

MANY TUCK HAMPERS AS PRIZES FOR READERS!

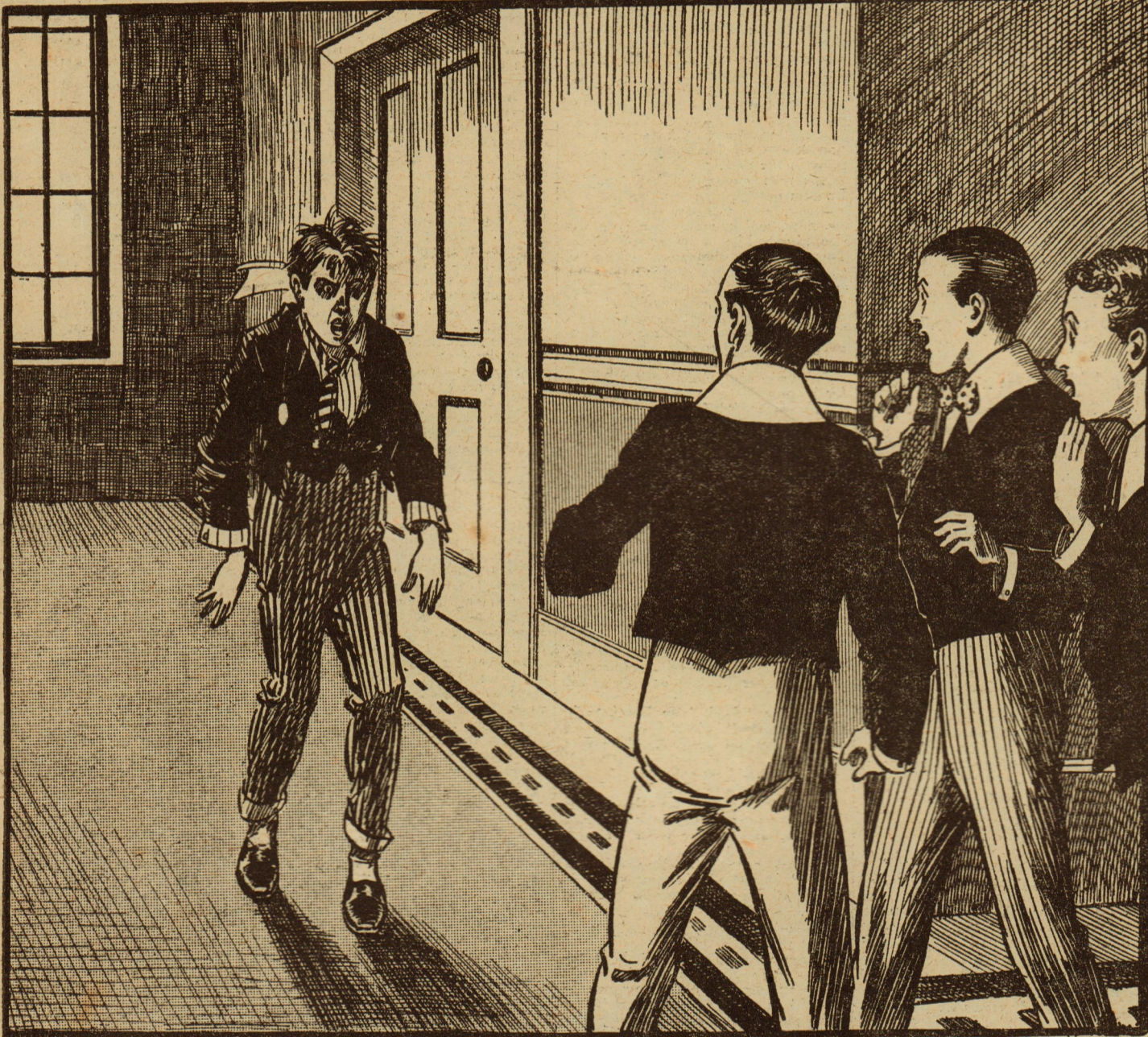
The BOYS' FRIEND Id.

OUR MOTTO IS: "PLAY THE GAME!"

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ONE PENNY.

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THE DANDY OF ROOKWOOD AFTER RAWSON HAS FINISHED WITH HIM!

RALLYING ROUND RAWSON!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Impertinent to Uncle James!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Adolphus Smythe, the ornament of the Shell, burst into that hearty laugh quite suddenly.

Apparently—so far as Jimmy Silver could see, at all events—there was no cause for the merriment of the great Adolphus.

Smythe of the Shell was sunning himself on the steps outside the School House, and he had appeared to be buried in thought. Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth, was leaning on the stone balustrade,

chatting with Rawson, the scholarship junior.

Rawson was telling him things about making a rabbit-hutch—a subject which Rawson had at his fingertips, as Rawson, senior, was a carpenter, and Rawson had worked with him before he had won the scholarship which brought him to Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver glanced round as Adolphus Smythe burst into that sudden cachinnation. There was a glint in Jimmy's eye.

Smythe of the Shell was the fellow who was most "down" on Rawson, though Townsend of the Fourth was

a good second. To the nuts of Rookwood the presence of Tom Rawson seemed a shocking thing.

"Wherefore the cackle, Adolphus?" asked Jimmy Silver, very quietly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some awfully good joke—what?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Adolphus made an effort to control his merriment.

"Yaas," he said; "the joke of the term! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what is it?"

"You'll be seein' that later," said Adolphus. "I'm not tellin' you at present. Don't let me interrupt your chat about rabbit-hutches. Rawson

knows all about those things. I dare say he's made 'em!"

"I've made a good many," said Rawson.

"I thought so," said Smythe, with a curl of his lip. "It's rather a pity, Rawson, that you didn't stick to your pater's workshop instead of comin' to Rookwood!"

Smythe stepped elegantly down the steps towards the quad, but he came to a sudden halt as Jimmy Silver's knuckles were jammed into the back of his neck.

With a firm grip on his collar, Jimmy twisted the dandy of the Shell round, gasping.

"Grooh!" gurgled Adolphus. "Let go, you cad!"

"You haven't told us the joke yet," said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Groooh! Leggo! I'm not tellin' you now!"

"Not keeping secrets from your Uncle James, surely?" said Jimmy Silver pleasantly. "That won't do, Adolphus!"

"You rotter! Leggo!" yelled Smythe, struggling furiously to release his neck. "It's nothin' to do with you!"

"Your mistake; it is!" said Jimmy Silver. "You mustn't burst into a cackle like an old hen, Adolphus, when Rawson is telling me how to make a rabbit-hutch. It's disrespectful to my pal Rawson!"

Rawson grinned.

"Oh, I don't mind!" he said.

"Let the idiot cackle!"

"But I mind," said Jimmy Silver. "As his Uncle James, I am bound to keep Adolphus in order. Adolphus, I am going to rub your adolphine nose on the steps!"

"Gurroooh!"

Smythe of the Shell made a desperate effort to tear himself loose. But he could not do it. His somewhat prominent nose was forced down to the stone steps, and rubbed there—hard.

"Cave!" murmured Rawson.

"Here comes Bootles!"

Jimmy Silver let go the wriggling, gurgling Adolphus.

"Now, wait a minute while I kick you," he said.

Adolphus did not wait a minute. He shook his fist at Jimmy Silver, and sprinted into the quadrangle.

The next moment Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, looked out of the doorway, with a severe frown, at the cheerful Jimmy.

"Silver!" he rumbled.

"Yes, sir?"

"I do not approve of this horse-play, Silver, especially in such a public spot. You appear to have been handling Smythe in a very—ah—rough manner. Silver, you will follow me to my study!"

"If you please, sir—"

"What—what? If you have an excuse to offer, Silver—"

"Smythe was impertinent to his Uncle James, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly. "I felt that I ought to take notice of it, sir."

Rawson nearly exploded, but he managed to turn his laugh into a cough just in time. Mr. Bootles looked puzzled.

"Indeed! If Smythe was guilty of impertinence to an avuncular relative, it was certainly most reprehensible," said Mr. Bootles. "But it hardly rests with you, Silver, to administer correction. However, as your motive appears to have been good, I will say no more about the matter."

And Mr. Bootles passed on majestically.

The 2nd Chapter. Adolphus Has a Great Idea.

Townsend and Topham greeted Smythe with lurking grins as he joined them under the beeches in the quadrangle.

They had beheld the scene on the School House steps.

Adolphus was very much ruffled. His collar was rumpled, and his necktie disarranged—great worries to a nut like Adolphus. He jammed an eyeglass into an eye gleaming with wrath.

"I've been lookin' for you, Towny," he said. "I've thought of a wheeze—a rippin' good wheeze! This time we'll take that cad Rawson fairly down!"

Townsend looked doubtful. As Towny and Topham shared Rawson's study, and had to "stand" the

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RALLYING ROUND

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RAWSON!

scholarship junior at close quarters, they were more "up against" Tom Rawson than any others of the noble society of nuts. But in their contests with the scholarship junior they had had so decidedly the worst of it that they were beginning to think that it was "not good enough."

Rawson was a dreadfully hard hitter, and that made ragging out of the question. The nuts had very quickly dropped that. As he was poor, they had found a new resource in damaging his books and clothes; but the iniquitous Rawson had calmly indemnified himself by taking in exchange clothes and books of their own, so that even that device ended in dead loss for the nuts. Rawson was, in fact, rather too hard a nut for them to crack, and Adolphus' great fistical encounter with him had ended in ignominious defeat for Adolphus!

"Well, what's the idea?" said Townsend cautiously. "The fact is, Smythey, I'm afraid it's N.G. The fellows are all takin' to Rawson, especially since it's come out about his brother Dick."

Smythey sniffed. "A private in the Army," he said. "Well, he's been taken prisoner by the Germans, and lots of the fellows are sendin' him grub," said Topham. "The fellows seem to think it's a big distinction for Rawson."

"What rot!" said Adolphus. "Well, I don't know," said Topham, hesitating a little. "Dick Rawson was in the Middlesex Regiment, and saw a lot of hard fighting, and then the Huns got him. After all—"

"I suppose you're not standin' up for that cad Rawson, Topsy?"

"Well, no. All the same—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Adolphus. "Look here, I've got a wheeze! It came into my head while I was listenin' to that outsider talkin' to Jimmy Silver. He was tellin' Silver about his father teachin' him to make rabbit-hutches."

"Nice—for a Rookwood chap's father!" said Townsend, with a sneer. "They might have put the fellow on the Modern side, at least!"

"I suppose nobody's seen his pater?" said Smythey.

Townsend laughed.

"No jolly fear! You can bet Rawson will keep his people jolly dark. Some awful boozey ruffian, most likely!"

"Most likely," agreed Adolphus.

"And that's where my wheeze comes in."

"What the dickens—"

"Your uncle is comin' to see you on Wednesday, Topsy?"

"Yes," said Townsend.

"Major Townsend of the Middlesex Regiment?"

"That's right."

"Good! Now, suppose Rawson's pater came here the same afternoon."

"He won't."

"Suppose he did?" grinned Adolphus.

"Suppose the boozey old ruffian came here, and met your uncle the major face to face? Major Townsend is one of the governors of the school, isn't he?"

"Yes, but—"

"What would he think of Rawson—and especially Rawson's pater?"

Smythey chuckled. "If they're here on the same afternoon, we can easily manage it for them to meet. The major would be simply knocked over at the sight of the old ruffian—what! He would be shocked to find that there was a Rookwood fellow with a pater like that! Wouldn't he jaw the Head about it! Why, it might lead to Rawson gettin' the boot out of the school!"

"By gad!" said Townsend.

"Anyway, it would be a fearful show-up for Rawson, havin' his pater here for all the fellows to see!"

grinned Adolphus.

"But he won't come. Rawson's too jolly cute to bring any of his people to Rookwood!"

"That's where my idea comes in. Suppose old Rawson gets a telegram from the young Hopeful, tellin' him to come at once, because Rawson's ill—"

"But he ain't ill—"

"Fathead! Old Rawson could get the telegram all the same!"

"Phew! You mean—"

"Any fellow could drop into a post-office and send a wire."

"It means trouble if it came out," said Topham uneasily.

"How can it come out? We needn't send it from Coombe, where we're known. One of us can bike over to Lantham, and send it from there. Rawson's people can't know how far Lantham is from Rookwood, so they couldn't smell a rat."

"Well, of course, you could send it," remarked Townsend.

"Well, I was thinkin' you could send it, Topsy."

Townsend shook his head.

"No, it's your idea, Smythey, and you can handle it better than I can. And I will say it's a rippin' scheme, too!" said Townsend, his eyes glistening.

"I haven't seen much of my uncle, the major, but I know he's a crusty old stick, and as hard as nails. Strong on discipline, and all that. He's bound to be ratty at findin' here as a Rookwood fellow the young brother of a private in his own regiment!"

"Bound to get his back up," agreed Topham. "But—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothin'!" said Topham uneasily. "But—but it's a bit hard on Rawson!"

"For goodness' sake shut up that, Topsy! Do you want the cad planted on us for good?" said Smythey irritably. "This is a chance of gettin' rid of him. My belief is that the major will get into a rage, and jaw the Head, and somehow or other they'll get Rawson out of Rookwood. That would be one in the eye for Jimmy Silver & Co., too, as they're backin' up that outsider out of sheer obstinacy."

"We'll jolly well try it, anyway," said Townsend. "What a rippin' lark to show Rawson's boozey old pater to all the fellows! I suppose he's boozey!"

"Sure to be," said Smythey. "Awfully low and disreputable, anyway!"

"Know Rawson's home address, though?" said Townsend. "Not much good askin' him for it?"

"You can find that out, as you're in his study. He's bound to have it written down somewhere—in his books, perhaps."

"Well, I'll try. I'll get you the address, and you can send the telegram immediately after lessons on Wednesday."

"Perhaps you'd better take it to Lantham."

"I'll leave it to you, Smythey."

Smythey grunted. He had pointed out carefully that there was no risk involved in sending the false telegram, but somehow he would have preferred to let Townsend send it. But Townsend was quite firm on that point.

"Oh, all right!" said Adolphus at last ungraciously. "I'll send the blessed thing. You get me the address!"

"Right-ho!"

And so it was agreed.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Treacherous Trick!

Jimmy Silver was a little puzzled. Jimmy generally had his eyes very wide open, but even if he had not been very observant, he would have noted that there was something unusual "on" among the nuts of the Classical side at Rookwood.

He remembered that mysterious cackination over an unknown good joke, which had led him to rub Adolphus' lordly nose on the steps. Since that incident there had been an extraordinary amount of nodding, whispering, shrugging, and grinning among the "Giddy Goats."

Smythey and Howard and Tracy and Selwyn of the Shell, Townsend and Topham and Peele of the Fourth, evidently had a little secret among them.

And the next day several more members of the noble society of nuts appeared to have been let into the secret, judging by their nods and winks and chuckles.

There was something "on"—that was certain.

But whatever was "on," the nuts kept their own counsel about it. But from the way they glanced at Rawson, it was pretty clear that the scholarship junior was the intended object of the pleasantries, whatever it was.

Rawson himself did not note it. The manners and customs of the Rookwood nuts did not trouble his serenity. And he had other matters to occupy his mind. He had taken up footer very keenly, and at the same time he was "swotting" for a prize examination, which, if successful, meant a round sum which would have been very useful to him.

Between footer and swotting, Rawson had no time to waste upon Smythey, Townsend & Co. And he had still another matter of concern—his brother Dick—Private Richard Rawson, of the Middlesex Regiment, now a prisoner in Germany, in the hands of the Huns.

Most of Tom Rawson's meagre allowance went in the shape of parcels to Paderbon, to feed the hapless prisoner in the hands of the barbarians.

It was the plight of brother Dick, as much as anything else, which had brought the Classical Fourth round in favour of Rawson.

The Fistical Four had been his good pals from the start. Now there were very few fellows left to follow the lead of Cecil Townsend, and persecution of the scholarship junior was a thing of the past.

Not that persecution had troubled Rawson much. He went on his way serenely, with a hearty contempt for the nuts, which, more than anything else about him, exasperated them. Townsend and Topham declined to speak to him in the study; but as the conversation of Topsy and Topy dealt chiefly with "geegees" and dead certs, and neckties, and tailor's bills, the loss was not heavy. Probably the lack of conversation of that variety came as a relief to him.

On Wednesday morning it was easy for Jimmy Silver to observe that the nuts were in high feather.

Townsend & Co. were smiling with great elation as they came into the Form-room for first lesson.

There was a good deal of whispering among them in the Form-room, and Mr. Bootles came down heavily more than once.

But even a shower of "lines" did not abate the satisfaction of the nuts. They were looking forward with keen enjoyment to the happenings of the afternoon.

When morning lessons were over Townsend & Co. joined Smythey of the Shell in the quadrangle.

"Better cut off before dinner, Smythey," Townsend remarked. "The sooner that wire goes, the better."

"Can't get back from Lantham in time for tiffin," said Smythey. "I'll see if I can get excused. The wire must go."

"Got the address safe?"

"Yaas, that's all right."

Ten minutes later Smythey of the Shell was sauntering down to Coombe, to take the train for Lantham.

He was excused attending at dinner, having invented a relation in Lantham with whom he was to lunch.

He arrived in Lantham, and hurried to the post-office.

There, he meditated a little at the telegraph desk. His conscience was not troubling him in the least, but he wanted to word the telegram in the best manner to avoid exciting suspicion.

He settled it at last to his satisfaction. It ran:

"Your son badly injured in football match. Come at once to Rookwood."

There was little doubt that that telegram would bring Mr. Rawson to Rookwood School as fast as he could get there, and there was nothing in the message to betray the hand of the elegant Adolphus.

Suspicion could scarcely point its finger to him; and if it did, a denial of any knowledge of the telegram would not cost him much. Smythey of the Shell had a very easy-going and accommodating conscience.

He addressed the telegram and despatched it, writing the message in a disguised hand, and filling a false name and address on the back of the form.

Then he strolled out of the post-office, and took the train back to Coombe in a very satisfied mood.

His friends met him at Coombe, and Adolphus lunched at the tuck-shop, and then the nuts sauntered back to Rookwood in great spirits. The arrival of Mr. Rawson and his meeting with Major Townsend seemed a certainty now, and Smythey & Co. rejoiced at the prospect.

The 4th Chapter.

The Last Match of the Season.

Jimmy Silver clapped Rawson on the shoulder after dinner. Rawson was hesitating in the passage, when the captain of the Fourth bore down on him.

"Footer!" said Jimmy.

"Well, I was going to put in some slogging at Latin this afternoon," said Rawson. "You, know I'm going to try for the Twenty Guineas."

"So am I," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "I'm down for it, too. But I'm not going to neglect the game, and you're not, either. My dear chap, it's the last match of the season—footer ends with this game. We want you to play at back, and you're coming."

Rawson laughed and nodded.

"Well, I'd rather play, of course, than swot."

"Done! Come on!"

Rawson joined the crowd of Classics making for the football-ground.

Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern side, were already there.

Moderns and Classics were very keen about that last match to wind up the season. Each was determined to leave the other side with a thorough licking to remember.

"Here we are," said Jimmy Silver cheerily, "and we've brought our shooting-boots, Dobby. Are you ready to be scalped?"

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"We're ready to mop your Classical duffers off the face of the earth," he replied. "I see you're not playing Smythey or Townsend."

"Hardly. We mean to win."

"And we've got a new back, that you'll find rather a cough-drop," said Lovell. "Rawson's a regular giant at back."

"Sure," said Tommy Doyle, "it's a new face you want, Lovell darling, more than a new back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You Modern ass—"

"You Classical spalpeen—"

"Order!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "This is going to be a footer-match, not a slanging-match. Get ready, you duffers!"

Townsend of the Fourth had just come in with Smythey & Co. He came down to the footer-field, and hurried up to Jimmy Silver.

"Glad I'm in time," he remarked. "Yes, you're in time to see the kick-off," said Jimmy.

"I mean, in time to play."

"Don't be funny, now, Topsy. Keep your little jokes till teatime," said Raby.

Townsend scowled.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver, I specially wanted to play this afternoon. I was in the team when Smythey was skipper. I—"

"If you specially wanted to play, my infant, you should have specially given up smoking and slacking, and specially done some practice," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm not taking a passenger in this team, thanks!"

"My uncle's coming this afternoon," growled Townsend. "I'd like him to see me in the team. He's on leave from the Front."

"Well, if that's the case, I'm sorry I can't play you—I'd like to please any man from the front, if it would please him. But it can't be done; you're not good at footer," said Jimmy.

"Who are you playing at right-back, then?"

"Tom Rawson."

"You're putting that outsider into the Classical eleven!" he said. "It's simply sickenin', leavin' out a decent chap to put in a howlin' rotter!"

"You've got it wrong," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "I'm leaving out a howling rotter to put in a decent chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't talk to him, Topsy, dear boy," said Adolphus Smythey. "Treat 'em with contempt."

"Well, my uncle will have something to say about that cad when he comes!" growled Townsend.

Jimmy Silver was turning away, but he paused, and turned back, as the exasperated dandy of the Fourth made that remark.

"What has your uncle to do with Rawson?" he asked quietly.

"He's a governor of Rookwood," said Townsend, between his teeth, "and he's major in the Middlesex Regiment. And we'll see what he's got to say about the brother of one of his privates bein' at Rookwood. Your pet blackguard can look out for squalls."

"I don't see what he can have to say about it," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Unless he's as rotten a snob as his nephew, he can't have anything to say. Get off this field!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Get off! You make me ill!"

"I'll get off when I like!" yelled Townsend.

"You won't—you'll get off when I like!" snapped Jimmy Silver, and he brought his football-boots into the argument.

Townsend fled, yelling. There was no arguing with football-boots. Jimmy Silver followed him, dribbling him as far as the quadrangle, amid yells of laughter. The dandy of the Fourth was feeling decidedly sore and dusty when he escaped at last, and Jimmy returned, smiling, to the football-ground.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Dobby. But—"

"Oh, don't mench!" said Tommy Dodd heartily. "If you'll wait a minute or two for me, I'll do the same with Smythey."

Adolphus hurriedly retired from the field, without waiting for "the same" from Tommy Dodd.

The two junior captains tossed, and Tommy Dodd won. Jimmy Silver & Co. were given the wind to kick off against, and the match started.

The 5th Chapter.

Mr. Rawson Arrives.

Jimmy Silver had been given some food for thought by Townsend's remarks on the subject of his uncle, the major from the Front. He thought he understood now the meaning of the whispers and nods and winks among the nuts for the last day or two. If Townsend's uncle was the same kind of character as Townsend, it was possible that he might make matters uncomfortable for Townsend's enemy, being a governor of Rookwood, to whom the Head was bound to listen with some respect.

It was probably a new trouble for Rawson—who bore his troubles already with such calm courage and equanimity. If a new and more dangerous "set" were made against Rawson, however, he had friends to stand by him—Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite ready to rally round him.

But Jimmy had no time to think about the matter just then. All his attention was wanted in the football-match.

Jimmy was determined to wind up the season with a victory, and, as a matter of fact, this match was a replay of a draw the previous week. Jimmy's team was in great form, with the Fistical Four—Jimmy and Lovell, and Raby and Newcome—and Flynn and Oswald and Rawson, and Jones minor and the rest. Not a single member of the "Giddy Goats" was in the team—Jimmy could not afford to take chances in the last match of the season.

Smythey & Co. sometimes watched the matches—from which they were now excluded on the grounds of slowness and unfitness. But on this occasion they did not grace Little Side with their presence. The nuts of Rookwood were lounging about the school gates, eagerly watching for the arrival of Mr. Rawson.

While the junior footballers closed in strife, Smythey & Co. were indulging in great anticipations.

They formed many conjectures as to what Mr. Rawson would look like.

Townsend's opinion was that he would be in cord trousers, tied at the knees. Topham considered it certain that he would be smoking a black clay-pipe, turned downwards in equally black teeth. Smythey was inclined to surmise that he would put on his Sunday clothes to visit Rookwood—that is to say, if the wretched individual had any Sunday clothes.

"Loud checks, dear boy, and a billycock hat," said Smythey. "It will be a sight worth seein'—and something quite new for Rookwood."

"Ye gods! Suppose the Head sees him!" said Peele of the Fourth.

"We must try to work that somehow," said Smythey. "Besides, he's bound to call on the Head, as he's here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, he'll drop his aitches," remarked Howard, "and speak with an awful twang, most likely. That will delight the Head!"

The nuts chuckled joyously.

Rawson, all unconscious of the trick which was to bring his father post-haste to Rookwood that afternoon, played up in the Classical ranks, thoroughly enjoying himself. Rawson was a keen footballer, and his sturdy build and weight made him very useful at back. The Moderns found him very difficult indeed to pass, and the Classics found him a tower of strength in the defence. Jimmy Silver was delighted with his new recruit.

The first goal came to the Classics after half an hour's struggle that was "gruelling" to both sides. Jimmy Silver put the ball in, amid loud cheers from the Classical juniors round the field.

Tommy Dodd & Co. pressed hard until the whistle went, and just on the stroke of time the leather reposed in the Classical net, and the score was equal.

"Jolly good game!" Jimmy Silver remarked, as he sucked a lemon at half-time. "The Modern bounders are playing up. This is a bit different from the game in Smythe's time—what?"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell. "And Rawson's a giddy prize-packet," said Jimmy Silver. "The nuts aren't honouring us with their presence. Where are the nuts?"

"They're all at the gates," said Oswald, nodding his head in that direction. "They seem to be expecting somebody."

"Towny's uncle, I suppose," said Jimmy, his brow clouding for a moment. He wondered whether Major Townsend's coming would mean trouble for Rawson, as Towny evidently anticipated with confidence. Jobson of the Fifth, who was referee, blew the whistle, and the Classics and Moderns piled into the game again.

The second half was a hard struggle. The Modern attack was hot; but the Classics defended well, and the goalkeeper had little to do. The Classical forwards got going at last, and the Modern citadel was assailed, but Towle in goal kept the ball rolling. The second half wore on, and the match began to look like another draw.

It was not far from the finish, when the station cab from Coombe came rumbling up the road to the gates of Rookwood.

Smythe & Co. spotted it at once, and exchanged joyous grins.

"Here comes Rawson senior!" chuckled Smythe. "Your uncle isn't due yet, Towny."

"No; not till five, I think. And he'll come in a car," said Townsend. "I'll bet this is the Rawson bird!"

"Let's give him a yell to begin with," suggested Peele. But Adolphus shook his head.

"No fear! The Head would be down on that when he knew. Let's be jolly civil to him, and pull his leg."

"That's the tune!" said Tracy. "We'll walk him all over Rookwood, and show him to all the fellows. We'll take him to see the footer, so as to get him in the crowd. I hope he's in cord trousers."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The hack stopped at the gates. The juniors drew back a little to give it room. A middle-aged gentleman descended at the porter's lodge, and the nuts stared at him curiously, and certainly not politely.

Was this Rawson senior? He was a somewhat stout, respectable-looking man, with a kind and intelligent face, dressed quietly and simply, with a bowler hat and heavy, thick boots. His face was troubled—doubtless as the result of Smythe's heartless telegram. He glanced at the juniors, and knocked at the porter's door. Old Mack opened it.

Mack looked rather curiously at his visitor. "This is Rookwood School?" asked the stranger.

"Yes," said Mack, undecided whether to say "sir" to that plainly-dressed man, and deciding finally not. "I am Mr. Rawson. My son is here."

"Oh!" said Mack. "I have received a telegram to say that he has been injured in a football match. Will you tell me where to find him, please?"

Mack stared. "Master Rawson of the Fourth, do you mean?" he asked. "Yes, I am his father."

"Then there's some mistake," said Mack. "Master Rawson's all right. I see him only an hour ago going to the football, sir."

Mr. Rawson gave a start. "Then he is not injured?" he exclaimed.

"Not unless he's injured in that there game going on now," said Mack, with a gesture towards the distant football-field.

"That is very strange!" said Mr. Rawson. "This telegram was sent to me from Lantham. That is near here, I think?"

"Ten mile," said Mack. "It must have been sent more than two hours ago, yet you say—"

"Must be a mistake," said Mack. "If you want to see the 'Ead, you go across to that there door and ring."

And Mack, feeling that he had spent enough time on a person who did not wear a silk hat, retired into his lodge.

"Excuse me, sir, perhaps I can help you," he said urbanely.

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman!" said Mr. Rawson, looking at him. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find my son Tom?"

"Rawson of the Fourth, I think?"

"That's right."

"A very great friend of ours," said Smythe. "He's playing footer now. Perhaps you'll let me show you the way, sir?"

"Thank you!"

With another wink to his chums, Smythe led the visitor to Little Side. The whole party of nuts brought up the rear, chuckling and grinning.

But they were a little disappointed. Mr. Rawson was not by any means the "out-and-outer" they had fondly anticipated. His clothes were cheap, and not fashionably cut; but they were quiet and respectable, and not likely to attract the mocking looks the nuts had expected. His manner was quiet and grave. He looked what he was—a solid, respectable, self-respecting workman dressed in his best, worthy of the respect of any but the foolish and unthinking nuts.

All Mr. Rawson's garments, from his head to his feet, had not cost so much as Adolphus Smythe's tie-pin, which was, of course, very shocking from the Adolphus point of view. While Mr. Rawson, if he had thought about Smythe at all, would doubtless

He wondered, in his simple mind, whether it would be harmful to his son to reveal the fact, at this high-class school, among these well-dressed fellows, that Tom's brother was a private soldier. But the thought immediately followed that he would be wronging them by such a supposition.

"No; Dick is a private," he said. "He was in the Middlesex Regiment, and he would have been made a corporal if the Germans hadn't taken him."

"What a distinction!" said Smythe. "Yes; we were proud to hear it when his officer wrote to us and told us," said Mr. Rawson. "He saved his officer's life at Loos."

"Did he, by gad?" yawned Smythe. "I suppose his officer was grateful, and gave him something for his trouble—what?"

Mr. Rawson looked hard at Smythe. To his simple mind it was almost impossible to suspect this elegant, well-dressed, gentlemanly young fellow of speaking caddishly. He concluded that Smythe meant no harm.

Before Smythe could proceed, there was a roar from the crowd round the footer-field.

"Well-done, Rawson!"

The 6th Chapter. Rallying Round.

"Bravo, Rawson!"

He nodded, and walked with his son towards the School House. The kite's tail attached to his coat dangled and whisked behind him, and there was a shout of laughter.

Fortunately, Rawson spotted the adornment and jerked it off. But his cheeks were burning as he went into the House with his father, and he mentally promised Smythe & Co. a warm time later.

The Fistical Four looked at one another grimly.

"What a rotten trick!" said Raby, in a low voice. "One of those cads sent the old chap that wire, of course."

"And they've got him here to rot him, and make Rawson feel an ass," said Lovell.

"I say, did you see his boots?" piped Muffin of the Fourth. "I say, did you fellows ever see such boots?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he hadn't his saw or jack-plane with him," chortled Townsend. "But he can tell us all about carpentry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rawson will give him a feed in the study," chuckled Topham. "It's our study, too. We invite all you fellows to come and see him eat with his knife."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you chaps!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth ran to the School House. Mr. Rawson had entered with his son, and Mr. Bootles had met him in the hall. Rawson presented his father, and the Fourth-Form master shook hands with him.

"Now come up and see my study, father," said Rawson. "You don't want to hurry away now you've come. You're going to have tea in the study."

Jimmy Silver joined them breathlessly.

"Rawson, old chap—"

"Hullo!" said Rawson. "We've got rather a spread in the end study," said Jimmy. "Will your pater come to tea with us?"

Rawson gave the captain of the Fourth a grateful look. He understood. In his own study, Mr. Rawson would have been exposed to the pleasantries of Townsend and Topham. True, Rawson could have slung out the two nuts without the slightest difficulty; but he did not want his father to see that he was on such terms with his study-mates. Of all the troubles the scholarship junior had met with at Rookwood, not a word had reached his humble home.

"Thanks!" said Rawson. "You'll have tea with my friends, father?"

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman!" said Mr. Rawson.

"This way," said Tom. And he piloted the distinguished guest to the end study.

He wondered, in his simple mind, whether it would be harmful to his son to reveal the fact, at this high-class school, among these well-dressed fellows, that Tom's brother was a private soldier. But the thought immediately followed that he would be wronging them by such a supposition.

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The 6th Chapter. Rallying Round.

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"You'll get off when I like," snapped Jimmy Silver; and he brought his football boots into the argument. Townsend fled, yelling at the top of his voice, for there was no arguing with football boots.

have regarded him as an extravagant young donkey. But as a matter of fact, he did not give the elegant Adolphus a thought, excepting to thank him gratefully for his proffered service.

The party arrived on the football-ground, where the Classical-Modern match was at its climax.

"Ha! There's Tom!" exclaimed Mr. Rawson, in great relief.

The sight of his son in blue and white in the ranks of the Classical footballers was reassuring.

Tom Rawson did not observe his father in the crowd.

The Moderns were attacking, and the Classical backs had plenty to do, and Rawson was very busy.

"Yes, that's Tom," said Townsend. "That's the dear boy! You must be very proud of Tom at home, sir?"

"Yes, we are," said Mr. Rawson simply.

"Are there any more at home like him?" asked Peele, closing one eye to his chums.

Mr. Rawson shook his head. "No; his brother's a prisoner in Germany," he answered.

"Ah, Captain Rawson, I think?" murmured Smythe.

Mr. Rawson smiled. "No; my elder son is not an officer, young gentleman."

Mr. Rawson watched the game again, his eyes glistening. It was a deep pleasure to him to hear his son cheered by that Rookwood crowd.

The Modern attack had, for the moment, broken up the Classical defence, and the right-back, who had the ball, was beset. But Rawson was not to be beaten. Three Moderns were right upon him, when he cleared with a powerful kick to mid-field, going over under a charge the next moment. Jimmy Silver & Co. were on the ball in a twinkling, rushing it away towards the Modern goal.

Jobson of the Fifth was looking up at the clock-tower.

The Moderns fell back to defend; but Jimmy Silver's attack was not to be stopped. Right home to goal they went sweeping, with short passing of the ball, and Lovell sent it in with a shot that beat Towle to the wide. Then the Classical crowd roared.

"Goal!"

The whistle went after Towle had tossed the leather out. The match was over, and the Classics had won.

"Jolly close thing," growled Tommy Dodd, as they came off the field. "We should have had you that time but for that bouncer Rawson."

Jimmy Silver clapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he said. "If your cricket's anything like your footer,

you'll be in the Classical team this summer."

Rawson nodded and smiled; and then, as he caught sight of a burly figure in the crowd, he uttered a startled exclamation.

"Father!"

"Hullo! Your father here!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes."

Rawson ran through the crowd to greet his father.

"Fancy seeing you here, dad!" he exclaimed, in surprise and delight.

"Jolly glad to see you, sir," said Jimmy Silver, coming up, with his coat and muffler on.

Then Jimmy's brow darkened ominously. Townsend, standing behind Mr. Rawson, had been busy. A number of fragments of paper, tied together like the tail of a kite, had been pinned to Mr. Rawson's coat-tails, and whisked about as he moved—the good gentleman quite unconscious of it. The nuts were giggling, and most of the fellows could not help grinning.

"Did you come down to see the match, father?" asked Rawson, having presented Jimmy Silver to Mr. Rawson.

"No, Tom, I came down because of this telegram," said Mr. Rawson. "I was told you were injured."

pany, I can tell you a good deal about it."

"I'm more interested in that than in anythin' else, except chimney-sweepin'," said Smythe seriously. "Perhaps you could tell me something 'bout chimney-sweepin'."

The nuts giggled, and Smythe howled, as Lovell took him by the arm with a grip of iron, and walked him away.

"Let me go, you fool!" muttered Smythe fiercely.

"You're coming for a little walk with me," said Lovell.

"I'm not!"

"Your mistake; you are."

And Smythe did. He had no choice about it.

"Come into the house, father," said Rawson, with burning cheeks. He understood clearly enough, from the false telegram and the looks of the nuts, that his father had been tricked into coming to Rookwood, for the special purpose of being "guyed" by Smythe & Co.

So far as he was concerned their design did not affect him; but he shrank from allowing his father to see that he was being deliberately made into an object of ridicule.

Mr. Rawson was looking very grave; perhaps he was beginning to see.

He nodded, and walked with his son towards the School House. The kite's tail attached to his coat dangled and whisked behind him, and there was a shout of laughter.

Fortunately, Rawson spotted the adornment and jerked it off. But his cheeks were burning as he went into the House with his father, and he mentally promised Smythe & Co. a warm time later.

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"Thanks!" said Rawson. "You'll have tea with my friends, father?"

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman!" said Mr. Rawson.

"This way," said Tom. And he piloted the distinguished guest to the end study.

The 7th Chapter.

Adolphus Has No Luck.

Smythe & Co. were in a state of utter disgust.

Smythe had been highly pleased with his scheme.

The only doubtful point had been whether his telegram would bring Rawson senior to Rookwood.

It had brought him; and that point being settled, all the rest ought to have gone swimmingly.

But it hadn't!

Smythe & Co. had looked forward joyously to showing off a rank outsider to hundreds of mocking eyes—to seeing Rawson crimson with rage and shame—to triumphing over the



RALLYING ROUND

(Continued
from the
previous
page.)

RAWSON!

scholarship junior by that trick of hitting below the belt.

But all had gone awry. Rawson's friends had rallied round Rawson. Every fellow who knew or suspected the treacherous trick played by the nuts, followed Jimmy Silver's lead in making much of Rawson's father.

Had he been the rank outsider, the "boozey ruffian" Smythe & Co. had expected to see, doubtless it would have brought the desired confusion on the scholarship junior.

But to the right-minded fellows—who, after all, were in the great majority—there was nothing to curl the lip at in Rawson's father. He was exactly what they had supposed Rawson's father would be—a steady and respectable workman, of whom any son might have been proud. Like many simple natures, Rawson's father was a little awed by big buildings and expensive clothes; but his manner was quiet and grave and commanded respect. And—strange as it may have seemed to Smythe & Co.—Tom Rawson was not in the slightest degree ashamed of his father, but was genuinely delighted to see him.

If he had not possessed a friend at Rookwood, if all the Rookwood fellows had been hopeless cads like Adolphus, Rawson would still have been glad to see his father. But as it was, with a crowd of friends rallying round him to defeat Smythe's miserable game, it was a joyful occasion to Rawson.

Mr. Rawson was placed in the armchair in the end study, and settled down there very comfortably. Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome vied with one another in showing him polite attentions. Oswald and Flynn came in to join the party and help to get tea. Then came Tommy Dodd & Co. from the Modern side.

"Bit crowded here, what?" grinned Tommy Dodd, as he looked in.

"Room for Rawson's friends," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, we're all Rawson's friends," said Tommy Cook; "especially at tea-time, with such a ripping cake as that one on the table. How do you do, Mr. Rawson?"

"Top of the afternoon to yez, sir!" said Tommy Doyle. "Sure we're glad to see yez at Rookwood!"

Smythe of the Shell looked in at the door. His scheme of "rotting" the simple gentleman was evidently "off" while Mr. Rawson was in charge of Jimmy Silver and the faithful Co. But Smythe, feeling that the chums would not care to proceed to rough measures under the eyes of the visitor, made a last attempt.

"I suppose we are all welcome, dear boys," he remarked. "I've been lookin' forward to a chat with Rawson's pater, you know. He's goin' to tell me all about carpentry."

Rawson stepped to the door. "I'll tell you about it, Smythe," he said. "Come along to my study a minute."

"Look here—"

"This way," said Rawson, taking Smythe's wrist in a grip like a vice. Jimmy Silver shoved the door shut, and, thus cut off from Mr. Rawson's view, Rawson jerked Smythe along the passage.

The dandy of the Shell was alarmed now. He did not like the look on Rawson's face.

"Let go my wrists, you low cad!" he muttered.

Without replying, Rawson drew him into his study and closed the door. Then he put up his fists. Smythe backed round the table in alarm.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

Rawson's lip curled.

"You thought I couldn't hammer you because my father's here," he said contemptuously. "That was a mistake. I'm going to hammer you. Put up your paws."

"I—I'm not goin' to fight with you," stammered Adolphus, with a longing glance at the door. But the sturdy Rawson was between him and the door.

"I'm going to thrash you," said Rawson coolly. "You, or one of

your pals, sent my father a spoof telegram, and made him anxious, and wasted his time."

"I suppose he had to leave his work to come here, what?" Adolphus could not resist that sneer.

"Exactly—and it's a loss to him." "Oh, I'll give him five shillings, if you like!" jeered Adolphus.

Rawson's eyes glinted. "You'll put up your hands," he said.

"I won't!" snarled Smythe. "Then you'll take a licking without."

"Look here—Yarrah! Help! Oh, lord! Yah!" roared Adolphus, as Rawson commenced operations right and left.

The next few minutes seemed like a dreadful dream to Adolphus. He put up his hands, as there was no help for it; but his hands, though delicately manicured and quite pretty to look at, were not of much use in a "scrap." He was knocked right and left, and finally collapsed into a corner, his nose streaming red, his left eye closed, and his other eye blinking dismally.

He looked, and he felt, a wreck. "Had enough?" snapped Rawson.

Adolphus groaned.

"Yow-ow! Yass! Yow-ow-ow!" "You can clear off, then. Come near my father again so long as he's here, and I'll knock you flying at sight!"

Rawson returned to the end study. His father glanced at him as he entered a little curiously. But Rawson smiled in his cheery way, and went on helping to get tea.

Adolphus Smythe crawled away down the passage, feeling that life was not worth living.

"Great pip! What's happened to you?" ejaculated Townsend, as the weary Adolphus rejoined his chums in the lower passage.

The dandy of the Shell gasped. "That cad Rawson pitched into me when I wasn't lookin'," he gasped. "I—I gave him a pretty good lickin', though."

The nuts grinned. They could guess exactly how much licking the great Adolphus had given Rawson.

"It's sickenin'," groaned Smythe—"simply sickenin'." Nearly everybody's makin' a fuss of that bounder's father, as if he were a lord at least, instead of a nasty, common person who works for his livin'. What's Rookwood comin' to?"

"It's all Jimmy Silver's fault," growled Townsend. "But I'll put a spoke in his wheel when my uncle comes!"

The 8th Chapter. A Surprise for Towny.

Major Townsend descended from the car.

He was a tall, thin, angular gentleman in khaki, with a grim, bronzed face, that looked as if it were wrought in hard metal.

The hard face showed traces of the rigours of the winter campaign in Flanders. On one weather-beaten cheek was a white scar, where a German bullet had ploughed its way.

Townsend of the Fourth greeted his military uncle a little nervously. As a matter of fact, Towny was more than a little afraid of the grim old major.

The major's manner, however, was quite cordial as he shook hands with his elegant nephew. He was shown into the Head's study, leaving Townsend and his friends in the hall.

"Looks a pretty savage old sport, by gad!" murmured Howard of the Shell. "I shouldn't like to have him on my track."

"He's as hard as nails," said Townsend. "Just the man to be down on a sneakin' upstart cad like Rawson."

"Blessed if I'm not sorry for Rawson's brother, if he was in your uncle's regiment," grinned Topham. "His men must love that face—I don't think!"

"Just the johnnie for us," said Peele. "Get him to come up to the study for a jaw, Towny, and we'll all pitch in to him about that cad Rawson."

"That's the idea!" agreed Tracy. "We'll all be there, and you can trot

him in, and we'll back up whatever you say."

"Good egg!" said Townsend. They proceeded to Townsend's study, to wait for the major there. In about ten minutes he appeared.

The nuts rose to their feet as Major Townsend entered with his nephew. The major's grim old face was relaxed a little now.

"So these are your quarters, Cecil?" he said, glancing round the study.

"Yes, uncle. These chaps are my friends." Townsend presented the juniors to his uncle. "Topham shares the study with me and another fellow; but I hardly like to mention him to you."

"Hey! Why not?" said the major.

"Well, I'm afraid you wouldn't think it right for me to associate with such a fellow," said Townsend diffidently. "He's not the kind of chap you would approve of—a rather low hound, in fact."

Major Townsend frowned. "I don't understand this, Cecil. Do you mean to say that Dr. Chisholm has admitted to this school a boy whom you can justly describe as a low hound?"

Townsend coughed. He felt that he was on rather delicate ground.

"Well, sir, you see, he wedged in here on a scholarship," he explained. "I believe he's got some legal right to shove himself into Rookwood—and—and, of course, the masters don't see what a brute he is. We can't exactly tell them—that would be sneakin'."

"Quite right, Cecil. But if this boy is really objectionable—Who is he?" asked Major Townsend abruptly.

The nuts exchanged surreptitious glances; they felt that they were getting on. The grim frown on Major Townsend's brow looked promising.

"His father's a carpenter," said Townsend. "A workman, you know—the kind of chap who is paid by the hour."

"I don't know whether a carpenter is paid by the hour," said the major. "But is there anything derogatory in being paid by the hour?"

"Well, he—he's a regular ruffian!" said Townsend, a little taken aback. "And the fellow himself is a rank outsider. He's got a brother a private soldier in your regiment, uncle, and yet I'm expected to associate with him."

The major did not look horrified, as Townsend expected. Instead of that he frowned grimly at his nephew.

"Cecil," he said sternly, "if there is anything really objectionable in this boy, it is my duty to see into the matter. But what you have stated amounts to nothing, and leads me to fear that you found your dislike of him upon nothing but a childish snobbishness, of which you should be ashamed."

Townsend jumped. "What do you mean, sir," pursued the major, "by stating that it is against this boy to have a brother in my regiment? Is there anything to be ashamed of in having a brother who has the courage to fight for his King and country?"

"I—I didn't mean it exactly like that," stammered Townsend. "I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

Peele & Co. exchanged glances, and stepped quietly from the study and departed. They had had enough of the major. It was only too clear that Major Townsend was not going to answer their charitable purpose, after all. It was one more disappointment for Smythe & Co. The nuts cleared off precipitately, leaving the unfortunate Townsend to face the terrible old soldier alone. Gladly enough would the dandy of the Fourth have followed them. But the major was fixing him with an eye like a gimlet.

"I have asked you what do you mean, Cecil?" rumbled the major.

"I—I mean he is really a rank outsider!" stammered Townsend. "He's got the cheek to bring his father here—he's here now, in the end study—a carpenter, you know, and—and, of course, we're disgusted!"

"At what?"

"At—everything connected with such people!" said Townsend. "We—we think it rotten to have Rawson here at all!"

Major Townsend started.

"Rawson!" he repeated.

"Yes. His name's Rawson."

"By gad!" said the major. "Rawson! You say he has a brother in the Middlesex Regiment?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Is that brother Private Richard Rawson who has been captured by the Germans?"

"Yes."

"By gad! Where is he?"

"I'll take you to see him, uncle, if you like," said Townsend, a little more hopefully. "You'll see his father, too—an awful old codger!"

"Silence! Take me to them."

Townsend, much puzzled, and wondering what was to come of it, led the way along the passage. He pointed to the open door of the end study.

"They're in there, uncle." "Follow me, Cecil."

"Ye-e-es."

Major Townsend strode into the study, the juniors outside respectfully making way for him. The merry party in the end study rose to their feet at the sight of the bronzed old major. They knew, of course, that this must be Townsend's uncle. Jimmy Silver's brow grew grim. Towny had evidently been at work, and the major had come to see Rawson.

"Is Master Rawson here?" asked the major, in his deep voice.

"I am here, sir," said Rawson quietly.

"You are Richard Rawson's brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give me your hand, my lad!"

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Jimmy Silver in utter astonishment, as the major shook hands with the surprised Rawson.

"Is this gentleman your father, Rawson?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Rawson.

"You know my name, Mr. Rawson," said the major. "I wrote to you when your son was captured by the Germans."

"Major Townsend," said Mr. Rawson.

The major held out his hand.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Rawson. As I told you in my letter, your son saved my life at Loos. He was one of the best soldiers in my regiment, sir—a splendid young fellow, of whom his father and his brother may well be proud."

"Hooray!" chirruped Jimmy Silver involuntarily.

Townsend's face was a study.

"Come here, Cecil," said the major, after shaking hands with Mr. Rawson. Townsend came in, reluctantly. "It appears that you are not on very good terms with Master Rawson. I should be glad to see you shake hands and make friends."

"I'm quite willing, sir," said Rawson simply.

And he held out his hand to his old enemy.

Townsend took it with a hand that was like a cold fish. Under the grim eye of his uncle, he did not venture to refuse.

"That is better," said the major. "Pray excuse me for intruding in this way, young gentlemen, but I was anxious to take this opportunity of making Mr. Rawson's acquaintance."

"Don't mench, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "Would you honour us, sir, by joining us? It would be a great honour to have a chap who's been at the Front—I—I mean—Excuse me calling you a chap. I mean—"

The major smiled.

"I should be very pleased," he said. "I should like a chat with Mr. Rawson, and also to make Master Tom's acquaintance."

"Here's a chair, sir."

"Please sit down, sir."

"Here you are, Towny. You sit here."

Townsend dropped into a chair. But he did not enjoy that feed in the end study, though the "tuck" was plentiful and of the very best. But the major unbent, and it was evident that he was in high good-humour. The feed in the end study was a greater success than even Jimmy Silver had expected.

When Mr. Rawson left Rookwood at last, Major Townsend gave him a lift in his car to the station. Tom Rawson was left looking very happy. And when they were gone, Jimmy Silver grinned at his chums.

"Looks to me as if the giddy goats' luck is out," he remarked. "I rather fancy Towny's uncle has frustrated Towny's knavish tricks—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smythe & Co. were furious. But their teeth were drawn, so to speak. It was evident that they were helpless to cause the scholarship junior further trouble, now that Townsend's uncle, from whom they had hoped so much, had followed Jimmy Silver & Co.'s lead in "Rallying round Rawson."

THE END.

(Another grand long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND, entitled "In Deep Disguise!" Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

TALES TO TELL!



Our weekly prize-winners! Look out for YOUR winning storyette.

CRUSHING.

A bullying lawyer was examining a witness and trying to confuse him in his statements. The man, however, gave a sensible answer to every question, and never once lost his head. At last the lawyer got angry, and, looking fiercely at the witness, he said:

"I have finished, sir, and let me tell you that I can see plainly a rogue in your face."

"Dear me!" answered the witness in composed tones. "I never knew till now that my face was a looking-glass!"—Sent in by D. Phillips, London, S.E.

AN EYE TO BUSINESS.

A train in Arizona was boarded by robbers who ordered the hapless passengers to deliver up all their possessions. One of the latter, however, happened to be a Jew hailing from New York. When his turn came to part up, he reluctantly drew two hundred dollars from his pocket, and taking four from them, placed the latter in his vest pocket.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the robber, as he toyed with his revolver.

"Mine friendt," answered the Jew, "you surely would not refuse me two per shent discount on a cash transaction like this."—Sent in by J. Brook, Sheffield.

HOW RUMOUR ARISES.

Querulous Old Lady: "What are all those posts standing out of the water?"

Boatman: "Hush, lady! Between you and me, them's the periscopes of 'undreds o' German submarines wot's been sunk, an' kept 'ere out of the way of the newspapers."—Sent in by L. Symons, Cathcart, Glasgow.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.

A number of men were painting the tops of the street lamps so as to make them invisible from above, when the foreman in charge of the men noticed that one of them was a long way behind the others. He thought, therefore, that he would ask the reason.

He strode up to the man, and to his astonishment observed that he was painting the bottom of the lamps as well as the tops.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "What ever are you painting the bottoms of those lamps for?"

"Why, sir," replied the man innocently, "so that the submarines can't see them."—Sent in by R. White, Abram, near Wigan.

THE ARTFUL APPRENTICE.

Fussy Old Gent (entering barber's shop): "I say, boy, is your master in?"

Apprentice: "No, sir, he's out." Fussy Old Gent: "Well, we can't help it. But, look here, my hair is falling out at an alarming rate. Can you give me something to keep it in?"

Apprentice (diving underneath the counter): "Yes, sir, here's a nice little box."—Sent in by A. Matthews, Earliston, Berwickshire.

WHERE THE DIFFERENCE LAY.

"This is Oliver Cromwell's skull, ladies and gentlemen," said the showman. "Observe the—"

One of the audience looked up questioningly.

"But Oliver Cromwell," said he, "had a very large head, and that's quite small."

"Sir," said the showman, with dignity, "this is his head when he was a boy."—Sent in by J. S. Leatherbarrow, Immingham.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send on postcard storyettes or short interesting paragraphs for this feature. For every contribution used the sender will receive a money prize. All postcards must be addressed: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and "Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.

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. . . .

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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 receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

OUR GREAT ANTI-GERMAN LEAGUE.

THIS war is like no other war the world has ever known, not only because of the tremendous size of the armies engaged, but also because it is, more than any war of the past has ever been, a struggle among whole nations. And the war will not altogether end when the fighting is over. We shall have Hans and Fritz and Otto creeping back to try once more their old, dirty game of sneaking our trade!

The boys and girls of to-day are the men and women of to-morrow. I want the boys and girls who read my papers to grow up resolute in the determination to have nothing to do with Germany or the Germans.

We must not forget! The Anti-German League has for its most important object just this—to help us to remember, by means of the definite pledge we have taken.

The League is going stronger than ever. Pledges pour in upon us in such numbers that we have real difficulty in coping with them. But we are not grumbling. The more the better. So fill in the coupon on the back page, and join to-day!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

D. S. F.—You can obtain full particulars on joining the R.F.C. by writing to the officer commanding the Royal Flying Corps, South Farnborough, Hants.

H. Peck.—The following books will probably suit your requirements: "Nature," published every week, price sixpence; "The Naturalist," published every month, price sixpence. Your newsagent will be able to obtain these books for you.

G. North (Sutton in Ashfield).—Physical exercises will help you to get rid of round shoulders. You can purchase a book containing suitable exercises from Messrs A. G. Spalding & Co., 78, Cheapside, London, E.C.

S. A. Fritter (Rochester).—Sorry I cannot accede to your request to put Tom Merry & Co. and Jack, Sam, and Pete into the BOYS' FRIEND. If you are so fond of these characters, why not read the "Penny Popular"?

H. A. Wright (Caiston).—Many thanks for complimentary letter. Your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND is read by you, your two brothers, and then you give it to another boy, who gives it to another boy, who passes it on to an old woman and her husband. Quite a round—eh? But surely it can be passed on a little farther!

A. Taylor (Kentish Town).—The matter you mention is a far too extensive one for me to deal with on this page, or in the space of a letter. To explain the subject properly, a long article would be needed.

H. Daly (Montreal).—Canadians barred from joining our League?

Never! Surely a Canadian has as much desire to crush the Huns as a Britisher? Send along your form at once, my chum, and get your chums to do likewise. Canadians, Australians, Africans, Indians, and New Zealanders are all requested to join the B.F.A.G.L., and help to beat the common enemy.

L. Warvell (Sheffield).—The places and characters you mention are entirely imaginary. Many thanks for storyette. Very sorry, but it is hardly up to publication standard. Try again!

H. Woolen (Sheffield).—Is a potato a vegetable? Most decidedly. You wouldn't like to eat it as you would an orange, would you?

Anxious (Oldham).—Sorry, but I cannot tell you the weight and height of Harry Wharton. Tommy Dodd is fifteen years of age. There is very little to choose between the football and boxing abilities of Harry Wharton and Tom Merry.

Cecil Harmer (Stroud).—Many thanks for your cheery letter. I am glad you were so pleased with our presentation plates. If you hand your old copies into your nearest post-office, they will be sent to the Front free of charge. There is no need for you to pack them.

A. Boyd (Linlithgowshire).—Very sorry, but the copy of the "Magnet" Library you require is out of print. You might, however, be able to obtain it from a second-hand bookshop, if there is one in or near your district.

R. Alcock (Goole).—Very glad you were so delighted with your certificate. Publish some war articles in the BOYS' FRIEND? Not likely, my chum! Generally speaking, the majority of my chums bar war stories, so I conclude war articles would meet with the same fate.

G. Ford (Craydon).—You have read the BOYS' FRIEND for ten years. This is a record to be proud of; but as there are several readers who can boast of having taken in the "B. F." since No. 1, your record, though excellent, is easily beaten.

Sapper F. Jones, 139232, 183rd Co., Royal Engineers, B.E.F., France, would be grateful for the gift of a football. Will one of my chums oblige this needy Tommy?

J. Fuller (Tunbridge Wells).—You have read the BOYS' FRIEND since No. 1, have you? Bravo! This is indeed a record to be proud of.

E. Hunt (Lower Edmonton).—Very sorry I cannot send you the plate you require, but the last one was distributed months ago. You will notice that your request for a fat boy to be introduced into the Rookwood stories has been acceded to.

P. Watts (Tasmania).—Many thanks for your long and interesting letter. I assure you it always gives me great pleasure to hear from my chums across the seas. I will ask Mr. Owen Conquest to bring Dick Oswald into the limelight again. Tom Belcher is sixteen years of age.

G. Wright (Kincardineshire).—Sorry I cannot supply you with the Christian names of the characters you mention. No doubt Mr. Owen Conquest will supply them in some of his future stories.

H. Bower (Blyth).—Physical exercises will help you to increase your height. You can obtain a book containing suitable exercises from Messrs. A. G. Spalding & Co., 78, Cheapside, London, E.C.

P. Powell (Bridlington).—I see no reason why you should not take the BOYS' FRIEND on board the Conway. Possibly you will be able to obtain some new readers amongst your messmates. There is very little to choose between Raby and Newcome and Lovell and Doyle as boxers. A football match between the Rookwood and Greyfriars First Elevens would be a severely contested one, and I should not like to say which school would come out on top. Rookwood school is about the same age as Greyfriars.

I. G. London (Templemore).—Your suggestion shall receive consideration. Mr. Owen Conquest will no doubt supply the information you require in one of his future stories.

R. Baber (Coventry).—Very sorry, but Tom Belcher is far too popular with my readers to be back-seated.

W. L. T. W. (Yorkshire).—In what Forms are Baker, Hampton, and Martin? The question arises, who are these three characters? I am not aware that Mr. Owen Conquest has mentioned any of them in his stories.

S. S. (Sydenham).—No; there are no threepenny books published dealing solely with the characters you mention.

C. W. Oakes (Manchester).—Your suggestion shall receive consideration.

Your Editor

OUR NEW COMPETITION.

This week I offer my readers a big new attraction in the shape of the Picture Puzzle Competition, transferred from our little companion paper, the "Greyfriars Herald," which has had to be suspended—only for a time, I hope—because of the Government's restriction on paper. This competition has been tremendously popular in the "Herald," and I am sure that it will be in the BOYS' FRIEND.

A MISSING AUSTRALIAN.

An Australian reader of this paper writes from Citizen Street, Goulburn, N.S.W., in the hope of getting some information as to the fate of his soldier brother. I can do no better, I think, than give his appeal as received. He says:

"My brother, L. D. Martyn, who took part in the famous landing by the Australasians at Gaba Tepe, on April 25th, 1915, was reported missing on May 2. Since then no official information has reached us as to his fate. We have had several unofficial statements, such as 'wounded, prisoner of war,' 'killed,' 'prisoner of war,' 'died of wounds.' So I ask you, if you come across any Australian sick or wounded, to inquire if they know anything about

No. 1331, Private L. D. Martyn,
2nd Reinforcements,
2nd Battalion,
1st Australian Infantry Brigade,
1st Australian Division.

"Will you also publish my letter on the 'Editor's Den' page? Then perhaps any reader living near or visiting any hospital or convalescent home where there are Australians would also inquire. My parents and I will be more than grateful to anyone who can give us news at the address named above, mentioning the name and address of the man from whom the information was obtained."

I feel confident that no words of mine are needed to lend additional force to this appeal. If any of my readers can help, they will help.

TUCK HAMPERS AS PRIZES!

GREAT NEW COMPETITION!

1st Prize, £1. SIX OTHER PRIZES AS TUCK HAMPERS.

I enter THE BOYS' FRIEND Tuck Hamper Competition No. 1, and agree to accept the published decision as absolutely binding.

Signed

Address

Write carefully.

READ THESE RULES VERY CAREFULLY.

This week your Editor is giving the above splendid prizes, which will be awarded for the best efforts in the following simple little task. Adjoining this you will find an attractive picture-puzzle, and I want you to try to make it out for yourselves. I myself wrote the original paragraph, and my artist drew up the puzzle. The original paragraph is locked up in my safe, and the first prize of £1 will be awarded to the reader whose solution is exactly the same as my "par." The other prizes, which consist of hampers crammed full of most delicious "tuck," will be awarded to the readers whose solutions are next in order of merit. If there are ties for the money prize, this will be divided, but no reader will be awarded more than one share.

Should more than six readers qualify for the tuck hamper prizes, these will be added to.

You may send as many solutions as you please, but each must be accompanied by the signed coupon you will find on this page.

Write your solutions in ink, on a clean sheet of paper, fill up coupon on this page, and pin to this, and address to "1st Tuck Hamper Competition, the BOYS' FRIEND, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.," so as to reach that address not later than Tuesday, March 28th, 1916.

Remember that your Editor's decision must be accepted in all matters concerning this competition as absolutely binding.

The result will appear in the BOYS' FRIEND as soon as possible; but readers should remember that, apart from the time required for properly judging the competition, each week's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND goes to press nearly three weeks before the date of publication.

1. MOST WITH FIRST A T L
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THE SECRET OF THE SEAS

BY
DUNCAN
STORM

AN AMAZING NEW
STORY OF
THRILLING ADVENTURE
ON LAND AND SEA.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

JACK HAWKINS, and his two chums, SANDY COCHRANE and PAT BLAKE, are searching for work in London, when they come across CAPTAIN TOM TIDDLER. The latter is a good old salt of the sea, and he immediately takes a great liking to the boys.

He tells them that he is going in search of vast treasures amounting in value to one thousand million pounds, and asks them if they would care to accompany him. The boys accept the offer with alacrity. The captain adds that the expedition will be a hazardous one, for his powerful enemies, SATAN GOMEZ and his spies, will do their utmost to thwart his plans.

The captain and the two boys go on board the Golden Girl, and at length they reach a little bay off the coast of Spain. There they meet Satan Gomez, and the first encounter between the rivals finishes in the captain's favour.

One day a ship runs on the rocks, and Captain Tiddler, by ingenious means, succeeds in getting it off. He receives a hundred thousand pounds for his trouble. Satan Gomez makes a bid for the prize, but the captain proves one too many for him.

(Read on from here.)

Done Brown!

Slowly and surely the Golden Girl towed the disabled Dutch liner stern foremost into the mouth of the Tagus, and left her safely at anchor off Lisbon, the admiration and wonder of a large fleet of boats which rowed off from the shore to see the ship which had been cut through like a cake.

The boys were hoping for a run ashore at Lisbon. Their eyes were turned hopefully upon the magnificent water front of the great white walled, red-tiled city.

But the captain soon put an end to their hopes by ordering the anchor to be heaved short.

"I can see what you are after, boys," said he, "but no Lisbon for me, and none for you. Lisbon is not a healthy place for any of us Golden Girls. See yonder house ashore there, the one with the blue-washed walls, close alongside the church?"

The boys followed his finger as he pointed.

"That's where Satan Gomez lives," said the captain, with a grin, "and he's got his spies and agents all over Lisbon. I'll bet that you wouldn't be ashore very long before you found yourselves nobbled by one of Satan's pals and knocked on the head. Satan thinks you lads are dead, and it is just as well to let him go on thinking so."

The captain swept his glass round the crowded anchorages of the Tagus.

"I don't see a sign of the Albatross," said he. "I suppose she is hanging about somewhere outside, waiting for a chance to fox us. We shall have the Albatross hanging around after us wherever we go, like Mary's little lamb. She must have seen us come in towing that great haystack of a liner, and she can see us go out."

It was not long before the anchor was hoisted in, and the Golden Girl steamed out of the Tagus again, hugging the beautiful shore at the base of the Cintra hills.

The captain steered her straight out to sea to the banks where the quaint Portuguese fishing craft, hung all over with small triangular sails, were trawling in the sparkling blue sea.

Then he shaped a course due north, as though he were steering homeward bound to London.

"If Mister Satan is foxing us from yonder hills," said he, "he'll think that we are going home to spend our money, and he'll put his London spies on the job. They'll be getting their sandbags and knuckle-dusters ready round about the London docks. But they will have to wait a long time be-

fore they see the Golden Girl in the London river again."

The Golden Girl held on her course till after sunset. She steamed close along the coast past the Burlings, where they could still see the bow of the salvaged liner sticking on the rocks. The boys shuddered as they described the little cove in which Satan Gomez and his gang had so nearly done them to death.

At sunset the captain climbed the mainmast of the Golden Girl, sweeping the horizon carefully with his glasses for any sign of the Albatross. There were plenty of steamers about, but none answering to the description of Satan Gomez's yacht.

None the less, the captain fixed his glass carefully on a small steamer some five miles astern. It was apparently a small coasting steamer, which had followed the Golden Girl out of the Tagus.

As the weather was fine and the sea was smooth and calm, he had allowed the boys to make their first essay at climbing the rigging, and they were waiting for him in the cross-trees as he slid down from the truck of the topmast.

"Now, boys," said the captain cheerfully, "you might think that we had given our pal Satan the slip. But we haven't. See that small coasting steamer astern?"

And he pointed out the little steamer which showed beneath a smudge of smoke almost on the horizon.

"We've been doing fifteen knots since we came out of the Tagus," said he, "and that little barrel of a coaster has been holding us all the afternoon. What does that mean?"

"That she is doing fifteen knots as well, sir!" replied Jack.

"That's about it," replied the captain, "and a ship of that sort which can travel at fifteen knots is up to no good. She is not what she seems. Eight to nine knots is about all that ship ought to be doing by rights, and, if I don't make any mistakes, she's one of Satan Gomez's boats told off to fox us. So we'll carry on till after dark, and then we'll give her the slip."

After darkness fell the Golden Girl kept on her course, showing a white stern light to her pursuer.

Down in the engine-room and stokeholds, Mr. MacKay and his staff got busy twisting a few extra knots of speed out of the Golden Girl.

It was then that the boys had their first experience of stoking and coal-trimming, for extra hands were called for in the stokehold to tend the white-hot roaring furnaces, and to trim the bunkers.

Stripped to the waist, the boys set to work in great glee.

Pat and Sandy were told off to trim the coal in Number 4 bunker, and to pass it out ready for the firemen who were slaving at the furnaces.

Jack was put on one of the furnaces, where an experienced fireman showed him how to fling back the steel door and to lay shovel after shovel of coal on the white-hot fire, distributing it evenly so that it would not clinker or pack.

Jack was instructed how to keep a full head of steam, and a full draught of air through the furnace, and it was not long before he learned that there is a good deal more in stoking the fires of a ship's boiler than meets the eye.

Soon his body was streaming in perspiration, and he was taught how to hold the sweat rag or cloth that was wrapped about his neck in his mouth so that he should not inhale the burst of flaming hot air that licked out of the furnace every time the door was thrown back.

In the bunker, his chums soon found that coal-trimming was no child's play. It is one thing to shovel coals into a cellar. But it is quite

another thing to pass and sort coal which is being eaten up by the hundredweight. Soon they were as black as imps from head to foot. Their cramped backs were aching, and the perspiration was running off them in streams.

At the end of an hour they had all enough of stokehold work, but they laboured on doggedly. The thought of that little steamer that was racing up behind them lent power to their aching bones as they shovelled and lugged at their coal-baskets.

The Golden Girl was clipping along now at her top speed. Since they had come down into the stokehold they had heard the pulsation of her engines increase in speed till she had put on ten revolutions to the minute.

They toiled on desperately. They had seen the stokers grinning when they had come down, and they made up their minds that they were not going to knuckle down to a gang of "swivel-eyed muckos," as the deckhands called the black gang of the stokeholds.

At last Knocko Scott, the leading stoker, called to them.

"Chuck it, now, you boys!" said he. "You've done quite enough for a first spell. We'll give you your tickets as stokers an' trimmers. And it's nigh on your supper-time!"

"Let us keep on a bit longer, Knocko!" gasped Jack, as he broke up his fire with the long rake which was called the slice, and strewed it neatly with a few shovels of coal.

"We don't want that Portugee crowd to overhaul us."

"All right," replied Knocko reluctantly, "but don't you blame me if you double yourselves up!"

It was not long after Knocko had spoken that Jack, for all the flaming furnace and the lather of perspiration he was in, came over in a shivering fit. His knees shook, and his teeth chattered. But he clenched them tight so that Knocko should not notice, and stuck to his job of piling in the coal to the hungry furnace.

Then, all of a sudden, the strength went out of his legs, and he doubled up on the steel floor of the stokehold shaking like a leaf, and feeling as if all the muscles of his chest and stomach were tied up into knots.

"Told you so!" growled Knocko, whistling for a hand to take the boy's place at the furnace. "You've got a dose o' stoker's cramps now!"

Pat and Sandy were called out of their bunkers, and, considerably alarmed, they helped to carry Jack through the steel, watertight doors between the stokehold and the engine-room.

Here they laid him on the floor, whilst Knocko rubbed him down, smoothing out the knotted muscles with powerful but gentle hands.

"That's stoker's cramp, that is," said he. "We all get it when we are new to the stokehold. You gets over it after a time when you get hardened to the game. But it do feel like bein' tied up like a knot in a bit o' string."

It was a good twenty minutes before Jack could move and stand up. Then a blanket was thrown over his shoulders, and he was led out of the stokehold for a hot bath to take the last of the stiffness out of the cramped muscles.

At the entrance to the engine-room they were met by Snowball, who had been searching all over the ship to call the boys to supper.

He started back at the sight of Pat and Sandy.

"Bress my soul!" he exclaimed. "I did t'ink dat you boys was two niggers for shuah! You'se as black as ole Snowball! An' glory be! What you been doin' to Mar'sr Jack?"

"We've been down in the stokehold, Snowball, trimming and stoking, and Jack's got a dose o' stoker's cramp!" explained Sandy.

"You silly, obstinacious boy!" exclaimed Snowball. "What fo' you wan' to go mixin' yo'self up with dem low stoker fellers? Let dem shovel deir coals 'emselves. You no come on dis ship to shovel coal an' keep supper waitin'. An' me an' Ching we have cook you a mos' golpicious supper yo've ever tasted! An' now it all spoil in de galley!"

Scolding and grumbling, Snowball led the boys to the bath-room, where he lay Jack in a bath of hot sea-water, whilst Pat and Sandy got busy scrubbing and lathering off the first layer of coal-dust.

Snowball popped off to his cabin, and soon returned with a big bottle of liniment.

He pulled Jack out of his hot bath, and laid him out on the seat in the bath-room. Then he commenced to rub him over with a greenish, evil-smelling mixture from the bottle.

"Dis soon put you all right, Mar'sr Jack," said he. "Him de bes' embrocation in de world!"

"What is it made of, Snowball?" asked Pat, who was towelling off the last of his black overcoat. "It smells like train-oil and dead dogs!" he added, wrinkling his nose disgustfully.

"Him made ob all sort o' good t'ing!" replied Snowball, rubbing Jack down with skilful hands. "Only der witch woman ob West Africa know how to make dis oil. Him hab fish-oil an' boiled serpent, an' burned lion whiskers, an' poison berry, an' coconut, an' whisky, an' ginger, an' der sting ob der honey-bee, an' all sort o' t'ing. Him bery secret, dis oil, and him wort' hundred pounds a bottle for rheumatizzums!"

"It may be very secret, but it doesn't half talk!" said Pat. "You will make Jack smell for a week!"

But whether it was the oil or Snowball's skilful massage, Jack soon declared that he felt as right as ninepence again, save for a bit of a bruised feeling in the relaxed muscles. Then Snowball put him through the bath again to get rid of the nauseous mixture, and dressed him warmly, tending him like a well-trained valet.

As they came out on deck again they found the ship in pitchy darkness.

The skylights were covered, the mastheads were out, and the Golden Girl, instead of steaming north, was heading due west, tearing through the smooth sea at her top speed.

The boys noticed that every porthole was covered with a deadlight, and curtains were hung over the doorways so that not a ray should show their whereabouts.

A dark shadow came along the deck in the gloom.

It was the captain.

"I think we've given our friend Satan the slip this time, boys," said he.

And he pointed astern through the blackness to where a steamer's lights showed heading north.

"We were eight miles ahead of him when we turned," said he, rubbing his hands gleefully, "and I dropped a light on a barrel, that he would make for our stern light, for twenty minutes. The light was timed just for that. Now he'll carry on, thinking that we've dodged round the cape yonder. Satan hasn't got every trick at his fingers' ends, and when we've had supper, I'll show you a few more little games to play with sea-pirates of his sort."

They went down to supper in the cosy saloon, where they found a splendid spread awaiting them.

Ching and Snowball had not been slow to take advantage of the shore-boats which had come alongside in Lisbon. There was a splendid dish of stewed fish and red peppers, cooked in the real Portuguese style, and there was a baked kid, which the boys tasted for the first time. They all agreed, after they had tried it, that young goat tasted as near like a grown-up rabbit as possible. But Ching had excelled himself in strawberry tartlets made with real strawberries, which, though it was still winter at home in England,

were procurable in the sunny climate of Lisbon. Ching was a first-class pastrycook, and the boys agreed that Ching's tartlets were worth stealing. They fixed their plans for a raid on the galley on the following morning as they wired into the tremendous dish of tarts which the Chinese cook had provided.

Diego, the Spaniard, was supping in the cabin to-night—a grave, silent man, who spoke but seldom, and then in broken English. The boys had seen but little of Diego since they had been on board. He did not work

with the crew, and travelled merely as a passenger, spending most of his time lying in his bunk in one of the deck cabins reading, and smoking endless cigarettes, which he twisted with inconceivable rapidity.

When supper was removed, and Ching and Snowball had retired to their pantry, the captain went into his cabin, and returned with a large roll of yellowed papers.

This he dumped on to the cabin table triumphantly, and the boys saw that the papers were covered with plans and crabbed writing.

"You wouldn't think, to look at them, boys," said he, "that these grubby old papers are worth, maybe, five hundred million pounds, and that old Diego, sitting there, puffing his fag, was worth another five hundred million pounds. But, between them, that's their price. The papers aren't much good without Diego, and Diego's not much use without the papers. The papers are the secret of the seas, and Diego is the key to the secret. Now, our pal Satan Gomez has got a copy of these papers, which was made by Diego's old master. But he hasn't got Diego, and that is where we have got him beat. Take off your shirt, Diego, and we'll look up our next Tom Tiddler's ground."

Diego smiled gravely. He slipped off his coat and his shirt of fine linen, and the boys gave a gasp of astonishment. From his neck down to his waist his skin was tattooed all over with all sorts of signs and numbers and charts and angles.

"What do you think of that, boys?" asked the captain proudly.

"Faith!" replied Pat promptly. "It looks as if old Diego had swallowed two books of Euclid an' arithmetic up to compound proportion, and it had all come out through his skin."

The captain laughed at Pat's quaint simile. Then he took a powerful magnifying-glass, and examined a small blue map marked by a crescent on Diego's shoulder.

"You see, boys," said he, "the wisdom of the man who put half his secret on paper, and half on the skin of a man he could trust. I'm looking on Diego's shoulder now for the track of a little wad of two million dollars which is supposed to be buried on some rocks called the Salvages, a hundred and fifty miles to the southward of Madeira. There's nothing new about this treasure. All sorts of treasure hunters have been after it, and in 1813 the Admiralty sent the frigate Prometheus to rummage for it. Fifty of her crew landed on the biggest of the islands, and searched for it above high-water mark. But they had no luck."

"Where did the treasure come from, sir?" asked Jack, who was greatly interested.

"Why, my boy," replied the captain, "the British Admiralty got the story from a Danish sailor called Christian Cruise, who had been laid up some years before in the hospital at Santa Cruz, in the Canary Islands, with yellow fever."

"In the same ward as this chap, Christian Cruise, was a Spanish sailor who had been taken out of the same ship as Cruise. Cruise got better of the yellow fever, but the Spaniard got worse, although he wasn't so ill. I expect he hadn't got the constitution of the Dane, and the fever crumpled him."

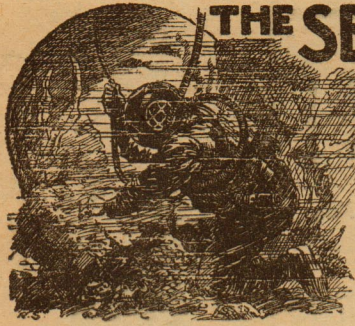
"Anyway, before he died, he confided to Cruise that in 1804, the year before the battle of Trafalgar, when we were blockading the Spanish ports, he was returning in a Spanish ship from South America to Cadiz, with a cargo of produce and about two millions of dollars in chests."

"It was not till they got near the Spanish coast that they were told by a neutral ship that a squadron of British frigates were blockading the Spanish coast from Cape Finisterre to the Straits of Gibraltar. So the Spanish captain made up his mind to turn and run for the West Indies, for

(Continued on the next page.)

FREE For Selling or Using 12 Beautiful POSTCARDS at 1d. each.

As an advertisement we give every reader of this paper a splendid present **FREE** simply for selling or using 12 Beautiful Postcards at 1d. each. (Gold Mounted, Embossed, Patriotic Real Photos, Glossy, etc.). Our New Prize List contains hundreds of different kinds of free gifts, including Ladies' and Gents' Cycles, Gold and Silver Watches, Periscopes, Feathers, Chains, Rings, Fur Sets, Cinemas, Gramophones, Air Guns, Tea Sets, Toys, etc., etc. All you need do is to send us your Name and Address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of lovely cards to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold send the money obtained and we immediately forward gift chosen according to the Grand Illustrated List we send you. (Colonial Applications Invited.) Send a postcard now to—**THE ROYAL CARD CO., Dept. 3, KEW, LONDON.**



THE SECRET OF THE SEAS

BY DUNCAN STORM

(Continued from the previous page.)

he knew that he would stand a mighty poor chance of landing his stuff in Spain with all the British frigates playing Puss in the Corner round the coast.

"To cut a long story short, the crew mutinied when the ship was off the Salvages. They cut the captain's throat, and took the treasure ashore and buried it. Then they planted the captain's coffin on the top of it, and sailed away, thinking to come back on some neutral ship, and recover it for themselves at a time when no questions would be asked.

"They reached the West Indies all right, but having killed their captain, they hadn't a navigator on board, and the lubbers ran their ship ashore on a reef and lost her with all hands save two. One of these died, and the other was the Spaniard who told his secret to Christian Cruise, who told it to the British Admiralty, who have got all the papers of it to this day. You can read all about it in the North Atlantic Diary, or in the book which was written by Mr. Knight, who tried to find it in 1889, a few years before you boys were born.

"So now, my boys, we are bound for the Salvages, and we've got to get there quietly. They are not far from Madeira, and the Portuguese fishermen use them at certain times in the year for catching and salting fish for the Canary Islands and Madeira. As likely as not, Satan Gomez has his agents around in these seas, for Madeira is a Portuguese island, and any fishing craft that spotted us would not take long in reporting us to Lisbon. And Satan has rummaged the islands already for the treasure. He didn't have any success, for he had not got Diego's left shoulder to show him where to look for it!"

The captain pored for a few minutes more over the tiny chart that was tattooed on the Spaniard's skin. Then he laid down his magnifying-glass without revealing his plans.

"Put on your shirt, Diego," said he. "I don't want you out o' the library again till we reach the scene of operations! Now we'll come on deck, and I'll show you boys how we set out to bluff Mr. Satan Gomez and his spies."

The decks were very dark as the boys tumbled out of the brightly-lit saloon. It was some time before their eyes grew accustomed to the gloom. The Golden Girl was racing along through the darkness with all lights out.

The decks were crowded with men working by closely shaded lamps. Some were slung over the sides in cradles, busy rigging up queer erections of stretched, painted canvas. And the boys, looking up at the funnel, gave an exclamation of astonishment.

Viewed against the starlight, they could see that it had gained immensely in size. In fact, it was twice the size of the funnel of the Golden Girl.

"The smoke-stack is a dummy," said the captain, with a laugh, "and those deckhouses that we are putting in are dummies as well. So mind that you don't lean up against them too hard. We are no longer the Golden Girl, and when we have shipped that great lump of wood packing-case on our bows, we shall look as near the Coral, the repairing ship of the South American and Buenos Ayres Cable Company, as makes no difference. The Coral is away doing a job on the South American coast between Bahia and Cape Frio. But none of Satan's spies will be wise to that, and you must remember that nothing but a cable ship or a survey ship can go hanging about sounding and laying buoys without arousing suspicion."

The boys assisted in rigging the huge chunk of wood built up to represent the machinery for lifting cables, which was fixed to the bows of the Golden Girl. By midnight the work was completed. The Golden Girl was smeared from end to end with a coat of cool grey paint, and the crew could hardly find their way about their own decks, so clustered up were these with strange deckhouses, fashioned ingeniously of painted canvas stretched on frames like stage scenery.

By midnight, the work was com-

pleted. The lights were switched on again, and the Golden Girl, instead of steaming northwards towards London, pursued by the spy ship, was heading south, completely disguised as the cable repairing ship Coral.

It was just as well that she was disguised in this fashion, for, at dawn, when she was in the latitude of Lisbon, and over a hundred miles off the mouth of the Tagus, she was hailed by a Portuguese fishing-boat, which asked for her bearings, declaring that she had been blown off shore by a squall on the previous day.

The Portuguese skipper looked up at the supposed cables innocently, as he told this astounding lie. He saw the huge cablebuoys on deck, and little dreamed that they were dummies of painted canvas.

Mr. Tubbs solemnly gave him his bearings, and told him that if he would steer due eastward, he would soon find himself in sight of the mountains at the mouth of the Tagus.

Then the innocent Portuguese asked if the cables had passed a

firing out of the hose, and had been knocked head over heels in the scuppers by the force of the water, when there was a sudden cry of "Land-ho!" from the look-out man on the forecastle.

Pat turned his head at this glad sound. He did not turn the hose as well, with the result that Ching, who came sloping round the corner of one of the dummy deckhouses, coffee-pot in hand, received the full discharge in the face and was knocked head over heels.

Ching was very cross about this. He looked at the spilled coffee-pot, and picked himself up from the scuppers. Then, as though he was doing a conjuring-trick, he produced from his wide sleeve the cosh of rope with which he defended the pies in his galley from the boys' raids.

"You naughty boy debbles!" he squeaked. "Me give you whackee whackee you no forget in a hully!"

The boys had had a taste or two of Ching's cosh. It was a stiff length of well-tarred Manila rope, with a Turk's head turned in the end of it. And it stung shrewdly, even through a thick pair of tarry trousers.

Now they had no trousers at all. There was nothing in the way of clothing between them but three towels.

So, when Ching dashed at them, they took to the rigging.

They were pretty surefooted now in climbing, and they shinned up to the cross-tree of the mainmast, leav-

ing that! And he won't give us our clothes back until he has given us a clobbering!"

The boys looked at the rugged outlines of the Salvage Islands, which were rising from the horizon as the ship approached them. But they could take no great interest in the Salvages whilst they were sitting up like cherubs aloft without a pair of breeches between them.

Far down below on the deck they could see the captain looking up and laughing at them, and they knew that he would not interfere on their behalf. He always believed in letting them fight it out with Ching, and was never more delighted than when, in their raids on the galley, they caught a lick of the dreaded cosh instead of a handful of tarts.

They looked down on the galley roof. Ching had closed and bolted the door, and had shut himself in. Ching always shut himself in the galley when he was doing a bit of cooking, and the captain always said that it was best not to look on when Ching was mangling the grub, since what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve after.

Out of the galley chimney rose a wreath of smoke, and the boys, who were getting very peckish, fancied they could scent the delicious odour of frizzling bacon.

"I do want my breakfast!" groaned Pat, stroking his empty stomach.

Then a bright idea struck him.

in a jam-pot, and the shaving-brush and razors were ready—so that he might turn up smart and neat at the cabin breakfast-table. He had wrapped a pudding-cloth round his neck, and Pat gasped with surprise as the long, yellow fingers went to the beautifully-plaited pigtail which Ching nearly always wore coiled about his head. The pigtail fell loose, and Ching's fingers fiddled for a moment. Then it fell away, and Ching was left with a short lock of grey hair sticking up from his scalp like the crest of a cockatoo.

Ching's beautiful pigtail was a dud tail! Its glossy plait was false."

Ching stroked his pigtail affectionately and laid it aside on his pastry-board whilst he lathered his head.

That was Pat's chance. On the roof of the galley were stowed Snowball's fishing-lines, with the hooks ready attached for fishing as soon as the anchor should be dropped.

Pat reached silently and stealthily for one of these. The ventilator hole was nearly over the pastry-board, and Pat gently dropped the hook through this, lowering it to the board.

Ching did not see this as he lathered his head critically in the small looking-glass. It was a nice piece of fishing, and Pat had to wait till the gentle roll of the ship carried his hook over to the precious pigtail. Then he gently jerked his line. The hook caught in the tail, and Pat hauled it up.

Ching's attention was drawn by the rasping of the line in the ventilator hole. He turned. Then he gave a yell of despair as he saw his precious pigtail wriggle out on to the roof like a runaway snake.

He leaped outside the galley, his lathered head smoking. But Pat was already hanging in the whip alongside the mast twenty feet above his head, whilst the pigtail, attached to the line from the cross-trees, was being hoisted forty feet from the deck by Pat's grinning accomplices.

"Give me my pigtail!" begged Ching.

"Promise you won't lick us!" urged Pat.

"Me promise!" cried Ching eagerly.

"And you'll give us back our clothes?" said Pat.

Ching nodded, whilst the crew roared with laughter.

"Well, hand out the clothes, and put half a dozen pies in the pockets, and we'll send down a line for them. Then you can have your old pigtail," said Pat, swinging like a pink-and-white monkey in the air.

Ching was beaten. He dived into the galley and brought out the clothes. Then he brought out a tin of his famous fruit-pies, to show that he was playing fair, and put them in the pockets of the coats. A line was sent down, and the bundle of clothes was hoisted up by the naked rascals in the cross-trees. Then Ching's beloved pigtail was slowly lowered to him.

He waited for it eagerly, with hands upstretched, trembling as it swung towards the side with the rolling of the ship. Then, when he grabbed it, he rushed into the galley to finish his toilet, whilst the boys dressed themselves and scoffed fruit-pies in the safety of the cross-trees.

By breakfast-time the Golden Girl, after coasting along a rugged, barren shore, on which the Atlantic swells were breaking in spouts of foam, turned the south end of the island, and anchored in a dangerous-looking bay which afforded but small shelter.

The captain swept the broken shore with his telescope.

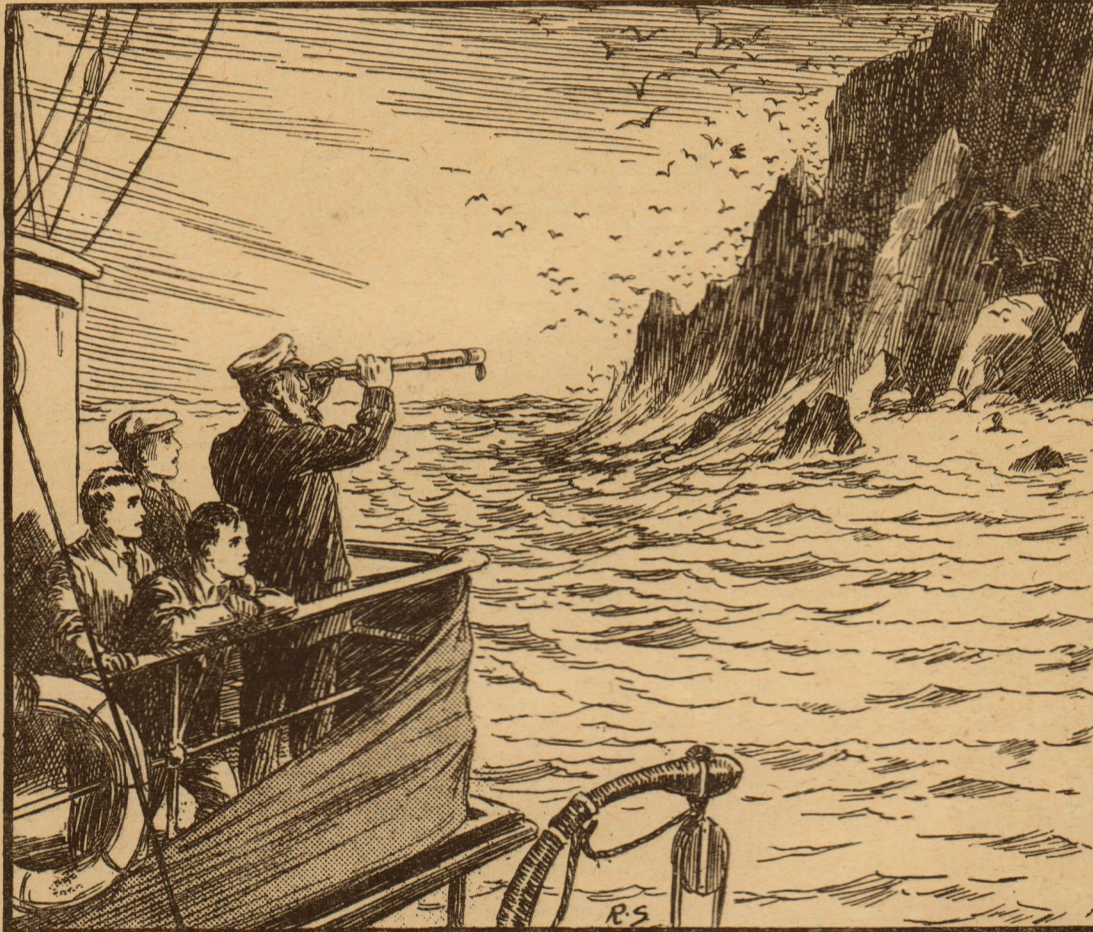
"Well, I've seen a few lonely places in my life," he exclaimed, "but this beats Robinson Crusoe's island! It doesn't look as if a human foot had ever stepped ashore."

The captain's glass was a good one, and it revealed every nook and cranny of the rock-bound shore.

But it was not strong enough to show him a narrow crevice under a huge pile of black basalt-rocks, from which peered out a pale, evil face, which was closely examining the ship through a pair of powerful glasses.

Perhaps the captain would not have eaten his breakfast with so hearty an appetite, or laughed and joked with the boys over their prank with Ching's pigtail, had he known that, notwithstanding all his precautions, he had not escaped his enemy, and that the man who was watching his ship from the hidden cave beneath yonder pile of rocks ashore was none other than his arch-enemy, Satan Gomez.

(Another thrilling long instalment of this grand adventure story in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)



"Well, I've seen a few lonely places in my life," exclaimed Captain Tiddler, sweeping the broken shore with his telescope, "but this beats Robinson Crusoe's island. It doesn't look as if a human foot had ever stepped ashore."

British ship with three masts, and a small funnel, bound northwards.

Mr. Tubbs, prompted by the captain, who was crouching down behind the bulwarks, replied that they had passed just such a ship heading up for Finisterre, and that they had spoken her. She was the Golden Girl, and she was bound for London.

The Portuguese waved his hand in answer, and filled his sails, heading towards the Tagus.

As the disguised Golden Girl passed on, the captain kept his glass fixed on the fishing-boat, which was crowding on all sail.

"That's another of Satan's spies!" he said. "The scoundrel must have a cordon of 'em out watching for us, and I'll bet the Albatross is not far over the horizon. But I think we've sold that gang o' pirates a pup this time!"

Ching Has to Give In.

It was early in the morning three days later that they came in sight of Salvage Islands.

The boys had come up on deck to get their morning bath, as the crew scrubbed down decks, and washed them over with the powerful jets of water from the steam pumps.

Jack had just swelled his chest against the full force of the crystal stream of sea-water, which Pat was

ing Ching shaking his cosh angrily at them on deck. Ching did not like climbing, and he knew that the boys were now as active as monkeys, and more than his match if they caught him in the rigging.

He remembered that last time he had chased them up the shrouds they had tied his pigtail off on a foot-rope, and had spreadeagled him by tying his hands and ankles with yarn to the rigging. Then they had refused to release him till he had promised them six of his famous tarts a-piece as ransom. And as a Chinaman always keeps his word, Ching had been obliged to hand out eighteen tarts instead of eighteen licks from his cosh.

But this time Ching had caught them napping, for they had dumped their clothes on deck. He gathered the garments under his arm, and disappeared into the galley, shaking his fist as much as to let them know that they would not be able to dress until they had taken their licking.

The boys sat up in the cross-trees, wrapped, as far as they could wrap themselves, in their towels.

"It's pretty parky up here!" remarked Pat ruefully as the fresh sea-breeze and the wind made by the speed of the ship chilled his damp skin. "It was most unfortunate that I should have looked round and washed old Ching's face for him like

From the cross-trees to the roof of the galley descended a whip which was used for hoisting one of the derricks. And in the cross-trees some lazy sailor had stowed away a long coil of the line that was used for serving the rigging.

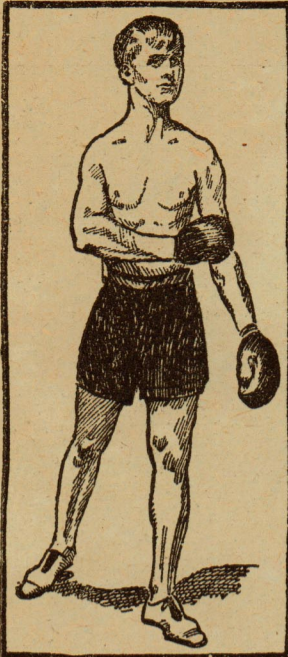
"Wait a bit, chaps," said Pat. "I'll climb down on the roof of the galley, and I'll wait till Ching has to come out. Then I'll bunk in and sneak our clothes, and you can haul 'em up on this line. Then we'll dress up here, and stuff the seats of our trousers with some of this line. Then Ching can cob away as hard as he likes. But I don't feel like taking one of Ching's kisses in the buff."

As agile as a monkey, Pat swung himself out of the cross-trees, holding the end of the thin line in his mouth and lowering himself rapidly down to the roof of the galley, on which he descended as softly as a cat.

He lay on his face on the roof of the galley, enjoying the grateful warmth of the galley fire for a moment or two. Then he squirmed across to the ventilator and peeped down into the galley.

Pat almost chuckled aloud, for he could see old Ching beneath him making a Chinese toilet by a cracked square of looking-glass which was fastened to the bulkhead of the galley.

Ching was getting ready to shave his head—he had mixed the lather



The 1st Chapter.
A Protest.

Tom Belcher, the little boxing wonder, was packing up his belongings. They were few—mighty few. An ordinary kitbag would hold them all. In his pocket nestled a purse, containing sufficient money to take him back to England third-class, with a bit over to keep him going there until such time as he could manage to secure some boxing engagement to help him to carry on.

His needs were few; his responsibilities nil.

He had only himself to think about, and he required little beyond good food, a roof to cover him, and clothes to keep the cold out.

Yes; he was going back to England. Yet, as he walked quietly about the little attic in the old house in Paris which he had shared with Jean Verlet while the latter was preparing for his contest with the Yankee bantam-weight champion Smiler Dillon, he sighed.

He felt a little sorry to leave Paris, that Gay City which hardly ever fails to make a deep impression on the heart of the visitor.

And most of all, he was sorry to have to sever his association with Jean Verlet, one of the best little sportsmen Tom had ever met.

Tom presently strayed as far as the window, thrust it open, and, leaning upon the sill, gazed out over a forest of roofs. And there he remained, lost in a day-dream, wondering perhaps when he would come back, and what would happen to Verlet ere he saw him again.

He did not hear the door open. He was unaware that the lad who occupied his thoughts had entered the room, and, with a roguish smile on his handsome face, was stealing tiptoe towards him.

Suddenly a hand fell heavily on Tom's shoulder, causing him to start, and a well-known voice said, with a laugh:

"Ah, Tom Belcher—a penny for your thoughts, as you Britishers say!"

Tom turned and smiled at his companion.

"They're not worth a penny, Jean," he answered.

Verlet looked around the room.

"Ah, it is good you have got your bag packed!" said he. "It will save time."

A hot flush mounted to Tom's forehead.

"So you'll be glad to get rid of me—eh?" said he reproachfully.

Verlet laughed. It was a free, open, boyish laugh.

"Get rid of you!" he cried. "Ah, but I am not going to get rid of you! I intend to keep you with me for a little while longer. So does Pontieux." (Henri Pontieux was Verlet's manager, and an excellent one, too.) "And as you had made up your mind to start for London to-day, we made plans to nip your journey in the bud, Belshar. Ma foi, but you are not going to your smoky, foggy, dirty London. You are coming to view the beauties of France with us!"

Tom looked hard at Verlet.

"Eh?" said he. "What's that, old man?"

"Old man—old man!" mocked Verlet, his eyes twinkling with merriment. "That is your British term of endearment, is it not? Ah, but I am not so old! Hi, Henri!"

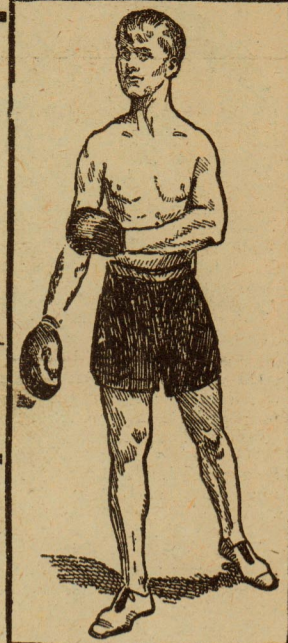
"Coming, my friend!" said a cheery voice outside.

THE BOXING IMPOSTOR!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Thrilling Adventure,
introducing

TOM BELCHER—THE BOY BOXER

BY ARTHUR S. HARDY.



And Henri Pontieux entered the attic.

The French boxing champion's manager was a broad-shouldered, tubby little fellow, with very piercing eyes and a resolute face, whose stern expression relaxed as he came stamping into the room.

Verlet tossed the few remaining things which Tom Belcher had set ready on his bed into the bag, snapped the catch to, and buckled up the straps. Then he heaved bag and contents at Pontieux, who caught it deftly.

"Just you run that down, and put it into the car, Pontieux," said he.

"The car!" exclaimed Tom Belcher, in surprise.

"Yes? We are going for a tour through France. As far as Lyons, friend Tom. We have business to transact there. And we want you with us, to prevent us from quarrelling. Is it not so, Henri?"

"Oui. Certainment!" came in deep, resonant tones from the landing outside.

"And so," said Jean, linking his arm with Tom's, "you will not go back to London to-day, friend Tom."

"But," protested Tom, "I—"

"We will have no refusal! If you are sauci, I will fight you, Tom! Come; you are with friends. We intend to give you a very good time. And you shall help us to unmask an impostor."

"What do you mean?" asked the little Britisher.

"Oh, I am supposed to be boxing in Lyons! A paper was sent to Pontieux. He received it this morning. And it told of the terribly hard fight I'd had with a man named Robson—a British boxer. I beat him by a knock-out in Lyons, and—well, Tom, it was not I. A dirty game is being played by some scoundrel, who ought to know better; and we are going to upset his little apple-cart—Pontieux and I. See?"

"Are we going to motor to Lyons, then?" asked Tom.

"Surely."

"But it is a long way."

"It is. But the roads are good—ah, you shall see for yourself how good the roads are!"

"I tell you, I have got to go back to London. I must!" said Tom. "I have my living to think of."

"You must think of it—after!" laughed Verlet. "I shall look upon it as a personal offence if you refuse to come with us now."

So, arguing and protesting, the pair of them left the house and gained the street. Here Tom saw a fine new touring car drawn up beside the kerb. He saw Pontieux sling his bag into it. There were two other bags already there.

"Come along!" said Pontieux, in French. "It's time we made a start."

"Get you in, Tom Belshar," said Verlet.

And he and Pontieux struggled with the protesting and resisting Tom.

Pontieux cut all argument short by seizing Tom and dumping him down in the body of the car. Verlet made a handspring off the footboard over the side, and the next moment Pontieux, seated behind the steering-wheel, was directing the car through a maze of traffic towards the gates of Paris.

"Voila!" he cried, in an ecstasy of delight.

Tom sank back in the comfortable seat with a deep-drawn sigh.

"You bouncer!" he gasped. Verlet only laughed the louder.

The 2nd Chapter. In Lyons.

"There!" said Verlet excitedly.

"What do you think of that, Tom?"

The dust-covered and travel-stained car had flashed through the streets

of Lyons, and in answer to an inquiry Pontieux had turned this way and that, until at last he had pulled up outside a shabby-looking building, outside which were pasted up some of the most hideously brutal posters of men engaged in fistic combat that Tom Belcher had ever seen.

Two muscular brutes were depicted on one of the posters with gloves upon their hands, engaged in the most grotesque burlesque of a boxing contest the art of man ever conjured up.

The gore was flying in abundance. Both men looked to have reached the very last stage of physical exhaustion.

They were fouling each other most palpably, and gesticulating and shouting outside the ropes were the most brutal lot of seconds one could possibly wish to see.

A streamer ran across the picture. On it were these words, but in French: "To-night. Jean Verlet, champion of France v. Jerry Clarkson, the coloured American maceater. For the championship of the world."

Verlet's boyish face lengthened, and his eyebrows met together in a fierce frown.

"So," said he, "that's what the promoters do—eh? They make money out of me. Well, they shall receive a rude awakening to-night!"

"Aren't you going to protest? Why not go in and say you won't have it? Why not make them alter the name?" said Tom Belcher eagerly.

"It would do no good," answered Verlet. "No; I want to see how far the rascals will carry the joke, and what sort of a boxer the man is who is going to take my name. And after—well, we shall have some fun, I promise you!"

Henri Pontieux sat glaring over the steering-wheel at the offending bills. They were numerous and varied. Verlet's name appeared in huge capitals on each.

"For two pins," he growled, "I would go into the building now, seek out the promoter, and twist his nose off! It's what he deserves."

"You can do better than that," laughed Verlet, with a change to his lighter vein. "I am surely worthy of patronage, Henri. Go in and buy three seats for to-night's show. I should prefer that we enter the building unnoticed and unknown."

"What! Pay to support a swindle?" asked Pontieux.

"Well, yes. We can, as Tom Belshar would say, get our own back afterwards."

Pontieux thought for a moment, then shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Oh, very well!" he said.

He jumped out of the car, entered the hall, surprised a beery-looking and down-at-heel man in the booking-office by asking for ringside seats, paid thirty francs for them, and issued from the building presently with the pasteboard passes in his hand.

"What now?" he asked.

"Lunch," said Verlet. "I am hungry, and Belshar is dying for want of food."

"So am I," said Pontieux, with a laugh.

And so he drove the car on, and presently, after putting the vehicle up in a garage, they made their way to a fashionable restaurant, and dined off a sumptuous and tasty little luncheon such as the French so well know how to serve.

What an enjoyable meal that was, partaken of in a room lined with mirrors and picked out with gold!

They had covered over a hundred miles from breakfast, and did full justice to the meal.

And while they ate they talked about the beautiful places they had passed on the way.

"Ah, and what do you think of beautiful France now, Tom?" asked

Verlet, his bosom swelling with national pride.

"It is grand!" answered Tom. "But, still, our British roads are lovelier!"

"Lovelier? Oh, no!" protested Verlet.

"Oh, but they are!" persisted Tom. "You must come over one of these days, and see them for yourself."

"But the surface—you can't beat that—eh?"

Tom had to admit that we could not. The French roads were so broad and so straight.

They were ideal motor tracks. One could travel at a fast pace without much danger.

But even the loveliest spots they had passed were not to be compared in Tom's mind with the beauty spots on the roads of Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Warwickshire, Devonshire, or Cornwall. But as he saw that Verlet was hurt by the comparison, Tom ceased to argue.

The talk then turned on the surprise visit they were going to pay to the boxing-hall that night.

Verlet had no selected plan. Neither had Pontieux. But they had made this holiday jaunt partly to expose the fraud which was being foisted on the lovers of boxing in Lyons, and they meant to do it.

What course they would take would depend on what happened at the boxing-hall when they got there.

The 3rd Chapter. At the Boxing-hall.

When the three friends entered the Palace of Boxing at Lyons that evening they found it pretty well-filled, and people kept on streaming in, a great many ladies among them.

The proceedings started with a novice competition, the bouts of which bore a very close resemblance to the bouts in similar competitions the world over.

The same raw novices made their bow before an excited and merciless public. They fought in the usual wild fashion, and much of the execution dealt out by one to another was of the customary sanguinary nature.

Most of the contests ended in a knock-out.

Yet there were one or two artful ones, who shaped as if they had been in a ring before. They passed easily into the second round.

After the novices' competition came a ten-rounds' contest between a Britisher and a Frenchman. Tom was near enough to hear the remarks these two passed as they slammed each other round the ring.

And he knew that neither was a Britisher.

They were both French, and the unfortunate who posed as an Englishman, after putting up a tidy fight of it for three rounds, went down and out from a body-blow which Tom was certain had not hurt him, though, to judge by the manner in which he groaned as he writhed upon the floor, he suffered agonies.

The audience sprang to their feet shouting like madmen, gesticulating, cheering, embracing, wild with delight to think that another English boxer had been beaten by a champion of France.

"The promoter is a bit of a showman, whoever he is, Jean," said Tom with a grim smile. "He knows how to please the public."

The counterfeit Englishman retired from the ring looking very crestfallen. He turned indignantly and shook his fist at some sportsmen who hurled jeering criticisms at his head. The mock expression of indignation on his face caused them to rock with laughter, and as he threaded his way through the crowd the audience sang the Marseillaise. Tom sat with a flush of indignation dyeing his cheeks.

Verlet glanced slyly at the little fellow and nudged Pontieux.

"Look!" he cried. "Here is Tom Belshar, overflowing with patriotism. I believe he'd like to get into the ring and show them how a real Englishman can fight."

"That I would, Jean!" said Tom angrily. "They'd have a better idea of what a Britisher can do if I did, I promise you."

"But there is no time, Tom," said Jean, referring to his programme, "for the next item but one is the big fight. Then I am going to make my bow. It will be my turn to become angry then—is it not so?"

The next pair of boxers were already in the ring.

They proved to be a Swiss of fine physique and a stocky Parisian.

The former was a light heavyweight; the latter looked to be a middleweight.

There was no deception here. The two men set to work like demons. Each was bent on beating the other as quickly as possible. Seldom had Tom Belcher seen so much ferocity crammed into such a small space of time as these two managed to cram into the four rounds that the contest lasted.

The Frenchman was at first all over the Swiss, who had to submit to a terrific walloping.

He was quick, he was strong, and he made the pace a cracker.

Again and again he landed, and the big Swiss reeled under the fierce hitting. But every now and then he sent a stinging hook or swing in which shook his opponent up.

Soon both were bleeding freely.

Gradually the Swiss, by superior strength, began to wear his man down. Showing the greatest pluck—for he might well have retired without disgracing himself—he stood up to his man, and after a while found that he could get his left home often owing to the Frenchman's weak defence.

Yet, when three rounds had been fought, he was well behind on points, and in a bad way.

He recovered, however, during the interval, and resumed the struggle with set teeth and dogged resolution.

A few fierce blows were exchanged, and then the Swiss got in a punch on his opponent's jaw which obviously dazed his man.

The fight was over. Following up his advantage, the Swiss gave his man no rest.

Half a dozen punches—the last of which was a smashing upper-cut—and down went the Frenchman, beaten to the world.

Though the contest lacked science, it had been a real rouser, and no fake.

Tom and Jean led the applause, which was loud and long, and then the ring was cleared for the star event.

The promoter entered the ring, and, with many a flourish, told the audience that they were about to witness the finest contest ever seen in a French ring.

He extolled the virtues and ability of Jean Verlet until the real Jean blushed like a school-girl.

He then stated that Jerry Clarkson, the American boxer, was the most wonderful coloured fighting machine that had ever appeared in a ring.

According to the promoter, no fewer than one hundred and nineteen knock-out victories stood to the credit of the man-eater.

All the while he was speaking, the seconds and attendants bustled about the ring making a pretence of doing

THE BOXING IMPOSTOR!

(Continued from the previous page.)

something, whilst, as a matter of fact, they merely crushed some bits of resin and altered the position of the buckets, bottles, and basins that stood upon the ledge outside the ropes.

Suddenly a mighty outburst of cheering echoed through the boxing-hall. It announced the coming of Jean Verlet.

Accompanied by a trio of friends in sweaters and flannels, the impostor entered the ring.

Jean took careful stock of him. And, to his surprise, he saw that the man who was about to box was sufficiently like him to carry out the imposture.

He was not so well put together, perhaps—looked a good half-stone heavier, and was older—that was all.

He was a good actor, and carried himself like a champion.

The cheering was deafening.

"Bravo, Jean! Bravo, Verlet!" roared the duped sportsmen, who had paid double the usual price for admission, under the impression that they were going to see a champion of France perform.

Pontieux rose in his seat, with angry face and flashing eyes.

"I protest—I protest!" he shouted. "That man is—"

His voice was drowned amid the din, and Jean hauled him back into his chair by the coat-tails.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "You will spoil the joke, Henri. Let me see how I box at any rate, my friend!"

Now a louder outburst than before announced the coming of the impostor's opponent.

He proved to be a man as black as ebony, with polished face and beaming smile.

He had the flat nose, the protruding lower jaw of the negro, and his head had been shaven, giving it an egg-like appearance which was enough to frighten any man.

He was a stone heavier than the unknown Frenchman, and his muscles stood out in lumps.

He looked as strong as a horse, and the women shrieked as they looked at him. It seemed to them that the black man must kill the white before they got to the end of the fifteen rounds they were supposed to fight.

The black having made his bow, removed his dressing-gown, and, crossing the ring, shook hands with the false Jean Verlet.

As they stood face to face, the difference between them could be more plainly seen.

It looked any odds on the coloured man.

The promoter now formally introduced them, and the referee then called the men up and addressed a few words to them, after which they retired to their respective corners to prepare for the fight.

The gloves were pulled on to their hands, and the strings were tied about their wrists.

The boxing-gloves were of green leather, and seemed to fit perfectly.

The timekeeper glanced at his watch.

"Seconds out of the ring!" he called.

A moment later only the principals occupied the space within the ropes.

"Jean," said Henri Pontieux, "the joke has gone far enough. I'm going to denounce the swindle. I don't intend this farce to go any further."

But again Jean restrained him.

"Wait," he said. "Let us see the fight!"

"Time!" said the watch-holder.

And the next moment, amidst a scene of indescribable excitement—for the Frenchmen could not keep their tongues quiet—the black man and the white had met in the middle of the ring, and the thud of their gloves could be heard distinctly even in the remotest part of the hall.

Tom Belcher sat there with folded arms, watching the movements of the men in silence. He had come there to criticise, and this he did dispassionately. It was not long before his experienced eyes told him that neither man was really trying to hurt the other.

Those loud, echoing blows had really no sting behind them.

All that fierce work at close quarters was fake. And the antics of the men—their clever feinting and dodging and ducking—was really wonderfully well done.

They were acting, trying to show off, and the audience took it all in, and marvelled at the cleverness of their champion and the ferocity of the black, who, uttering taunt after

taunt, seemed to be trying to get the white boxer to lose his temper.

The applause when the round ended was deafening.

Again Tom remarked that the promoter was a showman, and knew his business.

"That is true, Tom," said young Verlet. "Unfortunately, all this sort of thing is bad for the boxing game. It is a foolish policy to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"It wouldn't do in Paris." In London, the crowd would mob the ring," said Tom. "Here, I suppose they have not had experience enough to tell the difference between a faked contest and the real thing."

"Bah!" growled the disgusted Pontieux. "They are a lot of mugs, that's all."

For five apparently fierce rounds the black man fought the white, and it was only by cleverness (apparently) that the supposed champion of

heart, Jean's double floored his man for the second time.

The black scrambled up at eight seconds, but appeared to be all abroad. He was hit clean off his feet with a right-handed punch.

For the third time he rose, and his acting was superb.

He seemed to be dazed. He turned his back on the white man and groped his way blindly forward.

Then did Jean's double bring the contest to a fitting and dramatic climax. He walked after his beaten opponent, took him in his arms, swung him round, and gently pushed him down.

And as the coloured man lay there staring blankly up at the arc lamps which blazed above his head, the timekeeper proceeded to count him out.

The audience were satisfied. They swarmed round the ring.

They stretched up their hands to shake that of the winner.

The ladies threw bouquets into the ring. The coloured man was picked up and carried to his corner.

And so the big fight ended.

Now Pontieux made his final effort to interfere. Once again he rose to his feet.

"I'm going to denounce the swindle

Clarkson and get him to tell us the whole truth."

"You know Jerry, then, Jean?" asked Tom.

"Oh, yes! I met him once when I was boxing at Boulogne. He is not a bad sort, but he finds it hard to earn a living in the ring. Most boxers are afraid of him, and he's not good enough to meet men of championship class. That's why he has to sell his fights, I suppose. If he didn't, he'd never get a show at all. He's artful. He knows that most white men like to see a black man beaten."

The 4th Chapter. Jerry Clarkson Explains.

The proceedings terminated with a six-rounds contest that night, but very few spectators stayed to see it through. They were satisfied with the big item on the programme, and streamed out of the boxing-hall with Verlet's name upon their lips, little dreaming that the real champion, and not the false one, was rubbing shoulders with them and smiling at what he heard.

Having gained the street, Jean, Pontieux, and Tom Belcher made

answered Jean serenely. "And now, look here. We saw the fight to-night. Tell me what it all means."

The coloured man scratched his shaven head.

"It jest means," he answered, looking glum, "dat they've got a rare swindlin' promoter hyah."

"That's plain," grunted Pontieux. "And you were a party to the swindle, Jerry."

"A man's got to live, and I'm on de rocks," grunted Jerry. "If I hadn't been do yoh think I'd have let that lemon lick me to-night? I was starvin'. Dey offered me de contest on condishun dat I sold de fight. I had to lie down to dat white duffer, and orl dey gave me was forty dollars."

"Well," said Jean, "you shall have forty more if you tell us the whole story, and keep nothing back. Now, who was the boxer who took my name, Jerry?"

The coloured man's face lit up at the mention of the money.

"I'll tell the truf," he cried, "and be glad to! I've allus liked yoh, Mistah Verlet. Yoh allus play de game. Waal, he yuz a man called Jules Ruebon. De promoter's name is Bonnot. He hardly ever stages a real contest. Most of 'em are faked."

"You laid down to Ruebon, of course?" questioned Jean.

"I shud smile!" cried the black man. "Why, if I'd liked, I could have knocked him out with one hand, and dat's a fact!"

So they were in possession of all the evidence they required to convict the promoter Bonnot of misrepresentation and fraud.

"Well, now, look here, Jerry," said Jean Verlet sternly, "although I know you are down on your luck, I can't altogether acquit you of blame in this matter. But I'll forgive you on one condition."

"What's that?" he asked. "I'll do anyfink to please yoh, Mistah Jean. I did it cos I wanted de cash. When a man's right down on his uppers he doan't much care what's going to happen to him. But I want to get out ob this mess. Show me how."

"I will," said Jean. "It's like this. You shall come along with us. You shall attach yourself to my service till we get back to Paris, and then I'll see what I can do for you there. You'll be able to get an engagement at M. Martel's Boxing Palace, I don't doubt. And until then I shall expect you to hold your tongue and say nothing to anybody about this."

"I'll keep mah tongue quiet, yoh can rely on dat," said the nigger, with a broad grin. "I've always liked yoh, Mistah Jean."

"Very well, that's understood, then," said Jean Verlet. "So come along and we'll find you quarters somewhere at the hotel where we are staying."

"And what are yoh gwine to do about Mistah Bonnot and Ruebon?" inquired the coloured boxer eagerly.

"That," said Jean, with a broad smile, "you will see on Wednesday night."

The 5th Chapter. Tom Belcher Has an Idea.

During the few days which intervened between the date of their arrival in Lyons and the second display at the Boxing Hall run by the unscrupulous Bonnot, Henri Pontieux, Jean Verlet, and Tom Belcher discussed the question of getting their own back on the rascal.

How should they proceed?

First of all they looked up the boy Ruebon's record.

It appeared on reference to certain boxing annuals that Ruebon had done his fighting in the south of France, in Marseilles in particular.

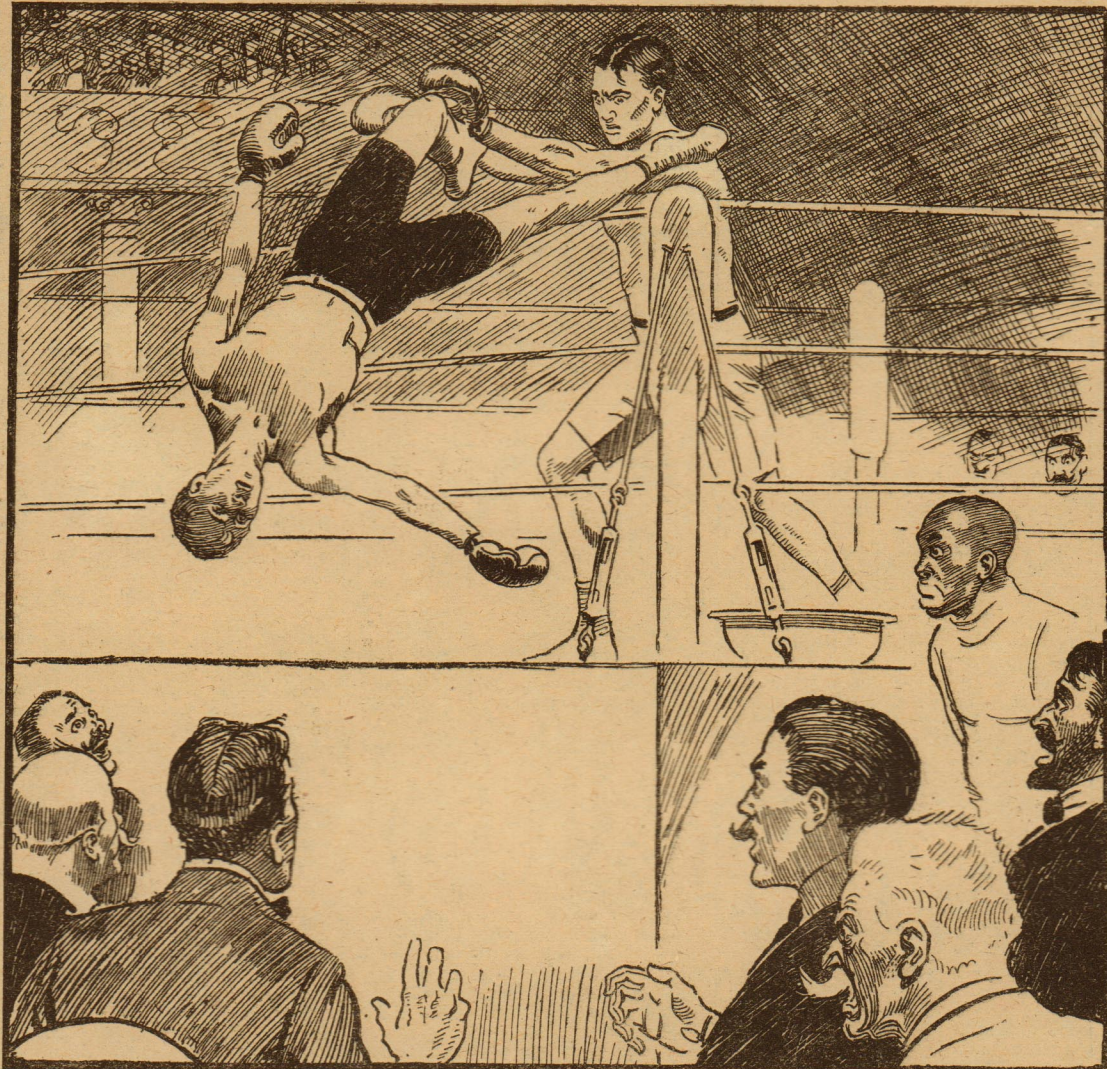
One or two of his contests were against decent class boxers, but most of them showed victories over lads as little known as himself.

Still, he might have improved, and certainly from what they had seen, he shaped like a fairly capable mitt artist.

Should Jean Verlet go to the boxing hall, rise in his wrath, and denounce the fellow? Ought Henri Pontieux to seek an interview with Bonnot, tell him exactly what he thought of him, and command him to make known his deception, or ought they to seek legal assistance and sue for damages? The last seemed to them to be the most orthodox method of proceeding, and the safest.

But as Pontieux pointed out, they would have to suffer from the law's delays, and they had no wish to enter into a litigation which might force them to pass many valuable days in Lyons.

"Besides," said Pontieux, with managerial shrewdness, "the pro-



Realising that he was up against a real champion, and stood no chance, Ruebon rushed at Tom Belcher, and, lifting him in his arms, he swung him bodily over the ropes.

France managed to save himself from being knocked out.

Then, like magic, there came a change.

The man who posed as Jean Verlet suddenly changed his tactics.

He ceased to dance and prance about, and went for the black like a tiger. He hit him when and where he liked. He slammed and banged him round the ring, fought him to the ropes, punished him severely there, until the black seemed utterly unable to defend himself.

And at last down he sent him.

The impostor made as if to strike his fallen adversary, then laughed and walked away.

It was a trick which brought down the house.

The black took a nine-seconds' count, then hauled himself up by the middle ropes, and met the white man's rush doggedly, screening face and body behind his gloves and arms.

And, in clinch after clinch, he seemed by sheer good luck to prevent his opponent (it was all excellent acting) from knocking him out.

Two more rounds were fought, with the black apparently making a fine show. The audience never ceased to cheer. Verlet's name was shouted in a frenzy. They called for the black man's blood.

And at last, with a punch over the

now, Jean," he cried. "And I reckon we were fools to leave it till so late."

"Bah! We must leave it still later," said Jean, "for I see the programme announces another fight for me on Wednesday evening next. That is where we shall come in, friend Pontieux."

"But," protested Pontieux, "think! The fraud has gone far enough. I don't see why—"

"Look here," said Jean calmly. "This fight will be reported through the whole of the south of France as a victor; for me. That won't damage my reputation, will it? Meanwhile, I think we ought to consult a lawyer. I want to find out who all these people are, so that I can bring an action for damages against them. And as for that fellow—with a nod at his double—"I think we will leave little Tom here to deal with him—eh? You'd like to box him, wouldn't you, Tom?"

"I should," answered Tom, with a grim smile. "He wouldn't be able to fake his fight with me as he did the one with Clarkson, the black, to-night."

"Just so," said Jean complacently. "And, besides, we are here on a holiday trip. We shall stay a week at least. There is plenty of time. And so I don't think we'll make any fuss to-night. What we will do is to get hold of Jerry

their way to what may be termed the stage door.

Here Pontieux inquired as to whether Jerry Clarkson had left the hall yet.

The answer was in the affirmative. "Well, just take him my card, will you?" said Pontieux, scribbling a brief message upon the back of it.

"And say that I'd like to have a word with him, will you? Say that it's something to his advantage. He'll find me out here."

He gave the doorkeeper a five-franc tip, and the man hurried off at once to deliver the message.

Six or seven minutes later the coloured boxer, muffled up to the chin, left the hall and came hesitatingly towards them.

When he saw that Pontieux was not alone, he made as if to retire.

Henri Pontieux, however, was too quick for him. As agile as a cat in spite of his heavy body, he sprang after the man, gripped him by the arm, and pulled him along to where Jean Verlet and Tom Belcher stood.

"It's all right, Jerry," said he. "We're not going to eat you."

Jerry, whose face was blank, smiled ruefully as he recognised the real Jean Verlet.

"Mah grashus, the game's up!" he cried. "How do ye do, Mistah Verlet?"

"Oh, I'm all right, Jerry!"

THE BOXING IMPOSTOR!

(Continued from the previous page.)

abilities are that Bonnot is a man of straw, as the law says. He might go smash. We might be obliged to meet heavy law costs, and if the rascal were mulcted in damages, he might very well go bankrupt, and we should have all our trouble for nothing.

"That's right," declared Jean. "And on the whole I think the show up is the best."

"If only we could utterly discredit this fellow Ruebon," said Pontieux, pulling at his chin, a habit he had when perplexed, "and show Bonnot up afterwards, we would knock the bottom out of his promoting in Lyons. Can't we do that?"

Tom Belcher's eyes dilated. "Here," he said, "they don't know me. Supposing I go and challenge Ruebon? Look here, Jerry Clarkson stands well with Bonnot. They don't know me. Supposing we get Jerry to introduce me to the promoter, so that I can make sure of a match with Ruebon? I'm so small that they'd look upon victory as certain. And they'd love to pit an English boxer against this chap who pretends to be you, Jean. Bonnot would probably jump at the chance if he thought I'd be an easy victim. And—well, I don't want to boast, but I think I could beat him easily enough."

Jean Verlet gave vent to a joyous cry. "Beat him, Tom!" he exclaimed. "Why, of course you would! It would be fifty to one on. You're so quick and clever that he'd never be able to lay a glove on you. My word, that's grand! Oh, if only Tom here could knock the fellow out, Pontieux, then I could enter the ring afterwards and denounce the impostor and the promoter, and we'd gain such a revenge as would more than compensate us for the trouble they've put us to in coming here, Henri friend."

Pontieux's grim face relaxed into a beaming smile. "Well, now, that's great!" he cried. "We'll send for Jerry and see if he'll do what we want." The black was accordingly appealed to. When they divulged their plan to him, the black fellow grinned mightily. But he shook his head when he looked Tom up and down and saw how very small he was. "He's not strong enough or big enough," he declared. "Ruebon's a flyer when he's got nothin' to beat, and he'd eat him!"

Jean Verlet's eyes twinkled right merrily. "Jerry," he cried, "he'd find Tom Belshar a very indigestible morsel if he did. I've fought him, and been beaten by him, and I've had many a tussle with him in the gym. And I give you my word that he's a better man than me."

Jerry's eyes bulged. He showed his gleaming teeth in a broad and sceptical grin. "Yoah pullin' mah leg!" said he. "I'm not—I give you my word of honour," said Jean seriously. "Here's Henri Pontieux, who can vouch for the correctness of my assertion."

"Well, I won't say that he could beat you all the time, Jean," said the manager. "But he certainly did beat you in public once, and he's shown remarkably fine form in practice bouts against you."

"Then, golly," said the ebony-faced pugilist, "if the atom's of dat class, he'll lick Ruebon foah shoah."

"I'm positive he will," said Jean. "Tom, will you fight the impostor?"

"Yes," answered Tom Belcher readily enough.

"Then the next question is," said Jean, "will you consent to introduce him to the promoter Bonnot and try to get him the match?"

Jerry thrust out his lower jaw and winked knowingly.

"I will," said he.

The 6th Chapter. The Challenge Accepted.

That same afternoon as Bonnot the promoter was sitting in his office correcting the proof sheets for the boxing show on the Wednesday, who should turn up but Jerry Clarkson.

And Jerry had little Tom Belcher in tow, Tom looking as insignificant and harmless as possible.

"Come in, Jerry," said Bonnot. "What do you want? I've got a full bill for Wednesday. Who's your friend?"

"He's an English boxer from London and Paris. His name's Belcher, and he wants to fight Jean Verlet," answered Harry. "That's a fact, isn't it, Tom?"

"Yes," said Tom, pulling out some of his best French, which was bad enough. "I challenge Verlet to fight. I'd give anything to fight him. I know I can beat him. I heard the challenge he threw out the other night saying he'd fight anyone in the world at the fly-weight or bantam-weight limit. I don't believe he's any good. And I want a job."

Jerry winked over Tom's shoulder at the promoter while Tom was speaking, and made signs to intimate that the little chap was no good.

Now, as it happened, Bonnot had arranged for a Parisian boxer named Lescaut to meet the impostor Ruebon on Wednesday, and he hadn't had the nerve to tell Lescaut yet that he wasn't going to box the real Verlet.

At the meeting when the bout was arranged, Lescaut had seemed somewhat sceptical about the whole thing, and Bonnot dreaded exposure.

These facts were in Jerry Clarkson's possession, and the black who longed to get his own back on a man who had never given him a straight deal, now went up to him and said:

"Say, boss, just yoh close with dis fellah. Tom Belshar is no good. Ruebon will beat him one hand, and the crowd will love to see another Britisher whacked. Give dat Lescaut guy a miss in baulk."

"Oh, but" protested the promoter, "this chap is so small! It would be ridiculous!"

"Bill him as fly weight champion of England. He'll fight foah forty francs. It's a cinch?"

Bonnot's eyes glinted. Well, why

not? It would be a safe game. A wire would put Lescaut off.

"Here, do you think you could last six rounds against Verlet?" he asked, with a contemptuous glance at Tom.

"Yes." "Oh, all right! I'll arrange for Verlet to let you off so that you can make a pretence of a fight of it," said Bonnot, waving aside any consideration of little Tom as a boxer. "And I'll pay you forty francs for the fight."

"All right," said Tom. "Though it's not much money, M. Bonnot."

He pouted his lips and looked dejected and downcast at the price offered him. Bonnot, all the more pleased because he thought he was going to rob a British mug, settled the contest then and there, wrote out a wire to Lescaut, which he despatched by one of his attendants, and at once inserted the name of Tom Belcher, champion of England, and one of the most renowned fly-weights in the world, in place of Lescaut's on the bills and programme.

And then Jerry led the supposed lamb away, whilst Bonnot chuckled and rubbed his hands in glee at what he considered an excellent stroke of business.

The 7th Chapter. The Cheat Exposed.

On the Wednesday night there was a bigger audience than usual at the boxing-hall.

The real Jean Verlet and his manager, Pontieux, entered the hall unnoticed and took their seats near the ring.

Tom Belcher arrived unattended, and changed his clothes in the dressing-room without saying a word to anybody.

At ten o'clock the impostor Ruebon entered the ring. He was received by one tremendous outburst of applause.

A minute later Tom Belcher followed him, and a shout of amazement rang out when it was seen that the supposed champion of England was the smallest boxer they had ever seen in the ring.

Ruebon shook hands with Tom and indulged in a few pitying remarks.

Tom smiled feebly, then went to his corner and donned the gloves, which had to be tied very securely, as they were a bit too big for him.

Amidst a roar of comment, the word was given, and Tom advanced to meet his man.

There was some laughter as Tom shaped up for the fight; but the laughter was changed to shouts of consternation as Tom, putting every ounce into his work, hit the supposed champion of France all round the ring.

Tom let himself go with a vengeance, and the dumbfounded Ruebon was hit all over the face and body, the blows landing with such speed and force as to send him reeling all abroad to the ropes.

He was bleeding, and perilously near to being knocked out, when the gong saved him.

Then what a shout rang out! Tom went back to his corner, with a grim smile of satisfaction on his face, whilst Ruebon collapsed in his chair and began to make futile appeals to his seconds to excuse his rotten display.

As soon as the word was given Tom rushed in once more to fight.

He gave the impostor no peace, and showed him no mercy. As a specimen of glove slinging his display was little short of marvellous.

Ruebon staggered before it, and was hit down to his knees.

He rose, full of impotent anger, and rushed in to make a fight of it, only to be hit down again.

And then, knowing that he was up against a real champion and stood no chance, he sprang up, rushed at Tom, lifted him up in his arms, and swung him bodily over the ropes.

Poor Tom crashed down to the floor of the hall and lay there, with all the fight knocked out of him, whilst angry cries rang out from every part of the building.

In a moment the ring was invaded. Ruebon, furious with rage, shook the men off who ventured to expostulate with him.

The referee, acting under rapidly issued instructions from the rascally Bonnot, gave the verdict to Ruebon, seeing that Tom was unable to rise and resume the fight. And for several minutes on end pandemonium reigned.

When it subsided the real Jean Verlet, leaning on the ropes, explained the situation to the startled audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried, "you have been imposed upon and swindled. This man"—pointing at Ruebon—"is not Jean Verlet, bantam-weight champion of France. I"—beating his chest—"am the real Jean Verlet. This man"—striking Pontieux on the shoulder—"is my manager, Henri Pontieux. Jerry Clarkson, the coloured boxer, will tell you that what I am saying is the truth. Bonnot, the promoter, has played a trick on you. The boxer who posed as Jean Verlet is the Marseillaise, Ruebon."

Ruebon started forward. "It's a lie!" he shouted.

Bonnot rushed forward, calling upon his attendants to help him. "Sling those men out of the ring!" he cried. "Turn them out of the hall!"

Several of them moved forward to obey. Jean waved them back, his face flaming with excitement.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop! I demand fair play—I, Jean Verlet!"

They hesitated, stopped.

"One word more and I am done," said Verlet, his voice ringing like a trumpet. "Tom Belshar, who you saw box like a little champion just now, is a friend of mine, and he fought Ruebon to-night to show you what class boxer he is. Ladies and gentlemen, if you admire fair play, you will never patronise M. Bonnot's boxing-hall again!"

Then Jean turned to Ruebon. The boxer from Marseilles had pulled off his gloves; his hands were bare.

"And you," he cried—"you, who ought to have played the game—for boxing is your profession, and you ought to have valued and honoured fair play—what have you got to say?"

"Simply," replied the enraged impostor, "that you are a liar! I tell you I am Jean Verlet!"

But there were men present in that boxing-hall that night who had seen the real Jean in the ring before, and now that he stood face to face with his double they were able to appreciate the difference between the real champion and the sham.

"Bravo, Jean Verlet!" they roared. "Down with Ruebon! Down with Bonnot!"

The cries drove the impostor to desperation. Short though Ruebon's mill with Tom Belcher had been, he had suffered. His sore lips and nose, his aching body, egged him on to an act which he ever afterwards regretted. He rushed at Jean.

But young Verlet expected the attack. He planted his feet firmly on the resined canvas and met his enemy with a straight left. Then they worked their way to the middle of the ring, where there was a brief and desperate melee.

The audience came swarming round. They saw the boxers' arms flying in and out, and heard the echoing thud of the blows they gave each other. And then, wallop! Jean sent a right cross-counter home on the jaw, which floored Ruebon like a shot.

He landed heavily on the floor of the ring, his head went down with a bump, and there he lay, white faced and bleeding, knocked clean out of time.

"Clear the hall! Clear the hall!" screamed the angry Bonnot.

And the audience obeyed the command literally. They smashed the windows, they pulled down the electroliers, they broke up the chairs, and pulled down the ropes and stakes of the ring.

And when all was over they emerged into the street, singing and shouting and cheering.

Jean Verlet, Henri Pontieux, Jerry Clarkson, and Tom Belcher, happily recovered from his tumble, made for the dressing-rooms, where Tom hastily donned his clothes, and followed the mob.

"Ah-ha!" sighed Jean, with flashing eyes, his lips parted in a grim smile, his handsome face glowing with satisfaction. "It is finished! Exit M. Bonnot! He will promote no more swindling contests in Lyons!"

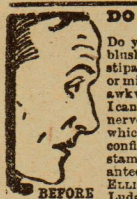
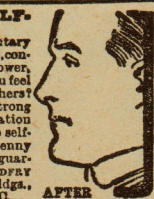
And he didn't!

THE END. (Another magnificent long complete tale of Tom Belcher in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND, entitled "Outclassed!" Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

DO YOU KNOW THAT—

- Crabs have two noses?
- The violet is the national flower of Greece?
- Camels can travel fifty miles a day for five days without a drink?
- In no case may a Court sentence a criminal to more than two years' hard labour?
- Bees have two stomachs?
- Bullets of stone were used in the sixteenth century?
- The Kaiser's eyes are steely-grey in colour?
- "Linseed Lancers" is the nickname of the Royal Army Medical Corps?
- Napoleon's handwriting was so bad that often he could not decipher it himself?
- "Khaki" is a Hindustani word, derived from the Persian word "khak," meaning earth or dust?
- It is estimated that there are 7,000,000 cats in the United Kingdom?
- The first British submarine ever sent on Foreign service left Davenport for China on February 10th, 1911?
- Vultures are said to fly at times at the rate of over 100 miles an hour?
- Iron rings were used as money by the ancient Britons?
- Chinamen take the oath in court by kneeling down and breaking a saucer?
- The era of submarine warfare began in February 1864, when the U.S. sloop Housatonic was sunk by an under-water craft by means of a torpedo at the end of a spar projecting from it?
- Fifty years ago Florence was the capital of Italy?
- The Pope may not go outside the precincts of the Vatican?
- England and Sweden are said to be the two healthiest countries in Europe?
- Hail is rain which in its descent has passed through a cold layer of air and has become frozen?
- Cold winters usually follow wet summers, owing to the reduced temperature of the earth?
- The tip of the tongue is the most sensitive part of the human body?
- A full-rigged ship has thirty-three sails, fourteen of which are jibs and foresails?
- Twenty thousand French priests are under arms?
- Gruyere cheese is made from goat's milk?
- Norway's whaling industry began in 1868?
- Italians, who are naturally superstitious, wear as a mascot a piece of pink coral, this being supposed to ward off the evil eye?
- A century ago there were in all Europe only twenty-two cities with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants?
- Sour milk will freshen salt fish quickly?
- There are no sheep in Japan?
- Arabic figures were not invented by the Arabs, but by Indians?
- Black diamonds, found in Borneo, are the hardest substance known to man?
- In Japan girl babies have their heads shaved until they are three months old?

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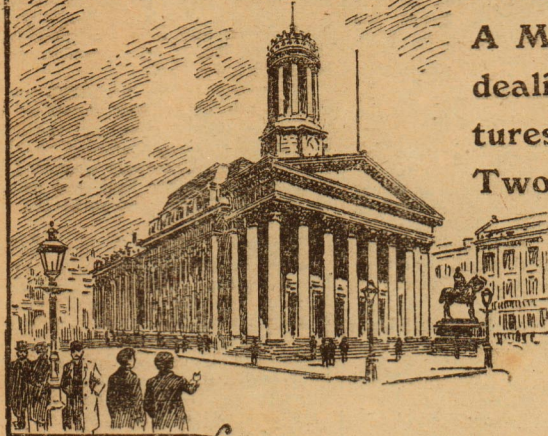
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A TALE OF TWELVE CITIES

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Garnett Bell and His Two Assistants in a Glasgow Mystery.

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Barney Martin Disappears in Most Extraordinary Circumstances.

What the Safe Had in Store for the Detective.

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The 1st Chapter.

Bell and Kit Face an Extraordinary Situation.

It wasn't often that the famous detective sent off either of his assistants on a false or a blind trail; yet this is precisely what happened to Kit Hampton on the occasion of his first visit to Sheffield.

Kit had arrived in Steelopolis by nine o'clock on a Monday night, for the express purpose of shadowing a certain gang of men in whose doings Garnett Bell—to say nothing of the local police—was more than a trifle interested. But, to the boy's surprise, just as he was dressing early on the Wednesday morning the page brought to his bed-room a note which ran as follows:

"Dear Kit,—You needn't trouble to proceed further with your work. Acting in conjunction with the authorities, I raided the watched premises soon after midnight, and made a complete capture. If you haven't already had your meal, come round to breakfast with me at the Royal Hotel.

"Yours fraternally,
"GARNETT BELL."

Kit folded the letter, and put it in his pocket.

Then, settling his bill, he hurried round to the Royal.

Bell was beaming over a big dish of grilled kidneys and bacon when the boy showed his shining face in the doorway.

"Mornin', Kit! Just in time to go shares with me," said Bell genially. "You can pour out your own coffee. I've been up all night, so you must excuse my going ahead. Sorry I had nothing for you to do in Sheffield. That's right. Make yourself comfortable."

Kit was too busy for several minutes with the tasty fare to wonder what had brought the Sheffield case so quickly to an end. When at last he spoke, his thoughts were of something quite different.

"Where's Barney?" he asked, glancing round for some sign of his chum.

Bell looked up from his early-morning paper.

"Of course, you didn't know. I sent Irish away—on a case."

"Oh!" Kit poised a finger of buttered toast half-way to his mouth.

"Where?"

"To Glasgow. Something very strange happened. Wait till I've read about this amazing bridge disaster, and I'll tell you all about it."

The boy craned his neck towards the printed sheet.

"What's happened to a bridge, anyway?" he inquired gravely.

Bell propped the folded sheet against the steaming coffee-pot.

"Something very sinister and puzzling. The Garvie Bridge, which carries the North and Central Railway Company's main line from the Midlands into Scotland, has collapsed. General opinion is that it is due to faulty construction, and that the structure gave way in last night's storm. My own theory is that one of the main piers was undermined for the purpose of wrecking the night north-bound mail. However, until the bridge can be temporarily rebuilt travellers to Scotland—I mean the West of Scotland—will have to go round by the East Coast route. But enough of that. You want to know about Barney?"

number of impudent and very annoying robberies. Of late these robberies have grown so serious that he has thought it worth while to go to the big expense of calling me in."

Kit swallowed a bit of crust.

"I should have thought a self-made man like that would have gone to the police and saved the bawbees," he said, with a grin.

Bell smiled through a haze of tobacco-smoke.

"Not Matthew Dorrington. He's a sentimentalist—at least, so far as his secretary is concerned. This young man's name is Adams—Arthur Adams. The merchant informs me that he took him into his

it's impossible for me to say whether he's innocent or guilty. However, after a talk with old man Dorrington over the long-distance wire, we decided it would be best to have a watch set on the secretary, and Barney has been entrusted with the job. I ought to get a report from him by this morning's post, as no letter came last night."

Kit pushed back his chair, as the bell whirred in the vestibule downstairs.

"There's the first delivery, anyway. If you like, I'll nip down and see the letters sorted."

The lad's willingness brought an assenting smile to the detective's face. He ran down the shallow stairs three at a time, only to return a few minutes later, shaking his head.

"No letters for you at all—"
"Yes, this is the Royal, and I'm Garnett Bell. What d'you want?"

"St. Kelvin's Mount, Glasgow, speaking. I'm Mr. Dorrington," came the faint reply. "Are you listening, Mr. Bell? That's better! Can you hear me now? Well, I've rather bad news for you. That lad you sent to me to do—you know what—his disappeared."

The detective leapt to his feet, and a cup of coffee crashed to the floor.

"Disappeared! Good gracious, you can't be serious, Mr. Dorrington!"

"I am. He went to bed, or rather, to his room, at nine o'clock last night. When the maid took up his water and knocked on his bedroom door at seven this morning, she received no reply. As he didn't

ton's in George Street, or at Heath's in Duke's Street. Engage the fastest and most powerful car they've got. By the time the petrol's in, I shall be round."

Kit was off like a lightning-flash. He scented more than adventure—danger for the chum who was more to him than a brother. It seemed a safe enough task to which Garnett Bell had set him—that of keeping secret watch over a man suspected of theft, but the news of his disappearance threw the shadow of grave and dreadful possibilities over the affair.

If any real harm should happen to Barney Martin! Kit shivered in the keen wind which blew down the Sheffield Street and raced towards the garage. There a shock of surprise awaited him.

"We've nothing faster or more powerful than a ten-twelve De Dion, except a hundred and twenty horsepower racing-car," said the man, after Kit had made his request.

Kit laughed.

"I guess that'll just about suit the bill," he replied.

The man shook his head.

"No one but an expert racing-driver could handle it. Besides, he would have to carry a mechanic to pump oil. This is a hundred-mile-in-eighty-minutes-machine, and I'm sure it wouldn't be of the slightest use to your friend."

Kit stood his ground.

"Never mind. Let's have a look at the thing," he said, quite unconcerned.

The other led the way through spacious show-rooms, and brought up before a long, low, wicked-looking monster of battleship grey, with pointed nose and rounded stern, and immense gleaming pipes running outside the engine through a wind-shield near the driver.

"She'll do anything up to ninety, and gobble up petrol at the rate of six miles to the gallon. Got an exhaust on her louder than a machine-gun, and'll wear out two sets of tyres between here and London. No good at all for your purpose," said the man.

The boy eyed the monster lovingly and longingly. In fancy he already saw himself clinging to the grey sides almost by his eyebrows, and pumping oil for all he was worth into the engine and crank-case, while the famous detective opened her out to ninety miles an hour.

"Fill her up with oil and petrol—she'll do. My chief will be along in a minute to fix up," he said.

The man looked him over critically.

"I'll have to charge you twenty pounds a day, with a hundred and fifty deposit."

"Never mind. Get her out, I tell you—she'll do," asserted Kit, who, however, nearly jumped off his feet as the man swung her over and the charges in the cylinder exploded with rapid, deafening reports.

Only partially convinced, the garage-owner drove the long, thin body with the stick-up angular wings into the main street.

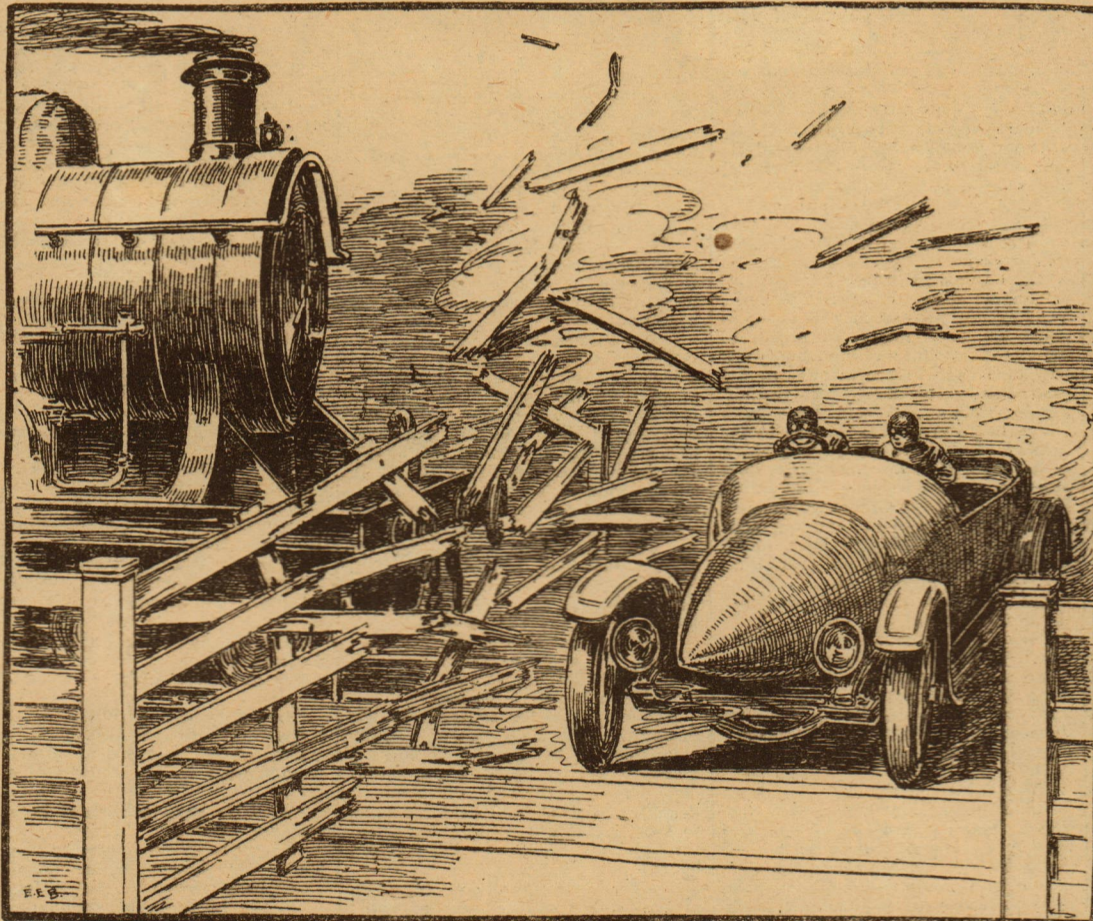
"You won't believe me, but no one except a racing-driver will be able to get her along," he warned. "Besides, you'll want leather suits and goggles and round leather skull-caps, or the wind'll tear everything off."

The boy slipped out of the pocket-like seat reserved for the mechanic, just as Bell came hurrying up. Kit rapidly explained.

"Just the very thing," the detective agreed, eyeing the powerful car admiringly. "As I once drove Navarro's three thousand horsepower Fiat from Milan to Turin, I guess I can manage this. Get along for those driving-suits!" And with that he dismissed the boy and engaged in a few moments' conversation with the car-owner.

The clock of the cathedral church was striking nine when the detective, with Kit at the fuel-pump, turned out of Sheffield and took the road through Wakefield to Leeds. Bell found, by keeping the car in first speed, it was possible to hold her down to a moderate thirty miles an hour. But once clear of the big manufacturing towns with the spacious loneliness of the Yorkshire moors and the bold heads of Pen-y-gant and Wharfedale looming mistily in the far distance, he opened up the pulsing giant to seventy, eighty, ninety miles, until the blood sang in the ears of both of them, and all the world seemed to revolve in chaotic confusion.

Still, Bell was a wonderful driver, a man possessed of enormous strength and matchless nerve, and with Kit pumping oil for all he was worth, and a mingled stream of blue smoke vapour and dust trailing away behind them, they flashed on in the direction of Appleby and Carlisle.



The motor-car containing the detective and his assistant had just reached the metals, when, with a thunderous roar and a shriek from the steam-whistle, a goods train, drawn by a powerful engine, scattered the closed gate like matchwood and bore straight down upon them.

"Of course. I haven't seen him for four days. What's he doing in Glasgow?"

Bell fumbled for his tobacco-pouch. "Good work, I hope. Last Sunday I had a very extraordinary letter from an extremely wealthy Glasgow merchant—I suppose one might safely call him a millionaire—name of Dorrington. Well, Matthew Dorrington's rise to fame and riches forms a veritable life romance. From a poor lad, picking up coppers on the Broomielaw, he has risen to be one of Glasgow's most prominent citizens, with an immense business in Sauchiehall Street, close to Simpson's the music-sellers, a fine house in Pollokshields, a charming wife, and a young fellow who acts as secretary to him, and whom Matthew Dorrington really loves as though he were his own son."

"Where does Barney come in?"

"Wait a minute. You must know something of Mr. Dorrington before you can realise the position in which he finds himself. Briefly, it is this. For some time past he confesses to having been made the victim of a

employ some three years ago—perhaps nearer four—on the recommendation of a friend. Adams has proved so trustworthy, so hard-working and loyal, that, not content with making him his secretary at a good screw, the old man, quite unknown to Adams, had constituted him, on his wife's death, his sole heir."

"Phew! Some chaps don't half touch lucky!" laughed the boy.

Bell leaned towards him, and looked grave.

"And yet, either through his own folly, or through some rascality which remains to be fathomed, he stands precious near to losing from three-quarters to a million of money. Let me explain why. Although Matthew Dorrington hates to think young Adams guilty of these thefts, they are of such a nature that it is barely conceivable anyone else can have committed them."

"Golly! He must be a juggins! How much has he taken?"

Bell referred to a slip of paper.

"Quite a good deal, when you become familiar with the total. Of course, I know nothing of Adams, so

come down to breakfast at his usual time, I went upstairs, and discovered his bed hadn't been slept in. No word has come from him; I think you should be here as quickly as possible to investigate."

Garnett Bell's strong face was a trifle pale as he banged the receiver down, and faced his assistant.

"Barney's vanished, Kit—disappeared from Mr. Dorrington's house. As far as I can see, he has no cause to leave the place, except for an hour or two in the daytime. I wondered why I hadn't heard from him. Get ready at once. We must catch the ten o'clock express."

Kit turned in the doorway.

"No go," he said, pointing to the news-sheet. "Neither the 10.20 nor any other train will reach Glasgow to-day. You're forgetting—the Garvie Bridge has been destroyed."

Bell said something under his breath.

"Good gracious, Kit! I had overlooked that. You're quite right. It would take all to-day and far into the night to go round by the East Coast route. Meet me at Mann & Eger-

A TALE OF TWELVE CITIES!

By MAURICE EVERARD.

(Continued from the previous page.)

Now and then Kit paused in his labours to glance at the detective's face. What little could be seen of it was grim and set, and a trifle pale. Kit shivered, though he felt nothing of the cutting wind. There was something about Bell that told of fear—deep-seated fear for Barney Martin's safety.

"He suspects more than he has told me," the boy decided. "Perhaps a band of desperate criminals has been at work, and Barney has fallen foul of them. Gee-whiz! We'll be over in a minute"—as the motor, crashing down into a deep rut, leapt full clear of the ground, and coming down with sickening force shot right across the road. The next instant, however, Bell had swung the steering-wheel round, and she boomed on her way just as fast and evenly as before.

By noon they crossed the border. On either side the vast range of the Cheviots stretched till the rounded shoulders and craggy heads became lost in low-lying clouds.

"Here is a wonderland of mystery and romance. One day I'll tell you all about it!" shouted Bell. "We're getting into Langholm. Then straight on to Moffat for Glasgow!"

Kit was all eyes as they swung at a reckless pace through the wide main street of the pleasant little Border town. Every woman, man, and child in the place stopped and stared at the racing-car thundered by. Kit pumped harder than ever, feeling something of a hero. Only Bell was earnest and grim.

Thirty miles out of Langholm, they ran into a curtain of mist—a low, heavy vapour sheet which clung to the ground and made it difficult to see the road more than forty or fifty yards ahead. Still, the detective did not slacken. Nowhere in the world are there more deserted roads than can be found traversing the drear land of the Border, and with this in mind the car throbbed on its way at more than a mile a minute.

For half an hour Bell had not spoken. His eyes were watching the speedometer. Kit continued to pump as vigorously as before, till, looking up suddenly, he saw the white side posts of a level-crossing looming out of the mist ahead. Bell had seen them, too, and with a shrill hoot from the Klaxon horn he sped on. Twenty, ten yards—covered in a moment of time. Now they were on the metals, when, with a thunderous roar and a shriek from the steam-whistle, a goods train, drawn by a powerful engine, scattered the closed gate like matchwood and bore straight down on them.

The 2nd Chapter. Glasgow Provides the Detective With a Puzzling Case.

Ever afterwards Garnett Bell described the happening on the moor-side level-crossing as his narrowest escape from death. He was conscious, as the engine loomed over him, only that a fifth of a second separated Kit and himself from certain destruction, but his amazing nerve and steadiness of hand did not desert him.

Swinging the wheel well round to the right, he missed the buffers by a fraction of a foot, mounted the bank for a distance of thirty yards, bounced a ton and a half of throbbing metal full into the middle of the road, and then drew up eighty yards further on, with no worse damage than a ripped-off cover and a crumpled wing.

Kit hopped out, white as death. Behind them, half enshrouded in the mist, all was shouting and confusion for both gates traversing the railroad had been carried away, and a frightened crossing-keeper was running frantically towards the driver of the pulled-up train.

Bell said something uncomplimentary under his breath, and slipped on a spare wheel.

"Silly fool of a fellow. He ought to have shut the gates. Probably went to sleep and forgot the train was due. However, we've escaped with our lives, and we'll leave them to settle their own troubles."

Kit breathed more freely by the time he was back in his seat, and the journey was continued with slightly less haste. By two they rolled into

the maze of Glasgow's streets. Taking the route past the Eglinton Street Station of the Caledonian Railway they reached Eglinton Toll, whence they followed the direction of the Pollockshields tramlines, and drew up, all pulsing with heat and steam, into the drive leading to Matthew Dorrington's front door.

The house was big and palatial, as was suited to one of Glasgow's richest citizens, and Kit felt sorry that his chum's stay in such delightful surroundings had been brought to a premature and perhaps tragic close. However, he tried to still his rising fears, and to show a smiling face as the butler showed them into the library where the master of the house awaited them.

Mr. Dorrington certainly looked gravely perturbed as he gripped the detective's hand.

"This affair distresses me horribly," he said, after ringing for light refreshments, which both the travellers were glad of after their exciting and long journey. "The lad has vanished just as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up. We can't discover a trace of him anywhere."

"Have you questioned your secretary?" Bell asked.

"Adams absolutely denies having seen the boy since nine o'clock on Monday night—no, not Monday night! What am I talking about? Last night, I should say."

Bell swallowed his glassful of wine and moved towards the door.

"For the moment, Mr. Dorrington, I propose to leave the case of the thefts which have taken place severely alone. Nor do I wish to question Mr. Adams just yet. The safety of my assistant must be my first consideration. It is quite possible, in view of the exceptional circumstances surrounding his disappearance, that he may have fallen into the hands of a gang of very dangerous criminals."

Dorrington started.

"You think so?" he asked.

"I must admit the probability. In some mysterious fashion this house of yours has been made the object of the attentions of a number of very unscrupulous and clever men. In the past month hundreds of pounds' worth of plate and coin have been taken, and you possess no clue to the thieves. I send my boy Barney along to keep his eyes open. Three days after he arrives he is spirited away. I must connect his disappearance with the scoundrels who are stealing your property. Now, if you don't mind, I should like you to go over what happened last night."

Mr. Dorrington led the way into the dining-room.

"We had our meal here at half-past seven—that is, my wife, myself, Mr. Adams, and Barney. At eight we rose, when Barney and my secretary went to the billiard-room to amuse themselves. From that time onwards I have only Mr. Adams' word to go upon."

"What does he say?"

"That at a quarter to nine they ceased making practice shots, and Martin announced his intention of going to bed. He and Adams then parted, and one of the maids says she met the lad on the stairs making for his bed-room door."

Bell nodded, and followed up the

carpeted shallow steps. Mr. Dorrington opened the door to a lofty beamed apartment, beautifully furnished as a bed-room. Small rugs were strewn about the polished floor, and on the cushion of a recessed window-seat lay a copy of a weekly periodical.

Kit drew the attention of the detective to it.

"Barney's favourite. It comes out on Wednesday evenings. He must have bought it before he came in to dinner."

Mr. Dorrington nodded.

"I believe he did, because he went out after tea in the direction of the city. The room hasn't been touched; it is just as he entered and left it."

Bell crossed to the window-seat, and picked up the paper—a long, complete journal.

"Can you say if anyone in the house saw him reading this?" he asked, turning to the merchant.

The other shook his head.

"I should say he didn't commence reading it until after he came to his room, because from tea-time to dinner-time he played tennis with my wife in the covered court. From dinner onwards till nine o'clock I've accounted for every minute of his time."

Bell was thinking rapidly. Suddenly he turned to Kit.

"From the way in which the first seventeen pages are thumb-marked I should say he had read up to there, when something caused him to stop. Now, Kit, how long should you say it would take him to get through those seventeen pages?"

The boy glanced at the small type.

"With a good light, about an hour and a half. With a poor light perhaps two, or two and a quarter," he replied.

"Good!" said Bell. "Mr. Dorrington, can you tell me what light Barney had in his bed-room?"

"Only a candle," was the reply. "There it is."

Bell picked up the stick and started in surprise.

"I see. This is a new candle, and has been burnt only for a few minutes—certainly not more than two or three. He must have lit it in the hall, and have blown it out as soon as he entered the room. Were the curtains drawn and the blind down when you came in early this morning?"

"No," replied Mr. Dorrington. "I particularly noticed. The windows were opened, the curtains looped back, and the bed, as you see, had not been slept in."

Bell sat down in the nearest chair.

"We have established several things. Barney had a reason for putting out the light. That reason was to keep a watch from his window on the grounds. You will remember last night was brilliantly moonlight. By the light of the moon he sat in that window-seat from nine to somewhere about eleven, alternately reading and watching. At about eleven he suddenly stopped reading, for some reason best known to himself. We must discover what happened then. What were you doing, Mr. Dorrington, at eleven o'clock?"

The merchant looked surprised.

"My wife and I retired at ten. It is a rule of the house that everyone must be in bed by ten-thirty."

A silence fell for several minutes, during which Bell passed rapidly from point to point, holding a magnifying-glass in his hand. Suddenly he straightened up from a kneeling position, and held the glass so that the bright sunlight streamed through it to a point on the polished boards.

"Don't move, either of you, please," he said, in a subdued whisper. "I've picked up a clue which may prove very important."

Ah, here is the second link in the chain!"—rising and stepping carefully in the direction of the door, through which he vanished a moment later.

For quite a long time Kit and Matthew Dorrington waited in perplexed silence, till they heard the detective's voice calling them from the hall far below.

"Come down the stairs, keeping as far to the left as possible—that is, close to the wall," he advised. "Then follow me!"

Dorrington, with Kit close on his heels, obeyed wonderingly. A young, well-dressed, and good-looking young man was just crossing the vestibule as the two followed the detective through a small curtained doorway down a flight of dark steps. But now an electric hand-torch flashed in Garnett Bell's hand.

The detective brought up suddenly before what at first glance looked like a solid wall of masonry.

"What's behind here?" he rapped out, with startling directness.

Dorrington coughed behind his hand.

"The vault, in which all my personal valuables, and sometimes a good deal of money, is kept."

Bell nodded.

"Then if you've no objection, Mr. Dorrington, I'll get you to open it."

The merchant turned to the young man behind him.

"This is Mr. Adams, my secretary, Mr. Bell. Arthur, run upstairs and fetch the key from my desk. Mr. Bell desires to enter the vault."

The young man straightened up, and Bell, watching him narrowly, thought that he flushed slightly at his master's commands. However, he turned and ran up the steps two at a time.

In three minutes the secretary was back again.

"Open the vault, Arthur," he said shortly; and at the command Adams fitted a long key into a small hole in a slab of stone, and a part of the masonry swung inwards, revealing an immense, vaulted chamber, with stone walls and a stone groined roof.

Bell stepped in and switched on the light. The smell of new paint was the first thing to attract his attention.

"I see the vault has recently been done up," he observed.

The merchant nodded.

"I thought it best to have the stonework repointed and the safe looked at. You will observe the door has just been repainted."

Bell rose from his knees, where he had been busy examining the stone flooring under his glass.

"When was this done?" he asked suddenly.

"The repainting? Oh, it was finished last Monday week!"

The detective stood before the huge green-and-gold door, and looked at it attentively.

"I see. And how many times has the safe been opened since then?"

Dorrington turned to his secretary.

"How many times should you say, Arthur?"

For an instant Adams looked confused.

"Oh, not more than two or three times!" he answered slowly.

The reply brought a gleam of apprehension to the detective's dark eyes.

"That is very strange," he said, swinging round. "This door has been very badly used since its renovation. Mr. Adams, can you explain, if you have opened the safe only two, or at the most three times, how all the scratches come upon the fresh paintwork?"

An exclamation of surprise broke from the young man.

"I certainly can't," he breathed, bending closer.

Bell turned again to the door, on the shining surface of which the bright beam from his flash-lamp travelled ceaselessly. Suddenly he bent closer, and held the glass with the light focussed on a point near the top left-hand corner.

Kit watched him narrowly, for a deathly whiteness was creeping up under the tanned skin, and the hand that held the lamp trembled visibly.

Then, the silence was shattered by a loud shout from Bell—the calling of Barney Martin's name at the top of his voice.

"Barney! Barney!" he yelled.

A deathlike stillness, with every heart beating fast, and the blood draining from four set, white faces—nay, five, for just then an exquisitely-dressed woman crept into the little circle of radiance cast by the electric bulb high in the groined roof, and came close to her husband's side.

Bell raised his hand.

"Listen!" he said, and again as someone coughed: "Listen!"

Yes, there it was—a faint tapping, twice repeated.

"The boy is in the safe!" he cried.

"Mr. Dorrington, for Heaven's sake give me the key!"

The merchant fumbled in his pocket, and a look of pain swept into his kindly eyes.

"It isn't here," he muttered. "I must have left it in my other clothes!"

Bell was banging frantically on the safe door now.

"Then please get it at once. This is a race against death. Any minute now may be that boy's last. Hark! He is tapping again."

A heavy knife showed in the detective's fingers, and with this he rapped vigorously on the steelwork. Matthew Dorrington's footsteps sounded on the stairs; he burst into the vault, his eyes staring, and his lips ashen.

"The key—the key!" he screamed, pressing his hand to his head. "It is gone—gone! We can't open the safe!"

"Can't open the safe?" Bell echoed blankly. "That means the lad will be suffocated!"

"Heaven help him!" moaned Mr. Dorrington. "The key wasn't on my chain! I remember now locking it for safety in the escreteoire in my bed-room. But someone has stolen it. It must have disappeared some time during yesterday!"

A terrible calmness settled on Garnett Bell.

"Who are the makers? Glasgow people, I suppose? You must telephone for a duplicate key to be sent round immediately!"

The merchant shook his grey head.

"No; the safe and the key were supplied by a Dublin firm. I never thought to ask for a duplicate. If we wired we couldn't get one inside twenty-four hours."

The tapping inside the safe became more distinct. Bell, white to the lips, took his watch in his left hand.

"The dreadful position has to be faced, Mr. Dorrington," he remarked gravely. "My assistant has been imprisoned in that safe for close on fifteen hours. You admit you have lost the key. It would take half a day for the cleverest locksmith in Scotland to break down that door. By then the poor lad will be dead. I must confess I am powerless. The position is horrible—hopelessly horrible! No one but an expert cracksmen can save him. One might be got from Dartmoor or Portland, or even from Peterhead, but not in time to rescue Barney Martin alive—"

Well, Mr. Adams, what is it?"—for just then, with a quick, determined throw of his broad shoulders, and a look of bold resolve on his handsome face, the secretary pushed past his master and faced Garnett Bell.

"I can do it—I can do it!" he cried shrilly. "It means exposure and certain ruin for me, but I will stand back, please!"—motioning Kit aside.

"Mr. Dorrington, ask one of the servants to bring sandpaper to soften down my fingers, a pair of pliers, and stout steel wire to form a skeleton-key. Then blindfold me and let me get at the lock. There's not a safe door in Scotland which I can't tackle. In a quarter of an hour I'll have Barney Martin out, dead or alive!"

(Will the secretary succeed in getting Barney out alive? Don't miss next Monday's grand new instalment of this great story. Order your copy in advance to avoid disappointment.)

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