancaster Picturedrome, Longridge Temperance Hall, Preston Picturedrome, Preston	Tuesday Evening. Any performance excepting Saturdays.
West London Theatre, Church Street, Edgware Road, London, W. Grand Theatre, Woodgrange Road, Forest Gate, London, E. Central Hall, Peckham Arcadia and People's Picture Palace, Lewes Road, Brighton Theatre Royal, Darwen, Lancs. Appollonian Hall, Snargate Street, Dover Co-operative Hall, Sheerness The Empire, Wharf Street, Leicester People's Picture Palace, Penzance Electric Empire, Woking The Empire, Wigan Holloway Hall, Holloway Road, N.	Any day excepting Saturdays and Sundays.
The Universe Picture Palace and Skating Rink, Great Harwood	Wednesday Minimum 2d.
Electric Theatre, Sutton, Surrey Electric Theatre, Epsom Brinkburn Picture Theatre, Brinkburn Street, Byker, Newcastle-on-Tyne Tyne Picture Theatre, Station Road, Wallsend Royal Animated Pictures, High Street, E. Wallsend Abington Picture Palace, Wellingborough Road, Northampton	Tuesdays. Wed. and Thurs. to boys not over 16 yrs. Mon. and Thurs.
Electric Picturedrome, Scarborough	Tues. and Friday.
Jefferson's Imperial Picture Hall, Bill Quay, Durham Fenton's Pictures, Central Palace, Darlington Temperance Hall, Bradford, Yorks Central Hall, Nottingham Picturedrome, Huddersfield Cinema, Longroyd Bridge, Huddersfield Kinema Theatre, Horn Lane, Acton, W.	Wednesday. Any evening. Any performance. Tuesdays.

the news editor's private room, and a tall, clean-shaven man of anything between thirty and forty looked up sharply.

"What is it?" he asked.

Chris handed him the photograph. "It's the arrest of two Anarchists in connection with the Royal visit next week, sir," he said. "I happened to be there at the moment. No one else has got the photo."

Then Mr. Rolands took the photograph and looked at it keenly. He was one of the finest journalists in London, and the "Mercury" owed much of its success to him. He was not the man to miss a scoop, but he had heard nothing of the arrest in the East End, and knew nothing of the youngster who said he had taken the photograph.

"I'm afraid," he started, "that unless you can—"

He broke off, and his glance went to the tape machine by his side that had commenced to work.

Whir, whir! Click, click, click! Whir, whir!

"I take it you're an amateur—you've never been here before, anyway? How am I to know that if I pay you five pounds you won't sell prints broadcast?"

Chris flushed.

"No decent fellow would do such a mean trick," he said quickly; "but if you doubt me, I'll leave my camera here. I took four prints. There they are, and there's the negative!"

Mr. Rolands smiled.

"All right, youngster," he said quietly. "I don't doubt you, but I can't pay five pounds unless we make a front page of it. The editor won't be here until four o'clock, so you'd better call back in an hour or so's time."

"Thank you, sir!" said Chris. "And would you ask him if he could give me a job? I'm awfully keen on being a Press photographer."

"Not much chance if you've had no experience," said the news editor;

His experience that day had shown him that he would have a big fight before him. He realised what a huge business Press photography was. He had heard snatches of conversation, and, on the whole, he was discouraged.

How was he, a raw amateur, with no real experience, with a camera which, although a good one, was a toy compared with the splendid instruments that some of the professionals used, going to succeed?

"I'll have a jolly good try, though!" he muttered, as he turned down the gloomy street in which his lodgings were situated.

As he took off his overcoat in the passage, his landlady came out from behind the dirty red curtain that shut off the mysterious part of the house, from which at all times of the day the mixed odours of washing and cooking seemed to arise.

"There's a letter just come for you," she said. "You can save me the trouble of walkin' up the stairs. You don't want your supper just yet, I suppose?"

"No, thanks!" said Chris. And he ran upstairs with the letter, lit the lamp, and noticing the embossed name on the back of the envelope, hastily tore it open with trembling fingers.

"Dear Sir"—he read eagerly—"A vacancy has occurred on our photographic staff, and I shall be glad if you will call here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The letter was signed by Mr. Rolands, the news editor; and Chris, carried away by his excitement, waved the sheet of paper wildly over his head. If he could satisfy the "Mercury" as to his ability, he would secure a staff appointment.

Here was a great chance in life, and he meant to make the most of it.

THE 4th CHAPTER.

The Rival Photographers.

MAYNE! Chris, sitting in a large and well-filled waiting-room, heard his name called, and hastily rising, made for the door, feeling terribly nervous as he walked towards the news editor's room.

On his last visit he had been so excited over his lucky scoop, and so confident that he had a good thing

to sell, that he had not troubled with nerves; now, with so much depending upon the forthcoming interview, he felt his heart beating quickly, and wished that it was all over.

Mr. Rolands had only just arrived. He was sitting at his desk smoking a pipe and opening letters, the majority of which he tossed into a wastepaper-basket by his side. As Chris entered he glanced up, and nodded to a chair just in front of him.

"You've had no previous experience in newspaper work, have you, Mayne?" he said, tapping his fingers with the long paper knife with which he had been opening envelopes.

"No, sir," said Chris, "except the photograph you accepted."

"Ah," said the news editor, with a slight smile, "you must not expect that sort of thing every day! It was a great piece of luck for you. But one of our operators has been discharged, and I have talked the matter over with Mr. Grant, the editor, and we have agreed to give you a six months' trial. We will pay you thirty shillings a week and your expenses during that period. How you get on after that will depend entirely upon yourself."

He pressed a bell, and a boy appeared at the door.

"Good-day, Mayne! This boy will take you to Mr. Larter, the manager of the Photographic Department."

Chris stammered out his thanks, and followed the boy along a corridor and up a flight of stone stairs, then along another corridor and into a long room where a young fellow was drying prints on a screen before a big fire and two or three photographers were packing up their cameras waiting for the news editor to send them out, not knowing whether their journey might be a mile or a couple of hundred miles.

At the end of the room the boy tapped at a door, and then motioned Chris to enter the smaller room. At a desk covered with photographic prints, artists' materials, with a large sheet of cardboard in front of him, on which he was drawing a fancy framework, was a short, burly young man with a head of long fair hair and a cheery, round red face.

"Ah!" he said, swinging round on the high stool. "The Anarchist

boy! Big job you gave me touching your photo up. Well, I'm glad you've taken Parker's place, though. Rolands wants me to give you a few hints on how to work the camera you'll have to use, and fix you up generally, but I sha'n't have time till after lunch, then I'll do my best for you. There's the camera you'll have to use. Take it into the other room and study it. You won't be sent off anywhere to-day."

Chris took the camera and went out into the long room. A young fellow dressed in a sort of cycling suit of weird and hideous design came up and entered into conversation. He was an ugly little chap, and spoke the King's English vilely, but he was a good-natured fellow, and explained something of the camera that to Chris was a sort of Chinese puzzle.

From this man Chris learnt that the sudden vacancy had occurred through an operator named Parker, who had been sent to Gatywick Steeplechases, going into the rings and betting instead of attending to his work. He had returned to town with a couple of very poor photographs, and when the sporting editor, who had seen Parker in the Silver Ring, had mentioned the fact to Mr. Rolands, that gentleman, who had often complained before, sent for Parker and dismissed him on the spot.

"E's a clever chap, too," said the little Cockney, "but 'e ain't steady. If 'e was 'e—Hallo, 'ere 'e is!"

The door was flung open, and a tall man of somewhere about thirty with a dark, sullen face, upon which were traces of recent dissipation, swung into the room.

He nodded to the men who were just going off on their work.

"Left an old coat here," he said shortly, and went across to a row of pegs on the wall near where Chris was sitting. He stared at the youngster, and turned to the little Cockney.

"My successor—eh, Brown?" he said, with a sneer. "The paper must be getting hard up, when it takes to employing schoolboys!"

Chris flushed angrily, but ignored the remark. The little Cockney muttered something about "going easy."

But Parker, angry at his dismissal, brooding over the news editor's sarcastic words, was deter-

mined to ease his feelings by making it unpleasant for the youngster who had taken his place, to humiliate him before the men with whom he would have to work.

He glanced at Chris's rather shabby suit, and then at the old chemical-stained jacket of his own on the peg. "I sha'n't bother about the coat," he said. "I'll leave it for the new hand; cut down a bit, it might smarten him up."

There was dead silence in the room. It was as cruel a speech as the man could make, and Chris sprang to his feet, tears of rage welling up in his eyes, his face deathly white.

"You cad!" he cried; and before anyone could realise what he was going to do he raised his fist and caught the taunting face a terrific blow—a blow that sent Parker, quite unprepared for it, staggering back almost to the floor.

There was a little murmur of applause in the room at the youngster's pluck in attacking a man of nearly twice his age and strength, and in the way he stood up waiting for Parker to attack him.

"I'll kill that kid!" cried Parker, half mad with rage, as he dashed towards his young opponent.

"Not here!" said a quiet voice; and the angry photographer found himself caught by the neck in a grip of iron.

To Chris's amazement, Larter, the little artist, had emerged suddenly from his room and seized Parker just as he was about to fall upon him with a fiendish look in his eyes.

The angry photographer tried to swing round, but he was helpless in the grip of the man who few would have put down for an athlete, and to the amazement of those in the room he was pushed quietly to the door.

"I heard the row," said Larter, "and you deserved what you got. I'm not going to let you go for a youngster half your age. You've no business in here, and you'd better not let me catch you here again."

At the door Parker succeeded in half wheeling round, and he fixed an angry glance on Chris.

"You shall suffer for this!" he cried hoarsely. "I'm on the 'Herald' now, and I'll have my revenge on you and on the rotten rag that sacks a decent man to have a pauper schoolboy."

Chris's rage had gone by now, but he faced the angry man calmly.

"Very well," he said, "I'm ready for the fight."

And for a moment the two photographers that were to be such deadly rivals and to face so many dangers and difficulties, stared steadily into one another's eyes, then there was a scuffle at the door, and James Parker had disappeared for ever from the offices of the great "Morning Mercury."

THE 5th CHAPTER. To Photograph a Prince.

IT was the Saturday following Chris's appointment to the "Mercury"—the day that the Prince of Aloffia was to pay his State visit to the City, and the young photographer was walking rapidly through the streets armed with a police pass and an order to be admitted to a large building in Piccadilly, from the roof of which he was to photograph the procession.

It was his first important work for the paper, and he was desperately keen on getting a good photograph. He had picked up the working of the camera much quicker than he had expected, and on the previous day he had been sent to photograph the laying of a foundation-stone, and his photo of the ceremony had appeared, greatly reduced, on one of the inner pages of the "Mercury" that morning.

Three of the half-dozen photographers of the "Mercury" were "doing" the Royal procession, and he knew that he had been given the easiest job, but he fully realised that it was very easy to make a failure of a birdseye photo from such a height, particularly as the light was very poor.

Once in Piccadilly he found progress difficult, for as the State visit had been fixed for Saturday, a great number of people who had previously never had an opportunity of witnessing a similar function made up their minds to get off a little earlier from shop or office and cheer the popular young sporting prince of a small kingdom of which few of the crowd knew anything of.

Soon Chris got wedged into a solid mass of people, and was unable to move backwards or forwards in the crush. He was afraid his camera would be broken, so with difficulty he pulled out his police pass, pushed

(Continued on the next page.)

OUR SPLENDID NEW MONTHLY FEATURE. CONTRIBUTED BY MANY EXPERTS.

In the Garden.

THE early part of January may well be called the gardeners' holiday, for it is the slackest time in the year. Towards the end of the month, however, when the days begin to lengthen, the rush of spring sowing and planting sets in.

Boys who are fond of gardening should take the earliest possible opportunity of getting their soil in good working order. To do this, the surface weeds should be hoed off, and then the ground should be well and deeply dug with a spade or fork.

The latter tool is usually the better for winter digging, and it should have long and flat tines. Stand up squarely to your work, right hand on the head of the fork, left hand at a convenient point on the haft. Now place the left foot on the left shoulder, then force the tool into the ground. Lift, with soil, and throw the latter well forward.

For winter digging the clods should not be broken. Throw them loosely on the ground so that the frost and air may enter. Then, when you come to sow you will find the soil light, well drained, and aerated. Of course, as you know, plants take a good deal of material from the ground, and manure is dug in to replenish exhausted soil. There is no better opportunity for manuring than during winter digging.

On heavy, sticky soil stable-manure and road-grit should be employed; refuse from a cow-byre is the stuff for light, chalky land.

Shallots are a splendid crop, multiplying ten or a dozen times. They should be planted now, and may be harvested in July, in good

time for utilising the ground for a late summer crop. The seed-bulbs may be bought for a few pence a pound, and should be planted in rows a foot asunder, with seven inches between each bulb. Do not cover the shallot; it is sufficient to merely "sit" it upon the ground, pressing it down so that it may easily root.

Early broad beans may be sown the second week in January. They should go in two and a half inches deep in a double row, with four inches between each bean all ways, thus: Sow a few extra at the end of each row, to be transplanted to mend any gaps.

In the flower-garden the beds should be lightly forked over, care being taken not to disturb bulbs or the roots of perennial plants. Hollyhocks and all hardy plants may be bedded out when the weather is mild, but in times of frost nothing in this nature must be attempted.

Keep the lawn well rolled in damp weather.



The correct position for digging, an art explained above.

In the Poultry Yard.

January is a great month in the poultry-yard, and chicks hatched now or in February are worth treble the value of the later broods. At the same time, early chicks demand a great deal of care and attention, and must be provided with quarters both warm and dry.

The proper way to go about chick-raising is as follows: First, be sure that you have a good, roomy, broody hen, preferably one that has sat before. Then get a setting of good eggs—eleven or thirteen are the usual number.

The nest is of the utmost importance. Get a shallow box, about a foot square, and place a little garden-soil at the bottom; over this put some soft hay, and then arrange your eggs. The evening is the best time to sit a hen, and she should be put in a place where it is semi-dark, and where she will not be disturbed.

See that a sitting hen has plenty of fresh water and some maize, and visit her as little as possible. A hen sits for three weeks. In my next article I will tell you how to look after chicks.

In the Pigeon Loft.

There is not much doing with the pigeons just now, but those that enjoy their liberty should be allowed cut for a fly on a brisk, sunny day such as we often get in January.

In the meantime you want to remember that the mating season will soon be here, and with this end in view you should go through your stock and get rid of any doubtful specimens. Start the breeding season

with good, honest parents, and the results are sure to be satisfactory.

Just now there are certain to be many days of wet, muggy weather, and it is at such times that you should pay special attention to the cleansing of your coots. Whitewash or lime-wash the ceiling and walls and sand the floor.

On the Football Field.

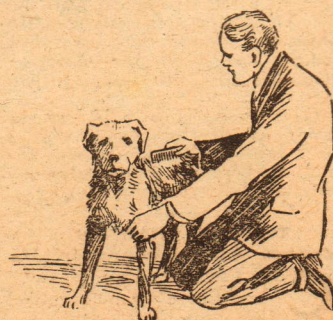
The interest in football is even heightened this month by the playing off of the Cup-ties; and as so many violent colds are caught by spectators on these occasions, a few words on the subject will not be out of place.

In the first place, wear thick, strong boots. To stand about in damp weather clad only in flimsy footwear is a great mistake. Leggings are a comfort, but if you do not possess a pair, make yourself some brown-paper putties and wear them underneath your trousers.

To do this, cut strips of ordinary brown wrapping paper. Make the strips four inches wide and a yard long. Now, before you put on your boots, start just above your ankles and wind the paper spirally round your legs like the soldiers do their puttees.

Hold the top of these impromptu leggings in place with an elastic garter. Your boots will grip the lower part if you tie the laces tightly.

With stout boots and leggings and a warm overcoat, you are not likely to take much harm whilst watching a football match.



See that your dog is well combed and groomed.

With the Rabbits.

In spite of the conditions under which they live in a wild state, tame rabbits abominate the damp, and you must do all in your power to keep your pets both warm and dry. At the same time, they must have light and air, and on a mild, sunny day they may be brought into the open if there are no cold winds.

Bunny's food just now is rather a trouble. When the ground is frost-bound dandelions and greenstuff are not easily obtained. Yet vegetable food is essential, so all you can do is to get a few cabbage-leaves from your greengrocer. Carrots and turnips are also appreciated by rabbits.

The great point is to feed regularly. If you had your meals at all times of the day you would very soon be troubled by indigestion. It is just the same with all domestic pets.

The Boy's Dog.

If your pet sleeps out of doors, be sure the opening in his kennel does not face north or east. A biting wind is enough to give a dog a severe chill. For the same reason, do not bath a dog as much as usual in the winter-time; if he looks shabby and ill-kempt get to work with a comb or brush and smarten him up.

On the Road.

January cycling is only pleasurable on crisp days when the roads are gripped hard by frost. In muggy weather the risk of side-slip is very great, and the mud is not conducive either to good temper or to cleanliness.

When cycling on greasy roads you want to pedal very evenly; jerky pedalling (heavily on one pedal and lightly on another) is likely to cause a slip. Ride as near the middle of the road as you can, for to trust to the edge adds to your chances of a slip.

Then, again, never use a front brake on greasy roads. There is far more resistance from the rear wheel, which is the one to brake in wet weather.

If you have to cycle to and from your business each day, you will find the mudguard extensions capital things. They sell at as little as a penny or twopence each.

(This feature will appear again in No. 504 of THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.

CHRIS OF THE CAMERA.

(Continued from the previous page).

his way to get as near a policeman as he could, and held it out at arm's-length.

"Fellow," said a pimply-faced youth clad in the height of fashion, "how dare you—er—force your—Ow-oo!"

The constable, seeing that Chris possessed an official order to the police to allow him every possible facility—the order that is sent to every newspaper on such occasions—promptly threw up his arm to make a passage for him to get into the military-guarded street, and as the pimply-faced youth was short, and had been leaning forward to address his remarks to Chris, he received a blow on the face that rudely interrupted his remonstrance.

Chris thanked the policeman, showed the card to a sergeant who hurried up, and was then permitted to walk along the sand-strewn road between the two rows of Guardsmen resting on their rifles until he came opposite the building where the "Mercury" had arranged he should take a photo from the roof.

Here, on showing his card, the police made a narrow way for him, and on showing his card to the porter at the door, and being narrowly scrutinised by a shabbily-dressed man, who did not in the least suggest by his appearance that he was a detective, he was permitted to ascend many flights of stairs until he was on the flat roof of the building.

Then a long wait. A couple of mounted constables rode along between the black mass of people and received a cheer. A mongrel ran across the road, and there was a loud laugh that came faintly to the ears of those waiting on the tall building. Then came three policemen with medals on their breasts, well mounted, and with an air of great importance.

"Shoulder arms!" The order came faintly from the distance, and the long line of red-coated, black-busied soldiers moved as one man.

Chris had his camera focused on Piccadilly, where the procession was to stop for an address to be presented by a little group of mayors, who were standing on a raised platform covered with crimson felt.

"Present arms!" A rattle in the distance, and the band of the Lifeguards stationed in Piccadilly struck up the Adolian National Anthem.

A clatter of Lifeguards, the weak wintry sun glinting on their breast-plates and accoutrements, then a row of carriages. The procession was stopping in Piccadilly.

Chris raised his camera, not noticing the evil-looking "Herald" representative, who had also gained access to the roof of the building on which he had taken up his position. A touch on the spring, a sharp click, and he would have a splendid picture of the procession.

But just as his finger went to the little spring, the new arrival fell upon him, and sent the camera clattering from his hands on to the coping, the dark-slide tumbling out and smashing to pieces on the concrete roof.

"You cad!"

He had wheeled round, his face white and drawn, to see Parker, his rival, grinning at him, as quick as lightning, he took a snapshot of the procession halting in Piccadilly.

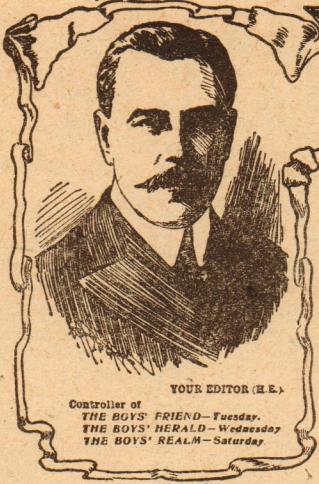
"Don't cry, kid!" he sneered, as he sprawled down on the roof of the building to take another picture as the procession passed beneath.

Cry! Chris was fighting hard to keep the tears of anger and humiliation from his eyes. His camera was wrecked; he could not attempt to take another picture that day. The "Mercury" had paid for him to be on the roof to take a photo, and by the dastardly, cowardly act of his rival on the "Herald" he had failed.

Failure! What would the "Mercury" people think of him now? He who had started so promisingly, who had been given a great chance, had failed. He, by no fault of his own, had committed the greatest crime that a newspaper man can be capable of—he had "let his paper down."

"I've lost my chance!" he groaned, as, with a roar of cheering, the procession moved citywards again. "What can I do—oh, what can I do?"

(Another grand instalment of this thrilling adventure serial next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)



YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

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

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

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

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

THE NEW YEAR.

THE new year has begun, and I hope very satisfactorily for all my friends. If the past year has been successful for them, I hope that this one will continue that success; and if the past has not altogether been so happy and pleasant a twelve months as it might have been, then I hope that 1911 will considerably improve matters.

There is one thing I would like to get my friends to do this year if they will, and that is to induce a chum to become a fellow-reader of our paper. It certainly deserves it, because it is a good paper. No one can deny that. In fact, it is the best boys' paper there is on the market. It has hundreds of thousands of friends, but I want it to have many, many thousands more, and this can be done by the efforts of my supporters in inducing those of their chums who are not regular readers to join our happy circle.

OUR 500th NUMBER.

This number of THE BOYS' FRIEND marks the 500th issue at one penny; but it is actually our 333rd number, because there were 333 weekly issues at one halfpenny. However, so great was its popularity that in order to enlarge its scope, I decided to give my friends more reading matter and to double its size, and I am glad to say that that experiment of nearly ten years ago has proved an enormous success. In a very great measure this success is due to the loyal support and sympathy of my friends. Each and every one of them I most sincerely thank for what they have done to spread the fame and increase the success of our popular little paper. I hope that when our thousandth number is notched up in another ten years' time, we shall still be able to count as readers of the paper all our friends of to-day.

THE BOYS' FRIEND is one of those extraordinary papers which manage to keep their hold on their old friends, whilst gathering into their circle newer and younger ones. Many of my readers are married men who have children of their own; and this, I think, is a very strong point in favour of the character of the paper, because if it is a proper paper for grown-up men who are parents, it must be a fit and proper paper for the young.

OUR NEW STORY.

The new serial of the young Press photographer, "Chris of the Camera," deals with a theme which has never been touched upon before in a boys' story, and I hope my friends will find the adventures of "Chris" very much to their liking.

The story is an extremely interesting one. It shows how a boy can get on in the face of many difficulties, it shows how attached he can get to a paper, and do all kinds of desperate and arduous things in order to obtain success and credit for that paper. At the same time, the story will give my lads an insight into newspaper life which must undoubtedly be very attractive to them.

OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME.

I dare say that my friends at the beginning of the year would like to know something about what I intend to give them as the months go by.

I may tell them that I have in preparation a number of very good stories, among them a laughable and interesting school yarn, a new tale into which a certain amount of prison life will be brought, and a wonderful story of adventure—one of those brilliant and imaginative tales

which usually please every sort of lad. Not only this, but I have arranged for a good number of bright, attractive articles on topics in which every lad takes an interest. In this way I hope to make THE BOYS' FRIEND more and more popular as the weeks go by.

POOR W. R. H.

I hope that my friends will not think that I want to worry them over the pitiful story of W. R. H., the lad who is making—as one of my correspondents says—such a plucky fight against fate, but I want to publish another letter from a loyal friend who sends me his name and address. Here is his letter, and it is one which can be read by all my chums with pleasure and profit:

"Darlington,
December, 1910.

"Dear Editor,—I hope you will not mind my letter coming to you, but I have just been reading a letter in your Den of the 'B. F.' of December 3rd from a reader who writes to complain, and whom I notice has not the decency or manliness to even sign his name. And who can wonder, after all?"

"Since reading this I cannot rest until I have answered the same.

"I notice his complaint is that you do not seem to understand boys. Well, let him hold a position of editor of a boys' paper for a few years, and see if he can.

"And then his other remark, 'That you do not seem to know what a boy is'—I wonder if he does? It seems to me that he wants to find something to growl about, or his own common-sense might tell him that after holding the position you have held so long you could do nothing else but understand boys after coming in touch with thousands—nay, I dare say, millions of boys.

"Now, I am about twenty-two years of age, and at present hold a high position in this town—in one of the largest temperance organisations in the world. I work beside ministers, politicians, and temperance workers, and of course have my ambitions as such. And through what?—why, most emphatically through the influence that you put into your papers. And will your anonymous reader dare to say after this that you do not understand boys?"

"I would also refer him to a letter in your 'B. F.' Den of November 26th from W. R. H., which has been written under painful circumstances. Let him peruse it, and swallow the advice he will read there.

"As regards W. R. H., I should like nothing better than to grasp him by the hand, for his plucky fight against fate must be painful to him. I feel now that if it were possible to reverse the positions of W. R. H. and your anonymous reader, he could but feel his cowardliness and want of manliness.

"I hope he will refer to the letter mentioned, and read, mark, and learn. And if we hear from him again, may it be in a different tone to this letter.

"Wishing your paper every success,
—I remain, yours, etc.,
"H. W."

MANCHESTER V. LONDON.

One of my young friends puts to me a rather interesting question. He says that one of his relations from the North has told him that Manchester is as busy as London, taking its size into consideration. What he means to say, of course, is that if Manchester were as big as London it would be a much busier city, and I am inclined to agree with my friend in the North.

London is naturally a tremendously important city, because it is the

principal city in the world, but in this matter of comparison it depends whether one is speaking just of ordinary commerce—i.e., the trade of buying and selling, or of manufactures. From the manufacturing point of view, Manchester is a more important city than London, which is not, strictly speaking, a manufacturing town. However, in the offices of London a much greater volume of trade is conducted, and from this aspect I suppose it is the busiest city in the universe, without any regard to proportionate size.

So we may say that Manchester is just as busy a city as London, but in a different way.

My young friend, whose letter is written in a large, bold hand, asks me to excuse the writing and spelling. His writing would be improved very much if he made it smaller, because when he writes small he writes quite well. His spelling he can make better only by practice. However, I am glad to see that he says he is trying to improve, and I am quite sure that if he steadily adheres to this determination he will rapidly advance, not only in spelling, but in writing as well. All he needs, it seems to me, is regular practice.

A WARNING FROM A BROTHER.

"Harry" writes me a friendly little letter, in which he deals with the subject of smoking. He says that about five years ago he had the misfortune to lose one of his brothers through an attack of typhoid fever, and the doctor told "Harry" that even had his brother lived, he would have been a hopeless cripple, because he smoked so much.

Lots of youngsters who smoke do not realise this. They do not realise that smoking in every case does not do the system good, but in many cases does a considerable amount of harm, because the constitution is not a robust one. Sometimes when I get a letter from a boy, a strong, healthy lad, who says he has smoked for a long time and rather jeers at my advice on smoking because it has not shown any ill-effects on his body, I think of the hundreds of lads who are not so strong physically, and who, if they give way to the cigarette habit, do themselves an enormous amount of harm.

Of course, nowadays it is illegal for a boy under sixteen to smoke or buy cigarettes or tobacco in any form for his own use, and I am very glad of it, because I often feel that lads who start smoking early in life are doing themselves harm which they will never be able to undo. In the first place, they lessen their lung power, and if lads would only realise how vitally important it is that they should breathe fully and deeply and what a tremendous part the lungs play in our daily health, they would not smoke at all. Really, smoking is only a bad habit, and we grown-ups who smoke know in our own hearts that it does not do us any real good and that we should be better without it. But the habit has grown on us, and we smoke because we have become accustomed to it.

Still, if I can persuade any youngsters not to smoke, I know I shall be doing them a good turn, and that is why I refer to the letter from "Harry," who gives me his brother's case as an example, and who tells me that he has given up smoking since he received the warning so emphatically and dramatically made to him by the doctor. Although he mixes with lads who indulge in the habit and try to persuade him to do the same, nothing will induce him to do so. I am glad to hear it, and I wish that heaps of other lads would have the same strength of mind as "Harry."

FROM A CANADIAN FRIEND.

The following extremely interesting letter comes to me from one of my readers who went out to Canada three years ago. He gives an account of the different occupations which he followed out there, and I am sure has that every one of my readers at home will peruse this letter with interest, because it demonstrates what I have always said about new countries, and that is that if a lad is willing to work and not to shirk, he need never be afraid of unemployment.

"Esquesing, P.O.,
Ontario, Canada.

"Dear Editor,—I saw in one of your papers that you liked all your boys to write to you. I take 'The Boys' Herald,' 'THE BOYS' FRIEND,' and 'The Boys' Realm.' I have taken them for the last eight or nine years. I have always been going to write about Canada. I have been out here three years. I left Guernsey (Channel Isles), on the 13th of May, 1907. I landed at Quebec on the 27th of May. The best part of the voyage is coming up the River St. Lawrence. From Quebec I went by train to Toronto, where I got an engagement with a farmer for six months at a place called Ashgrove, about 40 or 45 miles from Toronto. About two months after I was there he put me to ploughing. I was always glad when it was time to quit, as ploughing tires one's arms when not used to it. There is always a lot of work to do, especially in harvest-time.

"In the winter there is not so much to do, except feeding the cattle, and maybe drawing out manure and cutting wood in the bush for the summer, as we do not burn coal. I stayed with this farmer for eighteen months. The second winter I had a job driving the mail from Stewarton to Ashgrove and back, on to Georgetown and back. Some days were very cold—the thermometer was often between freezing and zero—and sometimes I had to get out of the sleigh and shovel the snow as it was too deep for the horse to go through.

"I was on that job all the winter till spring. Last winter I went trapping animals; I caught quite a few. I made about five pounds. This year I am working in a saw-mill. I will just give you an outline of what I have to do. Firstly, we have to roll the logs with a cant-hook up to the sheds, and on to the carriage, then we drive two iron pegs to keep them from rolling. The next step is to sight the log; we sight it from the saw to the end of the carriage. The first piece that comes off the log is called a slab. The slab is taken to another saw called a slab-saw, where it is cut into twelve or fourteen inches for firewood. The carriage is run back, and the log is cut into boards and planks, according to what is required. We also have a planing-machine, ribbing-machine, and a shingle-machine. The shingles are used instead of slates or tiles for roofing houses and barns, etc. One can get from one and a half to two dollars—that is six to eight shillings a day.

"I find the Canadian people very nice. Some people come out here from the Old Country thinking to have an easy time; then they go back and run this country down. They do not want any of that sort out here; they want boys and men who are willing to work, and to do anything, either on a farm or in a trade. I would not go back to the Old Country again not if I had my passage paid for me, as I like it out here too well. I expect my young lady out here in the spring. There is plenty of work out here for the willing.

"I think I will come to a close, wishing you would find room for this letter in your paper—THE BOYS' FRIEND. Wishing the papers every success, and long life and happiness to yourself, from a

"CONSTANT READER."

HOW TO BECOME AN ENGINE-CLEANER.

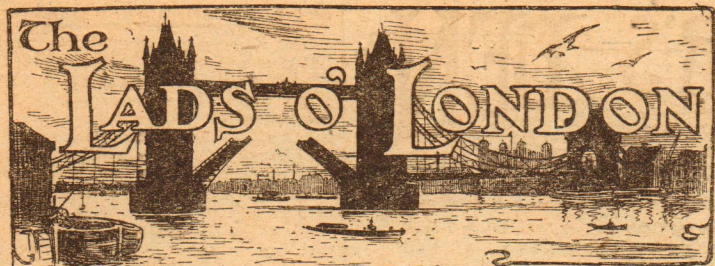
A young friend of mine wants to know how to become an engine-cleaner.

I have answered this question a good many times before in THE BOYS' FRIEND, but once again I come to the assistance of "A Suffolk Reader." He should find out from his local station-master the address of the nearest locomotive depot where engines are stored and cleaned, and write to the superintendent of that depot for a post.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.)

A GOOD RESOLVE FOR 1911:

To Always Pass On THE BOYS' FRIEND When Finished With! The "B. F." is Getting Better and Better, and Deserves the Full Support of Every Reader.



THE TUGBOY'S TEST. By ANDREW GRAY.

IT was a bitter cold night, with an east wind cutting up the river fit to flay you to the bone. Against the tide the steam-tug Grappler shouldered its way sturdily, a string of half a dozen heavily-laden lighters in tow.

Old Captain Basker was in the little hutch of a wheelhouse, the crew were snug below, and the only one left altogether out in the cold was Billy, otherwise known as the "Admiral" by the jeering mudlarks of the Thames.

Billy was supposed to be the "watch on deck" on this trip—that is to say, he occasionally pushed his blue nose above shelter just to see how the "old tank" was "getting along," but the rest of his time sat with his back pressed tight against the warm engine-casing, blowing on his frozen fingers, and bemoaning the unlucky day he elected to go "to sea" for his living.

"Talk about your 'jolly sailor boys!'" he grumbled, between his chattering teeth. "Let 'em come to me, and I'll lay I'll tell 'em something!"

And considering that Billy was getting on for fifteen years old, and had been bo'sun, cook, crew, and cabin-boy of the Grappler for three whole months, it must be admitted that he knew something of the hardships of a mariner's life.

However, the lights of Waterloo Bridge already lay well behind, and close ahead blinked the dim red lanterns marking the pier of Hungerford Bridge, over which runs the railway to Charing Cross.

"Good old Hungerford!" murmured Billy more cheerfully, as the tug went bustling under the huge iron spags. "Only Westminster now, and then we shan't be—"

Bang!
"Allo! What was that—a fog-signal?" No; Billy almost believed it must have been a shot, for craning his neck upwards while the tug was yet beneath the footbridge beside the railway, he could distinctly see figures swaying and struggling on the parapet.

Three men looked to be trying to haul a fourth into the river beneath. Billy watched, breathless with horror. Then, as the tug forged clear, he lost sight of them against the dark girders behind. Yet he could still hear their angry cries.

At last came a sharp yell from above:
"Look out below there! Man overboard!"

Billy was already on his feet. Someone had fallen, for he heard the thud, but whether he had plunged straight into the river or struck one of the barges first he could not tell. What was more, it was too dark to see.

A mad idea seized him to leap from the Grappler's gunwale to the foremost barge, and so spring from one to the other down the long string. But just as he was gathering himself for the spring he saw a long, dark shape shoot out from under the shadow of the Embankment.

It was a Water Police wherry, as Billy knew. If anyone could save the poor wretch they would, while if he jumped and missed his footing he would almost certainly be drowned.

The tug kept on, for Captain Basker, in the wheelhouse, had heard nothing of the shouts. Shivering in the cold, Billy stared astern into the darkness, hoping to see that the police had found their man, but already the gloom had swallowed them up.

A few minutes later all was bustle and activity aboard, and the cry of "Man overboard!"—a common enough occurrence in the lives of the toilers of the Thames—was forgotten. Westminster Bridge had been passed, and the Grappler was now circling round to bring her string of barges head to tide.

The watchmen who were to take charge stood on an anchored barge ready for the ropes to be flung to them. The Grappler then cast off and dropped astern, and returned to Blackfriars to find her own berth for the night.

The anchor was let go, the riding

light hoisted, and ten minutes later Billy the Admiral was tugging manfully at the dinghy oars, heading for the landing steps.

Captain Basker and the mate and engineer tumbled out and clattered away, leaving Billy to pull back to make himself comfortable on board for the night.

His meagre supper eaten, the boy took a turn on deck to see that his lantern burned brightly and the anchor held. Only a few yards ahead of him was the stern of the tailmost lighter of the bunch they had been towing.

"Tug ahoy! Hallo, there!"

Billy started and stared. It sounded as if someone had hailed him cautiously from the barge. He rubbed his eyes, and fancied he could distinguish the pale loom of a face thrust from under a tarpaulin.

"Have you got a boat handy? I want to speak to you."

It was a voice right enough. Billy was about to answer the hail when there came a hiss of caution.

"Make no noise," it said, "and don't be frightened. It's all right. Come!"

Billy thought it over for a moment, then climbed into the tug's dinghy.

"You ain't been pinching nothing, I suppose?" he demanded, as he pulled to the lighters astern, on which the mysterious passenger was kneeling.

"Stealing! No. Didn't you hear me drop from Hungerford Bridge a little while ago?" asked the stranger. "I thought you did. I pitched on to the slack of a tarpaulin fortunately, and so got off with nothing worse than a shaking. Have you got any one else with you on that tug?" he demanded the next instant.

"Not now," answered Billy. "The crew sleeps ashore, and leaves me to look after 'em."

"Good! Then row me back to it, and let me get the smell of a fire, will you? I'm as cold as death."

Billy thought it over again for a second, and then obeyed. The stranger clambered on to the Grappler with alacrity, and found his way below into the little cabin aft. He was a short, thick-set fellow, with just about the most glittering, determined eyes the boy ever remembered seeing in a man. Captain Basker's were mild as doves compared with them.

"Well, who do you think I am?" he asked, turning on Billy, after he had spread his hands to the galley fire.

"Blowed if I know!" answered Billy honestly; and the man laughed.

"Did you ever read books—stories about Anarchists?"

"Anarchists! People who throws bombs?" exclaimed Billy, looking alarmed.

"Quite right, sonny. People that throw bombs," said the man.

"But you ain't one of them, surely?" gasped Billy, half expecting the stranger to produce an infernal machine, pop it into the embers, and blow the tug to smithereens.

"No, not exactly," laughed the stranger. "I catch them, that's all. I'm a detective—Detective-sergeant Rusk, of Scotland Yard." Here he looked at Billy, whose face lit up with boyish admiration.

"A detective, eh? Paint me pink!" gasped the boy. "And them coves you was scrapping with on the bridge?" he added. "Was they Anarchists?"

"Yes; they're three dangerous customers—foreigners who've come over here to be ready for the Coronation." "Coronation!" gasped Billy, in horror. "You don't mean they're going to blow up the King?"

The detective nodded.

"I do," he said, looking hard at Billy. "And now the question is, whether you're going to help me stop them?"

"Elp you? Rather! I'd elp you shoot the blooming lot!" panted Billy, his eyes flashing fire.

The detective laughed grimly.

"Well, we shan't shoot them if we can help it," he said. "We'll collar them alive if we can. After all," he added, after a pause, "I don't know—but what this tumble of mine

isn't the best thing that could have happened. You see, they must have found out I was on their track, for while I was following two of them across the bridge they suddenly turned and made a rush at me. Then one appeared from behind, and I was fairly trapped.

"I could see they meant to throw me into the river, and so pulled out my pistol," said the detective, tapping a bulging pocket. "I only got in one shot, though, and the next second was over the parapet."

"And now they'll think you're drowned?" ventured Billy.

"That's it! My game now is to lie low a bit until they're right off their guard. I suppose you can't put me on to some deserted old shanty hereabouts, young 'un, where I can hide for a few days—an old barge, perhaps, that nobody ever goes near?"

Billy thought for a moment, and nodded.

"Yes," he said. "There's an old coal-hulk, half sunk, that a watchman used to live on."

"The very place! Is it far from here?"

"No; close alongside," said Billy.

"You'd be safe there, and as the tug is most always berthed here for the night, I could row across to you and bring you grub."

A few minutes later he had pulled alongside the barge in question, and the detective was inspecting the deserted cabin, which stood high and dry out of the water.

"And there's no chance of the River Police coming nosing round, you think?" he demanded of Billy.

"They're old rivals of ours, and if they knew what I was up to, as like as not they'd start meddling and spoil the whole game."

Billy could only say that he had never seen the police go near the barge, and that was all.

Detective-sergeant Rusk took Billy's bunk that night, and left the boy the floor to sleep on, with orders to wake him before daylight. This did not matter much to Billy, for in any case he would have been too excited to close his eyes.

Just before dawn he roused his guest and rowed him to his hiding-place. He went ashore then, and bought him food and some sacks to sleep on, and dumping these on the deck when no one was looking, returned to the Grappler to light the stovehold fire and get a bite of breakfast for himself.

All that day, as usual, they were busy up and down the river, towing barges from wharf to wharf, but at night, when Captain Basker and his mates had gone ashore, he stole across in his boat, and found the detective awaiting him with a letter to post.

"I shall want you to be on the look-out at the landing-place tomorrow night for my chief, Detective-inspector Smith, of Scotland Yard," he said. "I'm sending word secretly to him, and you must fetch him aboard. But just see that the coast is quite clear first. Understand?"

Billy winked, to show that there were not many flies to be found on him during a job of this sort.

"P'raps you'd like to ask Mr. Smith aboard the tug? It would be more cheerful there with a fire going," he suggested, and Sergeant Rusk agreed.

Next night, sure enough, there was a burly figure, disguised in rough waterman's clothes, loafing near the landing-place. Billy whistled the first two lines of "A Life on the Ocean Wave," which was the countersign agreed upon, and a minute later was rowing the stranger off to the tug, where Sergeant Rusk awaited him.

Then Billy was introduced, and the great man shook him heartily by the hand, and seemed very proud indeed to meet him.

"Billy had seen him before, too—at least, though it was very dark on deck, he managed to get a fair glimpse of his face, and it seemed strangely familiar.

"P'raps 'is photygraf has been in the papers over some big cop or another. These 'tees are always getting their pictures took," he murmured to himself, as he rowed away to the landing-place to keep guard, as the sergeant commanded him.

Jolly cold work it was, too, squatting there in an open boat beside muddy stone steps, with nothing to look at except a dingy gas-lamp and a narrow lane between dark warehouses.

Billy, however, was in such a glow of excitement and pride that he almost managed to keep warm over the job. However, after only half an hour a soft whistle came from the tug, which was the signal that he was

to return to set Detective-inspector Smith on shore.

He rowed the great man back to the steps, and again was rewarded with a hearty handshake, which sent him into the seventh heaven of delight. Then, as the officer moved away, the light of the gas-lamp fell full on his face, and Billy seemed to turn to stone.

He had sense, though, to creep back into his dinghy, otherwise the other might have looked back and seen him standing staring after him, as if he were a ghost or worse.

"Mulligan!" gasped Billy to himself. "That's 'oo it is. He ain't no detective-inspector, but just Mulligan of Lime'ouse."

Billy tried to pull his scattered wits together. He had been sold—duped. He knew this brute Mulligan as one of the cleverest and worst wharf-thieves to be found on the River Thames. Fortunately, Mulligan was not likely to know him, otherwise, after the yarn they had been stuffing him with, it would mean short shift for him.

All this about Anarchists blowing up the King was sheer fudge. That was obvious.

This man who called himself Detective-sergeant Rusk must be some confederate of Mulligan's, and just as desperate a customer as he.

For there was no doubt that the scuffle on the bridge was an attempt of the real detectives to arrest him, and that to save himself he had deliberately leapt into the river.

Now Billy had been duped into giving him shelter—had even given up his own bed to the brute. My hat! Wouldn't his mates laugh at him when it was all found out!

A vicious hail from the tug made him start in his skin. "Sergeant Rusk" was evidently getting suspicious at his long delay. However, Billy managed to trump up some story about a broken thole-pin, and he was ordered on board.

"Detective-inspector Smith will be coming back in a couple of hours' time," said Sergeant Rusk abruptly, "and will bring a couple of plain-clothes men with him. We've tracked the Anarchists to their lair not far from here."

"Liar," thought Billy to himself. "You're going to go burgling some blooming warehouse, that's what your game is."

"At two o'clock in the morning," continued Sergeant Rusk, little thinking what was in the boy's mind, "we're going ashore in your boat to arrest them. We shall bring them back on board. You must have steam up ready to start, and we can then take them straight to Westminster Steps by Scotland Yard."

"What! Me—single-handed?" gasped Billy.

"No, we shall bring off an engineer with us to help you. But all this, mind you, is between ourselves. If you dare to breathe a word about it to a soul I'll—"

The "detective" gave Billy such a look then as nearly made him topple backwards into the river.

There was nothing else to do, of course, but promise. The man was not likely to take his eye off him now he had him on the tug; and, besides, he might get a chance, while the gang was ashore, of hailing a passing craft, and telling them to send a police-boat along.

Billy was doomed to disappointment, however. Not only did Sergeant Rusk never take his eyes off him while he stoked the fires, but when the time came to fetch Detective-inspector Smith—otherwise Mulligan—and his pals on board, he came in the boat with him.

"Now sit up there on deck on the stern-rail, where we can see you," commanded the sergeant, whose manner had changed completely. "And if I see you trying to catch what we're saying in the cabin here, or see you making the least sign to anybody on another craft, you'll get a pill from this to swallow. See?" And he pointed his revolver at Billy's fluttering heart.

His eyes on the weapon, Bill backed steadily up the little ladder and took his seat as ordered on the Grappler's gunwale, where all below could see his slightest movement. Now they fell to talking in eager whispers. Billy watched them, fascinated.

Then all of a sudden a thought flashed upon him. There was an iron slide to the cabin hatchway, and this could be padlocked. One bold stroke and he might secure the whole gang of prisoners.

What then? Why, he had a full head of steam in the boiler, and knowledge enough, he believed, to set the engines going.

Once started he could leap to the

wheel, run the Grappler out into the stream, set his whistle blowing for help, and make for the nearest floating police-station—the one by Waterloo Bridge.

It was a desperate plan, but Billy was thrilled by it, nevertheless. Mulligan, he knew, was wanted at that moment by the police, and so was the man who had leapt into the river. Their arrest would justify him.

The cabin padlock lay by his toe. He edged it nearer to him, picked it up without attracting attention, and the next instant had made his leap.

Bang! The iron slide was shot forward in its grooves. Snap! It was bolted. And scarcely a man in the pokey little cabin had had time to scramble to his feet.

Now Billy was skimming forward like a monkey to cast off the mooring-chain. Splash! and that had gone overboard.

He could hear Mulligan's bull-throated voice threatening to burn him alive in the stovehole when they got their hands on him.

But Billy was in possession of the furnace, not they. Down into the tiny engine-room he dropped nimbly. He lit on a shovel, and Sergeant Rusk must have heard the clank, for he let drive with a bullet through the wooden bulkhead, only missing Billy's head by an inch.

Bang! Smack! That was another, splashing the boiler with lead. But Billy, crouching low, had pulled throttle and lever, and the powerful screw had begun to turn.

Then up the iron ladder he fled again, tumbling into the wheelhouse and tearing at the spokes. He was only just in time, for the Grappler was already within an ace of ramming a whole fleet of lighters at anchor.

Swinging her bull-nose clear, he set her ramming up stream at her top-most speed.

It had all worked like a charm, yet Billy was not out of the wood yet by any means. The cabin had a narrow skylight, from which the wheelhouse was only partially masked by the tug's funnel.

Bang, whizz! Sergeant Rusk had opened fire again, and the glass windows fore and aft of the wheelhouse were shivered by the bullet.

A second shot clipped Billy's ear, sending the hot blood streaming down on to his shoulder. The feel of it made him sick, but he set his teeth manfully, and stuck to his post at the helm.

By crouching low he managed almost to shield himself completely. Then winding the cord of the steam whistle round his wrist, he kept on tugging until the river echoed and re-echoed, setting every drowsy bargeman wondering what was up.

How long it would be before he would see a police-wherry shooting into mid stream to intercept him he could not tell.

Now he realised with sinking heart that his untended boiler was "losing steam." They had barely shot Blackfriars Bridge, and already the Grappler's speed was slackening. Still he must stay where he was. There was no help for it.

And then, as if it had risen suddenly out of the river, a police-launch darted across his bows, and a megaphone hail demanded to know what was wrong with him.

"Mulligan!" yelled Billy, in reply, not knowing what else to say. "Can't stop myself! Board me—Mulligan! Watch yourselves!"

Scarcely were the words out of his lips than a final shot rang out, and he felt a stab as with a red-hot knife through his shoulder. He fell, dragging the wheel round with him, so that the Grappler all but rammed the police-launch amidships, cutting it down.

The coxswain managed to save it, however, and a second later three constables had leapt aboard, quite realising after that last pistol-shot that something very serious was amiss.

A glance at the furious faces of the gang imprisoned in the cabin told them that they had effected, in some mysterious fashion, one of the richest hauls of criminals in recent times.

For the whole four were ruffians for whom the police had been searching high and low for various daring robberies on the river-side.

Billy, however, was able to tell them all about it, some hours later, when the hospital doctors decided that he might answer a few brief questions—enough to secure a remand of the prisoners.

Most of them got seven years' penal servitude in the end, but it will be a good deal longer than that before Billy the Admiral hears the last of his pals from Scotland Yard.

THE END.

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.

Sexton Blake: Spy.

A Superb New Serial of the Great Detective's Secret Service in Britain and Germany. START READING IT NOW.

NEW READERS START HERE.

In the opening chapters of this grand new serial we read how two Britishers are captured in the fortifications on the Island of Tarkum, off the German coast, while a couple of days later two Germans are seen making plans of Fort Ridley, in the East of England. One German is arrested, while the other escapes with his plans.

The news is abroad like wildfire. The Britishers have lost their plans, while one of the Germans has succeeded in making his escape with plans of the British fortification in his possession.

Sexton Blake, the famous detective, is summoned to Lord Dorrington at the War Office, and is at length employed in the Secret Service. Now that Germany is in possession of knowledge of one of Britain's

most valuable strongholds,

so must Britain be upon equal terms with Germany. Sexton Blake is aware that the one German who is captured is none other than Prince Gunther, son of the Kaiser. The famous detective, with his assistants, Tinker and Pedro, are to repair the unsuccessful attempt to obtain plans of the Tarkum fortifications.

Disguised as Baron Rudolf Steiner, chief of the Prussian Secret Service, Sexton Blake gains an entrance to the Tarkum fortifications, succeeds in securing the plans of Fort Tarkum, and with Tinker he escapes over miles of open and wooded country, taking every precaution to defy the scent of Pedro, who the Germans have captured, and of not being recognised by the German police.

Wearing the rags of a scarecrow, Sexton Blake and Tinker at last find refuge in a tree for the night, but upon awakening they are astounded to see that their faithful hound has tracked them down, and that a crowd of German soldiers is being led by Pedro to the foot of their hiding-place.

(Now read this week's splendid chapters.)

THE 17th CHAPTER.

Trapped—Pedro's Remorse—What the Major Thought.

IT was a stunning, disheartening blow. The worst had happened in spite of all precautions and safeguards. The clever bloodhound had betrayed the fugitives. Gifted with abnormal intelligence, he had overcome one obstacle after another, until he had reached the stream; and when he had followed that for more than a mile he had found, by his wonderful powers of scent, the spot where Blake and the lad had left the water and climbed the wall. His companions had then doubtless led him round to a gate that gave access to the estate, and now, having picked up the trail on the inner side of the wall, he was coming rapidly towards his master's hiding-place.

"It is hard luck," Tinker said bitterly. "To think that old Pedro should have done this!"

"He is not to be blamed," replied Sexton Blake. "He did not know what he was doing."

"Well, guv'nor, we must make the best of it. We are in a tight trap, I suppose."

"Yes, a hopeless one. We are as good as caught, my boy."

It was already too late for them to descend and make a dash for freedom, and there were no other trees into which they could have climbed from that one that sheltered them. For a few seconds they waited in silence, in utter despair; and then, from immediately below them, Pedro's voice rose in a loud, quavering bay of delight. The fugitives could see him distinctly; he was on his hind feet, with his paws on the trunk of the tree. The light from the lantern shone on upturned faces, on swords and carbines. There was another loud bay, and then a pitiful noise of whining.

"Come down, Herr Blake!" shouted a voice that could be recognised as that of Colonel Wenzel. "You need not try to deceive us! We know that you are up there!"

There was silence for a few seconds, save for the dog's whimpering.

"If you don't come down," added the commandant of the Tarkum fortress, "I'll bring you down with a rifle volley."

To disregard the summons would have been futile. Slowly and deliberately, scarcely realising as yet that their liberty was gone, Sexton Blake and the lad climbed down through the boughs of the tree, and dropped from the lowermost one to the ground, when Pedro at once leapt upon them, uttering short, sharp barks of joy. He wore a stout leather muzzle, but that did not prevent him from licking his master's hands and face. In wild rapture he sprang first

at Blake, and then at the lad, and then back to Blake again.

It was such a pathetic scene that it affected even the Germans, not one of whom lifted a finger. Stern, stolid men though they were, they were so moved by the dog's display of feeling, by his obvious love and devotion for his master, that for at least a minute they did not interfere between the two. Then Pedro was dragged away by the leash, and three or four men laid hands on the prisoners; but as soon as the hound observed this, he flew into a rage, and with blood-curdling snarls tried to break from the officer who was holding him, that he might launch himself at his master's assailants.

"Be quiet, Pedro!" the detective said sadly. "It is all right, old fellow. You can't do anything for me."

The dog ceased to struggle, and remained passive, whining in a low key. A strange, puzzled expression crept into his big eyes, which were fixed on Blake and Tinker while they were being secured. Their wrists were tied with ropes, and then, as Pedro saw them thus helpless, a sudden comprehension appeared to dawn on him; he seemed to understand that he was to blame for this, that he had betrayed his beloved master into the hands of enemies. He raised his head, and poured out his grief and remorse in a dismal, long-drawn howl that had almost a sobbing cadence. It was as near to a cry of sorrow as a dumb animal could get.

"Come—come, Pedro; don't take it so hard!" bade Sexton Blake, trying to speak cheerfully.

"Poor old chap!" the lad said huskily.

At first the dog would not be comforted. He continued to howl, his voice sinking lower and lower, and, meanwhile, Tinker and the detective, having previously observed that Pedro seemed to have some liking for the colonel, glanced with curiosity at their captors, who numbered half a score in all. Three of them were officers of the Tarkum garrison—Colonel Wenzel, Major Wolff, and Captain Webber—and the others were soldiers, with the exception of a stalwart, bearded man, whose peaked cap and dark, frogged jacket indicated that he was a police official of no low degree. It was evident, from the state of their clothing, and from their haggard features, that they had had about as rough a time of it as the prisoners had had.

Low though his spirits were, the humorous side of the situation occurred to Sexton Blake, and brought a gleam of amusement to his eyes.

"I regret, herr colonel," he said politely, "that I should have given you and your friends so much trouble."

"You can spare me your apologies," stiffly answered Colonel Wenzel. "I don't care to hear them, Herr Blake."

"Before you address me by that name, herr colonel, you should be sure that you are right. How do you know that I am not Baron Steiner?"

AUSTRALIA'S BEST BOXER.

Bill Lang, the Heavy-weight Champion, Completes His Chat to the "B. F."

HERE is Bill Lang's tip for those who intend starting a club.

"If you by any chance reside in a town where boxing shows are frequently held, go to the proprietor of the hall where the exhibitions take place and offer to purchase the gloves he has done with second-hand. He will have all sorts and sizes, and he will very likely be glad to get rid of them.

"One thing I want intending boxers to be very careful about, and that is the use of alcohol. Personally, I seldom touch it. If I feel I want a drink I have it, but if I did not feel inclined to drink, and was being pressed, I would rather fight a whole smoke-room full of people than imbibe against my will.

"Then there is the question of health, and I should advise every lad to keep himself in trim by constant exercise, mental and physical, and by avoiding rich and starchy foods. But this much must be made clear: It is absurd to lay down a hard

and fast set of rules and expect everybody who abides by them to enjoy perfect health or to become proficient in boxing. It is very seldom you find two natures and two constitutions alike, and therefore conduct and training depend on circumstances which, of course, you must ascertain the strength of for yourself. I dare say it will surprise most readers of THE BOYS' FRIEND to know that my favourite recreation is playing chess. Rather a peculiar one for a champion heavy-weight, is it not? But, then, I begin to think I am a peculiar individual. One of my legs is bigger than the other by half an inch, and a similar remark applies to one of my arms.

"Another little peculiarity. A perfectly-formed man should measure from the tip of his right middle finger to the tip of his left middle finger, arms extended horizontally, the same distance as height.

Well, I am 6ft. 0 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, and yet I have a reach of 6ft. 5in.

"Adventures? Well, since I started boxing with the opal miners in the Australian camps I have been through a lot of funny experiences, but have only time to tell you one or two.

"One night I received just over

£200 for winning a fight. I placed the money in a gladstone bag, and went to sleep with my trainer in a house which was nearly empty, and which had been vacated that day by my sister, who was 'fitting.'

"In the night we heard stealthy movements, and went downstairs to investigate, leaving the money unguarded under the bed. Then, to our amazement, we found the noise coming from overhead, and dashing back, we discovered that the supposed burglar was the family cat, who had been left behind, and who had, after dashing about, curled herself up round the bag of money.

"When I was training for my fight with Stanley Ketchell I went for a swim, but becoming seized with cramp, I was in danger of losing my life, when Mr. McIntosh very pluckily came to my aid, and brought me to the bank exhausted.

"Although I am not 28 till next July, I have already fought with such men as Jack Johnson, Tommy Burns, Bob Fitzsimmons, and Alf Kaufmann, and to win the Championship of Australia defeated about twenty men.

"And now you must let me go, for a heavy-weight's time is not his own." Saying which Bill Lang departed.

THE END.

"Because you will have no further use for him. He will have died many years before you are released from prison."

"I cannot grant your request, colonel. For the present, at least, I prefer to regard Pedro as my own property."

"Very well," the commandant stiffly assented. "I will leave the matter open. And now for those blue-prints," he added. "Where are they?"

"They are in the breast-pocket of my coat," Blake replied, "if you don't mind searching that garment. It might be cleaner than it is."

Some of the officers grinned, and the colonel laughed.

"Not all the ridicule will fall on my shoulders," he chuckled. "It will amuse the British people when they read in their newspapers how Sexton Blake robbed a scarecrow."

"And how the commandant of the island of Tarkum lost his uniform and his dignity," Blake sweetly retorted.

Colonel Wenzel scowled, and his eyes flashed again. With his own hands he took the plans of the fort from the pocket indicated by the detective, who was then thoroughly searched from head to foot, even his socks and boots being examined. But nothing was found on him except a large sum of money, which was taken charge of by the commandant, who, apparently not satisfied, had Tinker subjected to as careful a search—and as futile a one.

"If you will tell me what you have been looking for," said Blake, "perhaps I can help you."

The colonel ignored the remark, and turned to Major Wolff, who looked crestfallen and disappointed.

"I am willing to swear," he said, "that when I first recovered consciousness the other night, after the dinner at the Hotel Kronprinz, Herr Blake and the lad were writing at the small table that was in the room. And I assumed that they had been making copies of the blue-prints."

"You were wrong," snapped Colonel Wenzel. "If copies had been made they would have been found on one or the other of the prisoners. It is past eight o'clock, and I am hungry," he added. "Moreover, it is beginning to rain. Does anybody know if there is an inn close by?"

"I don't know whether there is or not," spoke up Captain Webber; "but I have just remembered that this estate of Schloss-baden—that was the name engraved on the gatepost—was purchased several years ago by Herr August Bentheim, the wealthy manufacturer of Hanover. I am intimately acquainted with him, and if he should be at home, as no doubt he is, I am sure that he will be delighted to extend his hospitality to us."

"Ah, nothing could be better!" exclaimed the colonel, rubbing his hands gleefully. "At this hour, I imagine, the gentleman will be on the point of sitting down to his dinner. He probably has a first-class cook, and an irreproachable wine-cellar. We will proceed there at once, and I will then send one of you to Lemberg, on a horse, to fetch a detachment of Lancers from the barracks."

A moment later all were moving away from the tree, Pedro walking dejectedly at the heels of the two prisoners, who were closely guarded,

bound though they were. The rays of the lantern presently revealed a wide, gravelled path, and the party followed this across the wooded ground, through the rain that was falling faster and faster. The wind had risen to a gale, and there was every indication of a stormy night.

"I want to ask you something, guv'nor," murmured Tinker, in a low tone.

"Well, what is it?" inquired Sexton Blake.

"You mentioned to me, I think, that you had told Lord Dorrington that if you were to be caught you would find a way to bring the Kaiser to terms."

"You are quite right. I believe I did tell Lord Dorrington that."

"And what did you mean by it?"

"Nothing in particular, my boy," was the gloomy reply. "I thought you had forgotten what I said. Don't let it inspire you with false hopes."

"Is it really nothing important?"

"It is something that I don't care to speak of, Tinker."

The lad said no more. The two tramped on in silence, thinking miserably of the gulf of despair that yawned before them, of the penalty that was hanging over their heads. Blake had not forgotten what Tinker had recalled to him. At first, on the day of his departure from London, the matter had bulked largely in his calculations; but he had not mentioned it since, because reflection had to a great extent sapped the confidence he had felt when he made the boastful remark to the chief of the War Office. He greatly feared that the hope he had entertained would prove to be no better than a broken reed, that the chances of freedom hung on a slender thread that might snap at any hour—if, indeed, it had not already snapped.

"And if it has," he told himself, "an appeal to the Kaiser would be worse than useless. If Prince Gunther's identity has been discovered, I shall have no card to play. The mailed fist of Prussian law will smite us with the utmost severity, and we shall be buried under the world for long years to come. By heavens, what a prospect!"

He was still absorbed in thought, conjuring up depressing visions, when a turn of the path brought into view a large mansion with lighted windows. The door was opened by a servant in livery, who summoned his master; and Herr August Bentheim, a huge man with bushy beard and moustache, offered a hearty greeting to Captain Webber, who introduced him to the other officers, and then briefly explained the situation.

"You are all welcome!" exclaimed the rich manufacturer. "You must make yourselves at home. And so you have really caught the terrible Herr Blake, and in my grounds! It will be good news for the Kaiser, and for the whole country!"

THE 18th CHAPTER.

At Dinner—Pedro's Atonement—Free Again.

HERR BENTHEIM was alone, as it happened, his family being in Berlin. He had not yet had his dinner, and that meal was postponed for a time owing to the arrival of the search-party, who were delighted at having found such snug quarters, and the more so because rain was now falling in torrents, and the wind was blowing great guns. In spite of the inclement weather, however, one of the soldiers was mounted on a horse without delay, and sent to Lemberg to fetch a detachment of Lancers.

"They ought to be here in about three hours," said Colonel Wenzel, after the messenger had started. "I will hand the prisoners over to them, to be taken to Hemsden and delivered into the custody of the civil authorities."

The unexpected influx of so many guests would have strained the resources of most houses, but it caused no inconvenience at Schloss-baden. The chef and his assistants at once "got busy," as the Americans would say, and in less than an hour they were ready to administer to the needs of the hungry men. A meal was laid for the private soldiers in the big kitchen, and while they were attacking it the soup was served in the luxurious dining-room, where the host, and the three officers, and the police official were seated round a table that was resplendent with silver and cut-glass.

It was now after nine o'clock, and an hour later the dinner was still in progress, with several courses yet to come. Meanwhile, Sexton Blake and the lad, who were themselves ravenous with hunger, had been liberally

A GOOD RESOLVE FOR 1911:

To Always Pass On THE BOYS' FRIEND When Finished With! Getting Better and Better, and Deserves the Full Support of Every Reader.

The "B. F." is

fed in the kitchen—under the watchful eyes of the soldiers—and had then been brought, for better security, to a small sitting-room that adjoined the dining-room. They were too worried to sleep, though in order that they might do so they had been placed opposite to each other on a large couch, in reclining positions, with their wrists and ankles tightly bound. No guard had been set over them, for they were in plain view of their captors, the door being wide open and the light burning.

Pedro had been called away from them, and he had not made any effort to return. It might have been supposed, from the sad, wistful look in his eyes, that he fully realised that he had done his master a bad turn, and that he felt himself to be in disgrace. Remorse did not spoil his appetite, however. He had first been given something to eat in the kitchen, and then, on joining the guests in the dining-room, a juicy bone had been tossed to him by Herr Bentheim, who had conceived a tremendous admiration for the sagacious animal. Pedro had been allowed to gnaw the bone on a costly Turkestan rug, and after picking it clean he had crawled under the table at a word of command from Colonel Wenzel. His muzzle had been taken off to permit him to eat, and the colonel had forgotten to put it on again.

The dog was in very sober spirits, and Tinker and the detective, as they lay awake on the couch, were about as deeply depressed as it was possible for them to be. But the guests in the dining-room, under the influence of good food and foaming wines, were hugely enjoying themselves, as was also their host, who felt honoured by their presence at his board. Frequent bursts of laughter drowned the patter of rain on the windows and the sound of the wind that was shrieking around the house; and when coffee and liqueurs had been brought, and fat cigars had been lighted, the party grew more noisy and jovial. It was natural that they should be highly elated, for had they not caught the formidable British spy after a long chase over the Hanoverian province, and recovered the precious blue-prints that had been stolen so daringly from the fortress of Tarkum? So they feasted and made merry, and now and again threw contemptuous glances at the prisoners. They had not drunk too much, however, nor had they any intention of doing so.

"To your health, sir," said Colonel Wenzel, as he lifted his glass to his host. "We are indebted to Herr Blake for leading us unwittingly to your hospitable dwelling. You have entertained us royally, and we shall not forget it. Your cook is admirable, and the Kaiser might envy your wine-cellar."

"I thank you for your kind appreciation," answered Herr Bentheim, with a rapturous smile. "As for my cellar, I have taken great pains in stocking it. There is one wine in particular—I am very proud of it—which I unfortunately overlooked to-night. If it is not too late to have it up—"

"Not at all," eagerly interrupted the colonel.

"Then we will have several bottles."

"Very good of you, sir."

"It shall be brought at once, herr colonel. You will enjoy it."

"I am sure we shall. But what wine is it?"

"It is a very rare one," innocently replied Herr Bentheim. "An old vintage of Johannsberger Cabinet, which I bought—"

"Ha! You would insult me, would you?" cried Colonel Wenzel, his face darkening with rage as he half started to his feet. "This is rank insolence!"

"Insult you?" his host echoed, in bewilderment. "Insolence!"

A hoarse chuckle from the adjoining room—it came from the lips of Sexton Blake—was like fuel to the flames of the colonel's wrath. He was at first convinced that the name of the detested vintage had been purposely used, and his passion did not cool until an apology had been offered to him by Herr Bentheim, after it had been intimated to the latter in a whisper by Major Wolff why the reference to the Johannsberger Cabinet had given offence.

The old wine was not brought from the cellar, nor was any further mention made of the subject. The shadow blew over, and good spirits were restored. For another half hour the party sat there, talking and laughing, telling anecdotes, and sipping liqueurs, until the reek from their cigars hung in the motionless air like a blue mist; a mist through which

the forms of the captives, who were still awake, appeared to be blurred and indistinct.

And now, as a clock was striking the hour of eleven, Pedro slunk quietly and unobtrusively from under the table, and crept very softly across the floor, putting each foot down in the manner of a cat stalking a bird. Whether or not he had been ruminating on his act of betrayal while he lay at Colonel Wenzel's feet, and had reasoned out a means of undoing the mischief he had wrought to those he loved so dearly, must be left to the judgment of the reader. At all events, it was a shrewd and deliberate purpose that had brought him forth from the table, and it must be admitted that he could not have formed that purpose had he not been capable of thought. There are people who will stubbornly deny that, but it must be remembered that they have never had an opportunity of knowing such a dog as belongs to Sexton Blake.

The company were too busy with their cigars and glasses, too much absorbed in a story that Captain Webber was telling, to pay any attention to Pedro. Nobody saw him as he stole furtively on to the open doorway, and over the threshold into the adjoining room, where he paused for a couple of seconds. He looked

officers are looking this way, and they will soon suspect what is going on."

"I don't believe they can see us distinctly, my boy, on account of the tobacco-smoke. There is just a chance that we shall be able to escape."

"By heavens, gov'nor, if we only could!"

"Be careful. Say no more."

Hope of escape! How the thought thrilled the prisoners, and what keen, harrowing suspense they endured as they lay there on the couch watching the company in the adjoining room, and fearing that at any instant the hound's object would be discovered and frustrated. But the officers were not thinking of their captives, were not trying to peer into the dim haze of smoke. They laughed loudly at the story that had just been told, and puffed the harder at their cigars as another tale was started by their host.

"You will enjoy this one," declared Herr Bentheim; and all of his guests fixed their eyes on him as he continued.

The words of the speaker and the sound of wind and rain drowned what slight noise was made by Pedro as he went on with his task, which was soon accomplished by his firm, strong teeth. In less than three minutes he had nearly severed the ropes that bound his master's wrists together,



"Get back, you rascals!" shouted Sexton Blake. "Get back, or you will be sorry!" "Thank you, Herr Treptow!" panted the police official. "I needed help badly!" For a long time they stood holding their assailants off with their blades, while jugs and bottles and glasses narrowly missed their heads.

back over his shoulder, and then, with his tail between his legs and his big head hanging low, he trotted to the couch, and stood in a crestfallen attitude before his master.

Though Blake knew that the hound had sufficient sagacity to understand and obey almost any command, he did not believe that he and the lad would be able to escape even if they had the use of their limbs. He was under the impression, indeed, that the officers had seen Pedro slip into the next room, and that they would promptly call him back.

"Good old fellow!" he said kindly, in a low tone, observing that the dog was remorseful and wanted to be comforted. "It is all right, old chap. I am not angry with you."

Pedro had been kindly spoken to more than once since the capture, but he had been craving for another token of forgiveness, that he might be sure of his attentions being appreciated; and now that he had received the further token, now that the cheering words had been spoken, he rose up on his hind legs, and thrust his muzzle against his master's hands.

"What is he doing?" Tinker inquired in a whisper, after looking on curiously for a moment.

"Hush; not so loud!" replied Blake, under his breath. "The splendid old dog is biting at my wrist-fetters," he added. "What do you think of that?"

"My word, how clever of him! Fancy him doing that without being told to! But it will be no use. The

and then, by one jerk, Sexton Blake snapped the remaining strand that had been all but gnawed through. He had a knife in his pocket, with which he quickly cut his legs free, and did the same for the lad's wrists and ankles.

The two were on their feet, stretching their cramped limbs; and now, as they were about to steal over to the window, their blurred figures were seen by one of the party in the dining-room.

"By himmel, the spies are loose!" shouted Colonel Wenzel.

"And the dog is with them!" cried Major Wolff. "He must have helped them to get rid of their fetters!"

THE 19th CHAPTER.

Across Country—A Narrow Escape—A Haven of Safety.

THE alarm had no more than been raised when Pedro uttered a gruff bark, and looked inquiringly at Tinker and his master. Up from the table, with scraping of feet and jingle of sword equipments, sprang the officers and their host, and in such haste that their chairs were sent clattering to the floor; but by then Blake had slammed the door, shut and rolled the big couch against it, and the lad had no less promptly dashed to the nearest window, and jerked the curtains aside and flung the casement open.

"Here goes for it!" exclaimed Tinker. "Quick, gov'nor, quick!"

"Out with you!" bade Blake. "I'm coming!"

They sprang through the open window, one immediately behind the other, and they had scarcely landed on the terrace when the bloodhound followed them, whining eagerly. They had no time now to lay any plans or to praise Pedro for what he had done. They had gained their liberty, and that was all they thought of for the present. Wild with delight, breathing the air of freedom in deep gulps, they ran on as fast as they could straight away from the side of the house, indifferent to the pelting rain and the shrieking gale.

And as they ran blindly, amid trees and shrubbery, a tumult swelled louder and louder behind them, audible above the raging of the elements. There was a frantic clamour of voices and a banging of doors, telling that the pursuit had begun.

"They won't be able to find us in the dark," panted the lad, "and if they stop to get lanterns we shall have plenty of time to shake them off. We are certainly in luck, gov'nor!"

"Yes, thanks to our noble dog," replied Blake. "That was about the cleverest thing he ever did. We should be able to keep our liberty this time, since our enemies will be deprived of Pedro's services. It will

three or four fields and had looked back from the edge of a plantation that they saw several lights winking far behind them in the direction of Herr Bentheim's estate.

"They are searching for us with lanterns," Tinker said gloomily. "They will follow our tracks over the muddy ground."

"Perhaps so," assented Blake; "though there was no mud where we scaled the fence. Ah, our enemies have been deceived!" he continued. "They believe we have taken to that road which had been washed so clean by the rain that no footprints would show on it."

"You are right," declared the lad. "Two of the lights are moving to the left and one in the opposite direction."

Such was obviously the case, and it meant that there was no immediate danger from pursuit.

In cheerful spirits, though they were drenched to the skin, the fugitives plunged into the dark woods, and emerged on open country again. Pedro, no longer depressed, bounded at their side, and his presence was a great comfort to them.

"He will be a source of danger," said the detective; "but I would rather he was with us than with our enemies, who would have put him on our scent."

"We must be careful not to let anybody see him," replied Tinker. "That will be difficult, I am afraid."

"Not if we hide by day, gov'nor, and travel only by night. We will try to get to some seaport, won't we?"

"Yes, that will be the best plan. But we won't discuss the future now, my boy. We must first be sure that we have thrown our pursuers off the track, and then find a place of shelter."

All was quiet behind them, and they could no longer see the lanterns of the searchers, who, they were satisfied, were not coming in their direction. For an hour they pressed on, now running, and now walking; and at length, when they had gone at least four miles from the scene of their escape, they came to another hard, clean-washed road, which appeared to be a highway.

And now, in order to make more sure of deceiving their pursuers, they resorted to a cunning stratagem.

Having crossed the road, and dived into a plantation that was on the opposite side of it, they fell in with a little stream, and waded along this for fifty or sixty yards, when they left it and retraced their steps to the road again.

"We will follow this as long as it is safe to do so," said Blake. "The hard surface won't retain our footprints, for one thing, and we shall cover more ground than if we were to—"

"Hark!" interrupted the lad. "I hear something."

A muffled, drumming sound was swelling above the noise of the elements from the rear, and that it was the clatter of many hoofs was obvious to the fugitives, who had no doubt that the Prussian cavalry from Lemberg was approaching.

"Shall we take to the woods?" exclaimed Tinker.

"No, not yet," replied Blake. "We'll keep to the road for a time, since we cannot be seen."

They broke into a run; and when they had dashed on for a hundred yards or so, with the rain pelting in their faces and the wind howling fiendishly at their ears, they dived opposite to another road that crossed the highway they were on. And here they very nearly met with a terrible death.

They saw two big, glaring lights flashing at them, and as they paused in bewilderment and confusion, not knowing for an instant which way to turn, a big motor-car, which they had not heard owing to the roaring of the gale, stopped within less than two feet of them.

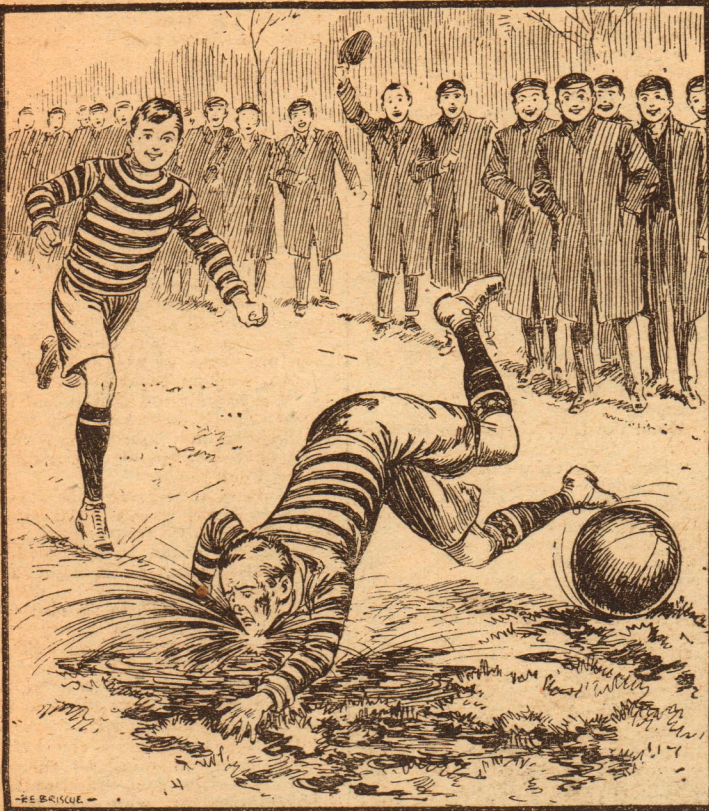
"What do you mean by getting in my way, you blockheads?" shouted an angry voice. "I might have killed you!"

With that, before it could occur to the startled fugitives to take to their heels, the owner of the voice sprang from the driving-seat of the car—which was a covered one—and strode close up to Blake and the lad, who saw with surprise, and with immediate recognition, an elderly, heavily-built man with a rough beard and moustache, who wore spectacles, and was muffled to his throat in a waterproof coat.

(Another long instalment next Tuesday in the BOYS' FRIEND.)

THE NEW BROOM

MAXWELL SCOTT'S
New School Serial.



In his excitement and his haste, Cyrus trod on the ball, and, to the intense amusement of the spectators, he went down with a crash, and landed on his face in one of the many pools of standing water.

AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE NEW READER OF THIS GRAND SERIAL.

Philip Ashley, a brilliant young scholar, saves the life of Sir David Rendle's only daughter. In consequence of this action, Sir David adopts him, sends him to Rayton College, giving him all the benefits he intended for his unscrupulous nephew, who has deceived him, and whom he has now packed off to Canada to make a fresh start. The new term at Rayton College is to begin, and Phil starts on his journey to Rayton. He is accompanied by Cyrus A. Sharpe,

an American lad,

whom you will all like.

Arriving at the school the collegers, to their great indignation, learn that Dr. Gandy, the new head-master, is a vegetarian and a great believer in fresh air, and he has already adopted many eccentric ideas in the school.

The head-master has an apparent disregard for sport, and instead of letting the collegers spend their half-holidays in football and such sports, he is going to institute a series of lectures, and to-morrow being Saturday, the first half-holiday lecture is going to be delivered. It is to be a lecture dealing with "Healthy Food for Healthy Boys," but the juniors are determined to play their football and let the lecture go unattended.

(Now read this week's splendid chapters.)

The Practice Match.

HEAVY rain fell during Friday night, and as the field which Merrick had allotted to the new club was low-lying and badly drained, it presented anything but an inviting appearance on Saturday morning. Several parts of the field were actually under water, and though most of this dried up in the course of the morning, it left the ground in that waterlogged and boggy condition which had earned for the field the nickname of the "Swamp."

Neither mud nor water, however, could damp the ardour of Philip and his fellow enthusiasts, and as soon as dinner was over—that is to say, about two o'clock—they donned their jerseys and football-boots, armed themselves with a marker and a measuring-tape, and trooped down to the Swamp.

The school joiner had already fixed up one of the goals, which for the present consisted simply of two uprights and a crossbar. Goal-nets and corner-flags were luxuries yet to be obtained. While he and his assistant were fixing up the other goal the boys measured out the ground, and marked it in accordance with the rules.

At first they had the field to themselves, but by-and-by a number of juniors strolled down to the ground to watch the proceedings. These

were presently joined by other boys, including Merrick and one or two seniors, and by the time the ground had been marked out there was quite a respectable crowd of spectators, all of whom were Rugbyites, and many of whom resented the introduction of the rival code.

"Awful rot, I call it!" said one of the seniors, in Philip's hearing. "Merrick oughtn't to have encouraged 'em by grantin' them a field. Rugger has always been the Rayton game, and we don't want any Soccer here."

"There are twenty of us who want it, anyhow," said Philip, "and we've as much right to play the game we like as you have to play the game you like."

"There's no accountin' for tastes, I suppose," said another, "but how anybody can like Soccer, I can't imagine. It's such a rotten game—not worth watchin'."

"Well, nobody has asked you to watch," retorted Tubb, who overheard the remark. "The Gander is givin' a lecture this afternoon. Go and improve your mind, or what you call your mind, by listenin' to that."

A few minutes later a bell rang. It was the summons to the boys to assemble in the big school-room to hear the first of Dr. Gandy's half-holiday lectures.

"Now, boys, come along!" cried Merrick. "There goes the bell. Ashley, Holcroft, Tubb! Don't be stupid! Don't set the doctor's back up. Bring your fellows along. The lecture won't last more than an hour, and then you can have your practice match."

"We're not coming," said Philip firmly. "We've arranged to have a practice match, and we're going to have it—now."

Merrick appealed to Holcroft, to Tubb, to Rigden—to all the members of the new club, but they all returned the same answer. Then he addressed himself to the other juniors, those who were not members of the new club, and had only come to watch the practice.

"Come along, you fellows!" he said. "We'll be late if we don't hurry."

"Don't you go!" shouted Holcroft. "Be men! Stand up for your rights! This is only the thin end of the wedge. If you give in to the Gander now, you'll never be able to call your souls your own. Our half-holidays are our own. Do as we are goin' to do, and show the Gander that we'll not let him dictate to us how we shall spend our halves."

His words had the desired effect, for none of the juniors wanted to go to

the lecture, and they only needed a little encouragement to stay away. "I'm not goin' to his lecture," cried one.

"Neither am I," shouted another. Most of the others followed suit, and in the end only Merrick and the seniors and two or three faint-hearted juniors left the field, followed by groans and shouts of "Cowards!"

After their departure, Philip and Holcroft proceeded to pick sides. As there were only twenty boys available, it was necessary, of course, to play ten a side, and these the rival captains marshalled in the following order:

Philip's side: Hepworth, goal; Pritchard, back; White, Atkin, and Cartwright, half-backs; Smith, Card, Philip, Cyrus, and Rigden, forwards.

Holcroft's side: Pettigrew, goal; Seymour, back; King, Dixon, and Jackson, half-backs; Barker, Holcroft, Tubb, Rutherford, and Carfax, forwards.

As already stated, Philip and Holcroft, Tubb and Rigden, Rutherford and Card, were the only members of the club who had any claim to be considered good players. The rest had only a very elementary notion of how the game should be played. Cyrus, for example, had never kicked a football in his life, but this did not prevent him being one of the most enthusiastic and excited players on the field.

"Say, what am I to do?" he asked, when Philip had won the toss and the ball had been placed on the centre-mark.

"Watch the others, and you'll soon get into the hang of the game," said Philip. "The main idea is to get the ball through that goal in front of us, and to prevent the other side getting it through that goal behind us. You may kick the ball, or butt it with your head, but you mustn't handle it. You may charge a fellow, but not from behind, and you mustn't push him or hold him. But watch the others, and you'll soon catch on. Now, Holcroft, are you ready?"

"Yes." Philip whistled—there was no referee—and Holcroft kicked off. The first game of Soccer ever played at Rayton College had begun.

Needless to say, it was not a scientific game. Even if the rival teams had been capable of giving a scientific exhibition, the state of the ground was all against good play. In some parts it was a veritable quagmire, and in others it was covered with shallow pools of water.

No, it was not a scientific game. It was just a good-humoured, rough-and-tumble scramble in the mud. Most of the boys were more than content if they managed to kick the ball, without caring where they kicked it. Philip and Card, on one side, and Holcroft and Tubb on the other, occasionally put in a bit of really good play, but their efforts were invariably neutralised by the bungling of their companions.

If it was not a scientific game, however, it was by no means devoid of incident. For instance, about ten minutes from the start a lofty kick

by Carfax dropped the ball a yard or two in front of Cyrus. "Now—sharp! Now's your chance!" cried Philip. "Pass the ball across to me!"

Feeling that the eyes of the world were upon him, Cyrus dashed after the slowly rolling ball. In his excitement and his haste, however, he trod on the ball, and after wildly sawing the air with his arms, to the intense amusement of the spectators, he went down with a crash, and landed on his face in one of the many pools of standing water.

Somewhat winded by his fall, he slowly scrambled to his feet, and wiped some of the liquid mud from his eyes and mouth. Scarcely had he done so ere he saw Tubb dribbling the ball towards him. "Stop him! Tackle him!" yelled Card.

Waving his arms, Cyrus rushed at Tubb. He put out his hands to push him off the ball, and then he suddenly remembered that Philip had told him that pushing was not allowed.

"Say, what am I to do?" he shouted, appealing to Philip.

"You're to get out of the way; that's what you've got to do!" said Tubb, with a grin.

As he uttered these words, Tubb's shoulder crashed into Cyrus's ribs, and the next instant Cyrus was lying on his back in the mud, wondering vaguely whether it was an earthquake or a cyclone that had struck him.

"I shall write to my poppa about this!" he wailed, as he dragged himself wearily to his feet. "I have been brutally assaulted. I—"

"Look out!"

A warning shout from Philip caused him to spin round with a gasp of alarm. Rigden had robbed Tubb of the ball, and had passed it out to Philip. Unfortunately for Cyrus, he happened to be standing right in the line of Rigden's pass, and before he had sense enough to step aside or to duck his head, the ball smote him a resounding whack on the breast-bone, and once more laid him flat on his back.

That settled matters so far as Cyrus was concerned. He had had enough of British football. His ambition to play for the Corinthians had received its death-blow. Not for all the wealth of the Indies would he remain on the field another moment.

Aching in every limb, and caked with mud from head to foot, he picked himself up, and was in the act of limping off the field, when he saw Dr. Gandy stride through the gate, with Mr. Sopworth and Mr. Walker close behind him.

The gate, it should be explained, was exactly behind the goal which Pettigrew was defending; and the doctor, who was furiously angry, was coming to demand that the boys should instantly abandon their game and repair to the big school-room to listen to his lecture.

"Ashley—Ashley, there's the doctor coming!" shouted Cyrus.

But nobody heard him, and nobody

saw the doctor, for all eyes and all attention were concentrated on Philip, who had secured the ball from Rutherford, and was dribbling it down the centre in brilliant style, with Holcroft and Tubb in close pursuit.

"Oh, well played! Go it, Blot! Down him, Tubb! Tackle him! Back up, Dixon!"

From players and spectators alike rose a perfect pandemonium of yells and cheers. With the exception of Cyrus, not a boy on the field saw the angry figure of the doctor, who was now but a yard or two behind the goal.

"Shoot—shoot!" Ten yards in front of goal, with only Pettigrew to beat, Philip steadied himself, and sent in a terrific straight drive. Pettigrew, who had never kept goal before, sprang at the ball, but missed it. With lightning speed it flew between the posts, straight for Dr. Gandy's head.

Too late the doctor saw it coming. With a gasp of alarm he hurriedly wheeled round, and even as he did so the ball, heavy with mud and sodden with water, struck him a violent blow on the back of the head and propelled him forward into the arms of Mr. Sopworth.

Mr. Sopworth promptly lost his balance and sat down. In a wild attempt to save himself from falling, he flung his arms round the doctor's neck. This, of course, only had the effect of dragging the doctor down with him, and in less time far than it takes to tell, Mr. Sopworth was floundering on his back, with the doctor sprawling on the top of him.

"Oh, sir, I'm awfully sorry!" cried Philip, running forward and assisting the doctor to his feet. "I didn't see you were behind the goal. Are you hurt, sir?"

"Hurt!" thundered the doctor, glaring at Philip through his goggles. "I am very much hurt indeed. It is a wonder my skull was not cracked. And you, the author of this diabolical outrage, dare to ask if I am hurt!"

"Nobody asks if I am hurt," moaned Mr. Sopworth. "I say, nobody asks if I am hurt."

"Nobody wants to know," snapped the doctor. "Get up, and don't make yourself ridiculous."

"I trust—" began Mr. Sopworth, with great dignity.

"Hold your tongue!" said the doctor irritably. Then he turned to Mr. Walker. "You see," he said, "what comes of allowing the boys to indulge in these brutal and degrading pastimes. It is a mercy I wasn't killed. Even as it is, I fear I shall have an attack of concussion of the brain. I wish now that I had stuck to my original intention, and forbidden football altogether. But I shall certainly do so now. Yes, I shall certainly do so now."

"I hope not," said Mr. Walker earnestly. "It was a pure accident, and Ashley has apologised. Are you not taking too harsh a view of the affair?"

(Continued on the next page.)



Too late, the doctor saw it coming. With a gasp of alarm he hurriedly wheeled round, and even as he did so the ball, heavy with mud and sodden with water, struck him a violent blow on the back of the head and propelled him forward into the arms of Mr. Sopworth.

"It is not only that I have been savagely assaulted," said the doctor. "That is not the only offence these boys have committed. They defied me by refusing to attend my lecture."

"That was wrong of them, I admit," said Mr. Walker. "But"—he lowered his voice so that the boys should not hear—"if you prohibit football, you will raise such a spirit of revolt among the boys as will almost certainly lead to open mutiny. Punish Ashley, if you wish—punish the boys for absenting themselves from your lecture, if you will—but don't, I beg of you, take the extreme step of forbidding them to play their favourite outdoor game."

This was sound advice, but whether the doctor would have taken it or not it is hard to say. Before he could reply, however, Cruft, the new school porter, came hurrying through the gate with a telegram in his hand.

"For you, sir," he said, handing it to the doctor. "Is there any answer?"

The doctor tore the telegram open and read it. A troubled look came into his face. He consulted his watch, and turned to Cruft.

"Yes, there will be an answer," he said. "Tell the boy to wait. I will follow you in a moment."

Then he turned to Mr. Walker.

"This is a summons to the bedside of a very dear friend of mine," he said. "He is ill, and the doctors fear he is dying. I must leave for Manchester by the next train. I will deal with the question of games when I return. In the meantime, will you please inform the boys in the big school-room that there will be no lecture this afternoon?"

"I will," said Dr. Walker. "I suppose you cannot say when you will return?"

"No," said the doctor. "I will wire to you from Manchester."

Saying which, he turned on his heel without another word and followed Cruft up to the school.

A Lull in the Storm.

THREE weeks elapsed before Dr. Gandy returned—three weeks during which Rayton College, with Mr. Walker in charge, reverted to the habits and customs of the good old days of Dr. Paul.

There was no longer any talk of abolishing outdoor games. No menace of vegetarian dinners hung over the boys' heads. Half-holiday lectures were undreamed of. Only the hated cubicles and the open dormitory windows, which Mr. Walker declined to interfere with, remained to remind the boys of the rule of Dr. Gandy.

During these three weeks the new Association football club, under Philip's captaincy, progressed by leaps and bounds. But for this the Walkerites and the Paulites, having now no common enemy to fight, would probably have dissolved their alliance, and would have resumed their former rivalry. But their interest in the new club, to which members of both Houses belonged, kept them together and cemented the alliance.

The popularity of the new club, however, was not confined to the twenty original members. The seniors, it is true, still kept aloof, and stuck to Rugger, but several juniors, who had always played Rugger before, joined the new club, and quickly adapted themselves to the new code. Even Cyrus repented of his decision to have nothing more to do with football, and, under Philip's careful tutelage, made very fair progress in the game.

All this gave Philip the greatest delight. Heart and soul he threw himself into the task of licking his men into shape. Holcroft loyally seconded

his efforts, and by the end of the three weeks a team had been built up which Philip proudly declared was ready to take the field against all-comers.

"Then let us challenge St. Benedict's," said Tubb. "I'm tired of pick-up games and practice matches. Let's have a real match. Let's challenge St. Benedict's."

The idea was received with great enthusiasm by the other members of the club, and accordingly Philip wrote to the captain of St. Benedict's School, offering to play their first eleven on any Wednesday or Saturday that was convenient to them, either at Rayton or at St. Benedict's.

On the very day that this challenge was despatched—the third Friday in October—Dr. Gandy returned. As afterwards appeared, his friend had recovered from his illness, but only after a long and painful fight with death.

It was Tubb who brought the news to Big Room.

"The Gander's back!" he cried, bursting into the room at tea-time. "I've just seen him."

A dismal chorus of hollow groans greeted this announcement.

"And we've none of us learned to play any musical instrument!" said Rigden.

"And we haven't started keepin' pets!" said Card.

"And we still indulge in brutal and degrading pastimes!" said Philip.

"Dear me! I'm afraid our respected head-master will be terribly disappointed with us."

There was another chorus of groans.

"The trouble will begin all over again now, I suppose," sighed Hepworth.

"We've had three weeks of peace, but now we'll have to buckle on our armour and start fightin' again."

"Perhaps he'll have learned wisdom while he has been away," suggested Rigden. "Perhaps he'll have come to the conclusion that it's no use tryin' to force his silly fads down our throats."

Philip shook his head.

"There's not much hope of that, I'm afraid," he said. "He's too old and too pig-headed to change."

Philip was right. Dr. Gandy had not changed his views in the very least, and he had come back to the school more determined than ever to carry out his so-called "reforms."

As he had lost three weeks, he was anxious to lose no further time in getting to work; so on Saturday morning he called the boys together, and after expressing his delight at being back among them—a delight which the boys by no means shared—he announced that dinner that day would be "a glorious, health-giving meal of purely vegetable products."

"First of all you will have lentil soup," he said. "After that you will have nut cutlets—nuts ground up and pressed into the shape of mutton cutlets—and delicious seaweed pudding. You will enjoy the meal, I know, and at three o'clock you will assemble in the big school-room, where I will deliver my postponed lecture on 'Healthy Food for Healthy Boys,' and explain to you the life-giving properties of the food you have just consumed."

This announcement was received by the boys with chilling silence, but when Tubb and his chums returned to Big Room their indignation found vent in a storm of angry protests.

"I don't mind lentil soup," said Tubb; "in fact, I rather like it. But sham mutton cutlets made of nuts! And seaweed pudding! Ugh! The very thought of the slimy stuff makes me sick!"

"It isn't a question of whether we like the stuff or not," said Rigden; "it's the principle of the thing that matters. It's bein' made to eat the stuff, whether we want it or not, that I object to."

"Exactly!" said Philip. "What we object to is the dictation and the tyranny. If the doctor had told us that nuts and lentils and seaweed were really very nice and very good for us, and had asked us to try them, I'd have tried them willingly. But he hasn't asked us. He doesn't consult us in any way. He just tells us we've got to have the muck, whether we want it or not. I vote we all turn passive resisters."

"What's that?" growled Tubb.

"What I mean is this," said Philip. "I propose that we go into dinner as usual, and don't make any fuss or kick up any row, but just sit quietly at the table and leave the stuff on our plates—never touch it, you know—never eat a spoonful or a mouthful or a crumb."

"But we can't go from breakfast-time to tea-time without anything to eat," objected Tubb.

"We needn't," said Philip. "We can send down to old Jerry's for some grub at the end of the morning school, and we can have a scratch meal before we go into dinner."

Eventually, after a prolonged discussion, Philip's plan was agreed upon, and as soon as morning school was over Card and Rigden slipped down to the village tuckshop and returned with an ample supply of sausage-rolls and ham sandwiches. These were hastily consumed in one of the outbuildings, and then, at one o'clock, the boys trooped into Big Room for dinner.

The Vegetarian Dinner.

THERE were three long tables in Big Room, one across the end of the room and one down each side. Mr. Walker and the seniors sat at the top table, and the juniors, who numbered about thirty, sat at the side tables.

This, it must be understood, was in Mr. Walker's House. A similar arrangement prevailed in the doctor's house, where Holcroft and the rest of the Paulites were quartered. For the present, however, we are not concerned with what happened at the doctor's House on this eventful day. We are only describing what happened at Mr. Walker's House.

When all the boys had assembled, and grace had been said, the butler brought in a large tureen of lentil soup, which he set in front of Mr. Walker. With due solemnity Mr. Walker ladled it out into the plates—one plate for each of the seniors and thirty for the juniors.

When all the boys had been served Mr. Walker helped himself. Just at first he did not notice that anything unusual was taking place, but presently, having finished his soup, he glanced round the room, and saw, to his astonishment, that, though all the seniors had cleared their plates, not one of the juniors had even taken up his spoon.

"Ashley—Tubb—Sharpe, what are you waiting for?" he exclaimed. "Why don't you begin?"

"I guess I'm not hungry to-day, sir," said Cyrus.

"Neither am I, sir," said Philip.

"I've no appetite to-day, sir," said Tubb.

Mr. Walker realised at once what was in the wind. Before he could say anything, however, the door opened, and Dr. Gandy walked in. He had come to see how the boys were enjoying their "health-giving meal."

"Well, now, boys—," he began; then his eyes fell on the thirty plates of soup. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, addressing Mr. Walker. "Why have these boys not taken their soup?"

"They say they are not hungry to-day," said Mr. Walker gravely.

The doctor glared at the juniors as if he could devour them. He rather hoped that some of them would utter a protest or make some cheeky remark, and so give him an excuse for punishing them. But they were as quiet and well-behaved as the strictest head-master could desire. Not one of them spoke or moved. Each of them sat with his hands clasped in front of him, and his eyes demurely fixed on his plate of soup.

"This is an insolent conspiracy to defy my authority," said the doctor, in a choking voice, "but I will teach you that I am not to be defied and disobeyed by a pack of ignorant schoolboys. I insist that you shall eat the food I have provided for you. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Philip.

"Then begin at once, all of you."

The thirty juniors rose to their feet like one man.

"Please, sir, we are not hungry to-day," they repeated in chorus.

Then they all sat down again, and resumed their contemplation of their plates of soup.

Fury blazed in the doctor's eyes. His face twitched with anger. He clenched his fists, and Mr. Walker, fearing that he was about to lose control of himself, and strike some of the boys, hurriedly rose to his feet, took the doctor's arm, and drew him outside the door.

"Let me beg of you to be calm," he said earnestly. "I understand as well as you do that the juniors have adopted this attitude as a protest against being compelled to have a diet they do not like."

"Their likes and dislikes have nothing to do with the case," snarled the doctor. "Am I to be dictated to by a pack of schoolboys? Am I not head-master here? Do I not know better than they do what is good for them?"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Walker. "But if they say they are not hungry what can you do? There is no rule of the school to compel a boy to eat when he isn't hungry."

"I will make them eat!" said the doctor furiously. "I will not be browbeaten! I have said that they shall eat that soup, and they shall eat it! Not one of them shall leave the room until every plate has been cleared! I will not go back to them now, but I will return in half an hour, and in the meantime you can tell them what I have said."

Mr. Walker returned to Big Room and delivered the doctor's message, adding a few words of persuasion of his own. But his words fell on deaf ears. The juniors had hoisted the flag of revolt, and they meant to keep it flying. They made no scene and created no disturbance, but they continued to sit and stare at their soup, and made no attempt to take it.

The "nut cutlets" were brought in and served out to the seniors, who ate them—or a little of them—in solemn silence.

"I suppose it's no use asking any of you if you will have a cutlet?" said Mr. Walker, turning to the juniors.

Again the thirty boys rose to their feet.

"Thank you, sir, but we are not hungry to-day!" they chorused. And sat down again.

The same scene was enacted when the "seaweed pudding" was brought in. The seniors ate sparingly of the concoction, making wry faces behind Mr. Walker's back, and the meal had just concluded when the doctor returned.

One glance at the side tables showed him that the juniors had not touched their soup. Shaking with rage, he signed to Mr. Walker and the seniors to leave the room.

When the last of them had departed he shut the door, and then for ten solid minutes he strode up and down the room, storming and raving at the juniors like one demented. But the juniors sat quietly through it all, and never once removed their steadfast gaze from the plates of soup.

At the end of his harangue the doctor opened the door, removed the key from the inside, and thrust it into the keyhole on the outside.

"I am now going to lock you up in this room," he announced. "If you will not listen to reason, perhaps hunger will subdue your mutinous spirits. I will return in an hour, when I hope to find that you have come to your senses. But I warn you that however long it may be necessary to keep you under lock and key—even though I have to keep you here all day and all night and all tomorrow—not one of you will be allowed to leave this room until every one of those plates have been cleared."

"Then I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to attend your lecture this afternoon, sir," said Tubb innocently.

"Or to go to church to-morrow," added Philip.

The doctor glowered at them through his goggles. He tried to speak, but rage and exasperation choked him. Finally, without a word, he stalked out of the room, slammed the door to behind him, and turned the key.

"Well, chaps, we're fairly in for it now!" said Philip. "But are we downhearted?"

"No!" roared the others.

"We've only got to stick together and we're bound to win," said Philip. "At the worst, the doctor daren't keep us locked in this room without food for more than twenty-four hours. Then he'll have to knuckle under and let us out and give us some decent grub."

"Twenty-four hours is a long time to fast," said Tubb gloomily. "But I'll do it, before I'll give in."

"I only mentioned twenty-four hours as the outside limit," said Philip. "As a matter of fact, I don't believe he'll dare to keep us without food anything like so long as that. For one thing, I don't think Mr. Walker would let him. We know that Walker is on our side—remember the dormitory windows—and I'm pretty sure—Hallo! Who's that?"

There was a tap at the door.

"Who is it?" shouted Philip.

There was no reply, but the person outside the locked door—whoever it was—pushed a small paper-backed pamphlet under the lower edge of the door, and then stole quietly away.

Philip darted to the door and picked up the pamphlet, the others crowding round him and peering over his shoulder.

It proved to be a copy of the rules and regulations issued by the govern-

ing body of the school, and somebody—probably the person who had pushed it under the door—had marked a cross opposite the following regulation:

35.—On not more than one day a week fish may be served for dinner instead of meat. On all other days there shall be provided a sufficient supply of hot, freshly-cooked butcher's meat of British origin. No tinned, frozen, chilled, or otherwise preserved meat may be used.

"Hurrah!" cried Philip, waving the pamphlet above his head. "Now we've got him—fairly got him! This bowls him out completely! This knocks his vegetarian dinners on the head! He has broken the regulations by not providing us with meat to-day, so he hasn't a leg to stand on. We've only got to show him this rule and demand our rights and he's bound to haul down his flag."

"I wonder who pushed the pamphlet under the door?" said Tubb.

"You don't!" said Philip. "You know who it was as well as I do."

"Mr. Walker?" said Tubb.

"Of course," said Philip. "It's another of his dodges to help us in our fight. We mustn't give him away, of course, but—Three cheers for good old Walker!"

The cheers were given with a will; and then the boys settled down to await Dr. Gandy's return.

When he came back, about a quarter to three, he brought Mr. Walker with him.

"Ah, you are still in an obstinate mood, I see!" he said, glancing at the untouched soup. "You still refuse to obey my orders."

"We will obey your orders, sir, when you obey the regulations of the school," said Philip boldly.

"Insolence!" exclaimed the doctor. "How dare you speak to me like that! How dare you insinuate that I have broken the regulations of the school!"

Philip drew the pamphlet from his pocket, handed it to the doctor, and pointed to Rule 36.

"According to that rule, sir," he said, "we are entitled to have meat or fish for dinner every day. To-day we have had neither. We respectfully claim our rights."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the others. The doctor's face was a study of impotent rage and chagrin.

He turned to Mr. Walker for support, but he got no support in that quarter.

"The boys are certainly within their rights," said Mr. Walker, in a low voice. "That is one of the rules of the school, and neither you nor I have the power to alter it."

"It is a most absurd and ridiculous rule!" snarled the discomfited doctor. "I shall write at once to the governors and insist on the rule being cancelled."

"Are we to be kept locked up in this room, sir, without any food until you get the governors' reply?" asked Rigden, looking as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

The doctor did not answer.

There was no fight left in him. He knew that he was beaten, and his only desire was to get out of a humiliating position with as little loss of dignity as possible.

It was Philip who came to his rescue. Like all true gentlemen, Philip had no wish to "crow" over a beaten foe. He and his chums had beaten the doctor; they could afford to be generous and "let him down easily."

"Now that we have gained our point, sir," he said, addressing the doctor, "we have no desire to prolong this unfortunate dispute. We have successfully vindicated our rights, and so—"

He sat down at the table and began to take his soup. The others followed his example; and when the last plate had been cleared they rose to their feet, saluted the two masters, and walked quietly out of the room.

They had won all along the line, and they had robbed their victory of none of its glory, but had added to it by their generous and sportsman-like concession.

Whether or not the doctor wrote to the governors about cancelling the rule was never known. If he did he wrote in vain, for Rule No. 36 still remained in force; and from that day to the end of Dr. Gandy's stay at Rayton College nothing more was ever heard of vegetarian dinners.

(Another grand instalment of this ripping school serial next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND. Patrick Morris is hard at work on a New Serial for the "Green Un.")

SANDOW'S BOOK FREE.

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health and Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development by exercise. Special Offer: To every reader who writes at once a copy of this book will be sent free.

Address: No. 5, SANDOW HALL, BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.

THE AEROPLANE WRECKERS.

An Absorbing Long Complete Story. Written by MARTIN SHAW.

THE 1st CHAPTER. Something Like a Pleasant Surprise.

IT was breaking-up day at Barchester School, and the usual scenes of boyish jollification inevitable on such an occasion were in full swing.

Boxes were being dragged hither and thither, shouts of laughter mingled with cries of expostulation as harassed servants and cabdrivers endeavoured to perform their duties in the midst of a crossfire of youthful badinage. Good-byes were being said boisterously. Everywhere was bustle, confusion, mirth, and merry-making.

Not quite everywhere, however. Apart from the general din and hubbub a little group of five boys were standing, and to judge by the expression on their faces the quintet found but little to appeal to their risible faculties. They were, indeed, all lapsed in the profoundest gloom.

Neither was the reason of their glum countenances far to seek, for the decree had gone forth that they were to spend the summer vacation at Barchester.

Dick Leslie's parents were in India, Phil Fairhurst's brothers and sisters had been smitten by an infectious illness, Terence Mulvaney's father—a soldier—had been ordered away on active service in Afghanistan, Alec Henderson's mother was in Russia by the bedside of a dying sister, Ben Hurley's parents were in the United States. There was nothing for it, then, but that the five youngsters should remain at Barchester.

"It does seem beastly rot!" said Ben moodily. "It wouldn't be so bad if old Corker—the head-master, whose real name was Cochran—wasn't here. But he'll do all he can to spoil any rag we may want to get up. Fancy six weeks of old Corker and the little Corks! It's enough to drive us on to do something really desperate."

"The chap I'm most savage with is Lazenby," growled Fairhurst. "For the last few days he's been doing nothing but going around and rubbing it in. 'Hope you chaps'll have a decent time this vac.,' he said to me just now. 'It'll be jolly dull for you, I'm thinking. Keep up your pecker, my son.' That ain't cricket, to my mind."

"No; and it's not like Lazenby as a rule," put in Henderson. "I've always thought him one of the best up till now. We all know he's got pots of money, but, all the same, he's been a rare good sportsman all the time he's been at Barchester. I can't think what's come over him."

"Shure, and it's his head I'll be after punchin' if he isn't careful!" ejaculated the fiery Mulvaney, whose Irish brogue always became more pronounced when he was excited. "Begorra, but becus he's got a lot of brass infoirely, it's no reason why he should go round laughin' at us poor beggars. Where is he now?"

"I can tell you," said Ben Hurley, in a voice of profoundest gloom. "He's driven off home in a whacking great motor-car, and as he went he waved his hand to me and grinned like a monkey. Wait till next term! I'll show him how to grin on the other side of his face!"

"Wait till next term!" groused Fairhurst. "A nice long time we've got to wait till then, I'm thinking." "Oh, come, you chaps!" put in Dick Leslie, speaking for the first time. "Why not be a bit more down in the dumps? Anyhow, we've got no work for six weeks. There are five of us here, and there's some jolly fine country round Barchester that wants exploring. We need only see old Corker at meals, and not always then if we manage to put some grub in our pockets and stay away for the day sometimes."

"Trust Corker to keep his eye on us all the time," said Hurley, with a savage grin. "I know him. He'll be wanting to improve our minds all the time. Fat lot of letting us alone he'll do!"

"Well, I vote we get away from the crowd now," contributed Fairhurst. "I'm fed up with watching all the other chaps get away. Come up to my study and let's have a pow-wow. Or shall we go and have a knock up in the cricket-field?"

"Begorra, let's do that!" cried Mulvaney. "I'm just dyin' to let off some steam entirely. Supposin' ye bowl lobs to me, Hurley—half-volleys to leg for choice?"

"I'll bet I'll bowl you twice in an over," answered Hurley. "But come on! We may as well do that as anything else."

Half an hour's cricket, however, sufficed to assure the five boys that the gloom of the situation was not to be dispelled so easily. They accordingly adjourned to Fairhurst's study to discuss plans for the future.

Yet it must be admitted that the rest of that day passed on leaden wings. The deserted class-rooms, the empty studies, the unwonted silence that hung about cloisters and playground only served to emphasise the unpleasantness of the outlook, while old Corker was very trying with his well-meant efforts to put the youngsters at their ease. They were all heartily glad when bedtime came.

"I vote we start away after breakfast to-morrow," said Leslie, as he undressed, "and go for a long tramp, and if we're not back in time for grub I don't see what old Corker can do. We're not supposed to keep in bounds now, I take it. Anyhow, we've got holidays."

"Well, Oi'm not going to get up too early at all," ejaculated Mulvaney. "None of your turnin' out at half-past six for this child. Oi'll have me shavin' water at nine o'clock."

However, he was down to breakfast at half-past eight with the rest. The meal was not a success, due to the fact that the table was graced by Dr. and Mrs. Cochran and the two Miss Cochranes, a couple of giggling, simpering "flappers" who seemed to think that the whole affair was a joke contrived for their own especial benefit. The boys were heartily glad when the meal was finished and they were free to escape from the constraint of the head-master's presence.

"Do exactly as if you were at home, lads," said the head-master unctuously. "I wish you to have a pleasant holiday. May I suggest an expedition to the Roman villa at Billingbury? There you will find much to instruct and much to edify."

"Thank you, sir!" said Hurley. "That sounds very jolly!" Though his gloomy voice gave the lie to his words.

Outside the boys exchanged meaningful glances.

"Roman villa, begorra!" spluttered Terence. "Why couldn't he suggest a day's rabbiting? Does he think we're going to mug all our holiday? I'll be after puttin' some strychnine in his soup if he's not careful."

"Well, that would be a safe way of insuring a long and peaceful holiday," laughed Dick Leslie. "But let's be off and leave old Corker to stew in his own fat."

A few minutes later the little party was setting off down the drive that led to the roadway and the open country beyond.

Outside the entrance gates of the college a romy gipsy caravan, between the shafts of which was a capable roan mare, was standing, a disreputable-looking youth being seated in front, idly flicking at the mare's head with a whip.

There was something about the vehicle that made it look different from the usual run of itinerant vans. To begin with, it was very spick-and-span externally, while the harness was new and of the best. It was also longer than the ordinary caravan, and its windows were larger than would commend themselves to the average wandering vanner.

As the boys came into the roadway the youth on the caravan jumped to the ground and touched his forelock sheepishly. He was not an ill-favoured-looking fellow, and his face was bronzed as though from much life in the open air. A thatch of yellow hair protruded from beneath the brim of his battered hat. His clothes were of a nondescript type, and bore traces of much hard usage.

"Good-mornin', young gentlemen!" he said, in a curious wheezy voice. "I 'opes as 'ow I sees you all well."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure!" retorted Ben Hurley. "I suppose you don't want to sell that turn-out of yours, do you?"

The other cackled. "That's just what I do want!" he shrilled. "Name your price, young sir—name your price and it's yours."

Ben turned out his pockets with a grin. "Seven and fourpence-halfpenny," he said. "That's my price, and a very good price too! Is it a deal?"

"Rather!" responded the strange being, holding out his hand. "It's a bargain. Here you are young sir; take the van and go."

Dead silence followed this unlooked-

for speech. The five boys exchanged glances.

"Begorra!" muttered Murphy. "But the omadhaun is daft. It's after leavin' him we'd better be, bhoys. He's been and stole the turn-out, and it's in Quare Street we'll be after findin' ourselves."

"I'm not sure we'd better not communicate with the police, as it is," said Henderson, with severity, fixing the unknown youth with what was meant to be a very stern look. "You don't look like the sort of chap who would own a swell turn-out such as this. You'd better make a clean breast of it. Where did you pinch the caravan?"

The rawbone began to whimper softly.

"I didn't pinch it, neither!" he blubbered. "It was give me to do what I like with it by my papa, an' I'd rather have the seven bob and fourpence-a'penny than live in it on my lonesome. That's true, that is."

"Well, you'd better close with the poor little tootsie if that's the case," giggled Leslie. "I'll make it up to eight bob if you like, Ben."

"It would be a jolly fine rag to take the thing and go off!" cried Fairhurst. "Wouldn't old Corker have a fit if we didn't turn up tonight? We could get miles away by that time. Is the van fitted up, young feller-me-lad?"

The owner of the vehicle nodded. "It's fitted up proper," he replied. "an' I don't suppose old Corker'd mind if you didn't turn up, neither."

"What do you know about old Corker?" queried Henderson.

"More nor you think," came the answer. And then, with one quick gesture, the youth's hand went to his head to tear off his hat, and snatched off the yellow wig that concealed his own closely-cropped head of hair. He drew himself up erect and burst into a laugh.

"By Jove, you fellows," he yelled, "but I reckon I've diddled you all properly this time!"

"Lazenby!" The five spoke the word as one boy. Profound astonishment held them all spellbound. They could do nothing for a few seconds save stand still and stare at their old schoolfellow, who rocked himself to and fro in merriment.

"What a ripping jape!" he chortled. "What a clinking 'have'—eh what! Well, boys, how d'ye like the van? And what do ye say to a cruise in her? Better than sticking at Barchester for the rest of the vac.—eh?"

"What on earth d'ye mean, Lazenby?" cried Hurley.

"I'd better explain," came the response. "It was all my own idea. I knew, of course, that you fellows would have to stay here for the holidays, so I wrote to my governor and suggested he should hire a caravan for us all. Of course, I had to let

old Corker into the secret, and I must say he's kept it like a brick.

"I am afraid you all thought me a bit of a beast to gibe at you as I did, but I didn't want you to get any inkling of the wheeze. So here it is. If you're game we can set off as soon as you like on our travels. You needn't thank me. The governor's got heaps of tin, as you all know, and I don't see why he shouldn't spend some of it on us. Of course, if you'd rather stay at Barchester, say so, and I'll take the van back where it came from."

A chorus of dissent rose from the delighted five.

"By Jove, Lazenby," said Leslie, "but you're a brick! This is absolutely too spiffing for words! D'ye mean to say we can come off with you right now, and that old Corker knows all about it?"

"That's just what I do mean," responded Lazenby.

"Three cheers for Lazenby and old Corker!" yelled Murphy, throwing his cap into the air. "Hooroooh, hooroooh!"

The cheer that followed was worthy of the five lusty lungs that gave it. The quintet crowded round Lazenby, lifted him shoulder-high, and bore him to the door of the van, not a little to the surprise of the horse between the shafts.

An hour later the caravan was on the road.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. The Caravanners.

ALREADY three days of the holiday had passed—three glorious summer days, and from the very first moment of the start from Barchester everything had gone as smoothly as the most exacting boy could have wished.

To begin with, the van was "absolutely topping"—to quote Ben Hurley—the horse was "a nailer to go," and the weather was A-1. Added to which, the novelty of the experience, the freedom from any kind of worries, the knowledge that they could go practically where they liked were all factors that made for perfect concord and enjoyment.

They had trudged on through the day, stopping where they liked to cook their meals, choosing the corner of a wood or the neighbourhood of a river to pitch their camp. There were six bunks in the van, that could be shut up during the daytime, making one large commodious room of the vehicle; though, seeing that the weather was so fine, the boys did not care to stay inside more than was needful.

The approach of nightfall on the third day found the caravanners on the outskirts of a large, bare expanse of common-land, across which a stream meandered musically.

"Well, here's an ideal camping-ground, but for one thing," said Gerald Lazenby. "There's water and there's a fine place for a camp-fire behind that clump of gorse-bushes. Only there's no wood. I think two of us had better make for that copse on the far side of the common, and get some kindling. While we're gone, the rest can get out the supper things, and see to the gee-gee. Come on, Fairhurst!"

"Right-ho!" answered Fairhurst. And so the two youngsters set off for the wood.

It was a wild and desolate spot. The wood proved to be of greater extent than had seemed apparent from a cursory view of the same, neither had it the air of trim neatness that is usually to be found on an estate where the owner is possessed of money and the wish to keep his property in good repair.

"It doesn't look as though there are any keepers about here," said Lazenby, in a low voice. "Good job for us. We don't want to tumble up against a spring-gun like the ones in my pater's coverts. You kick a wire and there's a bang, and the keepers are on the spot in a jiff. Let's follow this path for a bit, and pick up sticks as we go."

They penetrated into the copse. They had not gone far before Lazenby sniffed the air like a dog.

"Don't you smell tobacco, Fairhurst?" he said, in a low voice. "We're walking up-wind. Strikes me that there's someone near at hand smoking uncommonly bad shag."

"I can smell it right enough," answered Fairhurst. "Wonder who it can be? Let's go and reconnoitre. Perhaps it's a gipsy camp."

They crept on stealthily, taking care not to tread on any dead stick so as to betray their presence. After a while the scent of the tobacco grew stronger, added to which was the faint sound of voices.



On catching sight of Lazenby, the leader of the ruffians gave vent to a cry of rage. "It is the young varmint and his pal!" he ground out. "Get to him, Bill! We'll truss up the lot of 'em, and secure 'em inside their own van."

A GOOD RESOLVE FOR 1911: To Always Pass On THE BOYS' FRIEND When Finished With! The "B. F." is Getting Better and Better, and Deserves the Full Support of Every Reader.

With hearts that beat slightly quicker than their wont under the spell of the excitement that is always attendant on an unknown adventure, the two lads crept onward. The voices grew louder. Who could be there in that lonely spot at the edge of night? Surely men would not foregather in such a place unless they had some sinister plans in view.

Both boys were by this time thoroughly puzzled, for the sounds seemed to come from below. They dropped on hands and knees, and crawled, Red Indian fashion, towards the place whence the noise of the voices came.

A moment or so later they were peering down through a gap in the undergrowth into a shallow dingle, probably the remains of some old mine-working—a hollow in which four men were seated, eagerly talking together.

Three of them were ruffianly-looking fellows enough in all conscience. The fourth, however, was a man of different calibre—a well-dressed individual, on whose knees was a large-scale map, that he was intently studying, the while he emphasised the point of what he was saying by frequent reference to the map.

"Now, look here"—every word he uttered was plainly heard by the two cavedroppers—"let's have no mistake! He starts from somewhere outside London at daybreak. By about six o'clock he'll be at Bruton Heath, the first stopping-place. Bruton Heath is seven miles from here, so we've got plenty of time to get there. Of course, it mustn't be known that there's any connection between me and you three. That's why I've chosen this weird spot to talk over matters. There's not much likelihood of anyone coming on us here. It ought to be a pretty easy job. A nick here and there with a pair of wire-cutters, a clever bit of tampering in various parts, and the thing's done. If he fails—well, he must fail. That's all I care about. You'll get your money all right. You've got that down in black and white. I don't think there's much more to be said."

At that moment, however, a totally unlooked for episode happened. The two boys, in their eagerness to hear everything that was transpiring below them, had crept to the very edge of the shelving bank that led down into the dingle. The crumbling soil refused to hold up against the strain. Without the slightest warning, a large chunk of the soil slipped down into the dell, carrying with it the two boys in the midst of a miniature landslide of earth, stones, and torn-up vegetation.

The four men leapt to their feet with a simultaneous cry of fear and rage.

The man who had been studying the map did not jump up quick enough to escape being swept off his feet by the human landslide, while the boys were too much startled and horrified by what had happened to be capable of uttering a sound, added to which both expected to discover

themselves possessed of more broken bones than whole ones.

Luckily enough, however, they arrived at the bottom of the pit without sustaining greater injuries than a few bruises and scratches. They were dragged roughly to their feet by the three ruffianly-looking men, the while the other picked himself up to the accompaniment of a torrent of vindictive abuse.

"You young reptiles!" he yelled. "What the dickens do you mean by it? Who are you? Where do you come from? Playing the spy, were you? Oh, but you'll suffer for this! Who are you, I say? What were you doing up there? Speak—can't you!" And he shook the unfortunate Lazenby, who happened to be nearest to him, with a vehemence that made that youth's teeth rattle in his head like castanets.

"If you please, sir," gasped the victim, "we weren't doing anything. We're camping out near here, that's all. We came into the wood to get some sticks for a camp-fire. We heard the sound of voices, and wondered who it was, and just as we'd got to the edge of the hollow here, the earth gave way and let us down plunk."

"Likely story that," growled one of the men. "We'd better make the kids promise to keep their mouths shut, or else—" The hiatus in his speech conveyed a threat that lost nothing in its intensity for being unspoken.

"What did you hear?" asked the man who seemed the moving spirit of the band. "Answer me, you young cub!"

"Hear!" echoed Lazenby, with well-simulated surprise. "Why, what should we have heard? Was there anything we oughtn't to have heard? I don't know what you mean, sir. Do you, Fairhurst?"

"No," replied Fairhurst promptly, following his comrade's lead. "What was there to hear? All I heard was the smoke of that chap's pipe. Pretty strong baccy, isn't it, sir?"

"Don't try and be funny!" snarled the spokesman again. He looked meaningly at his underlings, as much as to say: "This is my show. You chaps had better keep your mouths shut. Least said, soonest mended."

Then, addressing himself anew to Lazenby, he said, in a quieter voice: "You aren't a bad-looking youngster. I shouldn't think you'd want to do anyone any harm. The fact of the matter is that my friends and I wanted a quiet talk about something, so we thought we'd come here. I live quite close to this place. I'll be perfectly frank with you." Lazenby thought he knew exactly how much that statement was worth. "We've got a bit of business on hand that requires secrecy; nothing of any importance to anyone—save ourselves, and something that won't do anyone any harm. That's quite intelligible, isn't it? Well, I'm perfectly willing to take your word for it that you were doing what you said you were—looking for firewood. Well, take my advice, and make yourselves scarce as quick as you can, and keep your own counsel in the matter. You see,

I trust you, and I certainly shouldn't let you get away scot-free if I had any reason for being afraid of the consequences of my act of kindness."

"That's all right, sir," said Lazenby, with alacrity. "I assure you we didn't mean to come tumbling in on the top of you as we did, and you'll understand that we were rather surprised to hear voices as we did. Of course, we couldn't have told that anyone was talking business in such a place. We thought it was poachers. Didn't we, Fairhurst?"

"Rather!" responded Fairhurst. "We thought it was poachers."

"Well, now you've found it isn't poachers, perhaps you'll scoot off," continued the stranger. "I suppose there are some more of you about? Boy Scouts—eh?"

"No, we're not Boy Scouts, sir," said Lazenby. "We're just a party of schoolboys out on a camping holiday. Our pals are somewhere away on the common. There was no wood there to make a fire, so we thought we'd come here and get some."

This was, as we know, perfectly true, and it was evident from Lazenby's manner that he was speaking the truth. His captor eyed him in silence for a few seconds. Lazenby's glance met his own fairly and squarely enough.

"Right-ho!" said the man, with a laugh. "Off you go! And you can consider yourselves jolly lucky to have got off so easily."

A moment or so later the two boys were scrambling up the side of the gully, and making off at the top of their speed.

"Never mind the sticks, Fairhurst," panted Lazenby, as they neared the edge of the wood. "We must get back to the caravan. We must have a camp meeting over this. I've got a theory, and if it's the right one, those chaps have got a very ugly game on. You remember exactly what we overheard, don't you?"

"Yes," said Fairhurst. "Well, freeze on it, then," came from the other. "I'll race you back to the camp."

The arrival of the breathless pair, minus what they had set out to get, caused quite a flutter in the camp. It was some few moments before either of the returned boys could find breath for speech. Fairhurst was the first to recover his wind.

"No," he panted, "we haven't been trying to break record for the hundred yards. We've had an Adventure with a capital 'A.' Get it off your chest, Lazenby. I'm pumped."

"Well, you might have brought a bit of firewood, anyhow," complained Ben Hurley. "Here's everything ready. We're all as hungry as hunters, and all you two can do is to go and play the goat in a wood."

"Play the goat!" answered Lazenby indignantly. "Wait till you hear what we've got to tell you. We might have been killed, mightn't we, Fairhurst? I tell you, you chaps, there'll be no supper for you yet awhile. We'll have to strike camp, and make for Bruton Heath, seven miles away. So look slippy, and harness old Susan in again! I'm

sorry for the old gee, but it can't be helped, and she shall have a long rest to-morrow."

"Here, have you gone off your chump, Lazenby?" cried Leslie.

"Bogorra, but he's ravin'!" said Mulvaney.

"No, he's not," answered Fairhurst. "We've had a narrow escape, I can tell you."

"Yes, and instead of wasting precious time, let's be off," continued Lazenby. "I'll explain everything while we're on the go. We absolutely haven't a minute to spare. We're on to something big, lads. You can take my word for that."

Mystified though the others were, they were by this time forced to see that there was indeed method in the madness of Lazenby and Fairhurst. Realising that something weighty must have happened, they lost no further time in asking questions, but began to bustle about getting everything ready for another trek. And, while his comrades saw to everything needful for the resumption of the journey, Lazenby consulted a map in the fading light, for the sun had dipped down beneath the western hills, and nightfall was close at hand.

"We've got to keep straight across the common," he announced at length, "and then turn off to the right, through the village of Honeywell. Then there comes a longish hill, and a steep descent, and after that the village of Bruton. Bruton Heath lies on the other side of Bruton, and we shall have to camp right in the middle of the heath. And we shall have, too, to be up with the dawn, so that there won't be much sleep for us. What we're to do then we shall have to trust to luck for. If my theory's right, we've got a hefty job in front of us."

"Well, everything's ready now," said Dick Leslie. "We'd better chew some biscuits as we go along. Personally, I'm pretty peckish, though I can keep going for a long time yet if I've got to. Don't know what you others feel about it."

"We're all right," came in a general chorus.

"Gee up, Susan!" said Lazenby to the roan mare.

And if the gallant old beast felt any disgust at being urged on again just as she had begun to look forward to a night's rest she gave no sign thereof, but stepped out gaily, as though the day were beginning instead of just drawing to a close.

As soon as they were on the way the boys all walked together at the head of the caravan, and Lazenby began:

"We got to the wood, boys, and tumbled into the middle of four men who were pow-wow-ing in a dingle—healthy-looking ruffians, I can tell you—and I thought we were in for a rough time. However, we managed to bluff them we were harmless, and I don't think they've any idea we overheard what they were talking about when we came upon them."

"What was it you heard the chap say, Fairhurst—the fellow with the map? I want to know if you can remember it, because then I'll tell you

my theory of the business. And I needn't remind you chaps that Fairhurst has got about the best memory of any chap at Barchester. He always learns his prep. quicker than any of us, and he's a nailer at spouting poetry."

"Yes, that's right," chorused the others.

Whereupon Fairhurst said: "Let's have no mistake. He starts from somewhere outside London at daybreak. By about six o'clock he's due at Bruton Heath, which is seven miles from here and his first stopping-place. We've got plenty of time to get there. It mustn't be known that there's any connection between you three and me. That's why I've chosen this rum spot to talk over things. No one is likely to come on us here, and it ought to be a pretty easy job. I'll talk to him, make myself pleasant, while you three chaps do the job. A snick here and there with a pair of pliers, and a clever bit of faking in various parts, and the thing's done. He must fail. That's all I care about. You'll get your money all right. You've got that written down. There's nothing much more to be said."

Dead silence followed the delivery of this speech, which was indeed a marvellous transcript of the man's speech, as you will be able to see for yourself by comparing it with what the fellow had actually said. Lazenby waited for the comments that never came.

"Well," he said at last, "do any of you chaps tumble to the meaning of the business?"

But no one did. So he went on excitedly:

"To me it's as plain as punch. To-morrow morning Mr. Seldon Black is to attempt to fly from London to Edinburgh, to win the ten thousand pounds prize promised by the proprietors of the 'Daily Mercury,' for the first Britisher that does the flight. He is to be allowed four stops, and the first one is to be not less than sixty miles from London. If you look at the map you'll see that Bruton Heath is between sixty and seventy miles from London, and it's a wide, open expanse without trees—just the sort of place a chap would use to come down on if he was flying. Now do you twig what those bounders were up to? I don't see what else it can mean."

"Great Grahame-White," cried Ben Hurley, "here's a pretty kettle of fish! By Jove, but everything seems to fit!"

"And Bogorra, but what'll we be after doin' with ut entoirely?" said Mulvaney. "We'd better be turnin' the caravan into an airship and go and meet the gentleman. We're up agin something, pretty tough, I'm thinking."

"If that's the case, then," said Dick Leslie eagerly, "hadn't we better try and stop him before he gets to Bruton Heath? If we could get him to come down somewhere else

(Continued on the next page.)

A STRONG MAN'S SECRETS.

Muscle-raising Exercises with Domestic Furniture.

MR. SANDOW, in a recent series of extremely interesting articles in THE BOYS' FRIEND, has so ably stated the case for physical culture, and proved so conclusively the necessity for systematic exercise, that I shall not attempt to put forward any further arguments or deal with the subject in this connection.

It will be my purpose in the following series of articles to endeavour to describe to you how you may test the results achieved by following Mr. Sandow's instructions, and how, incidentally, you may not only increase your muscular development, but add to your agility and strength in a manner at once interesting and entertaining to yourself and friends.

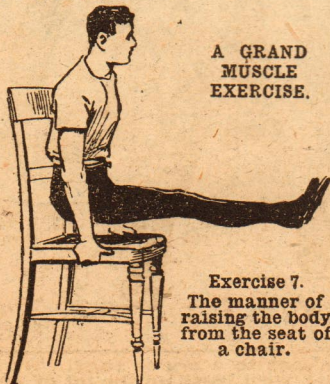
In the tricks, tests, and exercises which I shall describe no special apparatus will be needed. All that is required are the ordinary articles of everyday use to be found in every home.

I shall endeavour to describe to you exercises for all the important muscles of the body, so that this series will form in itself a complete course of physical culture, the adoption of which should be sufficient to keep you always "fit" and in good condition.

EXERCISES WITH CHAIRS.

Exercise No. 1.

Place two chairs at a sufficient distance apart so that your head may rest on the seat of one and your heels on the seat of the other. Place a third chair under your middle. The exercise consists in removing the centre chair from under you, lifting it over the body, replacing on the opposite side, and sliding again under the body, without falling off the two end chairs or using the hands to support yourself.



Exercise 7. The manner of raising the body from the seat of a chair.

This is a very severe exercise, bringing into play practically all the muscles of the body, and putting particular strain on those of the neck and back. As you progress you may continue the exercise by moving the centre chair several times from one side to the other without resting between the movements. Very heavy chairs should not be employed in this exercise.

Exercise No. 2.

When available, a light, cane-seated or bamboo chair should be used for this exercise. Grasp the top of the back of chair in one hand, and raise it slowly into the air to a horizontal position—i.e., with the legs pointing outwards. When you have succeeded in accomplishing this, you may continue the exercise by thrusting the chair (still in a horizontal position) to arm's-length in front of you, and withdrawing it before finally returning it slowly to its original position on its legs.

This is a splendid grip and forearm exercise, and also affects the muscles of the upper arm. It should be performed with both hands, rising one at a time.

Exercise No. 3.

A kitchen windsor chair standing firmly on its legs is best for the performance of this exercise. Stand at back of chair, grasp top of back firmly with both hands. Then stiffen the arms, and slowly raise knees until on a level with the hands.

As an exercise in muscular control and balance, the knees may then be rested on the back of chair and the heels lifted to an almost horizontal

position—as though to sit on the heels. If the chair shows signs of "wobbling," get a friend to sit in it until you feel more sure of yourself, as a nasty fall might result should the chair tilt backwards.

Exercise No. 4.

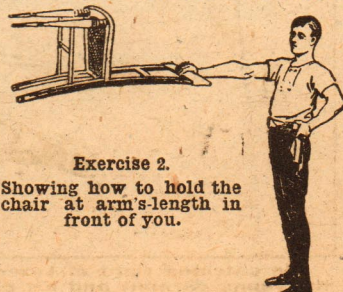
Place chair on floor so that its back and rear legs touch the ground. Grasp one of the back legs in one hand, and endeavour to tilt the chair towards you without raising the legs off the floor.

When this has been accomplished, and can be done slowly several times, the exercise may be varied by raising the chair off the ground and holding out horizontally at arm's-length.

Practise with both hands. A splendid test and exercise for the muscles of the forearm and wrist, and a test of the strength of grip.

Exercise No. 5.

This is a variation of Exercise No. 2, and should be performed with a chair having rung supports between the legs. Grasp the front rung support



Exercise 2. Showing how to hold the chair at arm's-length in front of you.

in one hand, and raise the chair straight out in its natural position—i.e., seat level, until at arm's-length.

Then draw in towards the chest, and thrust out again to arm's-length. Practise with both arms. An excellent exercise for the grip and all the muscles of the arm.

Exercise No. 6.

Place chair on floor as in Exercise No. 4. Grasp front legs (which are uppermost) firmly in both hands near extremities. Straighten out the body so that only the toes touch the ground, the whole weight of the body being supported by the two arms and the toes.

Lower the body until the face almost touches the rung support of the chair, then straighten arms, and press body up into first position. The legs should be kept quite rigid throughout this exercise, and the knees must not be bent. Head, back, and chin up. Choose a chair with strong, sound legs for this exercise.

Exercise No. 7.

While seated on chair, grasp edge of seat on either sides with the hands, palms on top of seat, knuckles beneath. Then from the sitting position raise feet from floor, and straighten legs out in front, toes pointed. Slowly straighten arms, retaining legs rigid in horizontal position, until body is raised clear of seat. Drop body slowly back on to seat and repeat, keeping legs rigid all the time. An excellent exercise for the muscles of the thighs, arms, and abdomen.

(Another of these interesting articles next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.

those chaps would be fairly done in the eye."

"I thought of that," answered Lazenby; "but we daren't run any risks. We don't know which way he'll come, and we do know he's going to come down on Bruton Heath. No; if we're about I don't see how the chaps can cut the aeroplane about. And, anyhow, we should be witnesses against their foul play."

"But I've an idea," said Alec Henderson. "Why shouldn't two of us, say Mulvaney and myself, set off and try and stop him? That would leave four of you on Bruton Heath. Even if we missed him, such lusty young fellows as you ought to be able to stop the bounders. They wouldn't dare play any monkey tricks if you were about."

"That's not a bad scheme," said Lazenby thoughtfully. "If Mr. Black is due at Bruton Heath at six a.m., and if you, Henders, and old Patrick leave the caravan about four-thirty, there might be a chance of your sighting the aeroplane and giving him warning. Though, of course, if he happened to be flying about a thousand feet up the chances are he wouldn't see you. But it strikes me that the situation is tricky enough to justify us taking some risks."

"Then I should suggest that Pat and Henders get into the van and get some by-bye," put in Hurley. "They may have a longish tramp ahead of them. It will be all right for the rest of us. We can take turn and turn about till morning."

"Be jabbers, I don't want to go to bed!" said Mulvaney indignantly.

"Nor me," quoth Henderson ungrammatically.

"You'll jolly well have to do what you're told, my lads!" remarked Lazenby, with mock severity.

"But we're jolly peckish," objected Henderson. "Let's wait till we've reached the new camping-ground and had some grub."

"Yis, begorra!"—from Mulvaney. "For if I go to bed now I'll be after eating my bedding. And then it's indigestion I'll be sure to git. You wouldn't be so cruel, Lazenby dear."

Everyone laughed at this; and it was agreed that the vanners should push on with all speed to Bruton Heath, there partake of supper, and make all final preparations for the work ahead of them at the camping-ground.

It was quite dark by this time. The van passed through Honeywell village, the boys taking care to proceed quietly, for they did not wish to advertise their journey more than possible, seeing that they obviously had to deal with enemies who were crafty and cunning rogues.

Luckily, the inhabitants of Honeywell seemed to act up to the old adage of "Early to bed, and early to rise." They left the village behind without attracting any undue attention, and so entered on the last stage of the journey to Bruton Heath.

It was past eleven when they reached the heath and saw in the dim light the long, level stretch of the great plain stretching out mysteriously ahead of them.

In the middle of the heath, as they had learnt from a study of their Ordnance Survey map, was a four cross-road, where was a small public-house and a smithy. In all probability the airman would choose the neighbourhood of the inn for a descent, while if there should be anything wrong with his motor or his aeroplane the blacksmith's shop would be useful.

Here, then, the caravan came to a halt in a slight hollow only a hundred yards or so away from the inn, which presented a dark exterior to the night.

The roan mare was quickly unspanned, some water was boiled over a spirit-lamp, and a hasty supper of hot cocoa, tinned meat, biscuits, and jam was partaken of by the young adventurers. All then turned in, with the exception of Hurley, who had been told off for the first spell of watching.

**THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Mulvaney and Henderson on the Warpath.**

"**B**EDAD, but it's a bird!" cried Mulvaney. "Bird be boiled!" shouted Henderson. "It's an aeroplane. It's a good way off, but it's coming this way fast. Look! You can see it now. He's not very high up. He's heading straight for us. It must be Mr. Seldon Black. Get ready to shout and yell, Mulvaney. Have you got the red flag? Wave it like billy-ho!"

Mulvaney clambered on to a gate

that opened on to a wide-field just off the roadway along which the two youngsters had come. Raising the red flag, he waved it lustily over his head, shouting at the same time at the top of his voice:

"Stop, be jabbers! Stop, sir! Come down entirely! Come down!"

And Henderson backed up his comrade with yells of:

"Come down! Danger! Come down!"

The aeroplane swooped nearer and nearer. It was evident that the man on the biplane had heard and seen the youths.

Mulvaney nearly lost his balance in his eagerness to make good the advantage they had gained.

Like some great bird the graceful machine swayed downwards and made a half-circle so as to come round and pass over the heads of the two boys.

"What is it?" shouted a man's voice from the machine. "What on earth's all the fuss about?"

"There's peril ahead of you!" cried Henderson. "Come down, come down, and we'll tell you all about it!"

The biplane described a half-circle, and for a moment or so it appeared as though the airman intended to ground his machine in the field. Suddenly, however, he raised the great fan-shaped tail of the flying-machine. Instantly the aeroplane shot upward again like a gull.

"You young fools!" said Seldon Black angrily. "What are you up to? Do you think I'm coming down here just to please a couple of silly schoolboys? Haven't you got anything better to do than this? I should like to descend, if only for the pleasure of punching your heads. But I won't—"

His voice died away as the biplane soared skywards again and made off north at a good thirty miles an hour.

Mulvaney and Henderson exchanged rueful glances.

"Bad cess to him!" growled Mulvaney. "But here we've been and wasted a good two hours gettin' here, and all for nothing. Well, it's not our fault! Skylarking, begorra! It's he that's doin' the skylarking, I'm thinking! Well, we can't stop him now—"

—he gazed sorrowfully after the vanishing aeroplane—"and he's flyin' straight into the lion's mouth, begorra! Didn't Fairhurst and Lazenby see the chaps they found in the wood round the inn this morning? And didn't they lie low so as the chaps shouldn't spot 'em? And now—well, what's going to happen now? That's what I'm after asking meself."

"Well, we can't do any more than we've done," said Henderson savagely. "We'll just have to make tracks back to the caravan as quick as we can. But—Hullo! What's that?"

He turned and gazed along the road. "That" was a motor-car speeding along the deserted highway at a pace that would have made any village constable's hair stand on end had he been at hand to witness so flagrant an exceeding of the speed limit. Quick as lightning Mulvaney had dashed into the road, and before the slower-witted Henderson could realise what he intended doing the Irish boy was dancing up and down in the middle of the road, waving his flag like a lunatic, and issuing a series of bellows that would have done credit to an Irish bull.

As the motorists were not apparently desirous of committing homicide, there was nothing for it but that they should slow up. An irascible voice that came from behind a pair of motor-goggles and a thick moustache, shouted:

"What the dickens are you up to, you stupid young maniac? Do you want to commit suicide, or are you just a candidate for a jolly good licking? I'm in a hurry, I tell you!"

"Did ye happen to see an aeroplane pass this way?" asked Mulvaney comically. "One just went over our heads, and it's Mr. Seldon Black, the famous flyer, I'm thinking!"

"Well, what if it was?" growled the man in the car, beside whom sat another man, obviously a chauffeur. "I've nothing to do with flying-machines!"

"Begorra, but ye're in one, sir!" grinned Mulvaney, the irrepressible. "And I'm thinking that if I was to take your number and report ye to the polis, sorr, I should only be doing my duty. But we're not mad, sorr. We just want to save Mr. Seldon Black from goodness knows what. And if ye'll kindly listen to us for a moment or so, sorr, and then take us with you, I think we'll be after convincing ye that we're white men!"

"I'll give you three minutes," said

the motorist angrily. "I can't spare any more."

"Then fire away, Alec!" said Mulvaney. "Ye can speak quicker than I can. I'm out of breath, bedad!"

"Mr. Seldon Black is flying from London to Edinburgh for ten thousand pounds," said Henderson breathlessly. "We're a party of boys camping out, and we overheard a plot to wreck his aeroplane on Bruton Heath, which is a few miles from here, and where he now is probably, and where our four pals are, and they'll get biffed if something isn't done, and we're speaking the truth, I swear by everything that's blue, and we think you ought to run us down to Bruton Heath and see fair play, and we swear we're speaking the truth, sir!"

He spoke at such breakneck speed, and withal with such tremendous earnestness, that the motorist began to experience the belief that after all there might be method in the madness of the two boys.

"But this is a very serious thing," he said more quietly. "Of course, I've heard of Mr. Black's attempt. I've got an important engagement this morning, but if it's true what you say, I think I ought to let that slide."

"Well, you can trust us, sir," said Henderson. "We shouldn't go and play such a dirty trick as to waste your time for nothing if we didn't"



Clambering on to the gate, Mulvaney waved the red flag frantically. "Stop! Stop!" he yelled to the man in the aeroplane. "Come down! Danger! Come down!"

think that there really was foul play. We can explain everything to you in the car, sir."

The motorist turned to his chauffeur.

"Get in behind, Williamson," he said curtly, "and let the boys take your seat!"

The man touched his peaked cap, and hopped off his seat with alacrity. Henderson and Mulvaney bundled into the vacant place, the motorist depressed the starting-lever, and the big car shot forward like a released horse.

"And now," said Colonel Norton—such was the motorist's name—"let's hear what you've got to say. One at a time, though, please. I think perhaps it would be as well if you—Henderson, thank you—Henderson told the story."

Alec told everything, beginning with the start of the caravan tour, relating how Lazenby and Fairhurst had fallen in with the rascals in the wood, and how the caravanners had set forth again to try and save Mr. Seldon Black. He came to his own and Mulvaney's abortive effort to stop the airman, and finished up:

"And don't you see, sir, he will have flown on, and I should think by this time he's at Bruton Heath. Well,

those blackguards must be waiting for him. Our four pals'll have all their work cut out to stop them doing what they want to, and it may be that the landlord of the inn as well as the blacksmith there have been squared. So I think we'd better bustle along, sir—don't you?"

The colonel smiled grimly.

"If I'm collared for breaking the speed limit," he said quietly, "I'll pay the fine cheerfully if only we can get there in time, for from what you say it seems to me that we shall only be just in the nick of time. I must say I didn't feel inclined to believe you at first, though I've altered my opinion."

The two boys never forgot that mad rush along the quiet country roads. The big motor tore along at the pace of an express train, rocking from side to side like a runaway engine, the colonel proving himself an expert driver indeed.

Would they be in time? That was the question that Mulvaney and Henderson kept putting to themselves as they rushed on.

Would they be in time?

**THE 4th CHAPTER.
Checkmate.**

IT was past five o'clock in the morning. Lazenby and Fairhurst were inside the caravan, as they had no desire to be seen by the

That'll teach 'em to go about learning things they've no business to!"

The boys put up a good fight, but were eventually overpowered. Then the four of them were dragged inside the caravan and bound securely together.

"We'd better gag 'em," said the principal ruffian. "We can't afford to run any risks. The aeroplane may be here any minute now. Look slippy, and then come outside!"

And "look slippy" the scoundrels did. In almost as short a time as it takes in the telling, the four boys were trussed up and gagged. Then their four captors swaggered out of the van, laughing callously.

"That's cooked your goose, I'm thinking!" said the leader.

The boys struggled wildly to escape. Yet all their endeavours were in vain.

It was horribly galling to think that in spite of all they had achieved, this blow had fallen on them. Nothing could save Mr. Black now. It was improbable that Mulvaney and Henderson would intercept the airman.

Though speech was impossible between the four boys, their eyes were eloquent enough.

Rage and despair was written large on every face. Once more they struggled vainly to escape.

Then a fresh sound fell on their ears, for the windows of the caravan were open. They heard the throb, throb of a motor, a chorus of cheers from the ruffians, and an answering hail from the man in the aeroplane.

Seldon Black had reached Bruton Heath, and although he could not know it, he must also have reached the limit of his fine flight.

But hardly had the chorus of cheers died away before a fresh sound broke the silence that followed, the toot, toot of an approaching motor-car.

The hearts of the prisoners thrilled anew. Help might be at hand from an unexpected quarter.

Then the noise of the motor grew louder.

A wild yell rent the air, as Mulvaney's voice could be heard calling out:

"Begorra, but we're only just in time! Lazenby, Hurley, Fairhurst, Leslie! Come out, ye spalpeens!"

Ten minutes later, after what seemed to the captives to be an interminable length of time, punctuated by a positive pandemonium of noise, Mulvaney burst into the caravan and at once set about releasing his comrades.

"It's all right, bhoys!" he shouted. "Hope ye ain't kilt entirely! The spalpeens are done for right enough! Begorra, but it was a fine scrap! The colonel laid out two of them, and the chauffeur waltzed into another one, while Henderson and meself, and a fine broth of a bhoys who came out of the pub, settled the other. The flier is on the ground, and his machine is as roight as rain. Come on out, bhoys, and don't miss the rest of the fun! It was the colonel who did it entirely, as ye'll learn soon enough!"

There remains little more that need be told. In the first place, it is now a matter of history that Seldon Black completed his flight to Edinburgh successfully, and won the ten thousand pounds.

The ruffianly leader of the four rascals was a man named Dunkerley, who was Seldon Black's deadliest enemy, though he had never come out in his true colours as such.

It transpired that years ago he and Black had been working together at an aeroplane, and Black had solved the problem of flight, while the other had failed. Strange though it may seem, Dunkerley had never forgiven his former mate for this. For more than a year he had brooded over his fancied injury, until it had become a monomania with him to gain revenge. He had waited until Black had announced his intention of making the big flight, and had then bribed three rascals to aid him in wrecking the venture, and maybe in killing Black as well.

Thanks to the schoolboys, however, his scheme had been frustrated, and he was rewarded with the punishment he so richly deserved. His accomplices were all men who had been long "wanted" by the police for various offences.

The remainder of the caravanners' holiday was a complete success, and you may be sure that when they got back to school they lost no time in relating to their schoolfellows the history of the adventures they had gone through "on trek."

THE END.
(Another grand long, complete story next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

HOW TO START A GYMNASIUM.

THE winter is the best time of year for starting a gymnasium. A good number of lads find the fees too heavy, but if you go the correct way to work you can join a gymnasium by paying a small fee of about two shillings for six months' training.

Churches and chapels usually run a gymnasium, and so does the Young Men's Christian Association, and here you will find the fees low and

within your reach.

A gym. is usually run in connection with public baths and other institutions also, but in this case you may find the fees three or four shillings.

In order to start a gymnasium you should get a number of lads together, and then ask the clergyman in charge of your church or chapel to make it public that you need an instructor. Somebody will soon come forward and offer his services for a small fee, and perhaps gratuitously. I may tell you that you will never make anything of a gym. without an instructor in command.

You can start with the horizontal and parallel bars, clubs, and dumbbells, and afterwards other things, such as vaulting-horse, boxing-gloves, etc., can be bought as time goes on. If you can muster together, say, thirty or more members, a fee of about two shillings should be sufficient

to make a start,

and, if needs be, the secretary should afterwards be able to call upon the members for a small levy in order to clear any debt, or to pay for any new apparatus that is deemed necessary. Later on, when you are far enough advanced, a display will help you a great deal.

In the case of the members being unable to meet all the expenses, the secretary should write to different local gentlemen or wealthier members of the church or chapel, asking for a small donation.

One other point worth mentioning is that the orders of the instructor must be rigorously obeyed, otherwise the whole concern will soon fall through without discipline.

THE END.

THE BOYS' FRIEND RECITER



MacUChart's CUP-TIE KICK.

Published by arrangement with Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd., Southampton Street, London, W.C.

Ten thousand hearts were beating fast around that classic ground, And twice ten thousand pairs of eyes turned at the slightest sound; And twice ten thousand ears to catch the heroes' names were strained, And twice ten thousand pairs of necks pavilionwards were craned.

Ten thousand hearts stood still—a howl—and, with a word improper, Mac hurled the ball right up the field—Killed two dogs and a copper! Then turned to face the crowd; his red hair tingled at its roots.

"See there! He's out!—MacUChart's out; that big one with the stride!" And down the field the hero came. Nine feet high! Six feet wide!

The fight went on. There fell a goal unto the "Kick-a-Poos"; Ten thousand throats went dry with joy, and then were damped with—tea!

"Oh, great of limb is he!"—"Can put his chin over the bar!"—"Upon my soul he fills the goal, wid a fist like a tramway car!"

"Time's nearly up—good-bye the Cup!" and gloom descended round. At last—two minutes left for play—the tension tighter grows;

With folded arms and scornful smile, Mac leans and chews grass roots. They line up. Off they go! And even while the whistle toots

Then from the corner of the net, all firm and fierce rose he. "By all the snakes that Howly Patrick dhruv into the sea.

CONJURING UP-TO-DATE.

A Grand New Series.

How to Begin—The Costume—Apparatus—The Wand, etc.

I WONDER how many of my "non-musical" readers there are who, when listening to their more talented brothers rattling off the latest air from a comic opera, have not felt just a wee bit envious of their ability to amuse, and have longed for some accomplishment wherewith they might vie with them in amusing their friends.

To them particularly I write these lines; but, of course, there is no reason why my musical friends as well should not add this, the most ancient of all arts, and, in the opinion of the writer, by far the most fascinating, to their list of attainments.

To begin with, remember that no successful magician, like Rome, was ever made in a day, and it may truly be said that the necessary qualifications for success in this art are: Firstly, perseverance; secondly, perseverance; and thirdly, perseverance, whilst the addition of a large amount of cheek would certainly not be out of place.

Costume.

As regards costume, the ideal, of course, is an ordinary dress-suit, this being absolutely necessary if the performer becomes sufficiently proficient to warrant his appearance in public. It should contain one or two pockets not easily found—i.e., one in each coat-tail, a small hip-pocket each side of the trousers, and two large breast-pockets inside the coat, the openings of which should be almost vertical.

All these pockets should be kept open by making them rather full and lining them with stiff buckram; they should also be made so as to be within easy reach of the hands without unduly bending the arms.

At the bottom and around the inside of the waistcoat should be sewn a stout piece of elastic; this latter is to prevent any article the performer "vests"—i.e., places out of sight beneath his waistcoat—from falling

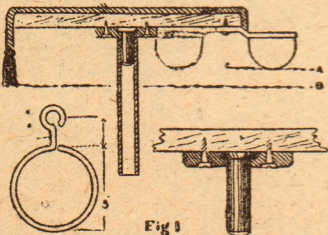
out, and will be found exceedingly useful.

Some performers prefer a fancy costume, such as an Eastern one, which, of course, must be in keeping with the subject. But for the beginner at home or at small parties, all that is necessary is an ordinary dark suit, with large breast-pockets, kept open as explained. The waistcoat should also most certainly in this case have the band of elastic, as its use will make up for the absence of other pockets.

Tables.

Next comes the tables. For the beginner, two small ones are all that are needed—in fact, for a number of tricks, any ordinary small table would suit admirably; but as they can either be bought or made for a trifling expense, the reader is advised to obtain them.

Let me say here that this particular



HOW TO MAKE A CONJURER'S TABLE, (as described in this article.)

A.—The "servante" for secreting things. B.—The fringe must come below the level of the servante.

variety of tables that are fitted with false-bottoms, springs, and trapdoors that will vanish anything from a canary to a rabbit are not recommended; the magician who works wonders by simply pressing a button is not an artist in any sense of the word, but simply a machine.

But if you elect to purchase them, be careful and see that they

pack up in a very short space, as their portability will later on be highly appreciated. Two first-class tables of this description may be purchased for £1, but can easily be made for about a quarter of that sum.

The best way is to buy two music stands—those with brass legs that fold up are the ones required. These may be obtained for about two shillings each. The rack that holds the music may be left behind, as only the legs are required. Next, two circular pieces of wood to form the tops are wanted. These should be about half an inch thick and fifteen inches in diameter, and painted a dull black. To their centres a metal peg about one inch long should be secured. This should be just large enough to fit snugly in the hole in the top of the brass stands originally occupied by the music racks.

Now, with the assistance of a lady friend, make two small circular table-cloths of dark green or black velvet. These cloths should have nice light artistic fringes, and be of such a length as to hang down about three inches below the edge of the table. Now comes the only bit of deceit about them. On the back of each table—i.e., the particular part of the table that should be turned away from the audience—what is technically known as a "servante" is fitted. This is a small black cloth bag, the frame of which should be made of wire, twisted into shape, care being taken not to make the bag deep enough to show below the fringe, as the audience must remain in ignorance of its presence.

It should be about three inches in diameter, and if it is fastened to the bottom of the table by one screw, the whole of it may be swung right round underneath the table (Fig. 1) out of sight, which is a great advantage, as then the table may be shown on all sides, and after the examination, it may be swung into position again.

These servantes are used to contain or get rid of an article unknown to the audience, and one or two extra ones should be made, as they will be found useful to fix to the backs of chairs, etc. Should the performer be landed anywhere, and not have his tables with him, an excellent substitute may be had by using a small table that is fitted with a drawer. If this drawer is turned

away from the spectators and pulled open a few inches, it forms a servant that is hard to beat for an impromptu occasion.

The Wand.

In describing the paraphernalia commonly used by magicians we must not, of course, forget the wand, which from time immemorial has been the symbol of all things mysterious. Many of my readers who, of course, know better than to credit it with the same miraculous powers as our ancestors did in the Middle Ages, may perhaps wonder of what use it can possibly be to any magician, since it is, after all, nothing more or less than a short wooden stick.

But in its simplicity lies the secret of its usefulness; for instance, supposing the performer has an article palmed in either of his hands, and the wand be held in the same hand, this hand may be kept in a much more natural position than without it. This is especially so if the article happens to be a large or difficult one to palm; also, with its use the performer may attract the attention of the audience away from some movement or other they are supposed not to see. In such little deceptions as these it is invaluable, so that one of the first steps our coming magician must take is to make himself the owner of one.

This he may do for the expenditure of a shilling or thereabouts. Should he, on the other hand, choose to make one for himself, he should obtain one of those large pencils, about twelve inches long, which may be purchased from any stationer for the sum of one penny. Both ends should then be fitted with a neat ferrule. These may be made from short pieces of brass tubing and silverplated with miraculum. The pencil should then receive one coat of hard-drying black enamel to hide the printing on it, and the result will be a wand to suit the taste of even the most fastidious.



HOW TO MAKE A CONJURER'S WAND FROM A LARGE PENCIL. (Described in this clever article.)

(Another of these grand conjuring articles next Tuesday in THE BOYS' FRIEND.)

BOXING NOTES.

By J. G. B. LYNCH.

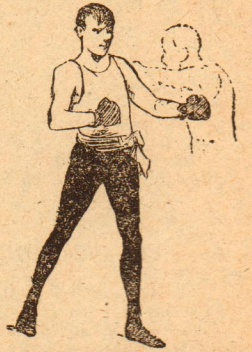
Side-stepping,

AMONGST the many useful things you can learn if you are quick on your feet is side-stepping; a splendid way both of getting out of danger, and of putting your opponent into it.

Choose some moment when your man is at least at arm's-length, and seems likely to lead at you with right or left. Then suddenly take a wide step to right or left, according as he uses his right or left hand, following one foot immediately with the other. The result is that your opponent dashes into nothing, and if you are quick in turning round, you will probably be able to catch him with

a dangerous blow

before he has had time to recover. But always remember in side-stepping to keep one foot firm on the ground whilst you move the other. Otherwise, it amounts to jumping, and that is always dangerous in boxing. If you receive a blow, for example, on your body whilst standing firm with the muscles tense, it is not so very likely to hurt you much. But it stands to reason if you jump in the air, all your muscles must be more or less relaxed, except those in your legs, and any blow hitting you then will be far more painful. Also



Side-stepping very useful for the accomplished boxer.

you will easily be knocked down if you are caught in such a position.

You should practice side-stepping constantly before ever you attempt to try it in a competition, as it is by no means easy. The best place is to do it before a long looking-glass.

But, above all things, don't loose your head when, with

victory within your grasp,

you see your antagonist dash past you. It will be a great temptation to swing your body round carelessly, paying no more attention to the all-important footwork. It is at moments like that when your feet will serve you in best stead. Move round quickly, but not recklessly, with your left foot in front, and attack your man with all your might, but from the same sort of position as you assumed at the beginning of the bout.

THE END.

THINGS A BOY SHOULD KNOW.

GUINEA-PIGS are natives of South America, in which country they live in warrens, just as rabbits do in England.

According to Government returns just issued, the gas companies of the United Kingdom use in a year 15,225,320 tons of coal. The gas mains of our country total 35,230 miles.

A potato just introduced has been called King George. It promises to be a favourite variety next year.

The stamping-machines at the Royal Mint turn out one hundred sovereigns a minute.

In the Italian Army the soldiers are allowed to sleep for a couple of hours each day.

Japanese boys find kite flying and fencing their most enjoyable sports.

It has been proved that a common beetle can draw five hundred times its own weight.

Not only convicts wear the broad arrow. All Government stores and materials bear this mark.

It takes three seconds for a message to go from one end of an Atlantic cable to another.

When it is noon in New York it is 4.56 p.m. by Greenwich time.

THE END.

(More splendid articles next Tuesday.)

FREE COUPONS FOR PICTURE THEATRES!

For full particulars of this grand arrangement, see page 511. If your Picture Theatre is not mentioned this week, it may be next. Our list grows every week.



SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE.

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

JUST TO INTRODUCE TO YOU

Dudley and Marcus Scarfield, who are travelling northwards in Africa on the track of Mr. Douglas, a hunter, who is beyond the pale of civilisation, and who holds the papers referring to an invaluable invention their father has left to them.

By getting these papers they become immensely rich, whilst if they fail to recover them they will remain poor, so that they are straining every nerve to reach their father's old friend.

Joseph Scarfield is their cousin, who by fair means or foul is also trying to find Douglas. Up to the present he has mostly employed foul means—in fact he

leaves no stone unturned

to gain his ends.

Amous is a native who has attached himself to the brothers, and he is a friend indeed.

Travelling with a prospector, the boys reach Fort Busi, where they have a terrible encounter with Matabele savages and Trek Boers who are making an attack upon the British Fort. When at last the battle on the veldt is over, and the savages and Boers retire, Dudley and Marcus find that Joseph has escaped them.

(Now read the splendid chapters below.)

The Escape of Joseph.

THEY left Radi-Mandi and his people to see to the enemy's dead. Then, very reverently, the police carried their own dead up to the looted fort, laid them in a corner, and covered them, each with his own blanket.

Captain Railton stood watching, biting savagely at his moustache. Then he turned away with a queer little sob.

"I've got to write some letters now which will break several women's hearts," he said to old Kerridge and the boys. "That's the worst of building up an empire. It's the women at home who pay the price in the end."

Kerridge nodded gloomily. His own heart had been broken long since, when the Matabele had murdered his wife in the early days, and for years he had been drifting, existing rather than living. Dudley and Marcus had come as a new interest to him—if only he had had sons of his own like those—but for the moment the black fit was on him again. He was deadly tired, and the reaction after the fierce excitement of the last twenty-four hours had set in.

"It isn't worth it, Jack," he answered. He and Railton were old friends. "It isn't worth it. The price is too high. Those fellows' lives in exchange for a country which Nature meant for the niggers—their lives, and the lives of thousands more like them." He knocked the ashes out of his pipe savagely, then strode away.

The captain watched him go, with sombre eyes.

"Poor old Kerridge! I know that he feels it as few of us do. He's seen so much more than most of us have. He's one of the very few of the older hands left. Most of his friends dead, from fever or from the niggers. But he seems to bear a charmed life; he goes through it all without a scratch."

A few minutes later Radi-Mandi came back with a look of grim satisfaction on his face.

"We have got all the waggons now, chief," he reported to Captain Railton. "Three had started south again, but we caught them easily. They will all be here soon. There is much loot—ammunition and flour and coffee and sugar, as well as other stores. We have found nearly a hundred dead Boers, and have caught about twenty un wounded horses. As for the Matabele dead"—he shrugged his shoulders—"there must be two hundred or more. A great killing, indeed!"

The police officer nodded, and glanced round the enclosure. For

the moment those wagonloads of stores seemed of enormous importance, for the Matabele had destroyed everything in the place. The Boer raid was over, of course, for even if the survivors had had the heart to go on, they could not do so without transport or supplies. As a matter of fact, however, the remnant of the attacking force was trekking south, wondering what story it could concoct to account for its defeat. It had lost its leaders, lost its waggons, lost more than half its men, merely in an attack on a little "rooinek" outpost. It was a lame tale to take back to Paul Kruger and the German agents, who, as they knew well, would promptly disavow them. One does not risk a big war in order to uphold men who have failed so badly.

The captain went off to arrange for the reception of the loot. He intended to keep the whole lot in the fort until he heard from the old chief, Khama, about it. Then Marcus turned to his brother.

"Dudley, there's some shade there, under what's left of the stable. I'm going to have a sleep. I'm absolutely done."

He picked up his saddle, which was lying near, and took it into the ruins of the stable, and, heedless of the litter and the ashes, threw himself down, with the saddle as pillow. His brother followed his example, but there was still one thing Dudley wanted to know. He rolled over towards the other.

"Marcus," he said, "what about Joseph? You were going to tell me how he managed to escape."

But there was no answer. The younger boy was fast asleep, and a moment later the elder one was in like case.

It was sunset when Marcus awoke, vaguely aware that something was afoot. He understood in an instant. They were about to bury the dead police.

The boys fell in at the tail of the little procession. It was the first funeral they had ever seen on the veldt, and it stirred them deeply.

The last rays of the sun caught Captain Railton's red-brown hair, as he began that burial service which is so full of poetry, so full of hope, so full of certainty.

"I am the Resurrection and the life," saith the Lord. How often I have heard those same words in the jungle or on the veldt! I have had to read them myself more than once; and though I have since heard them in cathedrals, with all the pomp of the church, all the splendour of gothic architecture around, they have never appealed to me as they used to appeal out in the open at sundown, when we had to put great piles of rocks on the grave afterwards to prevent the foul hyenas from digging up the blanket-wrapped body we had just buried.

They fired a volley over the graves, starting a flock of guinea-fowl which had just come out for its evening feed, and then they went back slowly to the camp.

The waggons were now drawn up in the fort, outside which Khama's men were camped. Radi-Mandi had arranged to stay there until reinforcements of police could arrive, and already messengers had been sent off to Palapye with letters for both the chief and the Deputy-Commissioner.

"Tell me about Joseph now," Dudley said, as he sat down on the pole of one of the waggons.

Marcus laughed. "He was the most frightened-looking man I ever saw in my life. He was standing up on one of the waggons, trying to see what was happening in the drift—he dare not go forward with the Boers—when suddenly he caught sight of myself and a score of Khama's men. He recognised me at once, gave a kind of scream—it was so shrill I could

hear it above the shouting and the rifle fire—and then he dived for his horse, which was tied behind the wagon, unhitched it in record time, clambered on to its back, and blundered away into the bush, followed by another man we know only too well—Harry Collins."

"Harry Collins!" Dudley started. "But Amous killed him yesterday!" Marcus shook his head.

"If he did, then it was Collins' ghost I tried to kill to-day, and that same ghost fired back at me. I was half inclined to shoot at Joseph, but I couldn't, of course."

The elder brother nodded. "No; that's right. And then?"

"Then!" Marcus shrugged his shoulders. "Joseph and Collins just disappeared into the scrub, and after that I was too busy to think about them again. It was a bit hot for a few minutes when the Boers turned back from the river, and began to ride through us."

"What are you youngsters going to do now?" It was Captain Railton who spoke. He had just strolled up, accompanied by Kerridge, whilst Amous was hovering in the background.

"We're going on, of course," Dudley answered promptly.

The police-officer raised his eyebrows.

"Going on! But you can't, my dear boys. Surely you've seen enough Matabele already. Every fight doesn't end as this one did. From here up to Fort Victoria, a hundred and fifty miles, the road is in the hands of the savages, and you couldn't hope to get through."

Kerridge answered for them.

"They're right, Jack. They can't afford to wait, especially as that cousin of theirs is ahead again. I'm going with them, but we're not going up the road at all. We're going to the east, into the Mahalanga country—there won't be any Matabele there—then into Portuguese territory, when we shall strike north until we reach the Great Sabi, and obtain news of John Douglas, whose camp is somewhere on that river."

"I think you're very foolish," the captain answered. "Still, of course, I can't stop you. The Mahalanga country is rugged and swampy, the Portuguese a fever death-trap, and you'll have lions all the way. Then, though the Mahalanga won't fight—we know that, by experience—their witch doctors can poison you. Moreover, there's tsetse-fly all the way, and your horses would die before you had got fifty miles. So it's a mad proposition all round!"

The prospector shrugged his shoulders.

"Mad or not, we are going! As for horses, I never thought of taking them. There are about half a dozen bicycles on those Boer waggons, and we're going to borrow some of those." He turned abruptly to Amous. "Can you ride a bicycle?" he asked.

The Basuto nodded. "Ja, baas, I can ride; I learned in Kimberley."

"That's right!" Kerridge answered. Then to the boys: "Your own cycles ought to be here to-morrow at the latest, and you can take a couple of pairs of tyres off those on the waggons. I suppose we can have all the foodstuffs we want, Jack?"

The police-officer nodded towards the waggons.

"Help yourselves; there's plenty. Only I must say again that I don't approve of your scheme, Kerridge. I consider that at this season, with the rains just beginning, you are all going to certain death."

The prospector consulted the boys with his eyes, and they answered, practically together:

"We'll go on and risk it."

Joseph in the Toils.

WHEN they rode away from the fight Joseph and Harry Collins covered several miles without a halt, without even exchanging a word.

Collins took the lead, and the other followed him unquestioningly, being half crazy with the fear of death, but as they came up a big rise overlooking the river Collins slowed down and glanced scornfully at his companion.

"So you came without even a rifle, much less a blanket!" he growled. "You are a cheerful sort of partner to have! What are you going to do now, with several hundred miles' journey ahead of you?"

Joseph shuddered. "I've had enough—more than

enough!" he muttered. "I'm going to turn back and go home again!"

Collins sneered.

"What do you call 'home'—gaol, eh? That's where you would go if they caught you in Bechuanaland, my friend, and I'm not sure they wouldn't hang you. No, Mr. Joseph Scarfield, you've got to go on with me. We're going to see John Douglas first, make that deal with him, and then we're going to England by the East Coast Route, out by Beira, where we sha'n't be known. Do you understand?"

Joseph nodded. He understood only too well that he was in Collins' power. He could not find his way back to civilisation alone, and even were he to succeed in doing so, he was certain to be dealt with as a traitor and an accomplice of highwaymen.

The latter thought reminded him of something.

"You haven't told me yet where my share of the gold off the coach is," he grumbled, his avarice getting the better of his fear of the other man.

"No, my friend, I have not," Collins laughed in a very unpleasant manner. "I couldn't tell you because there isn't any share. My aunt! Do you think I should have come up on this raid if Van Zyl and I had really got the gold? That case contained lead, not boxes of sovereigns. It was just a blind. The real gold went up in the deputy-commissioner's cart. You were actually sitting on it for days!"

Joseph Scarfield groaned. He had written to his father from Palapye that he had already cleared a thousand pounds over a "speculation," yet now it seemed that, so far from having done so, he had lost all his kit, made himself practically an outlaw, and was on the veldt, far away from civilisation, with a desperado as his only companion.

"We shall have to go on because we dare not turn back, and you'll have to stay with me, Mr. Joseph Scarfield, because I want money, which you can supply even if this business with Douglas does not come off. I shall require a good round sum." There was no mistaking the determination in Collins' voice.

Joseph clenched his hand. What a fool he had been to put himself in the power of this scoundrel!

"What are you going to do for provisions and so on?" Joseph asked suddenly.

"I've got all that mapped out," the other answered. "There's a trading station about twenty miles from here across the river, and we shall take whatever old Mac, the trader, happens to have. Don't you worry; we're going through with this game."

They rode up to the trading station, which consisted of a galvanised iron store and three or four grass huts on the top of a small kopje, about sunset.

Old Mackay, the proprietor of the place, came forward to meet them, scanning them curiously. He knew Collins immediately.

"Hallo!" he said. "You're the chap who came down with those Germans and Dutchmen catching live game, ain't you? You and your friend look now as if someone had been chasing you"—for their clothes were torn, they were coatless and dirty, whilst Collins' shirt was liberally bespattered with blood.

"We have been chased by the Matabele," Collins answered. "They've got our kit and gave us a big run. More than once I thought they were going to have us."

The trader detected the lie instantly. If the Matabele had really been pursuing them their horses would show signs of it, whilst now, as a matter of fact, the animals looked far more fit than the men. Moreover, Collins would certainly have fled westwards towards civilisation, not away from it.

Still, the old man did not allow his face to betray his feelings. He took

them into his living-hut, where he gave them food and drink, both of which they needed sorely, and listened to the tale which Collins was telling, making it up as he went along.

"Yes, we stayed with Railton at Fort Busi last night," Collins went on. "He seemed a bit worried at the look of things."

The trader nodded, and continued to puff at his huge briar pipe. Now he was certain that these were rogues, for only an hour before their arrival the natives had brought him in a full account of the great fight at the fort, and had proved their story by showing him various things they had managed to pick up on the field of battle—some Matabele assegais and feather head-dresses, all blood-stained, a couple of Boer brides, and most precious of all, three Boer rifles and cartridge-belts. Consequently, though Mackay could not think the fight had been as big as they said, he was perfectly convinced that they had told him the truth, and that Collins and Joseph were lying.

"I don't think the niggers will ever worry me here," he remarked, when Collins' supply of fiction had run out. "You see, I am pretty popular amongst them, and, moreover, they know my store can't be looted."

Collins looked up suddenly.

"Why not?"

The old man laughed gently. He understood now what his guests were after.

"Because I've got an arrangement on the door of the store, so that anyone opening it would at once explode a case of dynamite inside, and, of course, kill everything within half a mile radius. I set it by merely pulling out a certain peg after I have closed the door. If I heard the niggers were coming for me I should merely leave it ready for them and go."

"But it's not set now?" Collins asked anxiously.

Mackay shook his head.

"Oh, no! It's a bit too dangerous

(Continued on the next page.)

REMARKABLE!! FRETWORK BARGAIN.

Send us three penny stamps, and we will, as an advertisement, send you a SHILLING PARCEL of Fretwork Designs, including a SIXPENNY DESIGN for making a HANDSOME ARTICLE OF FRETWORK FURNITURE, and a SIXPENNY BOOK OF 25 DAINTY SMALL DESIGNS. Write to-day to—DESK 34, NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION, 63, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON.

SENT FOR 4/6 DEPOSIT.

Send 4/6 for the world-famed "ROBEYPHONE" with 24 selections, sumptuously decorated 17-in. horn, powerful motor, 10-in. turn-table and loud tone sound box, which I sell at HALF shop prices. I supply GRAMOPHONES, COLUMBIA, PATHE, ZONOPHONE, EXCELSIOR, EDISON, and AMBEROL Phonographs and Records at low monthly payments. Free approval. Stupendous bargains. 5,000 Testimonials.

GEO. ROBEY, Ltd., World's Provider, Dept. No. 10, COVENTRY.

WRITE FOR LISTS.

104 Genuine Foreign Stamps, every one different, from China to Peru. Free Gift of Four Long Ecuador to all purchasers from approvals. Large Illustrated Catalogue and Guide free, also how to obtain Stamp Albums free. Only one packet to each applicant. Price 3d., post free. 2d. extra abroad.—CAPE & CO., Stamp Importers, BRISTOL.

DRAPER'S ORGANETTES SEND 3/- DEPOSIT & 2/6 MONTHLY.

Draper's Organettes Play Dances, Sacred and Sentimental Music, 1,000 different tunes. Catalogue of Musical Instruments, Talking Machines, Jewellery and Fancy Goods post free.—C. P. DRAPER, Organette Works, Blackburn.

DEADWOOD DICK SALOON AIR PISTOL.

The largest sale of any air pistol in the world. Can be carried in the pocket. Specially introduced for in and out door sport. Latest and greatest novelty extant for shooting Birds, Rabbits, &c. Sent securely packed in case, together with 100 rounds of ammunition and a quantity of darts. Prices: No. 1, japanned, 4/6; No. 2, Silver-plated all over, 6/-; No. 3, extra finish, 8/6; postage 4d. extra. Enclose 1d. stamp for Illustrated List.—B. FRANKS & CO., Gun Manufacturers, Empire Works, Caroline Street, Birmingham.

BLUSHING.

FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to post postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 8, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

Applications with regard to Advertisement Space in this paper should be addressed; Stanley H. Bowerman, Advertisement Manager, THE BOYS' FRIEND, 6, Bowyer Street, London, E.C.

for everyday use. Now, if you're ready, I'll show you your hut."

Collins had expected to be asked to sleep in the trader's own hut, but he could not very well protest against being given one at the other end of the camp. It was perfectly clean, and contained a couple of veldt beds made of sticks and grass. Mackay brought them a couple of small trade blankets each, and then bade them good-night.

"He's a mean old beast!" Collins grumbled. "He's got better blankets than these, and I'm sure he's got a supply of whisky or dop hidden away somewhere, and he's sure to have plenty of cash in the place, as he uses it for cattle-buying. Well, we'll have the lot to-morrow, or as much as we can carry away on our horses and his. I'd soon quieten him." And he glanced meaningly towards his rifle.

Joseph sighed heavily. He was a weak-kneed villain, and he preferred to profit by crimes to seeing crimes actually committed. He did not feel guilty when a thing had already been done and he was merely getting the advantage from it. That was, to his mind, only business.

"We've got to get up before dawn," Collins said, as he lay down. "The first thing is to collar old Mac's rifle, then the rest will be easy."

A minute later both of them were fast asleep.

For the next hour or two Mackay was very busy. He routed out his cook-boy and his chief herd-boy, explained matters to them in a few words—words which made them grin and chuckle, and then they set to work vigorously to help him.

Just before dawn, Collins threw off his blankets, stretched himself, and awakened Joseph.

"Get up, Scarfield," he said. "It's time we made a start. See you don't make a mess of things." He slipped a cartridge into the breach of his rifle, then, followed by his shivering accomplice, made his way quietly to Mackay's own hut.

The door was not fastened, and Collins pushed it open, then he struck a match. As the light flared up, he gave a cry of amazement. The hut had been stripped bare—rifle, shotgun, bedding, saddlery, everything had gone; only the bed and table and chairs remained. On the table, propped up against a candle, was a note addressed to Collins in Mackay's shaky handwriting:

"Dear Mr. Collins," it ran,—“As an old man, I am not ashamed to go into hiding when I have two younger ones against me. You told a nice story yesterday, but you forgot that the niggers also tell me things. You understand? I'm afraid you will not find much lying about. It is all in the store, and the dynamite arrangement is set to go off. I have left your horses, and you may keep the blankets. But I sent a runner into Jack Railton last night to say you were here, so I should advise you not to wait too long."

Collins crumpled the letter up with an oath.

"He's done us, the old ruffian! I never thought he suspected. Well, the sooner we're out of this the better."

He strode off to the stable, followed by Joseph, who was hungry and cold and miserable. They saddled up, and were about to mount, when a sudden thought struck Collins.

"I may as well burn his grass huts," he said, and plucking a handful of thatch out of the nearest roof, he lighted it.

Dawn comes very quickly in the tropics, and it was already light enough to see. Before Collins could apply his torch to the thatch, a bullet whizzed out from the bush, passing uncomfortably near his face, so close that it seemed to daze him. He dropped the torch hurriedly, and sprang on to his horse. A minute later, he and Joseph were out of sight.

Then the old trader came out of his hiding-place, walking a little stiffly, but, none the less, chuckling gleefully.

"To think," he murmured—"only to think that there has never been even an ounce of dynamite in this camp! One good kick would have served to burst open the door of the store."

Meanwhile, Collins and Joseph were riding on towards the north-east.

"A cheerful look-out," Collins grumbled. "I've only got twenty cartridges in all, and you haven't even got a rifle. Only a fool like you would have come on without one. Well, now, we've simply got to hold up the niggers and get food from them, whether they like it or no. I can tell you there'll be no tea or

coffee or anything of that sort for the next week or two."

Joseph groaned.

"Isn't there another store anywhere? I've got a little money on me"—he had really over a hundred in his belt, although his meanness had prevented him from mentioning it the night before—"and we could buy some provisions."

Collins snorted.

"There isn't another store all the way. As for the money, you had better give that to me now, so that I can deal with the niggers." He reined up and dismounted. "Come on, Mr. Joseph Scarfield. There is no time to waste."

Collins had looped the bridle of his horse on his left arm, and was holding his rifle in the other hand, a loaded rifle, as Joseph happened to know; therefore, Joseph dismounted too, and began to search his pockets.

The other man stopped him impatiently.

"You know your money isn't there. It will be in a money-belt. Now, don't lie, but hand it over quick!"

Joseph glanced at him out of the corners of his beady eyes; took him all in—the ominous-looking rifle, the powerful figure, the strong, bad face—then, very slowly, he undid his money-belt, and handed it over, with something extremely like a sob.

ridge and Amous respectively, were by no means bad ones. Fortunately, the tyres of all were new, and it did not take the boys long to get their own cycles properly fitted up again.

They made up their packages of provisions—tea, coffee, sugar, flour, and salt—and distributed them evenly amongst the four machines. Amous had already shown them that he could ride well, whilst Kerridge had cycled many thousands of miles through Africa.

The boys took their own rifles, of course, Kerridge took a Martini, but Amous selected a twelve-bore shotgun out of the loot.

"This is the thing which will get us our food, baas," he remarked to Dudley. "There are millions of guinea-fowl where we are going, and we shall not want to wait to shoot big buck."

Captain Railton bade them farewell reluctantly.

"I wish you weren't going," he said. "You've done such good work that I don't want to see you lose your lives in a fool's game. Still, you know your own business, I suppose? You won't, at any rate, have cause to complain of what I have said about you in my official dispatch. And now—good-bye, and good luck!"

It takes some practice to cycle along the winding native footpaths, as the

this place, it would, of course, have been a very different matter."

Kerridge nodded.

"I quite agree with you, Mac. We need not think about them any more, but can take things quietly. By the way, have you got a runner you could send back to the fort? We find we left our two spare inner tubes there."

"You can have one to leave at dawn," the trader answered. "It will take him a day and a half there and back; but I reckon the rest won't do you any harm. You'll get on all the faster afterwards, and, meanwhile, I can send carriers on with your kit to M'Bambo's, thirty miles along your road, so that you'll have an easy trek when you leave here."

Kerridge and the boys agreed readily; it was pleasant to think that Joseph was out of the running, and that they themselves were now practically beyond the radius of Matabele attacks. That morning they had been in the bush veldt, now they were in a land of vast granite kopjes, with wonderfully green valleys in between. On the other veldt water had been scarce—you found it only in the rivers; amongst the kopjes you came on it every two or three hundred yards—clear, cold streams, gurgling down rocky little courses. There seemed to be a native village on every

tempuous way in which most white men dismiss native stories, but in this case he was not satisfied, and when he found himself alone with his brother, he said eagerly:

"Dudley, that sounds like a treasure cave. You know what we've heard about the enormous amount of gold the ancients got out of this country? There may be some hidden there, and the witch doctors may have invented this 'Death that Spits' to keep the ordinary natives away. We sha'n't be doing anything to-morrow. Let's go and investigate."

Dudley assented readily. Adventure was as the breath of his nostrils to him.

"Shall we take Amous?" he asked. The younger brother shook his head.

"No; because then Kerridge and Mackay would know, and probably want to stop us. Isn't it queer how these men, who have been a long time in the country, pick up the nigger ideas and superstitions. I'm sure they actually believe in half these native yarns."

"I don't think so," Dudley laughed. "They look on them as silly things—not worth worrying about; but in this instance there must be something worth concealing in that passage."

"And we'll find it," Marcus added confidently.

The following morning Amous went out early after guinea-fowl, and Kerridge and the trader were still lying on their cots, smoking and talking over old times, when the two boys, taking their rifles, started off in the direction of the conical kopjes. They did not leave the camp secretly in any way—they had no need to do so, being their own masters—but they did not want to risk the possibility of ridicule from the two elder men. The camp natives, store-boys and cook-boys, saw them go without taking any apparent interest in their movements.

There was no path leading to the kopjes, and by the time they reached the foot of the first one, they were wet to their waists from the dew on the grass, but they did not heed that, knowing that the sun would soon dry it off.

They had not much difficulty in reaching the pointed boulder which Mackay had indicated as marking the supposed entrance to the tunnel, but when they got there they searched for some time without seeing anything in the nature of a mine working; in fact, the whole kopje side seemed to be unusually thickly overgrown with scrub, and there was no trace of human spoor anywhere.

"I'm afraid it's all a silly yarn, as Mackay said," Dudley remarked. "There's no tunnel here, and this is certainly the pointed boulder. Let's go back to breakfast, and get some dry clothes."

Marcus, who had climbed a little higher up the hillside, did not answer for a moment, then he called out:

"Come up here, Dudley! I think I've found it!"

The elder brother scrambled up quickly, thoroughly excited now. Marcus was standing in a little flat space behind an immense granite rock, and there in front of him was an opening some six feet square.

Marcus gripped his brother's arm.

"It's one of those ancient mines, supposed to have been made by the Phœnicians or the Hittites, of which Kerridge is always talking. It probably leads to a rich gold reef." He did not know that gold never occurs in the granite kopjes. "I wonder if we've really found something good at last!"

They had brought candles with them, and, lighting these, they prepared to enter the hole in the rock.

As they went in, Marcus gave a little shudder.

"It doesn't look very pleasant, does it? Go carefully, Dudley, in case we come to a sudden drop of any sort."

The tunnel was sloping downwards rather sharply. It remained of a fairly even size throughout, however, and the surface was by no means bad for their feet. They had gone perhaps some forty feet when they were suddenly aware of a curious smell.

Dudley paused and sniffed.

"What is it, Marcus?" he asked. "I seem to know it, and it's not foul air, for the candles are burning quite properly; in fact, there seems to be a draught in our direction."

"I don't know—" Marcus began; then suddenly he put his hands to his eyes, dropping his candle, which went out. "Oh, oh!" he cried. "What was that hit me?"

"Another thrilling instalment of this grand adventure serial, next Tuesday, in THE BOYS' FRIEND."



"I don't know—" Marcus began; then suddenly he put his hands to his eyes, dropping his candle, which went out. "Oh, oh!" he cried. "What was that hit me?"

Collins weighed it critically in his hand.

"A hundred," he asked. "Ninety only, you say? Still, it is safer in my charge, and"—he grinned meaningly—"we are partners, of course."

As he was buckling the belt round his own waist a fly settled on his hand and stung him. He glanced at it angrily, and was brushing it off against his breeches, when he noticed its peculiar shape and markings. He gave a cry of dismay, and looked towards the horses. Scores of similar flies were round them.

"It's the tsetse fly!" he cried to Joseph. "We've got into a fly belt. Now, our horses will die the moment they get wet."

Joseph sat down, covered his face with his hands, and groaned from weariness and despair.

Their horses would die the moment they got wet! And already there were heavy rain clouds gathering on the horizon.

The Mysterious Tunnel.

THE second day after the great fight the boys' bicycles arrived from Palapye—Khama's messengers knew better than to tarry on the road, Matabele or no Matabele. The machines which they had found on the captured waggons were distinctly a mixed lot, though two, which were appropriated by Ker-

boys quickly found out, yet that night they managed to reach Mackay's store.

The old trader received them cordially. He had known Kerridge for years—in fact, there were few white men, real white men, in that part of Africa who did not regard the prospector as a trusted friend.

"I had some visitors the night following the fight," Mackay remarked, after having heard every detail of the story of the battle at the drift; and then he went on to tell them of the coming of Collins and Joseph, and of how he had foiled their scheme to loot his store.

He did not know Joseph's name, but the boys supplied that quickly, adding a few details concerning their cousin.

Mackay frowned.

"What a fool I was to let them have their horses; but, never you fear—they can't get through on horseback; the fly is much too bad, and they've no kit, except one rifle and some trade blankets. If I were you, I should put them out of my calculations altogether. I have known Douglas, the hunter, for a long time, and he would never do business with two tattered scallywags like those. Moreover, I don't suppose they will ever find him; most probably they will end by trying to cut through to Beira direct, and die of fever on the way. If they had managed to loot