

GREAT EASTER HOLIDAY NUMBER. PRICE 1^D.

THE BOYS' FRIEND

1^D



Splendid FREE PLATE Inside

The entire contents of THE BOYS' FRIEND are copyrighted in the United States of America.

The subscription rates for this paper to any part of the world are: 75. per annum; 35. 60. for six months; or 15. 00. per quarter, including all double and special numbers.



Published in town and country every Monday morning. To ensure getting a copy on the day of issue, readers are recommended to order in advance.

When finished with, please hand this grand number to a friend, and oblige—
YOUR EDITOR.

OWEN CONQUEST'S GRAND COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & Co.

THE IMPOSTORS!



Four flushed and dusty juniors came rushing up the drive, and charged across the lawn. The Modern juniors all leaped to their feet in dismay as they recognised the Fictitious Four. "Oh, tare and 'ouns!" yelled Tommy Doyle. "They've got away!"

The 1st Chapter.
cornered.
Tommy Dodd jumped.
Tommy Dodd, the great chief and leader of the Modern juniors at Rookwood, was dismayed.
Tommy Dodd was standing in the end study of the junior passage on the Classical side—that is to say, in the home and headquarters of Jimmy Silver & Co., the deadly Classical rivals of Tommy Dodd.
He had a large camel-hair brush in his hand, loaded with ink, and he was adorning the walls of the study with inscriptions that were quite modern, and not in the least classical. Upon the looking-glass stood out in bold letters the telling phrase:
"THIS STUDY IS A HOME FOR IDIOTS!"
Upon the wallpaper were daubed such graceful sentences as "Classical chumps!" "Go and eat coke!" "Go and grind Greek!"
Tommy Dodd was surveying his handiwork with great satisfaction. As the wallpaper had already suffered considerably from fuming-funks, Indian clubs, and ink, the owners of the study were not likely to be equally satisfied with the further mural decorations.
Tommy Dodd had even ventured upon a Greek inscription. As a Modern fellow, Green was not included in his studies. But he knew the alphabet, and he felt that a Greek inscription was exactly the thing for a Classical study. He executed the

following effort with considerable pride:
P A T E
which, being interpreted, meant "Rats."
Tommy Dodd had not finished yet by any means. Jimmy Silver & Co. were down at the cricket practice, and Tommy Dodd had found the coast clear. So long as the ink lasted he meant his artistic efforts to continue. But suddenly, as we have said, he jumped. There were foot-steps in the passage, and the sound of voices.
Tommy Dodd lowered his inky brush, and grunted discontentedly. It was the worst of ill-luck. He had watched those Classical fellows go down to the cricket, and had considered that they were safe for an hour at least. And now he could hear their voices in the passage.
The Fictitious Four were coming to their study, and there was no escape for the raider. And it would find him there—with those inscriptions on the walls, too—the result was certain to be extremely painful for Tommy Dodd. He could guess in advance how the rest of the ink would be used. Tommy Dodd looked round the study wildly.
There was a screen in the corner, a present from Lovell's affectionate aunt. The screen was somewhat damaged—it was curious how things got damaged in the junior studies at Rookwood. And there was a sprawling inscription on the screen in wet ink: "J. Silver, A.S.S., L.B.W."

the last initials referring to a recent performance of Jimmy Silver's on the cricket-field.
The screen was a little crazy, but by being propped across the corner of the room, it could be induced to stand. At this thrilling moment it was a haven of refuge to Tommy Dodd.
The footstep had almost reached the study door when the Modern junior made up his mind. He whipped behind the screen, and drew it as close to him across the corner as he could, holding it by one of the numerous rags and tatters.
Barely was he concealed from sight when the study door was thrown open, and the Fictitious Four came in. Lovell had a hat under his arm, and Jimmy Silver had a letter in his hand which had evidently arrived by the afternoon's post, as it had not yet been opened.
Silver, Lovell, Newcombe, and Raby were chatting pleasantly as they came in, but as they crossed the threshold the chat suddenly ceased, and there were four separate and distinct howls of wrath:
"Look at that!"
"My hat!"
"Some Modern cad!"
"Which we'd caught him!"
Tommy Dodd, behind the screen in the corner, chuckled silently. It did not seem to occur to the Classics that the raider was still in the study. They stared and gazed at the inky inscriptions on all sides with exclamations of wrath that tickled Tommy Dodd immensely.

"Why, the ink's still wet!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The ruter can't have been gone long. If I hadn't stopped to take this howly letter from the postman we'd have nailed him."
"The cheuky cad!" howled Raby.
"Look at the glass!"
"Look at my screen!" exclaimed Lovell.
Tommy Dodd held his breath. The Classics were looking at the screen, and there were holes in the screen—many holes. But the corner was dark, and they did not see the crouching Modern through the tears and rents.
"Must have spotted us coming in and cleared off," said Jimmy Silver.
"Lucky we didn't stay longer, or he'd have inked the whole blessed study. We should be still here if that ass Snythe hadn't shifted us. I tell you what, you chaps, I'm fed up with Snythe of the Shell. We want a new junior captain."
"We want to scrag the Modern beast who's done this!" growled Lovell. "If I had him here I'd make him swallow the rest of the ink!"
Tommy Dodd grinned behind the screen.
"Never mind; we'll re-paper the study some time," said Jimmy Silver.
"Can't re-paper my screen!"
"Well, that screen had seen its best days, anyway. It's never been the same since we trod on it that time we had a four-handed mill. I wonder what's in this letter?" How are you fellows off for cash?"
"Very much off—stony!"

"May he something in this for tea," said Jimmy Silver comfortingly. Jimmy Silver always looked on the cheerful side of things. "Blessed if I know the first 'Tant' from home."
"Well, see if there's a remittance in it," said Raby, as Jimmy Silver regarded the unfamiliar handwriting on the envelope with some surprise. "It's getting near tea-time, and there's nothing in the locker."
Silver opened the letter. His chums watched him rather anxiously, even forgetting the damage done to their quarters by the Modern raider. Money was "tight" in the end study, and he was a grave question. There was a general exclamation of delight as a currency note for one pound came into view.
"My hat!" said Lovell. "A quid—a whole quid! Hurrah!"
Jimmy Silver read the letter, and gave a whistle.
"Well, my hat!"
"What's up?" asked Raby.
"Listen, my young friends," said Jimmy Silver—"listen, and I will a tale unfold, as they say in the amateur theatricals. You fellows ever heard of a place called Oakwood, somewhere near Coombe?"
"Yes, it's a big house near the river, about ten miles from here," said Lovell. "I've passed it being. What about it?"
"Listen, my infants!" Jimmy Silver read out the letter in tones of great satisfaction:
"My dear James,—I have heard

THE IMPOSTORS!

(Continued from the previous page.)

was followed by a chuckle, and the chuckle developed into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" asked Tommy Cook, somewhat perplexed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dadd, in ecstasy. "What a thumping wheeze!"

"Are you fellows game?" demanded Tommy Dadd.

"What for?" asked Tommy Dadd.

"He doesn't know Silver—"

"He won't do that!"

"So he wouldn't know us."

"Eh?"

"There might be a bit risky, but there would be a feed, and to pull the legs of those Classical boarders, what a thumping jape!" grinned Tommy Dadd.

"Do you mean we should have to show them somewhere."

"What the dickens—"

"We could get Towle and Lacy and Webb to help—that's all right— and collar their bikes—"

"Blessed if you see!" said Tommy Cook, starting open-mouthed at his study-leader.

"If you're not right off your silly rocker, tell us what you're talking about."

"Haven't I told you? Are you game?" exclaimed Tommy Dadd.

"Why, it's the wheeze of the season—the old chap would never know the difference—"

"What old chap?" yelled Cook.

"What difference?" shrieked Doyle.

Tommy Dadd went off into a fresh fit of laughter. Whatever was the mysterious idea that was working in his brain, it evidently struck him as very humorous indeed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha!"

Doyle and Cook, exasperated, jumped up and hid violent hands on their chins. They yanked him out of his chair, and bumped him against the wall.

But Tommy Dadd was still howling with laughter till the tears came into his eyes.

"What is it now?" roared Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you explain intirely, you owl!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Bump his silly head against the wall!" shouted Cook.

"Bump!"

"Yow! Lazzo!" yelled Tommy Dadd, becoming serious at last.

"You silly chumps! Chuck it!"

"Then will you see what you're chortling about?" growled Cook.

Tommy Dadd chuckled again.

"It's the jape of the season! Ha, ha, ha! You fellows will have to back me up."

"Well, jolly well knock you down if you don't explain, you burbling jabbercock!"

"You see—ha, ha!—to-morrow's a half-holiday."

"Is that what you're chucking about?"

"No, ass! You see, when those Classical cads came in, dived behind their ragged screen, and hid there for a bit before they bowled me out. Then Silver and I went to the shed, but just had. Of course, I couldn't help hearing it as I was only six feet away from the blessed burber. Ha, ha, ha!"

dinner—they said so. Well, suppose a party of chaps from the Modern side met them on the road—"

"And bundled them into some where and fastened them up—"

"Eh?"

"And borrowed their bikes—"

"What?"

"And went on to Oakwood, and introduced themselves as James & Co."

"My only hat!"

"And scuffed the feed, and had a high old time, while James & Co. were cooling their heels in Snooks's barn."

Doyle and Cook stared blankly at Tommy Dadd. Then, as the faintest of that howling jape burst upon their minds, they uttered a cry of delight.

They rushed at Tommy Dadd and hugged him.

"Oh, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hooray! Ha, ha, ha!"

all of the Fourth. They grinned at the Classics.

"Spending your half-holiday like that?" asked Tommy Dadd sweetly.

"Go and eat coke!" growled Jimmy Silver.

The Moderns grinned, and wheeled their bicycles out and vanished.

Jimmy Silver soon had his tyre off, and examined it carefully.

There was no trace of a puncture. It was after a quarter of an hour had elapsed that he made the discovery that there was no puncture at all.

Jimmy Silver bent hard through his nose.

"Some thundering ass has loosened the valve and let my tyre down!" he said.

"I wish I knew who the silly idler was! I'd talk to the funny duff!"

"Well, you are an ass!" said Ruby.

"Why didn't you look at the valve first?"

"Why didn't you?" grunted Silver.

"Peace, my children!" said Lovell.

"Get that tyre on, and let's go off!"

"You're waiting time, Jimmy, my son!"

"Why, you ass?"

"Oh, buck up!"

The tyre was replaced, and the Classics juniors wheeled out their machines.

There was no sign of Tommy Dadd & Co. in the quad.

Butchley of the Sixth gave them a

between high rows of trees. The only building in sight was an old barn—but there was something else in sight.

As the Classical cyclists came level with the old barn, seven figures rushed out into the road ahead of them.

The Fistical Four recognised the Modern juniors, and they saw, too, that Tommy Dadd & Co. were joined a rope across the road. They jammed on their brakes.

"Hah!" sang out Tommy Dadd.

The Classical juniors had to jump off. There was no passing that obstruction. They bestowed wrathful glances upon the Moderns.

"What are you up to, you silly asses?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Collar them!"

"What?"

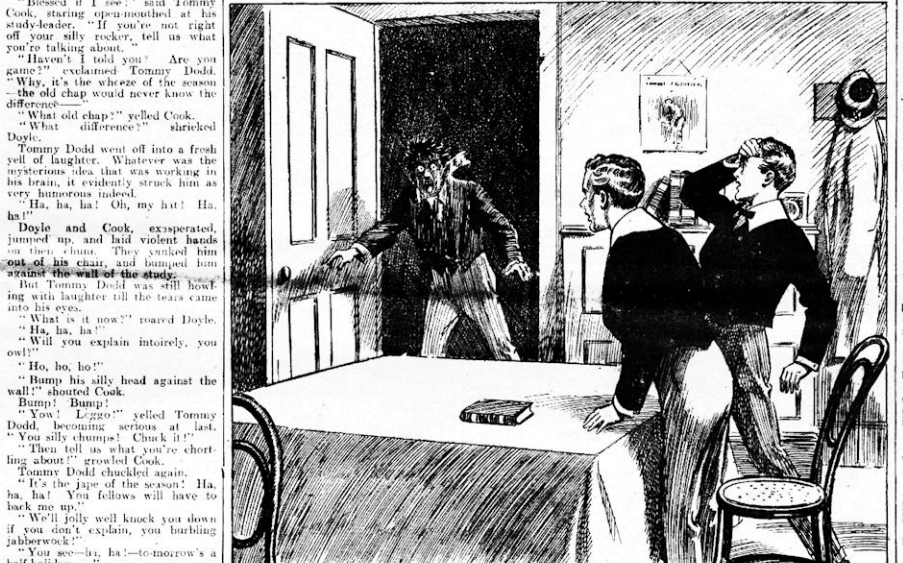
"Hands off!"

"You-on!"

The seven Moderns closed in on the Classics with a rush. The four had not been expecting that. But they were not called the Fistical Four for nothing. The bikes went whirling away, and the chains of the Fourth put up a tremendous fight.

For several minutes the road seemed to be filled with whirling and crashing bikes, flying arms and legs, and clouds of dust.

But the odds were too great.



"Bure, ye look a sight!" howled Tommy Doyle. "Yoop! I'm mothered! I'm nearly chook-chook-chook!" gasped Tommy Dadd. "The beasts caught me—yoop!—and inked me—yoop!—and sooted me—yoop!—and trauced me—groo!"

No. 5 Study rang with laughter. It was quite a little time before the three Tummies could recover sufficient gravity to discuss their plans soberly, and arrange the details of that stunning scheme which was to cover the Classical enemies with confusion, and cause the Fistical Four to hide their diminished heels.

The 6th Chapter, Fairly Dished!

Jimmy Silver uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

Promptly after dinner that Wednesday afternoon the Fistical Four had made their way to the bike-shed, and wanted to start at once for Oakwood. They had a long ride before them, and a good time awaiting them. And Jimmy Silver made the discovery that one of his tyres was as flat as a patekale.

"Oh, rotten!" he growled.

"Really puncture."

"Blestly!" said Lovell. "Buck up, zenth it!"

The bicycle was up-ended, and the juniors started to work on it. Barely had they started when quite a crowd of fellows came into the shed for their machines. They were all Moderns, the three Tummies, and Lacy and Webb and Towle and Hunt,

pleasant nod, and Knowles, the Modern prefect, gave them a scowl as they whizzed away. But the Fistical Four did not care for the old enemy Knowles just then. As they came out of the gates they passed Smythe of the Sixth. He called to them.

"I want you kids to tag at howling this afternoon," said Smythe.

"Go on wanting," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Look here," said the junior captain of Brookwood. "I want to tell you, kid, old chap, Tatt!"

"No law against that. Want all you like, old chap, Tatt!"

The Fistical Four wheeled their bicycles into the road, leaving the lovely Smythe frowning indignantly. The chains of the Fourth mounted and pedalled away down the road in great spirits. It was a sunny spring afternoon, and they had an agreeable ride before them, to be followed by a handsome feed at Oakwood, or so they supposed, at any rate. But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as Jimmy Silver & Co. were unfortunately destined to discover that afternoon.

They rode cheerily through the quaint old town of Coombe, and then pedalled away on the country road beyond. About a mile past the town the road was very lonely, winding

Great fighting-men as the Fistical Four undoubtedly were, they had to deal with seven of the best men on the Modern side. And it was too large an order. Gapping and panting, and still resisting, they were charged through the fence into the field. The rope was knotted round their wrists in turn, till they were two by two.

"You're up!" said Jimmy Silver & Co. were almost speechless with wrath. But they were not quite speechless. They found breath enough to tell the Moderns what they thought of them. But the Moderns did not mind. With howls of laughter, they pushed the captured Classics away across the field into the deserted barn.

The Fistical Four were rushed into the barn, and then their bikes were rushed in after them by Towle and Lacy. Tommy Dadd ascended the ladder that led to the loft over the barn and pushed up the heavy trap-door.

The prisoners were as astonished as they were wrathful. Why the Moderns had collared them in this way was a mystery.

"Look here," roared Jimmy Silver. "This has gone far enough!"

"You've gone far enough, you mean!" chuckled Tommy Cook.

"This is where you take a five-bar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bundie 'em up here!" called out Tommy Dadd from the ladder.

"That's all right, you silly asses!" shouted Silver. "We're going on a visit. The old gen will be expecting us."

Jimmy Silver could not say why that statement should make the Modern juniors scream with laughter. But it did. They simply yelled.

"They're off their silly rockers!" said Lovell, in wonder. "What is there funny about us going on a visit?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Beynon will be disappointed if we don't get there, said Jimmy Silver; 'so, chuck it, Dadd, and don't be a cad.'"

"That's all right," said Tommy Dadd. "We'll see that Mr. Beynon isn't disappointed. Won't we, chaps?"

"You bet!" chuckled the Moderns.

"I tell you he's expecting us!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"That's all right, all right. Look here, you're going to Oakwood for a stunning feed, and a high old time—what?"

"Yes, you worm."

"And Mr. Beynon don't know you by sight?"

"Of course he doesn't, as I've never met him, ass!"

"Then it's as right as rain. Mr. Beynon won't be disappointed. You were going to the three friends. I suppose you could take six?"

"Eh? I'm not going to take you Modern cads, if that's what you mean?"

"That isn't exactly what I mean," grinned Tommy Dadd, while his comrades yelled. "In fact, it isn't at all what I mean. But you're sure you wouldn't take us?"

"Oh, jolly leap!"

"Then you can't take us, if we don't take."

"What?"

"You see, we're going."

"You—you gig-gig-gig going!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"And so."

"Why don't you—"

"I shall introduce myself as James—dear James—and these chaps as my little pals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the kind old gen is sure to be pleased at having seven nice boys come to see him, instead of four measly, non-classical rotters."

"Why, you Classical—"

"Jimmy Silver, you're taking me to pieces!"

"You spoofing villain! You—you burglar! You wouldn't dare!"

"We'll call for your coming back," said Tommy Dadd, unbending. "I'll see if I can bring you a bit of cake in my pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter!" howled Ruby. "Let us go, my hat, I'll slaughter you! I'll—"

"This way with those Classical worms!" said Tommy Dadd. "My hat! How they wriggle! Up the ladder with them!"

The four Classics struggled furiously. But with their hands tied together in a bunch, they had no chance at all. Tommy Dadd ascended the ladder first, taking the loose end of the rope, and pulled. Underneath, six Moderns bunked them up.

Tommy Dadd was the last to descend. He kissed his hand to the Fistical Four, and closed the heavy trap, and disappeared.

The Modern Classics looked at one another with deep feelings. They were shut up in the loft for the afternoon, and Tommy Dadd was spreading off to Oakwood in their places, and in their names, to enjoy their entertainment and to devour their captives.

"Well, my hat!" said Lovell, at last.

"What a go!" murmured Ruby. "Dished and diddled and done!" growled Newcome.

Will you do Your Editor a good turn by asking a non-reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND to read Owen Conquest's magnificent school story— "The Impostors I"

THE IMPOSTORS!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"You! Stop sawing my wrists, you villain!"
"You merry idiot—" panted Jimmy Silver.

He had forgotten, in the excitement of the moment, that he could not hold a blade between his teeth and talk, too. The blade was on the floor again, and another period of stooping and groping ensued. It was recaptured at last, and Jimmy Silver went on again as the blade was put into his sharp, and Jimmy Silver was about to tell Lovell what he thought of him for carrying a blunt knife about when he remembered himself. He did not want to do any more groping for the elusive blade.

"My hat, it's going!" said Lovell at last, in a tone of surprise that had an irritating effect on Jimmy Silver. It was just as if Lovell hadn't expected the cord to go.

Jimmy Silver had almost cut through the cord. Several strands had parted, and the juniors felt a loosening of their bonds.

"Swibkrbkth!" said Jimmy Silver. He was trying to say, "Now try to break them!" without dropping the blade from his mouth, and the result could be called laughable.

Fortunately, the chums guessed his meaning. They strained their wrists as hard as they could, and the almost severed cord parted with a snap. The cooling cord whisked off their wrists like a snake.

"They are free!"
"Done it," roared Ruby. "Jimmy, old man, you're a genius—a giddy genius!"

"Ought to have a pretty medal, by Jove!" said Newcome heartily.

"Not of good that knife. It'll be now a landmark Lovell. Still, it is worth it!" Let's get out of this!"

The Classical juniors lost no time. Jimmy Silver was already raising the trapdoor. They slithered down the ladder. Silver dragged out his bike, and the others followed suit.

They rushed the bikes across the field to the road.

"No ride like thunder!" said Jimmy Silver. "We shall catch the beasts all right! We won't expect us! And as soon as you see 'em, they're for 'em. Never mind who's there. Just go for them, and give them belted beans!"

"What're 'em?" chorused the Co.
"They did not need telling that. And four flushed and vengeful eyes scanned the scene, letting out at a speed which certainly exceeded the legal limit.

The 7th Chapter.
A Sudden Interruption.
"Pass the cake, old chap."
"Jolly this way!"
"Where's that jam?"

The impostors were enjoying themselves immensely. Indeed, they had forgotten that they were impostors by this time. They felt as if they had known Mr. Benyon all their lives. They felt exceedingly friendly towards him. Not a fellow there who would have been glad to adopt the old gentleman as an enemy.

Mr. Benyon was evidently enjoying himself, too. He was one of those kind old gentlemen who relate a pleasant recollection of their own boyhood. He liked boys, and he understood boys. He had dismissed the footmen from the scene, letting the juniors wait upon themselves and one another. They did not slack. But they were very good; they looked after Mr. Benyon as well as they looked after themselves.

There was a feast in the gods. When the juniors had been more than an hour at the table they showed little sign of slacking. It was their idea to make a scene, letting the juniors wait upon themselves and one another. They did not slack. But they were very good; they looked after Mr. Benyon as well as they looked after themselves.

Tommy Dodd stamped on his foot under the table. Mr. Benyon was under the impression that his guests looked down to the Classical side at Bookwood.

You had it livelier with the new side," asked Mr. Benyon, with a smile. "Yes, I have heard that there is keen rivalry. Quite enjoyable, I think."

"Lively sometimes," said Tommy Dodd. "Of course, we always down the Moderns. They haven't an earthly on us."

"What sort of boys are the Modern fellows?" asked the old gentleman.

"Oh, first-rate!"
"Best of the bunch, sir!" said Cook.

"Faith, and the Modern side is top side at Bookwood, sor!" said Tommy Dodd. "The Classical cads can't keep their end up against us!"

"You as!" was the reply Tommy Dodd furiously.

Mr. Benyon was looking surprised. "No all our friends are not on the same side, Jimmy!" he objected.

"To my D, D, D coughed. Doyle had given himself away two sentences and that you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads and you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

Doyle was nursing his foot. There was a sound of loud ringing from the direction of the gates. But the trees that bordered the lawn shut off the gates from view, and none of the merry party saw who it was that entered.

"Now, shall we have a walk about the grounds, my young friends?" said Mr. Benyon, as even the Modern juniors, good intelligences as they were, showed signs of having had enough. "You shall tell me some stories of your school—I want to know how old Bookwood is going on after all these years—"

"Tell him about the barring-out!" chuckled Tommy Cook. "It was the time the Classical cads, sir—"

"Ahem!—ahem!"
"That chap's a Modern, too," said Tommy Dodd, coming to the rescue, but bestowing a glare upon Cook.

"Shut up, Cook! It's a ripping story about the barring-out, sir! There was Lovell and Ruby and Newcome and Jimmy Silver—"

"Youself, you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Benyon, in surprise.

"Oh, my hat!—I—I mean mummum-mum-mum, of course, sir!"

Lovell had Lucy and Webb by the collars, and was knocking their heads together with resounding bangs. The others were all piling in.

"Go it, Moderns! Yah! Classic cads!"
"Give the rotters socks!"
"Oh, my eyes, Yaroooh!"
"Tramp—tramp! Bump—bump! Crash!"

Mr. Benyon simply gasped. In the instance astonished footmen grazed on the scene in horror. Trampling over fallen crockery and among overturned chairs, Classics and Moderns waged a terrific battle. The odds were against the Classics, but they had such great wrong to avenge that each of them seemed to possess the might of two fellows at that moment, and they more than held their own.

"What does this mean?" shrieked Mr. Benyon. "You young rascals, how dare you come here and assault my guests? Bless my soul! Thomas—William—Peter!"

The astonished footmen rushed up, and the panting juniors were dragged apart by sheer force.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Benyon. "You—you young fools!"

dimagned Tommy Dodd. "Are you or are you not James Silver, the son of my old friend?"

"Nunno!"
"You are not!" thundered Mr. Benyon. "Then what does this mean?"

"It's a j-j-j-jape!"
"A what?"
"Please, I'm Tommy Dodd," murmured the Modern junior deprecatingly.

"So you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

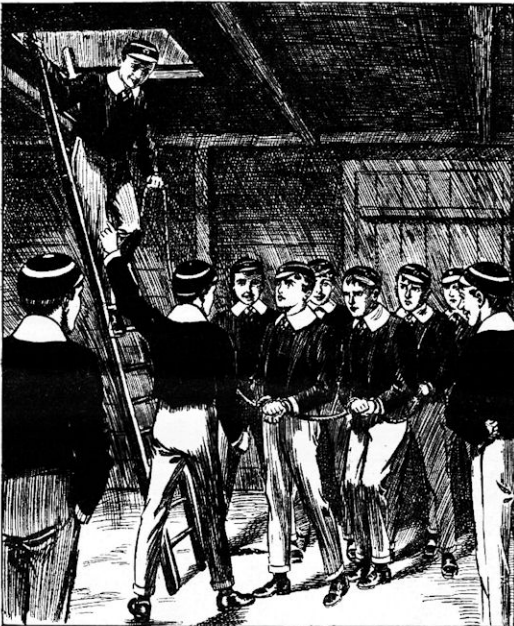
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"
"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"



"This way with those Classical worms!" said Tommy Dodd. "Up the ladder with them!" And the four Classics were hauled up towards the loft.

mean, we—that is to say, us—we were having a barring-out in the tuck-shop, and Doyle was rushing his way to the gate."

Tommy Dodd's head narration was interrupted by a sudden yell, which was recognized by the Modern juniors.

"Give the Modern cads socks!"
"Tommy Dodd jumped up with a gasp of alarm. Four flushed and dusty juniors were rushing up the drive. They came across the lawn at the charge. The Modern juniors all leaped to their feet in dismay as they recognized the Eastern Four.

"Oh, tare and 'ounds!" yelled Doyle. "They've got away!"
"Oh, my hat!—is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Benyon, in astonishment.

"Go for 'em!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

In an instant the four enraged Classics were on their feet. They did not even look at Mr. Benyon. The old gentleman had started up in a state of the greatest astonishment. His astonishment changed to alarm as he saw the four newcomers hurried themselves upon his guests.

The Moderns, taken by surprise, were knocked right and left. The air went roaring, and there was a terrific crash of crockery.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd rolled on the lawn in a wild embrace.

igans, how dare you? I hope you are not hurt, Jimmy—"

"All right, my man, thanks," said Jimmy Silver, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

The handkerchief came away very red.

"I was not addressing you; I was addressing Master Silver!"

"What!"
"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "It's all up now. How could the beasts get away? Oh, my hat!"

"Well, were they the feed?" murmured Tommy Doyle.

"And now there'll be the thunder to pay!" muttered Tommy Cook.

"Will you tell me what this means?" demanded Mr. Benyon, not quite sure whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

"That Modern cad—" "That Classical rotter—" "I'm Jimmy Silver—" roared the owner of that name. "That Modern worm has been borrowing my name."

"And scoffing our feed!" roared Lovell.

"We're the genuine article," said Jimmy Silver, in a tone of scornful respectability; "they're Modern cads."

"What—what!" gasped Mr. Benyon.

"Boy, why do you not speak?" He stared sternly at the

It was, after all, a merry meal. Mr. Benyon heard a full account of the jape from both sides, and Tommy Dodd & Co. were relieved to find that the matter from his humorous side. In fact, the old gentleman laughed till he almost cried.

By the time the Fistical Four had finished a tremendous tea, it was time to start home to Bookwood. All the day to tea. The seven Moderns discovered, too, that they could manage a little more. All hostility was banished now for the cause of the lion and the lamb lying in peace together.

Classicals and Moderns, on the best of terms, were full of the jape from both sides, and Mr. Benyon insisting that the whole party should pay him another visit shortly.

Apparently, he regarded the matter from both Classics and Moderns—a fact which surprised both parties. In the best of tempers, eleven juniors pedaled away down the road in the sunset, and the trace lasted till they reached Bookwood, just in time to cut in on the morning breakfast.

The went in together to calling. Over Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd with their arms linked quite affectionately. But when they separated, they went to their own quarters their remarks were:

"Clear out, you Modern wasters!" "For goodness' sake go and bury that!"

"Bow-wow! Who was tied up in a barn, and had his feed soiled?"

hooted Tommy Dodd triumphantly.

It was not long before the six of the Sixth had to come along with an assistant to restore order. Evidently the trace was an art.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—td. Every Monday.

THE GEM LIBRARY—td. Every Wednesday.

THE DREADNOUGHT—td. Every Thursday.

THE PENNY POPULAR. CHUCKLES—td. Every Friday. Every Saturday.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN



I would like all my readers to look upon me as their real friend, someone to whom they can come for help and advice when they are in doubt or difficulty. It is never "too much trouble" to me to be of use to my boy and girl friends if they feel they would like to write to me. . . .

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 readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: THE EDITOR, THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringham Street, London, E.C.

THE FUTURE OF "THE BOYS' FRIEND."

WITH this, our fourth Dumper Number of THE BOYS' FRIEND, I should like to thank my numerous chums most heartily for the splendid way in which they have backed up the old paper. Now that my readers have been given the greatest journalistic treat ever set before the British public, I can expect on them to continue to give their whole-hearted support to the champion of boys' papers. The fact that on Monday next THE BOYS' FRIEND returns to its usual style need in no way impair its success, for the forthcoming features are absolutely "great," and such as will appeal to every British boy. I do not, therefore, anticipate any falling-off in circulation; and I look to my loyal chums to show their appreciation of the superb numbers just issued by continuing to send THE BOYS' FRIEND through their names. I do not think I need say more than this on the subject.

THE FAME OF JIMMY SILVER

A few months ago the name of Jimmy Silver, schoolboy and sportsman, was unknown to the world. Now, however, he has become a household to which his exploits have not penetrated, and there can be no question that the splendidly-written chronicle of Rockwood School held the field against all comers. Next week's story is a rare treat, teeming with incident, and glowing with dramatic effect.

There will also be two stirring instalments of our popular serial stories, altogether my chums will derive much pleasant and wholesome entertainment from next Monday's superb issue.

AN ASPIRANT FOR THE LIFE GUARDS.

R. C. W., of Taunton, tells me that he thinks of joining the Life Guards. He says he is eighteen years of age, stands five feet eleven inches in his socks, and measures 37½ inches round the chest.

I think my friend's measurements are all right, but I cannot tell him that he would be accepted for the Life Guards until he has been examined by a medical officer.

But this is not the whole of my Taunton chum's question. He has already been talking of this ambition of his to become a soldier with some of his friends, with the result that they have been trying to persuade him not to join, because they hint that when he is in the riding-school, learning how to sit a horse like a soldier, he will be that very regularly—in fact, knocked about in a somewhat brutal fashion. Now, my friend wants to know if this is true. Let me assure him in a straight away that it is not true. Mind you, I won't go so far as to say that his first few lessons won't be a somewhat stiff exercise, but his experience will certainly not be a cruel one. Everything, of course, depends upon his aptitude. Some fellows pick a thing up far quicker than others. If he is quick at learning, then he will have no trouble, because I can assure him that the riding-master doesn't want to keep recruits in the riding-school longer than he can help, and the quicker they learn the better pleased he is with them. Some young fellows, of course, take a long time to learn to sit a horse properly, and as they have

got to be licked into shape with as little delay as possible, they may experience some pressure; but the intelligent, sensible lad who does his level best won't find the riding-school anything but a very pleasant experience after the first two or three lessons.

Of course, if my Taunton chum doesn't know how to ride a horse at all, he will find that learning to do so is like learning everything else—a source of some little trouble. Still, it is rather a libel to say that recruits are knocked about and treated badly. A riding-school, naturally, is not a nursery for infants, but a medium for young men to be trained as soldiers; and, therefore, they need not expect to be handled with kid gloves.

FROM ONE FRIEND TO ANOTHER.

I have pleasure in publishing the following postcard exactly as I received it, as I want to encourage all Boys' Friend readers to write to me when they are in any difficulty or in need of advice.

"Dear Editor,—Your kind letter of advice came to hand a few days ago. I was very thankful for your splendid counsel, and shall never forget you as long as I live.

"I am very fond of THE BOYS' FRIEND, and especially the stories of Rockwood, which, in my opinion, could not fail to appeal to any boy.

YOUR EDITOR.

- CONTROLLER OF:
 "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d. Every Monday.
 "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1d. Every Monday.
 "THE CEM" LIBRARY, 1d. Every Wednesday.
 "THE DREADNOUGHT," 1d. Every Thursday.
 "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d. Every Friday.
 "CHUCKLES," PRICE 1d. Every Saturday.

Arthur S. Hardy's boxing yarns are also "top-holes."
 "With best wishes. H. P."

Honestly, I may tell my host of chums that I shall be just as glad to give them a little help, or to reply to them through the post if necessary, provided a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed with their letter, as I was to give it to H. P. I want

you all to feel—as I have said over and over again in these columns—that in me you have a friend whom you can trust, to whom you can write when you want information, advice, or assistance in any difficulty which you find impossible of solution. I want you to regard your Editor as a friend to whom you may go with any scruple or fear, knowing well that when you ask for anything—if it is humanly possible—I will do it for you.

A SCHOOLMASTER'S TRIBUTE.

Among the many hundreds of letters which reach me daily, I usually discover communications from various individuals in high positions, and such epistles are especially gratifying to me, since they serve to show that THE BOYS' FRIEND, so far from being anything in the nature of a "penny blood," is a clean, harmless, and altogether wholesome paper for the boys of the present generation. It is an extract from the letter of a Johannesburg schoolmaster, which shows how much THE BOYS' FRIEND is appreciated in that part of the world:

"Your words seem to appeal to me very much, because I am one of those who place the building up of boys' characters far above brilliant scholarship."

"I have been a teacher for over thirty years, and headmaster for twenty-five, so I feel myself competent to speak with some authority.

"When I tell you that nothing pleases me more even now than to join the boys in their games, and that I was head of the bowling averages last year, you will see that I don't feel old at fifty. I don't turn out geniuses from my school, but I had a letter from an 'old boy' out West a week or two ago, in which he says: 'I thank you for your nice letter and kind advice. I shall ever be grateful to you for all that you did for me during my school career; and if I am not able to climb to the top of the ladder, I shall endeavor to do my best, and shall always try to do nothing to disgrace the old school which I shall ever remember.'

Such a letter as that gives me the greatest encouragement in my work. I read it out to the boys on breaking-up day, and shall read your editorial address to them when we commence next term.

"Kindly excuse my lengthy letter; but I have been going to write to you for a long time, and as I have watched the development of your publications from the commencement, I can honestly say that I can assure every one of them among my scholars with perfect confidence, for there is a fine sense of honour and nobility in every one of the characters in your stories. The tales of Rockwood School are particularly amusing, and Mr. Conquest is a genius of no mean order. I am a talented author to write for your papers."

Space forbids me to quote any further from the letter of my schoolmaster friend; but I am most grateful to him for his complimentary remarks, and I hope the publication of the above portion of his letter will convince any doubting Thomases who may exist that this journal is in no way allied to books of the "blood-and-thunder" order.

ON GAMBLING.

A reader living at Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has written me a very earnest letter on the subject of gambling by horse racing. He says his work works with a number of other young fellows, and he finds that quite a number of them make their money races nearly every day, and this in spite of the fact that this country is now at war.

I am not an alarmist, but there can be no question that in many of our large cities this gambling is becoming a very serious matter. It is all the more serious when one considers that there are unscrupulous men and youths who are willing to let with these same men their money, and who take their money without the least hesitation.

A boy who becomes a victim of the gambling fever, if he has a screw loose in his moral character, will descend to almost any depth of criminality.

Some boys, however, get sick of betting when they discover that for every win they get probably ten losses, and discontinue the habit. Still, there are a number of very foolish boys who persist in the iniquitous practice, and it is to these boys that I would like to say a few words.

I would ask them to remember that money obtained by gambling is money obtained in the worst possible form—in fact, it is all the proceeds of robbery and swindling.

I am emphatically of the opinion that a gambler is a vice which should be stamped out, because the very nature of the whole thing tends to destroy a lad's moral being. It blinds his mind to all sense right and wrong, and converts him from a decent, honest lad into a shifty, cunning, unscrupulous man.

YOUR EDITOR.

GRAND COMPETITION!

£10 IN CASH PRIZES!

First Prize, £5; Second Prize, £1 10s.; Third Prize, £1; and TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS.

4th Coupon: WHICH ARE THEIR WEAPONS? No. 5 Coupon Next Monday.

No. 6	No. 7	No. 8	No. 9	No. 10	No. 11

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO. Above will be found two rows of drawings. The top row consists of sketches of different classes of men serving under the British flag, and in the bottom row are shown the weapons which these men use. All competitors have to do is to decide which weapon each man uses. Having come to a decision, write in the space left under each weapon the number of the man who uses that particular weapon which is shown above that space.

READ THE RULES CAREFULLY. Having written in the numbers keep this form by you, for next week there will be given another set of pictures. Keep your coupons by you, and look out for an announcement in THE BOYS' FRIEND as to where and when entries are to be sent in. There will be eight coupons given altogether. The one given above is the fourth, and coupons numbers one, two, and three are reproduced on page iv of cover of this issue for the benefit of new readers.

Will you do Your Editor a good turn by asking a non-reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND to read Owen Conquest's magnificent school story—"The Impostors!"

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF OUR STIRRING ARMY-LIFE STORY.



By Beverley Kent.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

TOM BEVAN, and his sister, ETHIEL, are alone in the world. They have great difficulty in paying their way, and at last Tom decides to swallow his pride, and to go and ask help from his uncle, JOSHUA HEPSTONK, who has never shown any affection towards him and his sister.

He knocks at his uncle's door, and pressing to answer walks in. Arrived at the sitting-room, he is surprised to see his uncle lying dead on the floor, and an open cask on the table. Before he can move, Tom hears a loud knocking at the front door, and, realising what he will be accused of, he rushes to the window and escapes.

In order to escape detection, Tom says good-bye to his sister, promising to write to her through the papers, and joins the Army in the name of Brooks.

In camp Tom feels that he is safe until he comes into contact with a man named Barfield. The latter knows the reason why Tom has joined the Army, but promises to keep silent. Tom tries to know that Barfield is a German spy.

One night a dog enters the camp and causes a commotion, and it is proved afterwards that the dog was sent into camp to hide the entry of a stranger who managed to escape.

Some time later Tom and a sergeant named Parker see the same dog between two trees, which gives chase, and catching sight of a man in civilian clothes running away, he dashes after him and captures him. He is looking the man down, when Barfield dashes up and exclaims: "If that man is caught, I denounce you as the murderer of Joshua Hepstonk!"

What does Tom do? (See next page.)

Called to Account.

Nearer and nearer Parker and the other soldiers drew, running at top speed. Tom was shaking and his feet were shaken. Perhaps his life was hanging on the answer he would give. Again Barfield shouted. "They are cunning," he cried, "and I will denounce you as the murderer of your uncle if you refuse to let my friend escape. You have six seconds yet. Look at them and see for yourself. What will you do?" "I'll be loyal to the oath I've taken on my arms, and I'll do my duty to my King and country at all costs. Hi, there, Parker! Come on!"

civilian garb sixty yards ahead of him. The sergeant rushed on. Tom was gaining, but the wood was small and his quarry was near the far side. A motor-engine was throbbing on the road hard by. Parker saw the man jump on to the road, he saw Tom following, then he heard a cry. He ran on and sprang into the road.

Twenty yards away a motor was moving away, rapidly getting up speed. Two men were in it—one at the wheel, the other holding on to the dashboard. And Tom was lying on the road on his back, his face ghastly pale, his arms outstretched, his eyes closed, and blood trickling from an ugly gash over his right temple.

Parker rushed after the motor. A mocking laugh came back to him as he followed. He turned and hurried to Tom. At this moment Barfield jumped on to the road leading to the other soldiers. "Has he got away?" Barfield cried. Parker, who was bending down over Tom, drew himself up straight. "One might as well die here, anyhow," he asked coldly.

"I've been to the village with letters from the orderly-room, and I was on my way back," he replied. "I saw Brooks chasing that fellow, and I joined in, of course. What's the trouble, though? Who is the man, and why was Brooks trying to catch him?"

Parker did not reply. He got down on one knee and raised Tom's head. One of the other soldiers had filled his cap with water from the ditch, and came hurrying with it. They splashed Tom's face. Parker put the lad's head and shoulders comfortably on his knee. They waited. Presently Tom groaned, his eyelids flickered, he opened his eyes, and closed them wearily. Next moment they were wide open again, and he was struggling to rise.

"Have you got the car?" he cried. "The villain with him had a club and knocked me down as I jumped on to the road. If it wasn't for that—" "He groaned and struggled harder to get up.

"You're out of camp, and I'm your sergeant officer. Don't dare to disobey me unless you want a court-martial. Perhaps you are nearer to one than you think." "Barfield slunk across the road and joined the other soldiers. Parker helped Tom to his feet. The lad felt very dizzy, and was glad of the sergeant's strong arm for support. "March 'em off, Somers," Parker directed. "Brooks and I will follow slowly. And now, lads, go steady. I look to you to keep up discipline yourselves."

The soldiers tramped away. Learning heavily on Parker's arm at first, Tom kept silent as they walked slowly along. Every moment he was growing stronger, and his brain was clearing. Suddenly he shook himself free and tried to walk alone.

"What's up?" Parker asked. "It's my fault," Tom gasped. "That scoundrel should be a prisoner now. I didn't play the game. I meant to catch him. I had him down, but when Barfield stepped in, he got me. He groined, he tottered long. Parker whistled.

"You followed him up right to the first, and you only gave in when you were knocked out of time," he said. "I saw that for myself. In fact, I think you put up an uncommon good show. And you weren't feeling, were you? You meant leaving him at the end."

"Yes, I did," Tom said earnestly. "But you don't know all."

"Parker took the lad's arm gently again. "I'm not sure that I don't guess more than you think," he said, "and I'm not certain either that I want to hear any more. Barfield is in this business, and I've had my suspicions about him for a good while now."

"That sounded like a friend of Barfield's," Tom gasped out. "Barfield threatened me if I wouldn't let him go."

"I can guess the threat he made," Parker replied, with a face grim. "And in spite of it you didn't yield. You stuck to your duty. What more can a soldier do? The man has got away, but it's not likely he'll come to the camp again after this; he's too jolly well scared. I reckon."

"If the colonel knew all that happened," Tom began.

"If he did, he would try to catch the man, and he wouldn't get him. Parker rejoined. "Now, Brooks, let us look at this business squarely. You've never done anything of which you need be ashamed, yet you're as big a fix as if you had, and that's rotten hard luck."

"Barfield, like the car he is, is using this knowledge against you. Why should you tell the colonel about all this when the colonel can't do anything? Isn't it the right and proper game to sit tight until we can get back? I'm on Barfield's track, and I'll solve all that's puzzling me. It may take time, but I'll do it. Then we'll see and you'll be satisfied."

"Then you think I'm justified in keeping silence for the present?" "I do, and I'm going to keep a quiet tongue, too. But there are just a couple of things I can do, and I'll be one of 'em up as soon as we get to the camp."

"What are they?" Tom asked. "Parker chuckled. "You'll see pretty soon," he replied. "And I mean giving that surly fellow Dempster a grueling also. He's too much of a pal of Barfield's for my liking. Now when we get to camp you go to your tent and lie down and leave everything to me."

Tom was glad to take this advice.

for he was still feeling very shaken, and Parker set off with the sergeant as Captain Hatton.

"Well, sergeant, how did the two squads get on this afternoon?" Hatton asked.

Brooks showed up very well, sir," Parker replied. "I set Knight and his squad to attack, and Brooks to entrench a and defend. Brooks made several times, but the infuriated Knight when he took the first. It wasn't a bad piece of work."

"No. Knight came on too quick. I suppose."

"Yes, sir, but he won't again. Last time they had set me to attack, and he was Knight who beat Brooks."

"They're both sick cats. I don't expect both promising men. It's a t'ren remarked. Well, is there anything else you have to report?"

"Not a muscle of work," he said. "It might be his duty to tell of the hunt for the scoundrel who had escaped, but he was going to postpone doing so, for Tom's sake. For the moment, he is glad that the question has been asked."

"We had a bit of a scrap across country after dark, and open our wind-pipes," he said; "and the men are in tip-top condition."

"But Barfield, who had been on duty in the village, joined in. He's as soft as butter, and as wheezy as a sick cat. He hasn't come on, but since he's joined."

Hatton looked grave. "He's as strong as any man in the regiment," he said. "Why was it that he was put in the orderly-room?"

"Someone was wanted, sir, and Sergeant Erby recommended him."

"I remember. Brooks knew him before enlistment, and spoke all of him. Someone must do the orderly-room work. Is there anyone else you know of?"

"There's Somers, sir," Parker replied. "He's not a strong lad, and, if anything, he's been too keen, not getting his head and shoulders wet for the better for a rest."

"Quite so. A man can strive to get up his strength too fast. All right, sergeant, let me know when you go back to ordinary duty, and that Somers is taking his place."

At that, Hatton walked into the orderly-room.

"Barfield!" he cried.

"The spy jumped to attention and saluted."

"Sergeant Parker has just been speaking to me," Hatton went on, and Barfield's knees began to knock together. "You're a run across country with him to-day eh?"

"Yes, sir," Barfield faltered. "And the sergeant tells me that you didn't show any very well."

"The colour slowly ebbed from the spy's face. "May be about to be arrested! Had suspicion fallen upon him?" "I don't understand, sir?" he gasped.

"Ah, you seem out of breath still!" Hatton continued, little guessing the reason of Barfield's hussy voice. "You've got a long march of orderly-room work, and you mustn't neglect your training. Every man in the regiment has to be as hard as steel when he's ordered to the front. As a keen soldier you appreciate that. I am sure. So I'm going to have you to ordinary duty, and Somers is coming here. He'll relieve you at once, and then go and see Sergeant Parker. He is expecting you."

Hatton left the room, and Barfield stood as if turned to stone. Parker had done that to ordinary duty, and he might not be long before he was court-martialled. A shiver went down his spine. In imagination he saw himself standing a prisoner, and hearing his doom pronounced. He saw his first army, lying in the mire; he saw himself standing with his neck to a wall, his eyes blindfolded. He saw—

With a gasp, he looked round. The evidence of his guilt was in the orderly-room. If a search was made

He dashed to his desk.

But before he could find what he sought, he heard a brisk step, and the next moment Somers was in the room.

"I've just been sent here, and told to hurry up. You are to go to Sergeant Parker."

Barfield turned. To delay might only cause suspicion. "All right!" he said, and stumbled out of the orderly-room. His mind was in a whirl. How would Parker take him?

Barfield Catches It.

Parker was sitting before his tent smoking his pipe, and his eyes twinkled as Barfield approached.

"Barfield turned up to see you, sergeant," Barfield said nervously.

"And he's put you in very good hands, my son," Parker replied genially. "The captain wants me to take you along and get you in contact with Tom, to put you through an hour's exercises. He's to watch you before you start, and when you're through, he'll have a word with me if he gets ten pounds' weight off you in four days. Now, cut along!"

"Barfield turned, and strode off, furious at heart, and yet glad to escape the sergeant's quizzical eye. Parker grinned, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and his eyes twinkled as Barfield approached.

"On the following day, after dinner, the orderly-room was mustered for field exercises. They marched off from camp along the country roads for some distance, and then they were ordered to go to a wide stretch of common covered with brambles. In the distance, a line of trees, and a small square under Tom awaiting them, and half a score of ambulances lying on the ground."

Parker explained the work they were to practise.

"The orders said, in that wood, and we're to attack," he said. "Our heavy guns have been bombarding it, and the general has ordered the assault. The line of country you find is as easy as you think. You'll find a lot of brushy land first, then a ditch, and a line of trees. They'll cut all in line again. They'll push on till you come to a big broad ditch, which after all the heavy rain is full of water."

"Wait there till all are up. Then charge the wood. The idea is that you'll get a good deal of the best of it. You must not and save your wounded on the return. I'll hide them as I think well—and I'll take them as I think well."

"Knight, you lead the assault. Brooks, you follow with the second squad. I'll be ordering it step by step, each and start. If I see one of you for more than a few seconds at a time on the way across I'll have something to say! Now, get a move on you!"

They started, Parker keeping some way in front, when he meant to receive the ambush-bearers and wounded.

The soldiers went ahead, and did their best, but he kept on stepping up with them with the ambulances, having concealed the wounded, when they reached the wood.

"That's a very terrific, sergeant," Knight said, with a grin, his face plastered against the ground. "You've got a long wait, sergeant," said Parker. "Get back as quick as you can if you want to save your skin! Pick up the wounded, and get them to the ambulance. Every moment is precious. Make a dash for it and show your mettle!"

"Knight, and the other squad, and the retreat began. The soldiers rushed back in open order, dropping occasionally by any cover that came handy.

Parker watched the men picking up the wounded, and suddenly he saw a man appearing on the far side of the ditch. Half a dozen hands grasped him and pulled him back. And then another splash followed, and another savage yell.

Parker next saw Barfield's head and shoulders appearing on the far side of the ditch. Half a dozen hands grasped him and pulled him back. And then another splash followed, and another savage yell.

Parker next saw Barfield's head and shoulders appearing on the far side of the ditch. Half a dozen hands grasped him and pulled him back. And then another splash followed, and another savage yell.

If you want the BEST, buy only Your Editor's papers. They contain the BEST reading matter for boys that can be obtained.

WITH BUCLE & BAYONET!

(Continued from previous page.)

Parker ran to the ditch. Barfield was struggling with the ambulance-men.

"What's up?" Parker demanded sternly.

"We had the ill-luck to upset the ambulance, sergeant," a recruit named Grogson, one of the men whom Parker had taken a stroll on the previous evening—explained, struggling to hide a grin.

"And you carrying a wounded man?" Parker replied in a stern tone. Even if the bullets are about around you, you ought to remember what's due to a fallen comrade. What's he doing, standing about in a daze? You've had him bandaged up for a broken leg?"

"He won't stay quiet, sergeant. He won't play the game."

"This ain't a game of warfare," Parker thundered. "No fooling, any of you. Get him in the ambulance. Drop down, Barfield; you're not supposed to be out of the line."

Barfield was plastered with mud; water was dripping from his head and face. He looked a deplorable object.

"When I get on the bank I'll show 'em," he snarled. "But here in this rotten ditch—"

"You can't move a step unaided with a broken leg. You've had a good luck to be bucked out of the ambulance, but you've had a bad luck," Parker shouted. "Where you fell out there you must be put back. Heave, the line men, push him down! Bundle him in! Off you go!"

A couple were dragging the ambulance out of the mud. The other two seized Barfield and flung him on to it so heavily that he fell back into the water again. Grogson saw mud on the four grasped the poles and staggered up to the far side of the ditch.

"Run—run!" Parker commanded. "Get him out of the line of fire, any how. That's right! Ah, you are a chummy lad!"

They were running along, not keeping step. One man stumbled and fell on the polo go. Barfield fell sideways with a thud. They pushed him up and ran again, Parker following and abusing them roundly, and his shoulders heaving with anger. When they got to the rear they dropped the ambulance and began to run toward the rear.

Barfield crawled out. His teeth were chattering, his eyes gleaming. He knew well that his misfortunes had not been due to accident.

As the other ambulances came up, each carrying a dry and merry soldier safely ensconced, Parker congratulated the bearers and pointed out the difference. Then he took a most friendly interest in Barfield.

"Why, man, you've been punished with the cold," he said. "You'll be in hospital if I'm not careful. Grogson, run him back to the camp as quick as you can, and see he doesn't stop on the way!"

"I'm all right," said Barfield. "I'm not bandy words with me! I'm speaking for your good," Parker cried, and started off at once! "I'll put you in the guard-room if you delay."

Barfield sullenly obeyed. He headed for the camp, and left Grogson on either side setting the pace, and Parker loaded his pipe and pulled on it complacently. He winked at Tom, Broke, and nudged him whilst the men lay down to rest.

"You saw the fun?" he asked. "Yes, and you saw it," said Grogson. Tom replied, "Still, I only wish," and then he said, "I'm sorry for Barfield. The men handled him most awfully, and—"

"And it will be a good—that is, if anything could," Parker cut in, chuckling again. "Don't waste your sympathy on him, Broke. You owe him enough, goodness knows."

The platoon marched back to the camp singing all the way. As they swung around the gateway, Sergeant Farby hurried to Parker.

"Dismiss the men and come along with me," he said. "There's something I want to tell you."

Farby's face looked grave, and Parker did not lose time. Soon he had dismissed him.

"What's gone wrong now?" he asked.

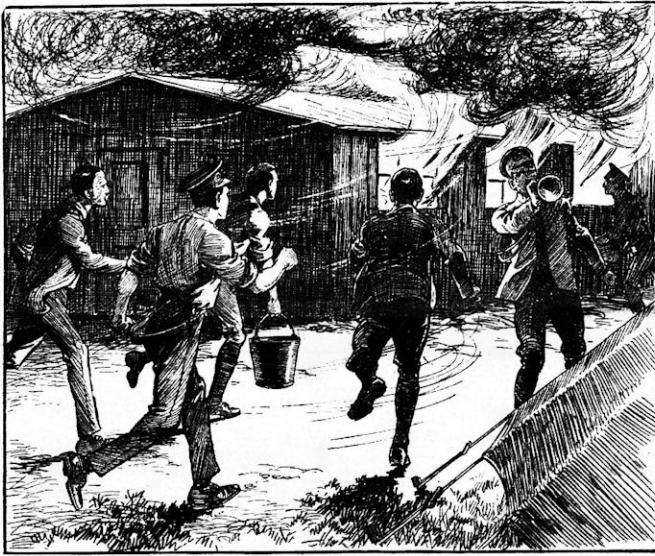
"One of the staff from the War Office has come down, and also a detective from Scotland Yard," Farby replied. "They're with the colonel and the adjutant, and they're had me on the carpet and a couple more. They wanted you particularly. Say, Parker, you haven't been keeping anything back, have you?"

Parker started. Farby shot him a quick look.

"Hi!" he said. "They've heard about something that happened yesterday, and the detective is keen about a fellow who has been identified in a motor. They wanted to know if I saw him. If you knew anything about him—"

"They'll send for me now, I suppose," Parker suggested.

"The staff officer and the detective have gone back to town. They're coming down to-morrow. They'll certainly want to see you then."



At the call of "Fire!" every man in the camp tumbled out, and rushed to the scene of the conflagration. In a moment the men were doing their utmost to quell the outbreak.

"Then I've got till to-morrow to think over everything," Parker replied. "I'll keep silent till then, anyhow."

"You do not know something?" Farby suggested.

"I've got my secret," Parker replied solemnly.

"I understand. Still, you must think of yourself, old man," he said. "We're both old soldiers, and we know the game as it has always been played in the Service," Parker gravely replied. "I can see I've got a tough nut ahead to crack, and I'm glad of the time to sort out everything. That's all I can say at present."

"I once nearly had my stripes for standing to a pal, and in the same circumstances I would take the risk again," Farby remarked. "I guess your case is something similar. Well, good luck to you, and you may be sure I won't talk. But keep out of the adjutant's way to-night."

"If he chanced to meet you he might play the spicer, and invite you into his parlour," Parker grinned, though he was ill at ease.

"I'll be in the camp all night," he said, "and yet it would be a smart man who would be able to find me. I'm going on my lonesome now."

And, with a nod, he wheeled round and disappeared behind a row of tents.

The Night Alarm.

Trembling with fury and gasping for breath as Knight and Grogson kept him at a sharp trot, Barfield last reached the camp. A hearty laugh at his woebegone appearance from the soldiers gathered there, as he hurried off to dry and brush his uniform, added to his rage. Vowing vengeance, Parker, if ever the chance came his way, he took off his uniform and put it before the fire.

But fury was not the only feeling gnawing at his heart. Fear was there, too—a deadly fear, ever since he had been forced to quit the orderly-room, leaving the evidence of his guilt behind. He did not know the moment when Charlie Somers might chance to find the incriminating papers.

He had shunk away whenever he had seen an officer approaching. And now, when dry and clean again, he joined his comrades, he heard of the visit paid by the staff officer and the detective to the camp. All were talking about a staff sergeant who should call seemed quite natural. But a detective! What could he possibly want, unless some crime had been committed?

Barfield went in search of Dempster when the latter returned. Dempster was grinning.

He was in the room, and his evil conscience made him hurry on. About five camp he wandered all the evening, and at reveille he flung himself down in his tent, having abandoned all hope.

His brain was in an agony. The other soldiers were sleeping heavily. For him there was no rest of body or mind. In the darkness, unable to stir, lying helpless, his agitation grew greater every hour. Then one last desperate resolve sprang into his mind. Anything was better than this insupportable suspense. He was lying next to a side of the tent. Raising the canvas, he rolled into the open air.

He crept through the maze of tents, and at last reached the orderly-room. Then, raising the window, he stepped into the room and felt in his pocket for a box of matches.

He lit the lamp and hurried to the desk. As he had expected, it was locked, and with both hands he tried to wrench open the lid. He was not able. He stepped to the fireplace, picked up a poker, and putting the poker across a chair and one end under the projecting surface of the lid, he tried to force it with this leverage.

At last, with a dull snap, the lock broke. Fervently he hunted for the papers. His heart jumped into

everything, gazing around, and up at the stars occasionally.

And when the window he jumped to his feet. Away to the right a streak of smoke was rising steadily.

He stood off in the direction of the smoke.

He came near to the orderly-room; he saw dense wreaths of smoke pouring out from the window, and he need delay longer. Putting both hands to his mouth, he yelled:—

"Fire!" His strong voice rang clear as a trumpet, far and wide, over the camp. Again he yelled, and again. The camp was aroused. The men dashed for the window. His foot tripped over something soft, and he fell. But the smoke was coming in fast, and touched a human form. Amazed, he dragged the man away from the smoke into safety. Then he rushed to the window again, knowing well that he was facing death.

Accident had brought him to the spot, but being there, his duty as a soldier was clear, and it did not occur to him to shrink from it. All the soldiers were in the orderly-room; it was essential that they should be saved. He sprang in through the window, and, groping his way, he found the door, unlocked it, and dragged it across the room. Exerting all his strength, he pitched it out. But the smoke was becoming unbearable; his head was beginning to swim; he knew that in another half-minute he must collapse without any work accomplished.

He turned, dashed across the room, and flung himself against the door. It shook violently, but he held on. Again and again he flung himself at it with all the strength of desperation. At last it crashed open. He fell headlong on the ground, picking himself up, and rushing into the orderly-room, set to work again.

Not one lost or wounded man had tumbled out by this time, and he knew where the fire was located. In a minute or two every man was at hand. Those reaching the spot first were astounded to see books, papers, files, boxes coming through the window. The bugles were sounding far and wide; soldiers were forming up in two lines, and buckets were being passed along. Suddler's Tom was seen staggering back by a swath of water full in his face. Someone jumped in through the window, and he caught him as he was falling. He felt himself being dragged and hustled out, and shoved along from hand to hand.

He closed his eyes, and opened them as he thought only a few moments later. None of them were he was in the officers' mess-room. The colonel, the adjutant, Captain Hutton, and half a dozen other officers were there, too. Sergeant Farby was there, and Parker was leaning against a wall, looking very white and ill. Tom, lying on the floor, raised himself on his elbow. The colonel noticed him.

"Don't stir, Brooks!" he said. "Lie where you are, my lad! The regiment is proud of you. It was you who gave the alarm, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you risked your life to save the regimental papers, and you succeeded. None of them have been lost. You've shown a fine example, and not for the first time. You have earned a promotion, and I don't think it will be long before there is a vacancy."

His voice was hard as he concluded. Tom did not speak.

"Did you observe anything as you got near the fire?" asked the colonel.

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

"No, sir—"

his throat as he saw them. One by one he looked at them, to make certain that he had all. He was safe as far as his absence from the tent had been noticed.

Again his blood ran cold. He heard a measured footstep coming round by the side of the wooden building. Someone was patrolling there. He had five seconds to fling up the window and get away. Seizing the poker again, he swung round by the side of the desk, lurching heavily against it. He heard the crash of splintering glass as he flung up the tent-pole, got to his feet, and by dint of a mad dash, he jumped out.

A man dashed round the corner. Barfield struck savagely, and the man fell on his face. The villain jumped over him, ran on to the grass, and the presence of mud still to avoid the tent-pole, got to his tent, and by dawn. Raising the canvas, he rolled in gently. None of his comrades had stirred in the fifteen minutes since he had left.

But he was not the only one who had been lying awake that night. Parker, who had been asleep, and who also had heard of the detective's visit, and had concluded that it was in connection with himself.

As time passed, and he could not sleep, he felt it would be better if he got out of the tent, and sat in the open air. So he too, crawled out, and sat smoking his pipe, his hands locked around his knees, trying to think out

"No, sir, I can't tell you. There is one of our grandest soldiers who ever wore the uniform. He is as true as steel, and—"

"Hold your tongue, Brooks!" he thundered. "This is my show! And I'll tell you the whole story."

(Will Parker suffer for Barfield's evening action? Another extraordinary instalment next Monday. Don't miss it.)



The 1st Chapter.

Old Enemies.

George Martin, promoter and boxing manager, and owner of the St. George's Boxing Hall, entered the rival establishment, the Star, whose fortunes were presided over by Bob Lewis, in no evasive frame of mind.

His face was set, and his eyes glinted malevolently.

He found one of the regular attendants of the hall, a man named Hughes, smoking a pipe as he leaned against the wall.

"Is Bob in?" growled the visitor.

"To be sure, sir! You'll find him in the office," answered the attendant.

George Martin passed the man by, and hurrying onwards, burst into the office of the rival promoter as if his very existence depended upon his haste.

Bob Lewis looked up as Martin came in, and instantly prepared himself for trouble.

"Hallo, George," said he. "Nice day, isn't it?"

George Martin growled out some reply which was not audible.

"Anything I can do for you, George?" asked Bob Lewis genially.

"Yes," answered George Martin. "And what's that?"

Martin seized a chair and drew it up until it was near that in which Bob Lewis sat. Then, with fingers interlaced, he leaned forward, fixing his eyes on Lewis.

"Look here," said he, "you've advertised a big boxing show for next Monday night, with Tom Belcher as the principal attraction."

"I have," Bob Lewis agreed. "And you've got young Cohen to consent to go fifteen rounds against him. Cohen is one of my own particular pets, and I don't think it was quite fair to select him, Lewis. You might have chosen another lad, seeing how often Cohen has shown at the St. George's Hall."

"Wait a moment," said Lewis. "You haven't a monopoly on his services, you know, George. I knew the boy was free. I sent for his manager. I offered a decent price for the contest, and the other side accepted. There's an end of it as far as I'm concerned. If you think you've got a grievance because Cohen is going to box for me, go and see his manager, and have it out with him."

"That's only part of the trouble," observed George Martin, with a sneer.

"Oh! And what's the other?"

"Why did you fix on next Monday for your show?"

"Because," answered Bob Lewis, "of late, ever since Bob Adams brought young Tom Belcher to fight at my hall, the gates have improved. I couldn't afford to stage a show on Monday before. Now I think I can risk it. And Monday happens to be the best night in the week, barring Saturday, on which to put on a boxing show, George."

George Martin uttered a grunt of discontent.

"Well, I don't call it pally!" he cried. "I've always opened the St. George's Hall on a Monday, and if that you might have chosen some other day."

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"Certainly! Why not have chosen Wednesday or Thursday? You wouldn't clash with my night then. You could have your grab, and I'd have mine, and we both get full value for our trouble. What's your

idea in opening on a Monday? Do you mean to try and cripple me?"

And Martin struck his chest with his clenched fist to emphasize his words.

"I never thought anything about it, George," confessed the rival promoter mildly. "You've got your group of patrons, and I've got mine. I don't think you'll find it will make much difference."

Up leapt Martin. Until this point he had controlled his temper admirably, although he was inwardly seething. Now he burst into a passion.

"I call it a dirty trick!" he exclaimed. "And you'll have to postpone your show until a later date—say, Wednesday. It's early closing-day, and you'll have a better chance."

"If you think so," returned Bob Lewis calmly, "why don't you shift your show?"

"Because mine's a long-standing institution. The public expect me to open on a Monday."

"Look here, George," said Bob Lewis, and his manner was so earnest and quiet that one could not doubt his genuineness, "if you'd come to me a week ago I'd have obliged you to postpone your show for the purpose of opening my hall on Monday. The Star is only a muddy old place compared to your fine hall. I never thought you'd mind. But your objection has come too late. I've got all my printing out, my advertisements are already set in, various sporting and boxing papers, and all my lads are engaged. I've made every possible arrangement with my staff, and I can't alter things now."

"I don't care a rap what you've done!" shouted George Martin, in a threatening voice. "You'll have to alter the date!"

"Have to?" repeated Bob Lewis. "Those are strange words to use to me, Mr. Martin. I'm not used to 'em. Bob Lewis doesn't have to do anything he doesn't want to do. Now, if you've come to the end of your complaints, perhaps you'll allow me to go on with my work. I've got a lot to do."

"You're trying to ruin me, you and Ben Adams between you," shouted the irate promoter. "You've already damaged my son's reputation through young Tom Belcher. Here there's a limit. If you refuse to alter the date of next Monday's show, I'll make you suffer for it!"

Bob Lewis smiled.

"Look here, George," he cried, "you ought to know me better. We both fought at the same time, and I claimed on three occasions years ago. I unluckily lost one of our several contests on a supposed foul which you knew I never committed, and the other two I won by putting you to sleep. And although you may be a year or two the younger man, I'm no more afraid of you now than I was then. This arm of mine still retains its old strength, and my eye's as true as ever it was. I couldn't hold my own with the young 'un, but I do think I should be able to fight and beat an old-stager like you."

George Martin looked at Bob Lewis' lined and seamed face and grey hair. He took stock of his ample proportions, and fancying that he was in very much the better condition of the two, he laughed derisively.

"What?" he cried. "Would you fancy your chances against me, Bob?"

"Any day of the week!" was the confident rejoinder. "Any day of the week!"

The reply so angered George



TOM BELCHER.



BOB LEWIS

Martin, accompanied as it was by a smile of conscious superiority, that, without more ado, he stopped within distance, and delivered a smashing right full home on the point of Bob Lewis's jaw.

It was a cowardly blow. Yet, fortunately, Bob Lewis was leaning back in his chair, and gave as the punch came at him.

His force, however, drove the back of his head with a bang against the wooden frame of the chair, and a thousand stars danced before his eyes.

Yet, with a cry of defiance, the old warhorse leapt out of his chair, ducked a left hook which was aimed at the other side of his jaw, and instantly went at George Martin tooth and nail.

Martin had done the worst thing he could have done in acting like a coward. Bob Lewis's ideas of fair play were so deeply ingrained that the slightest deviation from the lines of true sportsmanship acted on him like a red rag to a bull.

Besides he knew what thoroughly unscrupulous rascal George Martin really was, in spite of the suave and polite way in which he conducted his hall.

He remembered that Martin had, through the instrumentality of a boxer named Morgan, drugged young Tom Belcher when the latter met and

beat Georgic Martin for the second time. And he also recollected that ever since George had opened his hall in opposition to the Star he had systematically attempted to queer his

—Bob Lewis's—pitch.

And now a blow had followed other insults, unfair practices, and affronts. With so much to wipe off the slate, Bob Lewis sailed in, caring not a jot for his enemy's blows. All he wanted was to send his own stung home.

And he managed it. George Martin gave before the hail of punches, and presently received a blow on the mark, and collapsed into a waste-paper basket, which gave way under his weight.

Up he got, breathing vengeance and slaughter, and talking about the many things he was going to do to Bob before he'd finished with him.

"What! You'd threaten me, would you, you dog?" said honest Bob, as he banged and slammed away with both fists. "I'll show you who's the letter man!"

George Martin got it all ways—the head, on the body, at the back of the neck, and in the face.

And finally, with a groan of dismay, as another heavy jab on the mark doubled him up, he sank upon the floor.

Bob Lewis, flushed and excited, stood over him, prepared to continue the battle the moment Martin signified his willingness to resume.

"Do you want any more?" demanded the successful old bruiser, panting for breath from his exertions.

Martin made no reply. He was too dazed and breathless to utter a sound.

And now into the office poured half a dozen of the regular attendants of the Star.

They stared in amazement at the fallen promoter, then grinned as they realized that Bob Lewis was the victor.

"What's happened, sir?" asked the attendant Hughes.

"Oh, he asked for trouble," panted Bob Lewis, "and he got it! He wanted me to transfer next Monday's show to the Wednesday. Because I wouldn't do it he became angry. Then he struck me, and—well, I got a bit of my own back, boys, that's all!"

George Martin, pulling himself together, rose to his feet.

He'd lain smooth. A beautiful black eye and a split lip were only indications of the full damage he had sustained in his person and reputation.

"I suppose," he sneered, as he wiped his face, "that you'll gas like mad now that you've got your gang of bullies to support you?"

"Oh, I can manage you without them at any time, George, my boy!" returned Bob Lewis, not in the least disturbed by the taunt. "But at the same time I don't mean to put up with any of your saucy. Here, my lads, put George Martin outside!"

The attendants obeyed the command with alacrity.

In the first place, they were loyal to their employer, Bob Lewis, who

(Continued on the next page.)



George Martin fell back before a hail of punches, and presently received a blow on the mark which hurled him into a waste-paper basket.



(Continued from the previous page)

always treated them fairly; and in the second, they were inclined with a sense of partisanship natural enough when one considers that they were attached to a rival boxing-hall. And last, most of them had worked for George Martin at some time or other, and had learned to dislike and to distrust him.

As they seized the fellow, and despite his cries, rushed him to the hall, from whence they hurried him, in spite of his cries of protest, and attempted resistance, into the street.

"They gave him a final fling, which sent him staggering like a gutted, and there, grinning, flung the doors and bolted them fast.

George Martin, hurrying incoherently at Bob Lewis and crew, came face to face with the Star Boxing Hall, and made his way along the street, vowing vengeance as he went.

"I'll run him, I swear I will—I'll run him!"

The 2nd Chapter. The Conspiracy.

George Martin was naturally a vindictive man. After his visit to the Star Boxing Hall he could think of nothing else but revenge.

"People were already talking about the coming contest between Tom Belcher and Johnny Cohen, the Star of the Ring, and he called it was a likely match. Cohen was a sturdy young boxer, and a great favorite, and Tom Belcher had done quite enough already to prove that he was no slouch with the gloves."

Bob Lewis had refused to change the date of his show to the Wednesday, and, having failed to induce him to take such a drastic step, George Martin realized that there was only one thing remaining to be done—namely, to see to it that Bob Lewis should lose the fight.

To this end he cast about him for likely tools and accomplices. Attached to the St. George's Hall there were a good many men whom he could trust implicitly, knowing full well that they would never betray him, no matter what might happen.

Amongst these were three men named Crow, Ayres, and Newland, who were so far from being called to the door, as he called, as the men came in.

"Then the three of them stared at the Star's cur's face, and looked wondering in what sort of a mix-up he had received the damage.

"Now, look here, boys," said George Martin, "I want you to help me to get my own back on Bob Lewis."

"The men grined. They were only too willing to oblige their boss, if he wanted them to have a tilt at Bob Lewis."

"I've met over to have a friendly chat with him about opening in opposition to us on a Monday," said George Martin, "and he's offered me a chance."

"Newland," said Crow. "My word, I'd like to 'ave bin there while they were doing it!"

"As for Martin, went on, "it's was to the knife, my lads, I don't

really see that we've got anything to lose from Lewis's rivalry; but all the same it's a bit thick of him to open on a Monday against us, when he could have chosen the Wednesday or the Saturday, instead, and I've made up my mind to prevent his opening his doors on Monday next, boys."

"What, if it could be done," declared Newland, "I'll do it!"

"It can. It only wants one or two lads of spirit to act together, and the thing's done."

"How do you mean, sir?" asked Ayres.

"I'll tell you," was the swift answer. "Now, I suppose you boys wouldn't mind carrying a five-pound weight?"

"I would if I'll rather! The lads' eyes fairly sparkled at the thought. Five pounds was not as plentiful as blackberries in autumn at the St. George's Boxing-hall, and indeed, I've met the sort of manager who liked to part with 'Just give us the chance," declared Newland, "and we'll take it!"

"And so you all of us air!" cried Crow.

"That's agreed, then," said George Martin, "I'll give you each of you lads a fiver, if you'll agree to do what I want."

"Name it, sir," said Crow.

"There was returned the rascally promoter, "I want you to break into the Star Boxing Hall—it won't be as difficult as you think, and once inside, I want you to set fire to the beastly place. Let it burn. It's old. The woodwork must be as dry as tinder. I almost believe you could burn the bricks. Once a fiver gets a hold, the building will burn like a furnace, and we shall retain undisputed possession of the field."

"The three men stared blankly at the manager, and he gave them no answer. They were prepared to go to too long lengths, but this was a little bit too risky and dangerous they considered. "If it's anything else, sir," he cried, "just name it, and we'll do what you say."

"I really can't see what you're jibbing at," growled the promoter, scowling. "It's easier than anything else, and nothing could be more effective. You chaps are regularly employed here."

But supposing the Star Boxing Hall were to be broken into, and Bob Lewis steals most of our patrons? Supposing that I suddenly find that I can't go to the fight, and you fellows miss the bit of money I pay you regularly every week. Now, by burning down the beastly place you make sure. We shall be left with the field to ourselves. You'll have secured your own selves for the future, and you'll all be five-pound the richer for the job."

Still they did not appear to be over keen.

"And besides," Martin added persuasively, "there will be the great personal satisfaction of seeing the fellow carrying your own back on the enemy."

"It's too risky," said Crow, with a shake of the head.

"Why? I can't see that. You'd act in concert. You'd enter the hall late on the Saturday evening, and, being your own back on the enemy."

"After all, boys," he said, "I don't know what you ought to be so afraid of. I could guarantee to break into the Star Boxing Hall in half a minute. All the windows at the side are open, and I'll do the work while you two watch."

"The others appeared to be relieved at that. If they were to be paid a fiver for merely keeping an eye on the watch, it might be worth while."

"Will we be paid before the job is done?"

"Yes, if you like," answered

George Martin. "Only it's got to be fixed at latest by Sunday night."

"Give us the money, then, sir," said Ayres.

"Crow, Martin rose and quickly walked across the room to his safe. He unlocked the door, took out a wad of banknotes, and counted out five five-pound notes. He handed one each of these to the men.

"There you are," he cried. "Now, be cautious, my lads, but once you strike, strike quickly and get away as soon as ever you can. And above all, don't word it out. Let's see what you are going to do."

"Trust us, guv'nor!" said Newland, with a smile. "I don't think I'll be so stupid as to let ourselves be caught on the job's done. And you needn't worry. There'll be no show at the Star on Monday night. The old place will burn like straw."

"The 3rd Chapter. Villainous Work."

It was late on Saturday night, or rather in the early hours of Sunday morning, when Ayres, Crow, and Newland were seen to be walking in the direction of the Star Boxing Hall.

There was a dull night, and there was a stiffish wind blowing. They could not have chosen a better time or better conditions for their purpose.

"The old building looked gloomy and dark, and they were glad to see a local public-house, where they primed themselves with liquor, seeking a little Dutch courage to aid them in their purpose, and to set to work."

Newland wore an overcoat, and in the inside pocket of this was set a ginger-bear bottle containing a pint of paraffin.

"As they approached the vicinity of the Star they began to feel nervous. There was a glow, however, for the streets were almost deserted.

"The old building looked gloomy and dark, and they were glad to see a local public-house, where they primed themselves with liquor, seeking a little Dutch courage to aid them in their purpose, and to set to work."

"They were agreed that boldness of action was far more likely to succeed than the slower and more cautious method."

And so they passed at once into a side street, and, in a moment, they were at one end of the building. Crow was stationed himself at one end of this alley, and Ayres and Newland followed him to the end of the work."

"He had come provided with house-breaker's tools, and he took a pane of glass of a window and noisily renounce its pieces with the aid of a trowel. The paper was a matter of seconds to break."

Then Newland drew back the window-sash. A second or so later he was in the room, and he passed within the hall.

He then drew the window down, so that he should any stranger happen to be in the room, and he closed the window had been broken.

"He's done it!" thought Crow. "At this moment, Newland heard the sound of approaching footsteps and saw a man come striding along the street."

"An ordinary door. There was no sign of Newland. He was safely within the hall. Crow didn't want to be seen, and he went on and so he swiftly walked along the alley, whistled a warning through the broken window, joined Ayres at the other end of the alley, and they set to work."

"Let's mizzle, Newland will do the work all right now. He don't want us. I've warned him. It's all right."

Ayres was equally keen on getting away. So many of the Star men were in the hall, and he was suspicious would be aroused if any of them saw him hanging about there.

"As he was about to go, leaving Newland to his fate.

Now, Newland had turned on the electric light to work by, and this had attracted the attention of Hughes, of the Star Boxing Hall, as he stood at the end of the alley and looked along it.

Hughes looked around him, and saw a paper lying on the ground. It was a paper smothered with treacle, and broken pieces of glass were stuck to it.

And then he knew there was something wrong. "There are burglars inside the hall," he muttered. "I'll go and fetch the police and catch 'em red-handed."

But he could move, however a wretched, smoky, and stifling through the broken window into the alley. Then a small of burning as if from a window above.

"Why, the hall was on fire!"

"The mere thought struck horror to the heart of Hughes, who knew that the flames would be his ruin. And while he stood staring blankly at the window it was suddenly thrown up, and Newland's head and shoulders appeared. Then the secondary set a leg over the sill and prepared to drop to the ground."

"It's all right, boys," he said, thinking that Hughes was either Crow or Ayres. "The job's done."

"Well might he ask, for Hughes launched himself at him with the fury of a tiger. He clutched him by the throat, and, with a tremendous lunge of the window, and felled him to the ground."

Newland fought like a demon. Over and over they rolled, kicking, plunging, striking, in a frenzy.

Hughes had the advantage at the start, but the other was younger, stronger, and more active, and besides, was nerved to a decisive effort by sheer desperation.

"He's a right thick of it, he managed to turn Hughes over, struck him several times in the face as he lay on the ground, and he leaped to his feet, ran away as fast as his legs could carry him."

"Hughes staggered, and utterly bewildered where he had fallen, and a full minute elapsed ere he recovered his senses, and he began to get up. Up he got. His head was throbbing painfully, and a ringing noise almost deafened him."

"I must find the nearest alarm, and then I'll get the fire-brigade on my feet. And, bracing himself up to the effort, he turned and ran."

He could hardly remember where he had been, but he knew that he had been suddenly found himself outside the humble little cottage in which Ben Adams and Tom Belcher dwelt.

There was a light burning in the front room, which meant that Ben Adams and Tom Belcher were in.

Hughes hammered on the window-pane. "Ben—Ben—Ben!" he cried. "It's Hughes! Open, old man! Quick—quick!"

In answer to his shouting, Ben Adams put on his coat, and pushed the window up.

Hughes saw the burly old boxer looking at him, and he was wondering on his face, and in the room behind stood Tom Belcher. Tom was looking very sleepy, and had his eyes shut, but he was listening to the old bruiser's stories of the ring and ring battles of bygone days.

"What's the matter, Hughes?" asked Ben. "Have you been fighting?"

"You look scared to death. Anything's wrong, Ben."

"Yes," spluttered Hughes, "Some man has broken into the Star Boxing Hall, and set the place on fire. I've been staring incredulously at the speaker."

"Go on!" he exclaimed.

"It's a bad case, Ben. I've got some there. Ben's the nearest fire alarm. Where? I want to ring up the fire-station, and get the engines along here, and get the water on the fire."

"Are you drunk, or dreaming, Hughes?" exclaimed Honest Ben. "I don't know what that's what's the matter with you!"

"I had a turn up with the incendiary, Ben. He was out there, soberly, and I caught the beggar as he was trying to escape, and I seemed to recognise him, too. He was too good for me, and he got the worst of it. But for pity's sake don't stand staring there! Do you see? There was a window broken."

Off he ran, whilst Ben and Tom went hurrying away in the opposite direction.

The 4th Chapter. The Fire.

When they got to the hall, Ben saw the smoke pouring along the alley, and noticed the flickering light of the flames on some of the side windows.

"Tom! he said, 'we've got to be smart if we want to save the old place. We must get the water on the fire, and we must break through one of the windows here!'"

Letting some windows set some of the six inches from the ground. Lifting Tom up, he said:

"Here, take off my cap, boy! Smash your knuckles with it, and smash the window-panes!"

Tom obeyed; the glass went jangling to the ground.

"Now climb up on to the sill, push the window up, and get into the hall."

"Helped Tom up, and the boy eagerly obeyed.

Young Tom Belcher had a great deal to thank Ben Adams and Bob Lewis for, and he was genuinely grateful. He was prepared to do anything, even at the risk of his life, to save the old boxing hall, if it were possible.

Having got through the window into the hall, Tom looked down at Ben.

"What now, Ben?" he asked.

"Go to the front door, my boy, and get the water on the fire, and hydrant there. If we can fix it, and turn the water on, we may save the hall, and the boys' lives. I'll be in the front door, draw the bolts after a brief search, dress them, and let Ben in."

"Yes."

"Right, then; I'll join you at the door."

Ben ran round to the front entrance of the hall, while Tom Belcher, bending over the side of the street, the suffocating smoke as possible, banded through it, along the passage, and down the steps to the main door, where he set his key to the front door, drew the bolts after a brief search, dress them, and let Ben in."

Ben Adams knew where the electric switch was, and turned on the light, and he found the hydrant and hose. To set the nozzle on the hose and the hose on the hydrant was the work of a minute, and he set his key to the front door, and along the passage in the direction of the fire, while Ben Adams turned on the water.

Soon it was splashing and hissing and bubbling, beating the smoke down before it.

At last Tom Belcher saw the leaping flames. He directed the stream of water to the side of the hall, and the fire flickered and wavered as it struck. Masses of burning plaster and wood fell away, and the water, driven along the restricted space of the passage-way, so dense and suffocating, and the water ran down the hall, and hissing at his mouth and nostrils, that Tom Belcher reeled before them.

Yet he stuck to his task, going down on his knees in order to support himself.

He turned to Tom that a whole room was ablaze, and that the walls of this were cracking.

The flames, pushing out of the open door, struck the ceiling, and brought the plaster down. The wooden battens were blazing fiercely, and the ceiling was cracking and crashing against the burning stuff.

It seemed to him that the air was getting purer—that the smoke was being driven out of the hall, bidding him to be good heart. Tom staggered up, and advanced to the very room in which the fire had broken out. He saw the walls and floor with the stream of water, and then, as it hit the crumbling fabric, one of the beams of the roof fell down, and a beam of wood, dropping from the ceiling, struck Tom heavily, and he fell on the ground.

"Where are you, Tom? Tom, where are you?" bawled Ben Adams, who had come clattering along the passage.

There was no reply.

"Hope the boy isn't hurt," thought Ben, as he came out of the hall, and bowed his head as he forced a way onward.

He had not the water hissing, and saw a flood of it come running towards him.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—1d. Every Monday.

THE GEM LIBRARY—1d. Every Wednesday.

THE DREADNOUGHT—1d. Every Thursday.

THE PENNY POPULAR—1d. Every Friday.

CHUCKLES—1d. Every Saturday.

The RIVAL PROMOTERS



(Continued from the previous page)

He passed onward, and then his foot struck something limp and soft which lay at his feet.

With an exclamation of horror, he fell, and raised it. It was a human form.

He looked into the face, revealed to him by the glow of the fire. "That's Tom Belcher," he muttered. "It's poor old Tom!"

At that moment he heard the clatter and clang of an approaching fire-engine, and the accompanying roar of voices which is always with it.

The fire-engine had arrived, and a crowd of people with it. Meanwhile, his and Tom's prompt action had saved the situation.

Ben Adams had little doubt but that the wall would be saved; and so, caring only for the welfare of the gallant box-boy, he had to assist him in preserving Bob Lewis's boxing-hall, he staggered blindly back along the passage, and made his way down into the entrance hall, from which he speedily gained the street.

And then he saw that Tom had been struck down by some heavy substance or weapon, for there was a lump on his head as big as a hen's egg, and his face was badly bruised.

But a swift examination showed him that Tom's pulse was firm, and he had no reason to anticipate any serious result.

He had Tom gently down, and stood guard over him, while he watched the firemen rushing the hose along the alley, and the police instilling into the crowd.

He heard the crashing of glass, the hissing of water as it splattered against the burning building. He saw smoke and steam and sparks rise heavenward, and then he heard the crowd cheer.

A moment later Hughes came running up.

"Ben," he cried breathlessly, "it's all right. The superintendent of the brigade says he'll soon have the fire under. There's a real danger, and I think the auditorium will be entirely saved."

Ben Adams drew in a deep breath of relief.

"Thank goodness for that," he murmured. "I'm not going to take poor Tom home! I don't think he's badly hurt, but I'm not going to take any risks. I must get a doctor to come and have a look at him. Poor little chap! And he's got to box to-morrow!"

The 5th Chapter. Martin's Last Gamble.

On the Monday morning Ayres, Crow, and Newland went into George Martin's office to report.

"I know those chaps have made of it," exclaimed George Martin, scowling at them. "I trusted to you to see that the work was properly done out, and I bless me if you haven't bungled it!"

"We did our best, sir," said Newland.

"Did your best! Is the hall burnt down? Why, I went along this morning to have a look at it, and what did I see? The windows were all boarded up, and a lot of workmen were busy inside the building. But a little like you, that was all. I determined man like Bob Lewis. He's going to open to-night!"

"The crowd's man has been down to inspect the damage, and has given the necessary permission. And we're no better off now than we were before. It's cost me fifteen quid to give Bob Lewis's hall a fine advertisement, and what amounts to?"

And he went on grumbling and

measing until Newland indignantly interposed. "It's all very well, sir," he said. "I did my best; and even as it is, I run considerable risk of being hauled up for the damage, for I ran right into the arms of Hughes. We had a desperate fight, and I got away, leaving him lying senseless on the ground. But if he recognised me, it's all up!"

"What's that?" cried George Martin. Newland thereupon told his story, while the promoter listened gravely to his words, realising in a moment that Newland actually did run considerable risk.

"But understand this," said he, "if by any chance you are arrested you are to indignantly deny everything, and my name is not to be mentioned, even in the event of conviction."

"All right, gov'nor!" growled Newland.

way in left care, we'd find the crowd storm the hall en masse. They'd sooner get in for nothing than by paying, and Bob Lewis might have had his hall filled with denizens if the plan went off all right!"

George Martin's face lit up. He laughed. "By Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's not half a bad idea. Try it—try it. I'll give you a bit of money to work with, if you like, so as to make sure of your helpmates. It's a good scheme, and if it comes off all right it won't do Bob Lewis any good!"

"Yes, and don't forget," put in Ayres, "that Tom Belcher's had a nasty crack on the head. He was injured while trying to put the fire out, they say, and I don't think he'll be able to show up in the ring against Cohen. If Bob Lewis can't keep faith with the public, that'll be another nail in his coffin. And it seems to me that you're going to come out of this job all right, after all."

Tom Belcher had, indeed, received a nasty crack on the head by that falling pole.

He remained unconscious half through the night, and when he came round was violently sick—the after-effects of the snuff he'd swallowed, of course.

In the morning, after a sound sleep and he went off like a top, as any other tired boy would—he said that

himself in a fighting attitude and had a zap inside with an imaginary opponent, showing rare speed and dexterity of footwork.

"What's the matter with that?" he asked, when he had done enough to satisfy Ben. "There'll be a big crowd, and I ought not to break faith with Ben."

"Well, we'll see," was the non-committal answer.

Tom sat heartily that evening, and seemed very spry and bright.

And so at eight o'clock he accompanied Ben to the hall, outside which they found a mighty crowd assembled.

Ben could never remember having seen such a crowd outside the Star during all the years he had known of it as a boxing-hall.

News of the fire had attracted them. And, besides, the growing reputation of Tom Belcher, the drawing card that night, had brought them hither. They were hammering at the doors, and shouting for admittance, although they knew full well that the stairways and passages inside were already filled with sportsmen who were pushing and struggling to get at the pay-boxes.

The alleyway was being kept clear by a police-sergeant and two men, Ben Adams and Tom Belcher hurried along it to the side entrance door, and passed into the building.

As they passed the windows Tom looked up at them and saw that every one of them was boarded up.

pare himself for his bout with Cohen, which was timed for nine o'clock.

He had hardly begun to remove his clothes, however, ere his ears were assailed by the crash of breaking wood and a series of loud orders and strident cheers from the direction of the alley.

"Ben," he cried, "what on earth's that?"

"Why, the crowd has got sick of waiting to get in, and they're breaking down the wooden barriers. Tom!" exclaimed Ben. "Here, I'm going to lend a hand and help keep 'em out of the ring. You'll let Bob Lewis know. If we get the attendants round here quick we may be able to stop them from coming in."

Off rushed Tom; but before he had gone many paces he saw some of the crowd scurrying along the passage leading to the auditorium.

The barriers had evidently been pulled down already, and it was necessary to deal with the heat, and he joined Ben, who made his way to the scene of the trouble at the run.

He was not the only one. Several of Bob Lewis's faithful attendants had been warned that the crowd were attempting to break into the hall, and they now joined Ben.

At once the fellows, a half a dozen of them, stopped the rush, fought the invaders back into the room, through which they'd come, and right to the window itself, where Ben Adams found himself faced by Crow and Ayres, of the rival boxing-hall. They were standing at the window, encouraging the crowd by their shouting.

"Here are some of George Martin's crowd, boys. There's no accident about this. I'll stake my fanny along with you to fill the hall with dead-heads and do the gov'nor a bad turn. Are we going to stand it?"

"No!" was the cheering answer.

"Then follow me!" cried Ben. "And let's put the lot of 'em outside!"

He made a rush at Crow, who, in a momentary attitude, prepared himself for fight.

Ben, with a contemptuous laugh, threw the lot Crow made at him aside, and then with left and right sent him reeling backwards to the unprotected window through which he fell, tumbling upon snow-caper patrons of the hall.

Ben's eyes darted fire, his teeth were clenched, and every muscle and fibre of his body was strained in concentrated effort.

"Out of this, Bob Ayres!" he cried.

Martin's hiring laughed. "Not much! Think we're going to be kept outside?"

"If he hoped to conciliate Ben Adams, he was mistaken. Ben was not one of that sort."

Ben's eyes smothering hit on the jaw, which sent Ayres reeling.

The attendant from the Star, George's Hall, regarding his balance, stepped in, and on his chief Heavy blows were exchanged, and Ben got one on the nose, which made him several body-blow.

Ben Adams, and before the fellow could again recover Ben closed with him, and with a blow about his body, lifted him up, and flung him clear through the window into the crowd.

Others who were wandering through were beaten back, and now a shout of "Police!" told that powerful reinforcements were on hand. The police, who had been overcome by Ben Ayres and Crow led the rush of the invaders to the barricaded windows,



With the unconscious form of Tom Belcher in his arms, Ben Adams staggered blindly along the passage, and making his way into the entrance-hall, he speedily gained the street.

he felt much better; still, when the doctor came he advised a perfect rest.

"I don't think he ought to be brought to-night, then, doctor?" asked Ben Adams.

"Frankly, I do not. He might, of course, get through without doing himself any damage, but it would be advisable to rest."

Ben Adams was in a quandary. He looked after Tom all day with the love and affection of a father.

Tom's brightness of spirits returned towards evening, when he smiled and laughed at the thought of staying away from the ring that night.

"Why, Ben," said he, "I'm all right. My head may be black and blue where that falling beam struck me, but I'm all right otherwise, and I want to box. It's only fair to you and Mr. Lewis that I should."

the blackened brick-work above and around showing where the fire had been.

It was by this time almost proved beyond a doubt that the fire had been caused by an incendiary, who must obviously be an enemy of Bob Lewis.

The matter had been placed in the hands of the police, and sensational developments were being named.

The advertisement was the biggest that Bob Lewis had ever had. And as he was fully insured the fire was not an overwhelming catastrophe.

Tom and Ben entered the hall and went at once to their dressing-rooms. Ben had by this time made up his mind to allow Tom to box, in spite of the fact that the boy's right arm had been severely lacerated and rendered almost helpless.

Tom wished it so. Ben knew that he could trust the boy. And, besides, if it were proved that he could not stand the racket it would be a simple matter to stop the contest at any time.

And so Tom began to leisurely pre-

Will you do Your Editor a good turn by asking a non-reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND to read Owen Conquest's magnificent school story—"The Impostors!"



THE HIDDEN WORLD

The Opening Chapters of a Tale of Weird and Thrilling Adventure, full of amazing scenes, which will hold the reader spell-bound from start to finish.

By REGINALD WRAY.



THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

DICK MANLEY, his sister NELL, and a girl named JIM KLUX, are on the Yorkshire moors when a terrible earthquake takes place, and Nell is thrown down a tremendous gulf. Dick works his way down a crack in the cliff, and endeavours to get to his sister's side, but the obstacles in his way are insurmountable, and he is forced to stop on a ledge some great distance from his sister. Whilst there he watches a hand and savage approach, and carry Nell off.

Later, Dick is joined by Jim and his father, PROFESSOR KEN DRICK KLUX. "The earthquake has made an opening into an unknown world," says the latter. "But don't despair. We will bring your sister back again, if we have to follow her to the centre of the earth."

In due course, however, the professor, said a had named PAT RYAN, start to search for Nell Manley in the Hidden World. Their enterprise is fraught with innumerable dangers, and after several encounters with animals of enormous size, he descends to rest, leaving Dick on guard.

Suddenly the lad sees a huge dragon-fly, and gives chase. The fly falls a prey to an immense bird, and Dick is just preparing to shoot the latter, when he hears his sister calling him.

Before the lad can reach Nell, she is snatched up by an apewoman, and carried off. Dick follows, and after an unsuccessful search, he loses his way in the forest, and is captured by two apemen, and taken to their hut in the trees.

There, whilst he is kept prisoner, Dick hears the strange people conversing. He cannot understand their language, but he gathers that they are arguing whether to kill him or keep him alive.

(See next issue's instalment)

A Lucky Accident.

Although not seriously alarmed, Dick Manley felt far from comfortable as he sat, pressed against the wall of the apemen's tree-hut, listening, or, rather, watching his captives discuss his fate. Ever since he had realised that he had succeeded in losing himself in the forest he had bitterly repented having flown to Nell's rescue without first rousing his comrades, for he knew how anxious they would be about him.

But he did not for a moment regret having followed the elusive dragon-fly, which was the bottom of the mischief, for had he not done so it is unlikely he would have seen his sister and that he had known what, though a captive, he was still alive.

Presently the woman rose from the squatting position, the adults had taken up before their prisoner, and, clambering up the wall of twigs, dechambered a skull, which she held before him, pointing excitedly to a place where the bone had been crushed in by a heavy blow, then to a similar part of Dick's head.

"I believe the charming creature wants my skull broken in exactly the same place to satisfy her craving for

uniformity," thought Dick. "So, it is about time I got busy. Hello! Where's my rifle?"

He had gone from the lead stream floor on which he had laid it. After peering about him for some minutes in vain, he found to his horror that the oldest boy, and a charming sister who was even more popular a young gorilla than her brother, were having a tag-of-war, using a rifle as a rope.

"Look out, you young idiot; if that rifle goes off someone will get hurt!" he yelled, then he rushed forward and grabbed him by the ankle. The boy let out a yell which could not have been heard in shelliness or vigour by any number of stout pigs.

It was indeed a boy of the same name as the men, and shrill screams from the woman, as all three flung themselves on Dick, who, strong though he was, was utterly helpless in their sticky grasp.

He was, of course, obliged to leave go of the boy's ankle, who availed himself of his liberty to snatch at the stock of the rifle, just as the young lady apewoman was about to rush through the entrance to the hut with her knife, and the Housing struggle was resumed.

This time he had not time nor inclination to watch the issue of the fight.

Holding on to either arm, the apewoman forced him on to his knees whilst the amiable mistress of the hut leant over the heap of weapons which she had before referred, picking up one after the other and balancing each, with the air of an expert examining it for quality.

At length she fixed upon one of the apewoman's stone axes, armed with which she took her stand before Dick, pointing to the skull she had taken from the wall, and back to Dick's head, as though to indicate the exact part of his head she meant to crush.

There was no mistaking the meaning of the woman's gestures, and Dick felt his heart sink to his boots, as she stopped back to within good striking distance and swung the stone axe over her head.

Toe had Dick regretted having submitted to his capture so easily. Had he not known his danger he could easily have extricated himself from his perilous position when first brought into the hut with the aid of his revolver and his chemical pistol. Now, however, it was too late, for the apewoman's huge, clawlike fingers encircled his arms like iron bands.

Presently he saw the stone axe raised in its swing, and closed eyes that he might not see its fearful downward stroke.

But the blow never fell. Instead came the deafening roar of a rifle fired in a confined space, the hold on his arms relaxed, there was a rustling of leaves, a stampeding of feet, and when at length Dick Manley opened his eyes it was to find himself in the same position as before, but with the stifling fumes of gunpowder.

On the floor close beside him lay his rifle, smoke still curling from its muzzle, and he had little difficulty in guessing what had happened.

In their struggle for the rifle one of the children had cocked the weapon, then it would be only a question of time before one or the other would press the trigger, and the rifle would go off.

Well for Dick Manley was it that the pulling of the trigger had not been postponed a few seconds, or he doubted

not but that his skill, carefully bloused, would in due course have formed a valuable part of his hideous hosts' grim collection.

But Dick did not waste time in conjectures of what might have been. There was something else of greater importance at that moment. Although Dick did not think the apewoman would readily recover from the shock of the explosion, he did not feel inclined to take any risks, so, snatching up his rifle, he crawled swiftly through the narrow doorway.

It was not until he was in the clear, pure air outside, that he realised how truly awful the atmosphere inside the hut had been, and his nerves still upset after his narrow escape from death, he seated himself on the horizontal limb to regain his strength, ere facing the perils of the apewoman forest below him.

As he grew calmer, anger drove out what little fear was left in his heart, and, shrugging a fresh cartridge into the magazine in the place of the one about for some sign of his late foe, intent upon taking summary vengeance upon them.

But not so much as a finger of the apewoman could he see. If they were anywhere near, they must have been signs of concealing themselves.

Undoubtedly they had had the scare of their lifetime, but when Dick realised his surroundings as that awful stone axe hovered over his head, he

was unwilling to let them off with so light a punishment.

Slowly his eyes wandered over the tree-bud, and as he noted how truly deadly were the twigs and branches of which it was constructed, and remembered the circle of skulls it contained, he made up his mind that that hut, at least, should never again harbour an unfortunate prisoner.

Drawing a box of matches from his pocket, he struck four at once, and held them close to the roof of the entrance hole.

Soon a slender ribbon of fire ran through the nearest twigs, then another and another until the front of the hut was blazing fiercely.

"Now, I do feel as though I have got some of my own back," muttered Dick, as he climbed slowly and carefully down the trunk, for the wood had been so soft as smooth as glass by the hand-like feet of the apemen, and he had no wish to descend quicker than was consistent with sound limbs.

A Strange Refuge.

The ground reached, Dick Manley moved off as swiftly as he could towards where he had noticed that the undergrowth, between the trees seemed thinner, for he had had enough of the apemen to last him quite a considerable time; in fact, he was not quite sure he would not rather risk encountering the beasts than the fireflies in the trees.

Within half an hour of leaving the apewoman's oak Dick Manley emerged from the bush into more open ground, then stood looking around him, uncertain in which direction to proceed.

Immediately before him the trees seemed to thin out considerably; in fact, he judged from the fact that all the lower branches were torn off or bent and twisted, that monsters were fairly abundant in the vicinity.

As the more open country the more difficult would he find it to escape, if attacked he determined to keep within reasonable distance of the bush so as to have a refuge close at hand.

For some hours he wound his way, almost aimlessly among the trees, not daring to hurry lest he should be getting farther away from his friends. At rare intervals he fired off his rifle, then listened breathlessly, hoping to hear some sound which would tell him that his signal had been heard.

But he dare not waste many cartridges thus, for well he knew that sooner or later he would meet some of the awful creatures which roamed that mysterious wood.

Once or twice he climbed a tree, hoping to catch sight of the plain on which the party had camped; but though the trees seemed to come to an end some mile or so away, the country beyond was certainly not the fabled height.

He had already made a second inquiry on his compressed emergency vian washed down by strange warm water from one of the many streams with which the forest abounded, and fearing lest he should use up all the rations he carried, was on the look out for some small animal with which to eke out his store, when he stopped to gaze incredulously at the jagged stump of a tree from which fluttered a piece of rag.

It was such a common sight in the upper world that he had been about to pass it without a second glance, when its full significance burst upon him.

So far as he knew neither the apemen nor the cavemen had yet reached the manufacturing stage, and it could only have been placed there by someone from his own world—in other words, by his companions, or by Nell.

With trembling hands he disentangled the rag, his heart beating rapidly with excitement as he recognised it as a strip torn from the dress his sister had worn when she had been carried from the sunken world and by the cavemen.

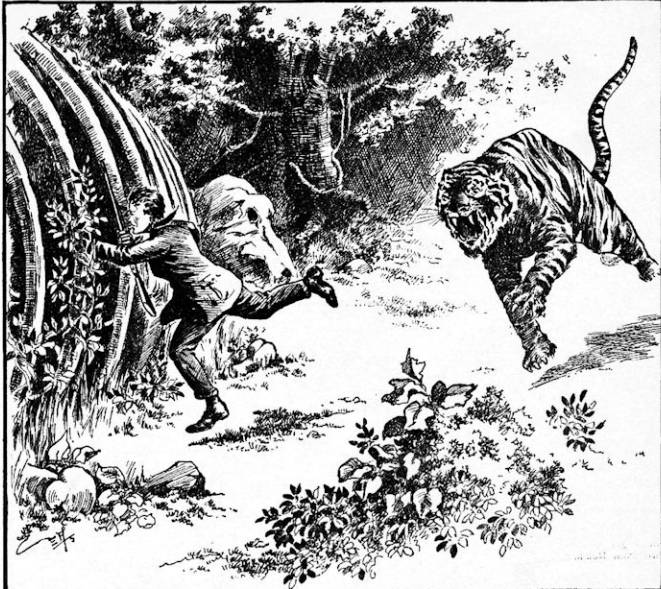
Yes; Nell had undoubtedly fastened that piece of rag to the tree, but why?

He looked on the grass beneath where the strip of cloth had fluttered and found his answer.

Lying on the ground were three pieces of stick, forming a broad arrow, the point turned away from the bush, and he knew it was in that direction Nell had gone, for some few years before he had belonged to his school troop of Boy Scouts, and during the holidays had taught Nell the various scouting signs, little dreaming under what strange conditions they would be found useful.

Breathless with excitement, he commenced running in the direction the sign pointed, searching the

(Continued on the next page.)



Though not daring to look round, Dick could hear the deep breathing of his pursuer close behind him, and a hoarse, breathless shout escaped his lips as he darted between two of the enormous ribs.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS

THE MACNET LIBRARY—1d. Every Monday.

THE CEM LIBRARY—1d. Every Wednesday.

THE DREADNOUGHT—1d. Every Thursday.

THE PENNY POPULAR. Every Friday.

CHUCKLES—1d. Every Saturday.

The Circle of 13



THIS WEEK: THE CASE OF LORD SCARNING'S PLATE. BY W. MURRAY GRAYDON.

PART I.
 HARVEY KEENE, the prince of detectives, is engaged to investigate the Case of Lord Scarning's Plate. He travels to the latter's residence, and although he cannot discover any clues, he is confident that his lordship has been robbed by the mysterious "CIRCLE OF 13," a band of criminals of the worst type. Keene holds Lord Scarning's butler, a man named LEHMNER, with suspicion, and believes that he is connected with the Circle of 13. He therefore decides to set a trap for the man. Realising that Lehmer is listening unseen to his conversation with Lord Scarning, he remarks that he has great hopes of recovering the plate, but is negotiating with a member of the Circle of 13 to betray his companions. Keene surmises that Lehmer wishes to warn the Circle of 13, and sends his assistant, OLIVER, in disguise to shadow the man. Oliver does so, and follows Lehmer to the East End of London. The butler discovers that he is being tracked, and leads the lad to a dark alley where he knocks him unconscious.

When Oliver recovers he is lying in a dark room bound and gagged. There he overhears a plot to murder Keene. THIE FERRET, a member of the gang, is to obtain entry to a house opposite Keene's, and to shoot him dead. Oliver manages to escape from his bonds, and gets away from the house by jumping into the river which runs alongside. He is followed, but he succeeds in getting away and warning Keene. At ten o'clock the Ferret enters the house opposite, and fires at what he takes to be the detective's form. At the same moment, Keene, who has been hiding in an alcove in the room, steps forward, captures the Ferret, and, taking him to his own rooms, shows him a dummy figure which he had placed in a chair to deceive the latter. Oliver is greatly surprised when Keene allows the Ferret to go free. "How can you capture the gang now that you've let that villain escape?" he asks. "Harvey Keene only utters one word," Mosenstein-!"

PART II.
 The 1st Chapter. A Man of Mystery. The Ferret was gone, leaving behind him the three tokens of his visit—the handcuffs that had been round his wrists, the argon from which he had fired the murderous shot, and the dummy figure lying by the French window, with a bullet in its wooden head. Princes Street was very quiet. Nobody was aware of what had

occurred. Harvey Keene puffed at his pipe, and smiled through the smoke at the lad, on whose face was an expression of blank bewilderment. "What was it you said, gov'nor?" he asked. "Mosenstein," Keene repeated. "That is the answer I gave you." "I don't understand," declared Oliver. "Who the dickens is Mosenstein?" "You shall have an explanation in a few words," said the detective. "Aaron Mosenstein is a notorious person, a receiver of stolen property. He does business as a pawnbroker in Turle Street, Whitechapel, and he lives over his shop. On several occasions the Circle of 13 have disposed of plunder to this man. The police learned that, and they passed the information on to me. "But neither Mosenstein nor the gang know that the police and myself possess this knowledge, which was gleaned only a day or so ago. I judged that it was likely to be of service at some time, and a way to utilise it suddenly flashed to my mind to-night, as I was wondering what to do with that rascal!" "I don't see the point yet," replied Oliver.

It is quite simple. The band of criminals, alarmed by the message I have sent to them by the Ferret, will in the course of to-morrow remove Lord Scarning's gold plate to Aaron Mosenstein's place, instead of making it down, as has probably been their intention, and thus I shall have an opportunity of recovering the plate and of capturing several members of the band. Do you understand now?" "Yes, gov'nor; you have made it clear. You mean to set a trap for them at Mosenstein's place, then?" "That is the idea, my boy. You and I will be there, and a force of police will be in the neighbourhood." "Well, I hope we shouldn't have our trouble for nothing." Harvey Keene nodded, and was silent for a few moments, gazing into vacancy. He tapped the ashes from his pipe, and tose to his feet. "It has been an exciting evening for both of us," Oliver, he said, as he glanced at his watch, "and now we must get some sleep. You can put Mr. Still back in his cupboard, and to-morrow the window must be mended. But before going to bed I had better—off, and stepped to the telephone that was on his desk. "I shall ring up Scotland Yard," he added, "and have them send a plain-clothes man to keep Aaron Mosenstein's premises under observation. It will be as well to have that seen to at once, in the event of the gang removing the plate sooner than I expect." It was past midnight when the lean,

like figure of the Ferret turned from the High Street at Wapping into a dark and narrow alley that led to Cabotia and the river. The members of the Circle of 13 had been waiting for him, and were growling impatient and uneasy. As they heard his tread on the stairs they glanced at the door, and when he entered the council chamber twelve pairs of eyes glittered at him. He glided forward to the table, and stood by the vacant chair. "How do you done our bidding?" asked the big, bearded man who was the chief, and was called the Vulture. "Is Harvey Keene dead?" "No, he isn't," the Ferret answered, in a harsh, croaking voice. "He is alive and kicking, worse luck!" "So you have failed! How is that?" "It wasn't my fault, sir. I was copped by Keene. He had a dummy at his window, and he was hidden in the empty house. After I fired he jumped on me, and with the help of



The Ferret trembled in Keene's unrelaxed grasp, shrieking with terror, and all the while the smoke thickened and the flames soared higher and higher.

his boy he backed nippers on my wrists, and dragged me across the street to his own place." "And you escaped from him, did you?" "No; he let me go." "He let you go?" cried the chief. "You have been tricked, you infernal idiot! Keene must have followed you here!" "No jolly fear!" declared the Ferret. "He didn't have me! I was too careful for that. But I'll tell you the whole story!" And the Ferret explained how he had been captured by Keene, and afterwards released. "Here you are, sir," he concluded. "This is what Keene told me to give to you." And he handed the envelope to the chief, who tore it open, and read aloud the brief message: "At nine o'clock to-morrow night I am coming to your riverside lair for Lord Scarning's gold plate. Kindly have it ready."

There was silence again, tense and breathless. For a few seconds a pin might have been ticked to drop. Terror and dismay were now in the eyes of the villains seated round the table. It was a bolt from the blue to the Circle of 13, this daring challenge that had been flung at them by Harvey Keene. "I wish I had gone to Princes Street," declared the Baron, with a bloodcurdling oath. "I shouldn't have said that!" "I bet you would!" the Ferret vowed sullenly. "It would have been the same with you as it was with me!" "Well, the mischief has been done," drawled the Baron, twisting his fair moustache. "I was afraid we were too confident. That the detective should have been aware of the plot, and hiding in the empty dwelling, shows a cleverness that, while the lad was lying bound in the warehouse, he must have overheard some of us talking; and it is equally clear that he kept his hearings during his flight, and was able to tell his master where our headquarters are."

"Then we may expect Keene and the police at any minute," cried another of the party, glancing nervously at the door. "We had better be off at once, or we shall all be—""Nonsense!" a voice broke in, ringing loudly in scorn and derision. "There is not the slightest ground for alarm." It was the chief who spoke, and the mocking laugh that followed his words allayed the panic. All eyes were turned on him. He crumpled the detective's warning message between his slim, white fingers, and flung it on the table.

"This is bluff!" he exclaimed. "Why do you think so?" asked the Baron. "Because it is impossible for me to think anything else." The chief laughed again. This man of mystery, of whom his comrades had heard so much, was the brains of the organisation. He lit a cigar, and smoked in silence for a few moments, his mind bent on the shrewd deduction he had formed. "If Harvey Keene knew where to find us," he said, "he would have informed us of the fact." "It seems rather unlikely, come to think of it," the Baron admitted. "Of course, it is not necessary for the chief, with a shrug of the shoulders. As regards the boy, you are right. While he was a prisoner here he heard us talking of the plot to shoot his master. But he could not guide him to the place from which he escaped. He has only a vague idea as to where it is."

"Then why did Keene send the bluffing message?" "For much the same reason that he led his lordship's butler to believe that he would be a traitor amongst us—so that the man would not confide in us, and he would have him shadowed. I have worked it all out by theory. Harvey Keene must have learned, in his first place, that he has been in the habit of disposing of stolen property to that fellow Mosenstein." "In the second place, I am afraid that if we should be deceived by his bluff, frightened into the belief that he knew where to find us, we would rush Lord Scarning's gold plate off to the ferry. And it is his intention, therefore, to set a trap for us, as Mosenstein's plan. By this way of deduction, What do you think of it?" The chief paused, and as he dropped into his chair there were murmurs of approval from his comrades. His clever theories had convinced them. They were no longer afraid of a visit from the detective. "By heavens, sir, you're right!" exclaimed Lord Rufus, the crack-man. "I am so sure I am right," asserted the chief, "and I will take the chances. There will be no danger from this place, because Mr Harvey Keene has notified us that he is coming for his lordship's plate. By the way, which of you has the key to the unoccupied dwelling adjoining Mosenstein's house that I purchased a month ago?" "I have, sir," spoke up the Dwarf, the little, monkeyish man who was devoted to the leader of the gang as a bound to his master. The chief nodded. He started into vacancy, and then there leapt to his eyes such a flame of fury that his companions shrank from him; but when he spoke his voice was as cool as ice, as sharp as a sword. "When I purchased the dwelling," he said, "I judged that it might be of use to me at some time, and I looked over it carefully. The walls are thin, and access can easily be had to Mosenstein's place. This fellow Keene has defied us so long. He has devoted to my service by every move he has made, and I am determined that he shall be—"

He paused, and drew his chair closer to the table. "Sit down," he added, "and I will tell you what I propose to do to-morrow night!"

The 2nd Chapter. Craft Against Craft. It was on a Tuesday night that the Ferret was trapped in the empty dwelling in a Princes Street, and the next morning Harvey Keene went to Scotland Yard to make such arrangements as were necessary. Meanwhile his request of the previous night had been obeyed. A man had been sent off to watch the premises of the house, and as the day wore on more men, to the number of a dozen, arrived one by one in the vicinity of the house, in Turle Street, Whitechapel, and posted themselves at such points of vantage as permitted them to observe without being observed.

They were plain-clothes constables, and their orders were to remain at



(Continued from previous page.)

their posts until they should receive a certain signal from Keene.

Turle Street branched off a main road, and as it was frequented at all hours, and lined with coster's barrows and pretty shops, it offered facilities for espionage. Aaron Mostenstein had twice there for some years, and so warily that he had never been tripped up by the police.

His house, No. 17, was a large, rickety old building of four stories, and almost as tortuous as a rabbit-warren inside.

An adjoining dwelling, No. 18, was the one that had been referred to by the Circle of 13, who had purchased it in an assumed name a month or so ago. It was very similar to a residence of the force, and it was occupied. To enter it without being seen was not a difficult matter, since there was a high-walled yard at the back, and a gate that led to an alley.

Aaron Mostenstein was a man of sixty, lean and stout with a hooked nose, and a ragged, iron-grey beard and moustache. He had the vision of a hawk, and he was always on his guard, and that happened to him in plain-clothes constables, careful though they were, did not escape the attention of the force.

He first noticed them on the morning of that Wednesday, and not long afterwards there was delivered to him early in the evening, when the faint chirp of a telephone-bell summoned him to the private office at the rear wing. No note yet. He picked up the receiver, and put it to his ear.

"Hallo!" he called.

"Hallo. Holed to him over the wire."

"Yes, he is speaking."

"This is the chief. Have you seen anything of Harvey Keene yet?"

"No, not yet. I don't believe he is coming."

"He will come," declared the chief. "A number of my comrades are now in the evening house, and I have had a report from them. They are certain that the men loitering in Turle Street are Scotland Yard constables, which can mean but one thing. You will have a visit from the detective, and he will force you to assist him in setting a trap. He will force just what he will want you to do."

"Am I to do it?" Aaron Mostenstein inquired.

"Of course you are. You will obey like a lamb, pretending to be frightened. And now for your indignation. I can tell you that he expects Lord Scarning to be brought to you by one or more of the thieves. He will doubtless wish to have a view of the street, and he will take him to the sitting-room above, and leave him there."

"On your return to the office below, you will pretend to be absent from the house. Word will be sent to me, and I will arrive shortly with the plate. You will take it up to Keene, having previously promised him that you would do so, on some plausible pretext. Meanwhile, he will have been observing the street, and he will be able to take him to the sitting-room above, and leave him there."

"You must make up your mind to do this. It is to be assumed that there will be three or four of them, and when the police ultimately come, suspecting that something has gone wrong with the plate, you will deny them. They will not be able

to lay a finger on you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, your instructions are clear."

"That is all, then," said the chief. "Good-night."

The chief had rung off. Aaron Mostenstein hung the receiver on its hook, and shook his head doubtfully.

"It is a complicated affair," he muttered. "I don't like it. I wish I had never had anything to do with this gang of crooks and their associates."

He raised, hearing the click of the street door. He passed from the office to the shop, and found there a tall, shabbily-dressed man, with mottled features, and a fair, heavy moustache, who was carrying a parcel.

As he came forward the door was opened, and there appeared a ragged youth with army boots. He also had a parcel under his arm. The pawnbroker glanced at them indifferently.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"Nothing of value," the man replied. "Only kindling-wood."

As he spoke, he deftly whipped off his moustache, and all eyes Aaron Mostenstein's face palmed.

"Mr. Keene!" he gasped.

"Yes, Mr. Keene," murmured the famous detective.

"What sort of a game is this?" said Aaron Mostenstein.

"Never sit to the best of my knowledge," vowed the Jew.

"Stop lying, and listen to me," Keene interrupted. "What I have to tell you can be said in few words. I strongly believe that a valuable set of gold-plate, which was stolen from Lord Scarning's residence in Grosvenor Square, will be brought to you some time to-night by one or more members of the gang."

"Perhaps it is, and perhaps it isn't. You may know all about this men, but I am sure of little or nothing. That isn't the point. I propose to set a trap under your roof, and you must help me."

Aaron Mostenstein hesitated. He was pretending to consider the matter, judging that it would be wise to show some reluctance.

"I am sure," he assented, in an sullen tone. "I'm not expecting a body with any plate, but I'll do what you like. You can trust me."

"It is as news to me," Harvey Keene replied. "You won't dare to play me false. There are Scotland Yard men in the evening house, and if you were to try to leave the premises you would be promptly arrested. And now to arrange things. I shall wait for you to walk on the street. Where will be the best place?"

"My sitting-room, on the first-floor," he said.

"Has it a cupboard?"

"Yes, sir, a large one."

"So much the better. Listen close, and I will tell you all that you must do. You must make up your mind to do in the event of the thieves coming with the plate. It is to be assumed that there will be three or four of them, and when the police ultimately come, suspecting that something has gone wrong with the plate, you will deny them. They will not be able

to lay a finger on you. Do you understand?"

planning to him that it will be safer for you to negotiate there for the purchase of the stuff. The last I will be hidden in the cupboard, and when the man appears we will whip out and cover him with our revolvers. Should any assistance be required, you will give it."

"Meanwhile, I shall have blown a whistle as signals to the police, who will rush into the house. They will seize any persons who may be below, and hasten up to join me. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," Aaron Mostenstein answered. "You can count on me."

"Very well," said Keene. "The plan is arranged. And now take us to the room. He quick."

Oliver and the detective were led from the office down the stairs, and from that by a passage to a staircase, which they ascended. When they had traversed another passage a few opened doors, and the two companions through. He had brought a candle with him, and the light revealed an apartment that had two windows, and a chair, a table, a desk, a couch, and a table, and several chairs. Harvey Keene stepped forward, and unlocked a door.

"Quite large enough," he said. "You can go, Mostenstein. Be sure you don't fail us."

Aaron Mostenstein withdrew, shutting the door behind him, and went quietly downstairs, laughing in his sleeve at the thought of the chief's trap. He tapped on the wall of his office, and by then Keene and the lad were standing in darkness at one of the sitting-room windows gazing from the blind of the blind into the street below.

"I wonder if they will come!" murmured Oliver.

The 3rd Chapter.

Totting the Perret.

Nearly an hour had elapsed, and the watchers at the window were becoming impatient, when suddenly they observed approaching along Turle Street a handcart that contained a large sack, and was pushed by a stout man, who was carrying with a ragged moustache. He stopped and threw a future look about him.

"There he is," said the lad in a low, sagging tone.

"I think so," Keene assented. "He is alone, good boy."

"Yes, I am afraid there is only the one."

"If we get him and the plate, however, it will be something accomplished."

Apparently satisfied by his scrutiny, the man shouldered the sack, and entered the shop with it. Nobody else arrived, though Oliver and the detective were waiting for two or three more minutes; and then, as they turned from the window with the intention of concealing themselves in the cupboard, took his electric-torch from his pocket. The cupboard was at the back, and as soon as he saw the yellow glow towards the wall, he ran a faint, and then he saw a spot that glittered like a point of fire. And at once he knew it was Harvey Keene, who was looking that was gazing at him from a tiny hole in the wall. The truth flashed to his mind. Craft had been matched against his craft.

"By Jove!" he whispered as he extinguished the torch.

"What do you mean, the lad?"

"Treachery!" breathed Keene.

"What do you mean, governor?"

"Hush, my boy! We are under observation," he said.

The detective's hand was on Oliver's arm. They groped to the door, and on the outer side of it there was a hole, through which Keene turned as soon as he and the lad had slipped from the room. A noise of floorboards was heard, and the two darted in the direction of the staircase, and here they encountered Aaron Mostenstein, who had a candle in his hand, and who was dragging the sack that had been brought in the post-carriage.

"What do you mean for me?" he asked. "There was only the one man, and he didn't want to come up. He said that he would find him. I would give him his price, and—"

"Liar!" interrupted Harvey Keene, and with that seized the man by the collar, and tried to behead. "Confess, you cur!" he hissed. "The Circle of 13 are in your house!"

"What do you mean, they—they are! All of them!"

"Where?"

"Above and below! They got in through the door, and they don't shoot me! Oh, sir, please don't—"

Aaron Mostenstein sprang like an eel, and was gone, leaving behind

him the bag of plate, and, dropping the candle, which was snuffed out, he fled, and plunged headlong down the stairs.

"Help! Help!" he yelled, as he crashed to the bottom. "Keene is after me!"

From the lower floor three shouts and curses. Above, the men who had slipped from behind the door were hammering on the locked door. Keene put his whistle to his lips, and blew four shrill, piercing blasts.

"That will fetch the police!" he declared.

"They will be too late to save me!" gasped Oliver. "We are in a trap!"

"We'll get out of it! We're not caught yet!"

Harvey Keene led the way, flashing his electric-torch, and the lad followed at his heels, jiggling the heavy sack. "They dared not go below. They must ascend, and the chance of escaping by the roof."

They hurried from corridor to corridor, from balcony into the sitting-room, and then to a lofty, rambling rookery of a house. And in the very shadow of a door, they saw a man lying dead. In the room there were for them like wolves on a hot scent, were the bloodthirsty members of the Circle of 13.

"The cunning rogues!" Keene said savagely.

"The cunning rogues!" Keene said savagely. "They are waiting for the shooting!"

"Yes, the police have entered, and are meeting with resistance."

"Do not let it's like the Sidney Street siege!"

"The dwelling was an inferno of noise. Dancng and clattering, and howling, and shouting, and rapid cracking of revolvers, and with a tumult that was swelling in Turle Street, and in the surrounding neighbourhood. Even in this dread uproar Harvey Keene remembered that he had not seen Aaron Mostenstein."

Knowing that the detective would have got in from an adjoining house, he was anxious, whether he himself lived or died, to see that he was warned the Scotland Yard men to draw a cordon around the entire block.

"I don't know what we are to do, my boy," he said, as his stout countenance wavered for an instant.

"I don't know what we are to do, my boy," he said, as his stout countenance wavered for an instant.

"They were still in a confusing tangle, and still the avenging hand were searching for them. They went on, this way and that, through rooms that were empty and rooms that were littered with trash. The firing had ceased, and the other sounds within had almost faded to silence, when they came to a door that was locked.

With one kick Keene burst it open, and he and the lean form of the detective stepped into the room. The Perret, who was standing in the doorway, his hand flew to his waist, and he whipped forth a gleaming electric torch, and he pointed it at them from his grasp, and rapped him on the skull with the butt of his revolver. "Though it was not a stunning blow, it did give the Perret roofing against the wall, and half-dazed him for a moment. Keene gripped him by the throat, and the Perret, with his teeth fairly rattled.

"Show us the way to the roof," he bade fiercely. "You must be familiar with the dwelling."

"I—I don't know anything about it," spluttered the little ruffian.

"That's the truth, I'm led."

"I've been trying to—"

He stopped, and his hollow cheeks grew livid, and he fell faint. "Do you hear how quiet it is? There hasn't a sound! Hauged if they haven't done it!"

"The Perret demanded the detective.

"They've left me here to die!" he wailed.

"It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

"It's what you mean, Spook!" he wailed. "It's what you mean, Spook!"

In harrowing suspense, as fast as they could, they scrambled up one rickety staircase, and came to a landing, where they saw a man who had reached the top breathless and exhausted.

"No trapdoor was visible!" he gasped, "I stumbled into a room to one side of the door, and they had no more than raised their eyes to the ceiling when, from beneath them, a white smoke had been explosion that lurled them off their feet."

"My poor boy!" gasped Keene, as he fell.

For a few moments the three lay there in slumber. Their senses confused, while a cloud of dust settled slowly around them. They had not been hurt. Either the bomb had been blown, or the white smoke had been strong enough to withstand the shock of the explosion. Oliver was the first to rise, and then the detective rose, halting the Perret to his feet.

It was a marvel that they had not all been killed. They were at the top of the dwelling, and the room was a hollow shell of wreckage. The floor had split and sagged, and the walls were cracked, and the ceiling had been a window was blown out, and the ragged gas in a tangled, bristling framework of splintered beams and twisted iron.

Harvey Keene and his companions grouped to the opening, where they expected to see the detective standing. The street was thronged with people, and they at once saw the three figures high above them.

"Do not jump!" they shouted.

"Don't jump! Wait for the firm—"

"What are the police?" Keene called back. "Tell them to—"

"His voice was drowned by the clamour. He could not make himself heard, and the noise increased, ringing louder and louder. Billows of smoke were now drifting past the window, and the white smoke beneath was streaked with vivid crimson.

The explosion had set fire to the house."

Oliver and the detective waited calmly, showing no fear as the white smoke, and the noise increased, ringing louder and louder. Billows of smoke were now drifting past the window, and the white smoke beneath was streaked with vivid crimson.

The Perret, trembling in Keene's unrelaxed grip, shivered with terror. The smoke thickened, and the crackling flames leaped up and down, and at length, when it seemed that there could be no hope, the clang of a gong and the shouting, hoarse and hoofs told that help had arrived.

A horse-escape was below. Soon the detective and the Perret, with the ragged gas at the top of the dwelling, and the helmeted head of a fireman appeared. It was a risky descent, but the shouting hoarse and hoofs told that help had arrived.

Down went Harvey Keene and his companions, and they were met by a fireman. And at last, amidst a storm of cheers, they safely reached the street. And in a few moments later, just as the fireman got to the flames, the burning, shattered house collapsed into a heap of ruins.

Keene and the Perret had been recovered, and the Perret had been caught. But the rest of the gang had escaped, though the adjoining dwelling and not a trace of them could be found. It was a bitter disappointment to Keene, yet the triumph was with him. His bluff had won the game, beaten the cunning of his adversaries.

Several days had elapsed, and a fresh interest of the public from the Turle Street affair. Aaron Mostenstein, who had escaped with the others before the explosion, had not been seen since he had won the game, beaten the cunning of his adversaries.

Several days had elapsed, and a fresh interest of the public from the Turle Street affair. Aaron Mostenstein, who had escaped with the others before the explosion, had not been seen since he had won the game, beaten the cunning of his adversaries.

Several days had elapsed, and a fresh interest of the public from the Turle Street affair. Aaron Mostenstein, who had escaped with the others before the explosion, had not been seen since he had won the game, beaten the cunning of his adversaries.

Several days had elapsed, and a fresh interest of the public from the Turle Street affair. Aaron Mostenstein, who had escaped with the others before the explosion, had not been seen since he had won the game, beaten the cunning of his adversaries.

HUGE COMPETITION

500 PRIZES

Including

A Splendid Rudge-Whitworth Bicycle

Telescopes || Stamp Albums || Pocket Knives
Cameras || Model Aeroplanes || Fountain Pens, Etc.

**BIGGEST OFFER EVER MADE
TO BRITISH BOYS**

All you have to do is to introduce THE BOYS' FRIEND to your chums. Show this copy to them, and let them read it. Then get them to sign their names saying which story they like best. You can rule a sheet of paper in the manner shown below, and the readers who send the longest list of names will win the magnificent prizes.

DON'T FORGET! 500 PRIZES!

Write out your sheet in this form.

I of

Have shown THE BOYS' FRIEND to my chums, who have signed their names on this list, and after reading it the story they like best is the one mentioned against each name.

(Get your chums to sign their names
on one side of the column like this.)

(Name of story they like best.)

Don't send your sheet in at once. The closing date for this competition and the address to which the lists are to be sent will be announced shortly. The Editor's decision in this competition must be accepted as final.

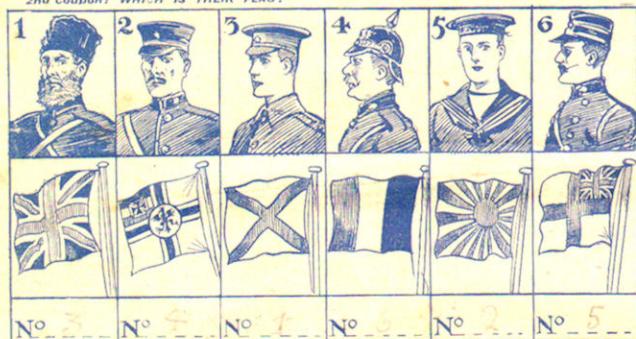
ENTER OUR GRAND CASH PRIZE COMPETITION TO-DAY.

For Rules see page 730 of this issue.

1st Coupon: WHICH IS THEIR COUNTRY?



2nd Coupon: WHICH IS THEIR FLAG?



3rd Coupon: WHICH BRANCH OF THE SERVICE ARE THEY IN?



FOR RULES, ETC., SEE PAGE 730 OF THIS NUMBER.

Now on Sale
THE GEM 1D.
containing
LOYAL AND TRUE!

A magnificent complete tale of School Life at St. Jim's



Also contains

OFFICER AND TROOPER!
a grand tale of Army Life by BEVERLEY KENT.

Buy your Copy To-day!

TAKE CHUCKLES

—Price One Halfpenny—

HOME!

IT WILL MAKE THE WHOLE FAMILY LAUGH!

Grandpa, Grandma, Father, Mother, Uncle, Auntie, Cousin, Brother and Sister and Baby.

They all like CHUCKLES, 1^d.