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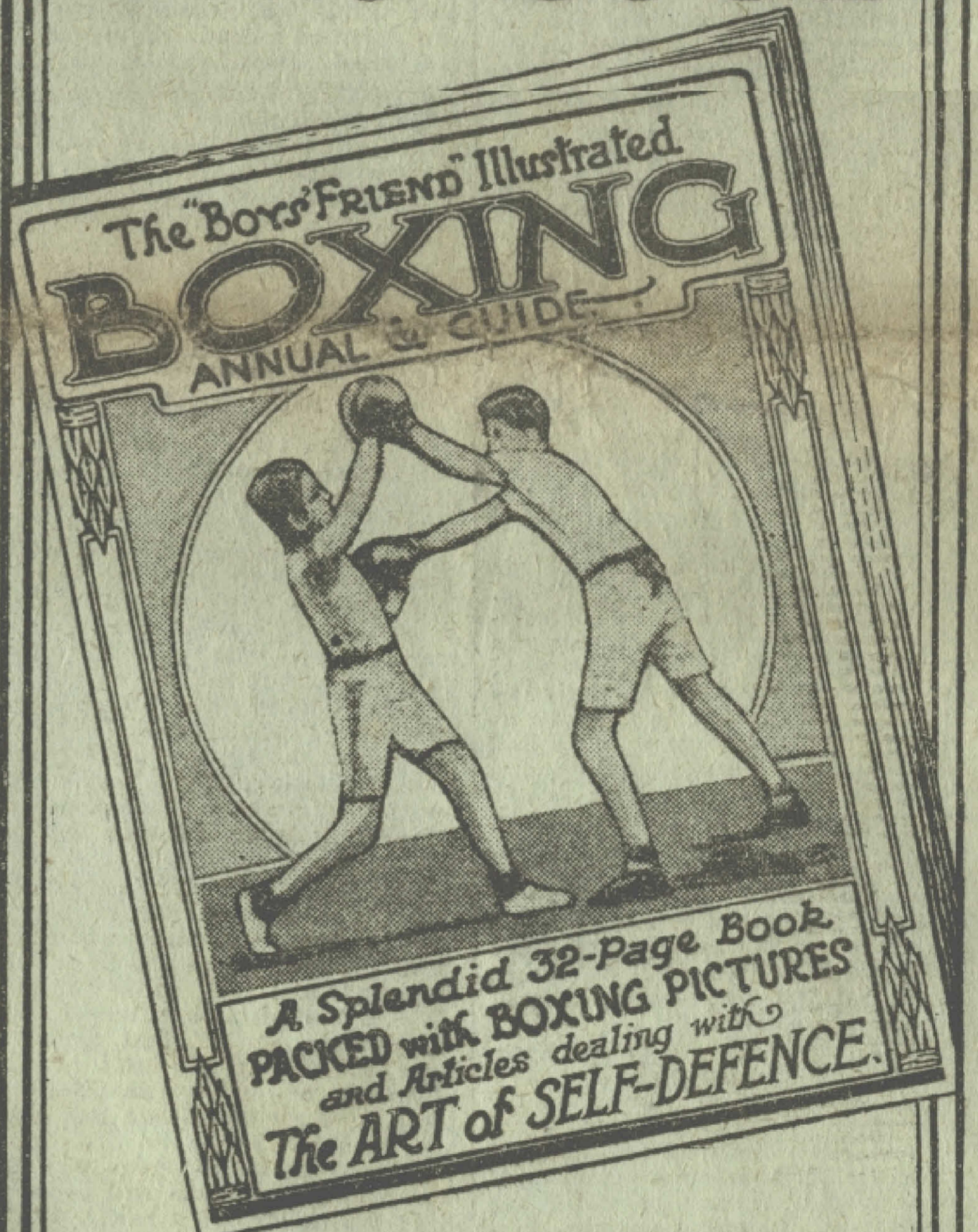
THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 6th, 1920.



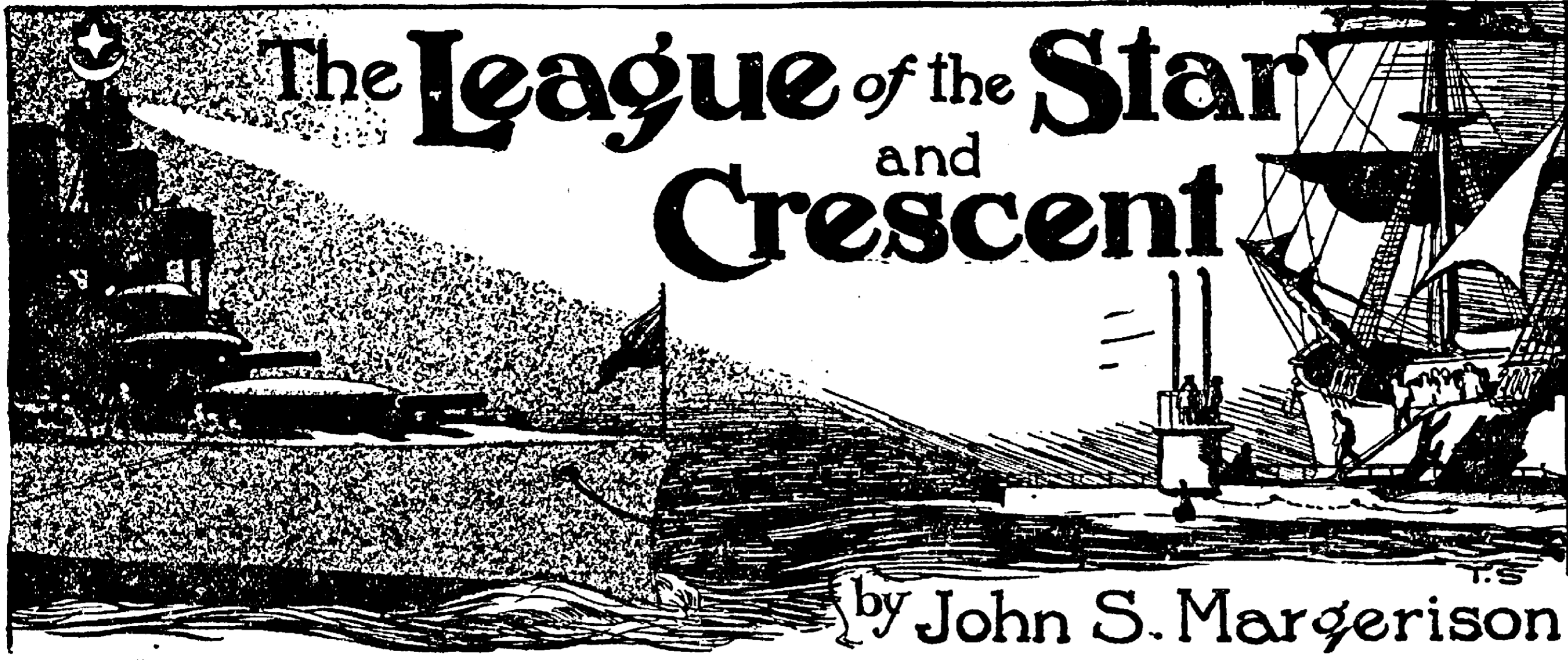
DEFENDING THE DERELICT! Dick's party of British bluejackets closed in on the raiders, and soon a stupendous mill was in progress. (An incident in our grand new serial which starts on page 470.)

GIVEN AWAY WITH THIS ISSUE



Part One of this SPLENDID BOOK ON BOXING

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL, PACKED WITH ADVENTURE AND EXCITING INCIDENT!



The 1st Chapter.

The Derelict.

"Hard a-starboard! Smartly, now, unless you want us to be in collision! Hey, you in the schooner, d'you think you've bought all the sea?"

Midshipman Dick Murray leaned over the end of the bridge of the light cruiser Firecat and yelled the latter remark through a megaphone, addressing it to one of the ordinary trading schooners so frequently met with off the Spanish coast. But, unlike most of its kind, this ship had not chosen to give the war vessel a wide berth and plenty of sea room; instead, it had flapped its sails in the wind, tacked in a most slovenly fashion, and then hurled itself down upon the light cruiser at the rate of knots, apparently intent on crushing itself like an eggshell upon her armoured hull.

The boy's query brought an unexpected answer, for there appeared in the head of the companion-way under the foot of the mainsail a dark-faced figure, which, supporting itself against the hatch-cover, raised supplicating hands towards the cruiser, remaining in this attitude for a second before falling forward on its face.

"That's weird," remarked the lad. "I'll let the commander know about this. He may be interested."

"He is." Commander Hardy spoke at the lad's shoulder. "And, in passing, Mr. Murray, let me compliment you on the smart way you avoided that ship's charge just now. And as a reward I'll send you away in the seabot to talk to her crew at close quarters. I expect you'll find them all either drunk or asleep, and you have my full permission to stir them into a proper respect for the rule of the road at sea with the toe of your boot. Tell them that it isn't at all usual for a British warship to send visiting parties in this way, but we can't have this sort of thing going on, endangering the lives of seamen carelessly. Anyway, seabot's crew, man the first cutter!"

Ten minutes later the Firecat's seabot's crew was ploughing her way through the water, urged by the arms of sixteen hefty bluejackets, and steered by Petty-officer Michael Casey, a good-humoured giant, and as reliable a seaman as sailed the Seven Seas. It wasn't any use chasing the schooner; all Dick could do was to take the boat to a spot where she might be intercepted in her wild, headlong rush, and then hook on to her chains as she passed. Being trained seamen, the cutter's crew found little difficulty in carrying through this feat without capsizing their own boat; and Dick, followed by a couple of men, swung himself aboard the schooner in the twinkling of an eye. Naturally, he looked round for somebody to strafe, but, save for that grotesquely crumpled figure by the companion-way, there was not a soul on the schooner's deck.

"Jump to the helm, Riley," ordered Dick, "and keep this blessed hooker on some sort of a course! Mann, you get the rest of the boat's crew aboard, and ease off your main-braces till you've got her hove to. I'll investigate."

He picked his way across the schooner's slanting deck to the companion-way, and bent to raise the fallen sailor. Dick put his hand under the prone head and turned the man over. Then he stepped back, for the front of the stranger's blouse was saturated with blood from a wound in the chest. He was plainly

a Spaniard, the dark skin and the tiny gold earrings shouted that fact aloud. As Dick's hand touched him he opened his eyes and tried to smile. "Gracias, señor," he said. But Dick, understanding no Spanish, shook his head.

"I spik ze Inglease," amended the stranger. "I die. I am kill. But ze papers! Ze Inglease señor mus' ave ze papers. Zey are in ze little secret 'ole in ze centre beam in ze main cabin. Ze submarine, it kill me an' ze ozzers before—"

And, as if the effort had robbed him of his last remaining strength, the Spaniard's head fell forward on his breast. Dick bent to raise him, but the eyes were glazing fast, and when the midshipman thrust a hand inside the other's blouse he could feel no heart-beats.

"He's dead, sir," said Casey, at Dick's side. "But what's these papers he's yammering about, and what's he mean by talking of submarines? There ain't no war on now."

Dick shrugged his shoulders. "I'm as bad a guesser as you, Casey," he replied. "But he said something about a secret hole in the centre beam of the cabin, so we'll have a look there before we cudgel our brains any longer. Hallo, the ship's signalling! What's she saying?"

The midshipman read off the semaphored words with the ease of long practice. "Firecat to cutter," it said. "Please report at once reason why schooner steered so wildly. Can you find any men?" "In other words, 'Buck yourselves up,'" smiled Dick. "Come on, Casey, let's see what's wrong with this hooker, or the 'bloke' will be getting shirty. There's nobody on deck; let's see if there's anybody below."

They descended the companion-way and entered the main saloon. It was obviously the place where the small crew of about six lived, ate, and slept, and Dick found two men sleeping their last sleep on its floor. Examination showed that they had been shot through the head. But of others there was no sign. Nor was there anything to indicate that there had been a struggle in that cabin. Tea in basins on the table was still warm, and thin steam still ascended from the interior of a newly decapitated egg. The furniture was still in its proper place, and it looked as though the dead men had either committed suicide or been shot by each other. Yet the wound in the body of the man lying on deck was no gunshot wound. Besides, in a schooner of this size three men were by no means all the crew—three men couldn't have hoisted or lowered her somewhat heavy sails, or worked her on her voyage. But where, then, were the others?

Dick and Casey took all this in swiftly, and then went back on deck. No, the boats, as far as they could see, were all still in place, even a small dinghy towed over the stern. And the fore-castle was empty. Yet it didn't seem possible that this quiet schooner, sculling around the seas with all her sails set, till Mann and the bluejackets had hove her to, had lately been a battle-ground. She seemed so utterly peaceful—only that queerly huddled figure on the companion-way marred the picture.

"We'd better tell the ship what we've found, and ask for instructions," said Dick, jumping to the bulwarks, and wrapping his leg round a shroud to hold him steady while he

semaphored the message. Aboard the Firecat the commander bit his lip. The cruiser was due at Gibraltar that night to join with the Atlantic Fleet for manœuvres, and couldn't spare time to tow the schooner to port. She couldn't leave the vessel derelict to be a menace to navigation, and she equally couldn't sink her. Therefore, the commander did the only possible thing.

"Keep the cutter's men aboard for your crew," he signalled to Dick, "and sail the schooner to Gibraltar as salvage. Rejoin Firecat on your arrival, and please don't make too long a holiday of it."

And, ringing down her engines, the light cruiser gathered way, and pushed onwards at top speed, making up for the delay occasioned by her boarding and examination of the schooner Maria Dolorosa, as Dick found his new command to be named. Soon Firecat was a speck on the horizon, and by the time she had totally disappeared, Dick had split his men into two watches, himself in charge of one, and Casey responsible for the other, had made all necessary sail to steer southward, and had carried the three dead bodies of the original crew aft, where they could be conveniently buried over the side in due course.

And then suddenly Casey remembered something.

"Was there not some word of hidden papers, sir?" he asked of Dick respectfully. "Sure, and it's thinking I am that we'd better have a look at 'em, in case they're worth keeping and using ourselves. You never can tell what those Dagoes will be getting up to; and maybe these papers'll turn out to be of advantage to the Service, and, maybe, to ourselves as well."

"Maybe," said Dick. "Though I don't suppose by any chance they refer to pirates' hoards or treasures or the other things one usually connects with Spaniards. More likely they're the ship's log and manifest and things. Anyway, they're in some secret hole in the centre beam of the main cabin, so we'll have a look at 'em for ourselves."

And, little knowing that the papers so lightly mentioned were going to change the whole course of his life, Midshipman Dick Murray led Petty-officer Casey down the companion-way to find them.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Mysterious Papers!

It took the two sailormen half an hour to find the spring that opened the door of the little cavity scooped out of the solid beam which ran athwartships; and, with a cry of glee, Casey thrust his hand into it, he being nearest, when it slid back. There were papers there—four of them, in fact—and Dick sprang to his side to read them in a second.

A quick glance showed that two of the sheets were in black German characters, while the others were covered with scrawled writings which looked as though a fly had wandered across the paper after taking a bath in an ink-well. Dick and Casey spread them out on the cabin table, and tried to read them.

"I thought I knew German," said Dick at last, "but this beats me. It doesn't make any sense. Now, what in the world, in either English or German, does 'iopztkr' stand for, unless it's a code word? No, Casey, we sha'n't get much information from this little lot. The German's too high for me. And that shorthand-

looking stuff is worse than Greek. I've never had any lessons in Arabic or Turkish or Moorish, any of which these characters might be. But I expect the commander'll be able to get them read and acted upon, whatever they may be. Hallo! What's wrong on deck? We seem to have stopped."

Thrusting the papers into his inside pocket, the young captain led his second in command on deck, where they found Maria Dolorosa hove-to once more, this time not of her own accord, but because the wind had suddenly ceased to blow. The sails flapped against the masts, and the schooner pitched lazily in the swell, and it seemed likely that the trip to Gibraltar would take longer than was expected. However, as Dick and the others realised, it was no use crying over spilt milk, or worrying about what couldn't be altered; so, after a deal of rummaging, when some of the cutter's crew found fishing-lines stowed away in a small locker, he raised no objection to their fishing to while away the time, and add to the variety of the menu.

And as the sunny afternoon waned, and the twilight deepened until the darkness wrapped the Atlantic in a velvet mantle, the wind held off, and Maria Dolorosa lifted and fell to the light rollers which disturbed the glassy sea.

"We'll keep watches, ready to get away the minute the wind comes," declared Dick. "Casey, you'd better take the first till midnight, and then I'll relieve you. I want to see if I can make any more sense of those papers. Maybe I'll find the key to the code, when we can read them for ourselves."

But, though Dick juggled with the mixed medley of letters and numbers without ceasing, straining his keen eyes in the glimmer of the swinging oil-lantern, which was the main cabin's only illumination, he got no nearer solving the cipher of the papers. Indeed, he was not at all sorry when, five minutes before midnight, one of the watch came below to inform him of the time, and to add that, in his own quaint words, "the wind was still blowin' a flat calm, sir," because the change of jobs gave him a rest.

He found the world wrapped in darkness, and, save for the creaking of blocks and the flapping of sails against the masts as the ship rolled, perfectly silent. Somewhere forward two or three glows in the darkness showed where the men were smoking cigarettes, prior to going below, now that they were relieved of duty, and the gleam of the schooner's navigation lights showed red and green over the water beside them. But, beyond that, the schooner might have been the first vessel ever navigated, for all the company she had. She was simply drifting to the south-west, and there was no means of inducing her to head in any other direction, though, from the fact that the stars were hidden and the blackness of the night, Dick inferred that he would have more wind than he could handle before long.

He took over the deck from Casey, and sent the watch to turn in. His own men he made reef the sails, partly as something to pass the time, and partly in case the wind, when it did come, was squally, as frequently happens after a dead calm in the Eastern Atlantic. And when that was done the ship settled down to darkness and silence again, broken only where a couple of men lay in the

shadow of a deckhouse, and murmured reminiscences of their lives to keep them awake.

Dick seated himself on the roof of the companion-way leading to the main cabin, and gazed vacantly at the flapping mainsail over his head. His thoughts were busy with the finding of three dead men, and he wondered what was the explanation of the tragedy. They were still lying aft, he remembered, and he must bury them to-morrow. He wondered how much of the Burial Service he could remember, and if the men were of a religion to which that service didn't apply. Would they—Hallo! What was that? He could have sworn he saw a dim figure getting over the bulwarks as though coming aboard. He stared into the darkness for a moment, and then, slipping down from his perch, strode across the deck, never thinking to do it stealthily.

And then, suddenly, with a catch at his heart, he realised that he actually had seen somebody come aboard—somebody who skulked in the shadows.

"Who are you?" demanded Dick, jumping for the figure. "And what do you want?"

For answer the skulking man raised himself, and whistled shrilly twice. Then he turned to Dick as though to explain, but instead launched himself at the young midshipman. Taken utterly by surprise, Dick was borne to the deck, yelling as he went.

"Hi, there, Firecats!" he cried. "We're boarded! We're—"

The invader's fingers found Dick's throat, and began to press. His knee was boring its way into Dick's chest, and he seemed to weigh a ton. Dick tore at the arms that held him, but with no avail. Then there came a sudden rush across the deck, and two of the bluejackets stumbled over the pair already on the deck. The next thing Dick knew was that the fingers had relaxed their grip, and he was being assisted to his feet.

The next minute he was swept off them again, for, with a yell that effectually roused out the Maria's watch below, there rushed over the bulwarks the forms of a round dozen men, armed with pistols that spat into the darkness around the unarmed British bluejackets.

The Firecats fell back, for they hadn't even a pistol among them, and seized belaying-pins and handspikes and short crowbars—anything that would serve for a weapon. Casey, arriving in a hurry up the hatch-way, just missed a bullet aimed at his head, and sprang forward in the darkness at the place where the flash had shown. The result was that one of the invaders went down under his burly opponent, heartily wishing he had never been so foolish as to invade a ship manned by British sailors. Casey wrenched the revolver from the luckless man, and sprang to his feet.

"That'll teach you, ye blighters!" he exclaimed. "Now, where's the next that wants a little scrap with me—gun or no gun? Come out, ye spalpeens, and show yerself, and it's Mike Casey as will fight the lot of ye!"

The skulkers needed no second invitation, but sprang as one man out of the shadows, fearful of using their pistols at such close quarters in case they shot their own friends. Truth to tell, they had been as much surprised at finding the schooner manned at all, and even now they didn't know the number or calibre of the men they were matched against. But they could only see Casey, and thought there were not more than half a dozen. Therefore, they were brave.

Dick's throat was painful, but his temper was aroused. He found the rest of the men gathering weapons in the darkness, and secured a handspike for himself.

"Follow me, lads," he whispered. "Shake the blighters up for coming aboard here without invitation! They're up to no good; and one Englishman is as good as ten Dagoes, any night!"

The bluejackets needed no further urging. They only wanted a leader. And so it came about that as the dozen dark forms which had apparently walked out of the sea, closed on Casey, Dick's party closed on them, their bare feet making no noise on the deck.

Bang went a pistol almost in Casey's face as its holder received a hefty clump on the head from a belaying-pin, and pitched forward. Then the fight really commenced. Dick laid out right and left with his weapon. The others fought like scrimmaging wolves, and over all Casey's huge form and hefty fists—

now supplemented by the butt of a captured automatic—beat about with grim impartiality.

The fight didn't last long, for the man who had tried to strangle Dick suddenly hauled out of the melee, whistled shrilly once more, and dashed for the bulwarks. The remainder of the invaders, such as could move, followed him, apparently disappearing into the sea. But Dick's blood was up.

"After 'em, lads!" he yelled. "If they can walk on the water, so can we, and we'll bung 'em down quick to Davy's locker!"

He sprang over the bulwarks as he spoke, followed by a dozen of the Firecats, the other four having hurled to tie up and bruises to rub, for the victory had not been cheap. And, to Dick's surprise, instead of leaping into the water, his feet encountered a solid steel deck.

"Great snakes! A submarine!" he gasped. "Here, lads; here's another prize! Take it, and we'll tow the thing with us!"

The impetus of the rush over Maria Dolorosa's bulwarks had carried half the Firecats down the steel ladder of the submarine's conning-tower in close pursuit of the crew, and soon her deck was deserted. But the fight waged on; there now being no room to use firearms, even if the enemy had found time to reload them. Handspikes and belaying-pins had been dropped here and there, but the bluejackets didn't need them now; they could see their enemy, so that it had turned out to be a real scrap, after all. Down the echoing tunnel of the submarine it surged, men here and there falling over fittings of the underwater boat, but all scrambling up in an instant and carrying on the good work. It was the tables turned with a vengeance; the invaders were invaded, and they didn't seem to like it.

And then, as if seized by a giant hand, the surging mob of men were swept off their feet and crashed in a struggling, kicking, striking, writhing heap into the very bows of the boat, while a wild laugh rang out from the central control plat-

form. The leader of the band, seeing that there was little hope of his side winning, had managed to win his way to the controls, and, shutting the conning-tower, had suddenly started her engines, and was now soaking the depths of the ocean, himself and his enemies cooped up in a frail prison of steel.

But in a second the fight resumed its merry course, for now Dick and his men were the superior force, and, besides, had the advantage of being able to see what they were fighting. And, to even matters still more, they had captured their fair share of the pistols, though they had no ammunition to use in them as yet.

Then as suddenly as she had started off the submarine stopped dead. With a jerk that threw them all again off their feet, she struck bottom, and bounced back like a rubber ball. The maniac who had stationed himself at the controls was pitched out of place, his head striking the steel deck with a thud, and afterwards he lay still and crumpled, never moving a limb. Dick glanced at him.

"Dead!" he yelled. "His neck broken. Well, you blighters, what about it? Have you had enough, or would you like some more?"

For answer, the submarine's crew raised their hands above their heads.

"Shove the bight of a line round each one, and help yourselves to the guns!" said Dick, with a short laugh, to his men. "We'll take this ship back where she came from, if we can find the place, and if I can help it, we'll not bump things on the way. Casey, if you don't leave that chap alone I shall get cross with you. He's surrendered, you know. That's better. Now tie him up, and come and help me with the controls of this sardine-can full of machinery."

Casey grinned, and released his man. He glared round for a second to see if any of the strangers were still showing signs of fight, for the big Irishman had never had his fill of scrapping. But they were all quiet, and submitting to be bound by the bluejackets.

"Faith, that little tamasha did me

the world of good, sir!" he said to Dick, making his way to the controls. "It's no that wouldn't mind a scrap of the same size every night, provided the other chaps wouldn't use pistols. Anyway, it's a souvenir of the Great War I've got now, sir, and, with your permission, I'll keep this pistol in case it is wanted again. What might you be calling them chaps—Dagoes, eh?"

"A mixture, Casey," said Dick. "From the number of languages they swore in while the scrapping was going on, they're the sweepings of all European countries, and what on earth they're doing aboard a submarine like this beats me. And I can't quite place her—directions shoved up everywhere in several languages, with English on top, and a star inside a crescent marked all over the place. Where the dickens did they get her from, I wonder?"

"Maybe they'll tell us in due course, sir," smiled Casey. "I know the best way to get information out of these sort of chaps!"

"Casey," laughed Dick, gingerly feeling the bruised swelling around his left eye, "you're a bloodthirsty brute! But now just put the knowledge of submarines you gained during the war into good use, and get us back to the Maria Dolorosa as soon as possible. She's my prize, and I don't want to lose her, though the commander will be a little bit surprised when I cart a submarine into harbour as salvage as well as a schooner, eh?"

They discussed many matters while the submarine was breaking surface and cruising about till dawn, seeking the Maria Dolorosa. The calm which had delayed the schooner stood their friend now, for it allowed them to remain on the surface of the sea, and use the great gasoline engines to push them along at top speed.

Malevolent eyes glared at them from the forward end of the craft, where the dozen men who had originally owned the submarine were tied up in a neat row, and who when addressed maintained a surly silence.

Dawn came at last, and with it the sight of the still becalmed Maria Dolorosa drifting her way along the

edge of the horizon. Dick and Casey between them took the submarine alongside her, and made it fast with her grass hawsers before transferring the prisoners to her more spacious decks.

"We've got aboard in time, I think," said Dick, pointing where the dark brown clouds were massing up in the south-west. "For if that little lot doesn't contain wind, I never saw wind-clouds in my life. Well, breakfast first—we've earned it—and then we'll have a chat with these prisoners of ours. Anybody missing, Casey?"

"Not on our side, sir," said Casey, who had been making a rapid count. "We're all present and correct."

"We're four men short, sir," said one of the prisoners suddenly. "And we'd like to know what you're going to do with us?"

"That depends," replied Casey. "Maybe I'll use the lot of you as chopping-blocks and sparring partners while we're getting to Gibraltar, where we'll shove you in prison for piracy and murder on the high sea, and a few other small offences. What have ye got to offer for your liberty?"

The man grinned. "A full explanation," he said in English, "not only of the reason why we came aboard here last night to get some papers out of the centre beam in the main cabin, but also of the contents of those papers, and what they mean to the peace of the world. Those papers, in the hands of the wrong folks, you may be surprised to know, will start a war alongside which the German bid for world supremacy will look like a dog-fight."

Dick looked intently at the speaker, and there was that in his eyes which told that his words were true.

"Well, we'll hear your cock-and-bull yarn after we've had breakfast," replied Casey. "So you can get all your details worked up ready."

And, sure enough, after the men had fed, the English-speaking men of the party, supported by their comrades, were brought before Dick and the remainder of the Firecats. The submarine was now made fast alongside,

and the calm still held, so there wasn't any necessity for anybody interested to absent themselves from the conference in the big main cabin.

"Well, prisoners at the bar, we're ready to hear what you've got to say as to why we shouldn't hang ye to the yardarm for piracy, attempted murder, assault and battery, carrying guns without a licence, and letting off fireworks in the shape of cartridges on the public seas to the common danger," said Casey, taking the nod from Dick. "On your feet, Mr. Man, and let's hear your information, and we'll weigh it and see if it's good."

"Before I tell you anything," said the Englishman, "I must ask you to promise that if you find what I have to tell you true and valuable, you will not only release me and my comrades here, but you will also hand us back our submarine, and allow us to go free of all charges."

"Well, I'll let you go if your information seems worth it. That's a promise," said Dick.

"I thank you, sir!" said the other, with a bow. "And now to surprise you. The papers you hold, sir, are instructions for the finding of a huge treasure hidden off this coast by the Kaiser Wilhelm II during the last war. They are being sought after by the League of the Star and Crescent for the purposes of financing another great war."

"If you will kindly verify the truth of my statement, and restore to me and my men our liberty, sir, I shall be very grateful. The code word is 'Joachim.'"

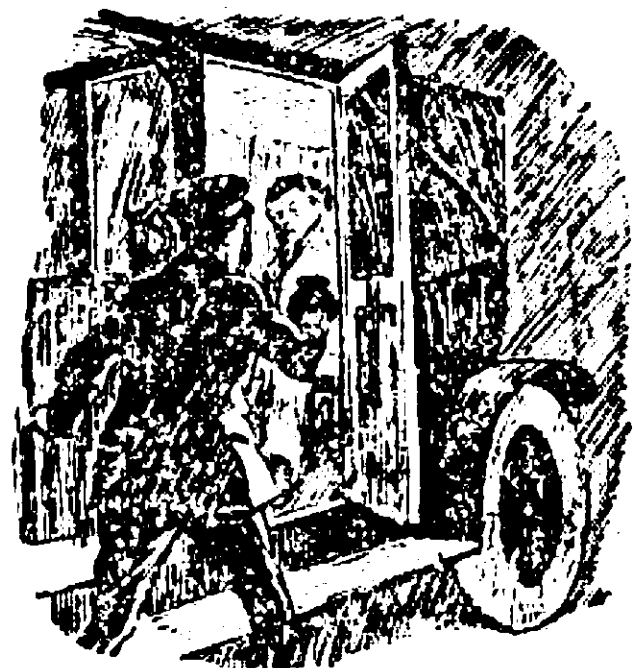
The stranger had spoken the truth, as Dick soon found out, and he and his men returned to their submarine, their liberty restored.

Just then a gun boomed sullenly, and a shell fell into the sea a few yards from the two ships.

"That's a cruiser of the League—after the Maria Dolorosa and her papers!" shouted the stranger, as he disappeared down the conning-tower of the submarine.

(Another instalment of this wonderful yarn in next week's Boys' Friend.)

OUR GRAND NEW DETECTIVE SERIES STARTS TO-DAY!



The 1st Chapter.

The Car with the Damaged Mud-guard!

It was through the force of circumstance, rather than his own inclination, that Mr. Thomas Grant daily occupied the driving-seat of taxicab No. LC 41 B, instead of a comfortable office within the hallowed precincts of New Scotland Yard.

Not that his job was a poor one, by any means. It was, indeed, quite the reverse, for the Crane Street rank was well in the track of London's busy stream, and consequently the cabs were seldom disengaged. But Mr. Grant had ambitions. He also possessed in a very remarkable degree that most precious of gifts to a detective—the sense of observation. In short, Nature had intended him to be a crime-investigator; but Fate, the inexorable, had decreed otherwise.

Just now that self-same "gift" was centred on a big limousine standing at the opposite curb a few yards farther down the street. There was nothing really remarkable about the car itself, except that the rear left-hand mudguard was severely battered, as though it had come into violent contact with something. But this was the third day in succession that the big car had taken up the same position, and had remained there for hours, apparently with no particular object in view.

The chauffeur's coat-collar was turned up to his ears, although the weather was mild, and his cap pulled well down over his eyes, so that it was impossible to see very much of his face; also, the car's window-blinds were drawn, successfully foiling any attempt to catch a glimpse of the interior. And these were the things which set Mr. Grant a-wondering.

THE ADVENTURES OF GRANT, CHAUFFEUR DETECTIVE

By EDMUND BURTON

"The Affair of the Golden Flower."

"Yes," he mused, "there's something funny about you my friend, and—Suffering Caesar!"

The exclamation was pardonable under the circumstances, for the blind of the mysterious car had suddenly been drawn aside and a face looked out—a dark, evil face, like that of an Eastern.

But the glimpse was a brief one. Next moment the blind had dropped back, and the taxi-driver had resumed his interrupted reflections.

Presently a swift patter of footsteps caused him to swing round. A low-sized man was standing there, breathing heavily, and tightly gripping a small, box-like parcel wrapped in brown-paper. The man's face was deeply tanned, telling of many years spent under a tropical sun, whilst dark rings beneath the eyes suggested nights passed in sleeplessness and anxiety.

"Disengaged?" the newcomer asked a trifle hoarsely. And Grant pointed to his flag.

"Yes, sir. Where to?"

"Benfield. And drive like the dickens!"

Grant stared. Benfield was a good distance off, and quicker to reach by train than by taxi. Nor did this individual look exactly a millionaire, and—well, the fare would be high—

"What are you waiting for?" the man snapped roughly. "Think I can't pay? See that!"

who had been standing by the kerb with his tray of nicknacks, suddenly moved off, with a curious smile on his face, as he gave a backward glance at taxicab No. LC 41 B. But Grant saw nothing of this, and shortly his whole attention was fixed ahead as he deftly steered his cab through the maze of traffic until the suburbs were reached.

It was then that he became conscious of something which brought all his previous wonderment back again with redoubled force. For clearly revealed in the little observation mirror facing him was a large car, the build of which was certainly familiar. Then, as it slowly overhauled and passed the taxi, a whistle escaped Grant's lips, for the car's left rear mudguard was all bent and twisted out of shape. It was the mysterious limousine.

Yet, he reflected, what had it got to do with him? Why should he worry? That other car was not shadowing his cab, for had it not passed him and forged ahead?

"Ass!" he muttered savagely, cracking on extra speed. "The thing's probably as innocent as the day, yet—"

Yet! Yes, that little word made all the difference. Grant's natural detective instinct refused to be smothered. The mysterious car, the strange, evil face, his fare's agitated manner, all combined to force it upon him that here was something worth investigating.

The 2nd Chapter. By Whose Hand?

His fare had instructed him to "drive like the dickens," and Grant did his best.

Village after village, town after town, flashed swiftly by; and now, as dusk was closing in, Grant

halted about a mile from Benfield to light up.

"The Dragon, I suppose, sir?" he inquired through the tube.

There was no reply, so he repeated the question. Still no answer.

"Hang him!" Grant gave an exasperated growl, for he wanted to return that night. "I expect he's fallen asleep."

He opened the door, but no sound came from the interior of the cab. He could just discern the dim outlines of the man's figure against the far window.

"Asleep, sir? Benfield's right ahead. Where are you putting up?"

Still no sound, no movement, and Grant gave his fare a gentle shake; but there was no response. Impatiently he struck a match, and was just able to catch a glimpse of the huddled figure in the corner ere the flame flickered out.

The man's position was so unnatural that the taxi-driver felt vaguely alarmed. He lit one of the sidelamps and carried it back.

"What's wrong, sir? Are you ill? By Jove!"

Grant staggered back, nearly dropping the lamp. Then, pulling himself together, he held the light closer. His fare was stone dead—murdered!

Just beneath the right ear something was buried in the neck—an air-gun dart. Evidently it had been fired either at very close range or from some very powerful weapon, for the tuft of coloured hair at the end was almost buried in the flesh.

For the next few minutes it was the detective—not the taxi-driver—who held the stage, as, slowly and carefully Grant commenced a thorough examination of the body and its surroundings. Where had the dart been fired from, and when? He had not halted till now since leaving the city, for his tanks had been full and the engine perfect.

Of course, he had been compelled to slow down at times, so perhaps it was then the occurrence had taken place. The man was sitting in the left-hand corner, and the right-hand window was open. Could anyone have sprung on the running-board and fired the fatal shot when the cab had been travelling slowly? It seemed feasible, for Grant might not have noticed, since the mirror did not reflect the side of his own cab. Yet it would be risky for anyone to attempt such a thing in broad daylight.

He stepped back and shone the light all over the taxi's side, at once giving a startled exclamation. No; the assassin had not stood on the running-board. That was quite plain now.

For just level with his head, and a few inches from the door, something was visible on the outside of the cab. It was a second dart, which had struck the woodwork at a downward angle, proving conclusively that it had been fired from a height. Nobody on the running-board—pasted against the door, as it were—could cause the dart to enter at such an angle, or, in fact, to strike the outside of the cab at all.

Now, what could have happened? Ah, the big limousine! It was of high build. It had overtaken him, and—yes, by Jove!—had slowed down slightly when passing him. He remembered that now. And it had, of course, passed him on the right.

"Now, am I correct?" he reflected. "Why did that car hang about Crane Street for so long, and then only move to go in my direction?"

"Pon my soul, I believe there's something in the theory! Probably two weapons were used as well, for no air-gun or pistol I ever heard of carries more than one dart at a time, though several makes have pellet magazines; and there would hardly have been time to reload—that is, if the shots were fired when the other car was passing me, as they must have been if they came from the limousine at all.

"Now, the possible motive? Not robbery, plainly; revenge, likely."

Grant re-entered the cab, shining the light round, and now noticed something which had escaped him before. The brown-paper parcel had been unwrapped, and on the seat beside the dead man lay a wooden box, and a small, grotesque-looking image. Its hands were folded across its breast, and clasped a portion of what seemed to be a golden stalk, which apparently had been broken off short.

The man's right hand was tightly clenched, but Grant forced it open, and a glittering object dropped to the cab-floor. He stooped quickly, picking up a small flower fashioned out of pure gold, each petal exquisitely carved and covered with minute hieroglyphics. When he placed the stem against the broken portion between the idol's hands, they fitted exactly. Evidently the man had been examining the image when he was shot.

"Well, I suppose I'd best give information at once," Grant muttered, "as I think I've gone about as far as I can go at present. Considering that the face I saw looking out of the limousine was that of an Eastern, this image is likely at the bottom of the whole-affair."

He wrapped up the idol again, placing it back on the seat. The little golden flower, however, he slipped into his pocket for safety. Then, having carefully withdrawn the dart from the woodwork outside, and having just as carefully placed it in a tin tobacco-box, he drove on to the Dragon.

Sleepy Benfield was soon on tenterhooks of excitement. They had something to talk about for months to come, for even the oldest inhabitant could remember nothing approaching this most mysterious occurrence.

As Grant left the hostelry, after inquiring the way to the police-station, he noticed that a ray of light from one of the inn lamps partly illumined the dark interior of his cab, and it seemed to him that the body of his fare had slightly shifted its position. On going closer, he found that such was indeed the case, and also that the paper parcel had vanished; whilst the disarranged state of the cab-cushions showed clearly that a hurried search had been made for something else—probably the golden flower which now reposed in his pocket.

Things had certainly moved with lightning speed. Even the brief time that he—Grant—was inside the Dragon had been taken advantage of, telling that the enemy were well aware of the taxi's destination, and had been lying in wait.

So Benfield, Grant reflected, had evidently been the goal of the big limousine also. Why?

The 3rd Chapter.

Picking Up the Threads!

At the inquest, which was held in the bar-parlour of the Dragon, Grant was, of course, the chief witness. He told his story straightforwardly, omitting nothing save the finding of the golden flower, which fact he thought wise to keep to himself, as something instinctively told him that it would be through the medium of this little article that the mystery would be solved—if ever.

The jury brought in the only possible verdict under the circumstances—"Wilful murder against some person, or persons, unknown."

Nobody in Benfield or the neighbouring towns remembered noticing a large motor-car with a battered mudguard, nor had any foreigners been seen in the district. So there the matter rested until a day or two later, when a workman discovered the limousine in a field about two miles away, where it had evidently been driven in behind a high hedge and abandoned.

The C.I.D. now took a hand in the affair, and sent down Detective-Inspector North to investigate. This astute officer succeeded in tracing the car to a garage in the City, where the proprietor informed him it had been hired every morning for several days past "by three foreign-looking gentlemen, who had paid a good price, cash down."

Grant's request to see the deceased's apartments was readily granted. These consisted of a bedroom and sitting-room, communicating by folding doors.

"And now, madam," said Grant to the landlady, when he had taken a brief survey, "you will pardon me, but I noticed you seemed a trifle upset at the inquest, and perhaps you may have withheld something—unintentionally, of course. You said Mr. Williams only went out late at night. How did he occupy himself during the day?"

"Reading, sir—by candle-light."

"By candle-light? Why?"

"He had something wrong with his eyes—a disease, he said, contracted in foreign parts. He always kept the blinds down and the shutters closed, because he couldn't stand the daylight."

"H'm! Those are his books, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; but particularly this one he used most. I know it by its hacked appearance." The landlady picked up a tattered volume and handed it to Grant, who opened it at random.

The page was covered with quaint signs and hieroglyphics, and, going to the window, yet keeping his back to Mrs. Johnson, he took the golden flower from his pocket, comparing the symbols on its petals with the others. They were for the main part very similar, suggesting that the book was a kind of history of the sect or tribe, with whom the ornament was probably connected.

"Thanks!" Grant said, returning the volume. "Mr. Williams was evidently fond of study as well as travel."

The landlady started slightly. "That's strange, sir!" she exclaimed. "One of the foreign gent's

who called here yesterday was very interested in that book, and passed much the same remark!"

Grant with difficulty restrained a gasp.

"Foreigners?" he repeated. "Now we're getting on! I'm very glad you told me this, Mrs. Johnson. How many were there, and what were they like?"

"Two, sir—dark-skinned chaps," she answered. "They inquired for Mr. Williams, evidently not having heard the news. When I told them, they seemed quite shocked, and begged to see their old friend's rooms."

"Ah! And you brought them up?"

"I did, sir. They appeared to be so genuinely upset that I couldn't refuse. They spent about ten minutes looking over his things—mainly that book there."

"Were they alone here for a while, by any chance?"

"Why, yes, sir! That's what I was just coming to. Whilst I was talking to them, a ring came to the door and I went down. It was an old pedlar, who kept me looking at his blessed stock-in-trade for more time than I could spare. Curiously enough, he, too, was very swarthy-skinned."

"And the other two went—"

"Just afterwards."

"Did you notice, were the rooms disarranged in any way?"

"No, sir, I didn't. But, you see, Mr. Williams was always rather untidy in his habits, so amongst all this litter it would be hard to tell if anything was out of place."

"I see," nodded Grant. "Well, I'm much obliged to you, madam! Good-day!"

He passed downstairs and into the street. Certainly, he had gleaned some information, but exactly how to make use of it was the problem. Grant undoubtedly possessed a detective's talents in a very marked degree, but what he lacked was equally necessary—sound training as to how to make the best possible use of them.

Things had now reached a point when the advice of a professional tracker was indispensable; so he decided to see North, of the C.I.D.

The 4th Chapter.

An Exchange of Confidences!

Detective-Inspector North received Grant cordially enough. Truth to tell, he was at a deadlock himself, and was ready to welcome even the slightest clue which might put him on the scent. For, since tracing the limousine to its owners, he had been able to do practically nothing in the matter.

"You were, of course, wrong," he said, after listening attentively, "in withholding information at the outset about your finding the golden flower; and yet I personally consider you did quite right, if you can understand the paradox?"

Grant nodded. "I understand perfectly. You mean that from the law's point of view I should have told everything, but that I was sensible in saying nothing of the only substantial clue in our possession. You share my opinion that there may have been spies in court?"

"Precisely! Now, your theory from the start?"

North was not one of those pompous, self-opinionated men who, swelled up with their own importance, will have nothing to do with an outsider, should such by any chance happen to poke his nose into matters that concerned the regular police only. He fully realised that more than one smart amateur had in the past put the seasoned professional investigator on the right track, and was quite ready to accept assistance from this taxi fellow if it promised to be valuable.

"Well," commenced Grant, "from what I have read of these things, the whole business seems fairly clear up to a certain point. To begin with, a big limousine occupies the same place three days in succession; its blinds are down, and only once do I get a glimpse of the occupant, who is apparently an Eastern. I then take a fare to a place which is easier to reach by train than by taxi. This looks as though my passenger had some objection to railway travelling—which objection might be that it would be easier to follow him. He seems agitated, and is gripping a parcel very tightly; and he chooses a time when there is only one cab on the rank—my own—thus believing he's safe from pursuit."

"Nothing happens until the big car overtakes and passes me in the suburbs; then I discover the tragedy on the outskirts of Benfield. I have told how, from the position of the dart outside, I concluded that the

missile had been fired from the limousine, which theory is borne out by the fact that the big car was found abandoned near Benfield. This shows that its occupants evidently knew our destination, either having overheard Williams instructing me, or perhaps someone had been watching his rooms, and shadowed him when he came out." (This, as our readers will probably guess, was the correct theory, if they will cast their minds back to the incident of the swarthy-faced pedlar whom Grant failed to notice.) "They also seemingly expected him to put up at the Dragon, as it is about the only decent place in the village, and must have been hanging about, as witness the fact that they had time to search my cab whilst I was absent. They apparently don't know that I found the golden flower when I pulled up to light the lamps."

"Then the doctor states that Williams was killed by cobra-poison, which snake, I believe, is mainly an inhabitant of India."

"Next, I visit Mrs. Johnson, who says that her lodger travelled a great deal. She also informs me that he spent his days reading by candle-light, as he had some eye affection to which daylight was dangerous. That, I know, was all bunkum, for the man's eyes were perfectly healthy-looking, and it was broad daylight when he engaged me. No. The motive for the closed shutters and his only going out at night was fear, pure and simple. He'd probably stolen the idol from some eastern temple during his travels, and guessed he would be followed, yet so great was his interest in the golden flower that he could not part with it until he had deciphered the inscriptions written on its petals. From the fact that he left behind all those curious books, I conclude that he had succeeded in doing this, and was anxious to get away unnoticed to some quiet place like Benfield, to study his translations in peace. But, fearing that he might not secure a taxi quickly if he waited till after dark, when the evening rush would begin, he decided to risk emerging by daylight on this last occasion."

North nodded, but remained silent.

"Then," resumed Grant, warning to his work, "two foreigners—Indians, likely—call to see their old friend Williams. They are shocked at his death, and ask to see his rooms. Whilst there, a dark-skinned pedlar arrives, and keeps the landlady talking. Why? Because he is the third of the trio of 'foreign-looking gentlemen' who hired the limousine. The whole thing was a plant. The pedlar kept Mrs. Johnson engaged in order to give the others time to search for the flower, which they think may have been broken off before Williams left his lodgings, since they didn't find it in my cab. They've got the idol, but apparently they dare not return without the blossom also, for fear of the wrath of their priests or gods."

North sat up in his chair with an approving smile.

"D'you know, friend Grant," he said, "that you're a loss to the Force? I agree with you in every particular. It's very well thought out for an amateur—indeed, it has quite the professional touch. You mentioned that you suspected there were two weapons used. From that I should say that your theory about Williams being tracked from his lodgings to your cab is correct, the shadower afterwards joining his colleague in the limousine, and the third man was, of course, the chauffeur. They probably fired together, but only one dart took effect."

"Yes, that's very likely," agreed Grant, "but though we've got the thing straight up to a certain point, it doesn't get us any nearer the assassins. What d'you think will be their next move? Will they revisit Williams' rooms, have another search of my cab, whose number they probably know, or chuck up the sponge and return with the idol alone?"

"Not the latter, anyway!" replied North decidedly. "They'll stick at it until they either succeed, or prove that the flower is lost for ever. Ah! You've got an idea?"

"Yes," replied Grant; "though whether it's worth trying or not I don't know."

He gave North a brief outline, and the C.I.D. man evidently approved of it, for he clapped the taxi-driver enthusiastically on the back.

The 5th Chapter.

How the Trap Worked!

The outcome of the foregoing consultation was that the following announcement appeared next day in all the principal London newspapers:

"A GOLDEN FLOWER.

"Workman's Strange Find.

"Whilst going to his work early the other morning, a labouring man picked up a curious article, a sketch of which is shown hereunder.

"It is a beautifully-carved flower, fashioned from pure gold, and covered with mystic symbols. The base of the stalk seems to have been roughly broken off, which indicates that it had originally been joined to something else—an ornament very probably."

"Mr. Thomas Smithson, the well-known curio-dealer of Minter Street, has purchased the quaint article, which is at present on view in his shop window, and is attracting considerable attention."

The latter part of the announcement was certainly true, for quite a considerable and ever-changing crowd was hanging about the window of Mr. Smithson's emporium, gazing—some curiously, some half-amusedly—at the glittering little blossom occupying a prominent position therein.

The curio-dealer was an old pal of Grant's, and, standing well back in the shadows at the far end of the shop, were the taxi-driver and his colleague, North of the C.I.D., both eagerly watching the crowd outside.

Presently Grant gripped his companion's arm, and nodded his head in that direction.

"There!" he whispered. "I'm sure it's the face I saw looking from the limousine. I hadn't much of a glimpse, but the johnnie was so evil—"

North took a short step forward. At the back of the crowd a dark, sinister face was visible, the coal-black eyes fixed gloatingly on the little ornament in the window. Then the man boldly entered the shop, and inquired in good English what price Smithson wanted.

The curio-dealer, who had previously received his instructions, appeared to ponder for a while, thus giving North and his colleague time to draw closer to the prospective customer; then the C.I.D. man sprang forward. There was a metallic click as the handcuffs were snapped on the dusky wrists.

Crash! Grant and the others turned sharply. The window was in smithereens, and a lean, brown hand was being swiftly withdrawn through the jagged gap, regardless of numerous cuts threatened by the broken glass. And, clenched tightly in that hand, was the innocent-looking cause of the whole ghastly business—The Golden Flower.



(If you are in need of any advice concerning health and general fitness write to "The Health Editor," The BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. All queries will be personally answered by Mr. Longhurst. Seize this opportunity of securing first-rate information and advice FREE!)

Physical Fun.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," and unless it is possible to introduce some "play" into your exercise, for the purpose of developing physical strength and building up health, there's the risk that frequent repetition of the "work" will cause it to become tiresome and you will lose interest. Here are a few tests from which it is possible to extract some amusement.

Stand sideways against a wall, with the left foot and the left cheek close against it. Now, see if you can lift the right foot while steadily keeping the position. It can be done, though not by all. If you come across a chap who can do this, ask him to go further, and touch his left knee with the right foot without falling over.

If he succeeds, challenge him further. Stand him with his back close against the wall, toes forward, and place a penny on the floor just in advance of his toes. Tell him he shall have the penny if he can stoop down and pick it up without shifting his heels from the wall. You won't lose many pennies. I'll warrant.

Here's an easy one. Chalk a line, place your toes against it, knees down, hands clasped behind your back, and then stand upright again without shifting your toes from the line.

Something harder. Fold the arms across the body, and lie down flat on the back. Now try to get up again, using one leg only, and preventing the foot of the other leg from touching the ground while you get up.

These last two tricks are really excellent exercises for strengthening the big muscles of the thighs.

How to lift two persons from the ground at the same time.

Stand between the two fellows. Stoop, and pass the right hand behind the left thigh of the one on your right and seize his right hand. Now do the same with your left hand, it going behind the right thigh of the

Leaving North to attend to his prisoner, Grant dashed from the shop. The second man was already several yards away down the street, running like a hare, whilst the crowd, too dazed by the audacity of the theft, stood open-mouthed and helpless.

Turning and twisting, up one street and down another, rushed the pair, until the river loomed ahead and the thief half-turned; but, seeing his escape cut off—for the others had by this time recovered, and were coming up fast—he sprang for the parapet and dived over.

Grant was in the water almost as soon, but a strong tide was running, and already the Indian was beginning to show signs of distress. Then, as his pursuer's hand touched his collar, the man sank like a stone. The chauffeur dived, but to no purpose—the body had evidently been caught by some under-current, and was not recovered. The Golden Flower will never again be seen until Father Thames gives up his dead.

Followed by a curious crowd, North marched his dusky captive to the police-station which stood only a few yards away.

The Indian seemed quite resigned, walking almost with an air of dignity. As they neared the station, however, the detective felt him shiver violently, and next moment he had collapsed in a heap on the pavement. North gave a cry of horror as he stooped down, for a brightly-coloured tuft of hair was visible amongst the coal-black locks at the back of the man's neck. The captive was stone-dead when they carried him indoors.

Who had fired the dart no one knew. The large crowd had been too intent watching the couple in front to pay much attention to each other. North and Grant, however, were quite convinced that the third Eastern was the responsible person, nor was the motive very far to seek. Guessing that a conviction was certain, steps had been taken to have the captive quietly removed, lest his tongue should reveal any secrets connected with The Golden Flower. There are mysteries in the East, to prevent the solving of which even human life is considered of little or no account.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's case—"The Affair of the Mystic Bell!")

chop on your left, and gripping his left hand, which he will bring within your reach. Both fellows must now lay one arm each about your neck, and if you will raise yourself quite gradually, you'll be able to lift both from the floor together. Don't have your feet close together when trying to perform this feat; let them be about eight inches apart.

Japanese Physical Training.

Attacker and defender stand facing each other, the latter putting forward his left hand, and the other gripping it with his right. Both arms are almost horizontal, and the attacker should take an overhand grip of the wrist. The palm of the defender's hand is downwards. Both bend forward as far as possible. Then the attacker tries his utmost to force the captured hand back to the starting-point, the defender resisting for all he is worth. The object gained, then begins a struggle to force the hand downwards.

The right hand of defender and left hand of attacker then carry on the exercise, after which positions are reversed—after breathing spell—and the complete movement gone through again.

This exercise has a very strong influence upon the body muscles, but particularly those of the lower part of the back and the abdomen.

Every muscle between the fingers and the shoulders comes in for hard use in the next exercise, and it is to be carried through on both sides of the body, one after the other, so that the left side gets just as much exercise as the right.

Percy Longhurst

(Another splendid Health and Exercise article in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

THE FIRST OF A GRAND NEW SERIES OF ROOKWOOD YARNS!



The Phantom of the Past!

An Exciting Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Kit Erroll. By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

The Face from the Past!

"Where's Erroll?" Jimmy Silver wanted to know. It was the Bagshot match that afternoon, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were gathered on Little Side at Rookwood, ready for the fray. But Erroll of the Fourth, inside-left—usually as punctual as a clock—was not present. And the Bagshot brake had already been sighted on the road. "Morny, where's Erroll?" Valentine Mornington shook his head. "He went down to Coombe after dinner," he said; "but—"

"He's had lots of time to get back from Coombe!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "The Bagshot Bounders will be here in another minute. Bqther him! It isn't like Erroll to stray off like this just before a football-match. I don't want to put another man in his—"

"Oh, rot!" said Mornington sharply. "I say, Jimmy!" sang out Tubby Muffin. "I'm ready, you know, if you like."

To which Jimmy Silver responded only with a snort. Apparently he did not like.

"I'll cut down to the gates, and see if he's comin'," said Mornington. "Keep your wool on! The Bagshot Bounders aren't here yet, and they can wait, anyhow."

Morny was gone before Jimmy Silver could make any reply to that. He ran down to the school gates, and looked along the road to Coombe village. Mornington was surprised himself by the absence of his chum. It was quite like Morny to turn up at the last minute—or after the last minute—but not at all like Kit Erroll.

A figure came in sight on the road coming towards the school, and Morny recognised Erroll.

Erroll was not hurrying himself. He came along slowly, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and his head bent, his eyes on the ground. He looked like a fellow buried in deep and not pleasant thought, and it was pretty clear that he was not thinking of the football-match, now due on Little Side at Rookwood.

Morny ran out into the road. "Erroll!" he called out.

Erroll started at his chum's voice, and looked up quickly. His handsome, grave face was curiously pale, and there was a troubled look in his eyes. Mornington ran quickly to him.

"What's the matter?" he asked anxiously. "Nothing, Morny." "Have you forgotten the football-match?" Erroll started again. "I—I—" he stammered. "Is it time?" "The Bagshot fellows will be on the ground in a minute. Jimmy Silver is getting his hair off." "I'm sorry! I—I— Let's get on, then."

They hurried towards the school together.

But close by the gates Erroll paused irresolutely. He flushed a little uncomfortably, as he met Morny's curious glance.

"There's somethin' the matter," said Mornington quietly. "Feelin' seedy?"

"Oh no!"

"Don't you want to play? You're always as keen as mustard." Erroll paused.

"If—if Silver wouldn't mind," he muttered, "I—I don't feel like footer this afternoon. I—I—" "Somethin's happened?"

"Well, yes," said Erroll, after another pause. "I—I've seen a man—"

He broke off, flushing. Mornington smiled. "Plenty of men to be seen in Coombe," he said. "I suppose you mean some particular man?" "Yes. A man I saw years ago, before I came to Rookwood." Erroll's eyes drooped before Mornington's. "You—you know something

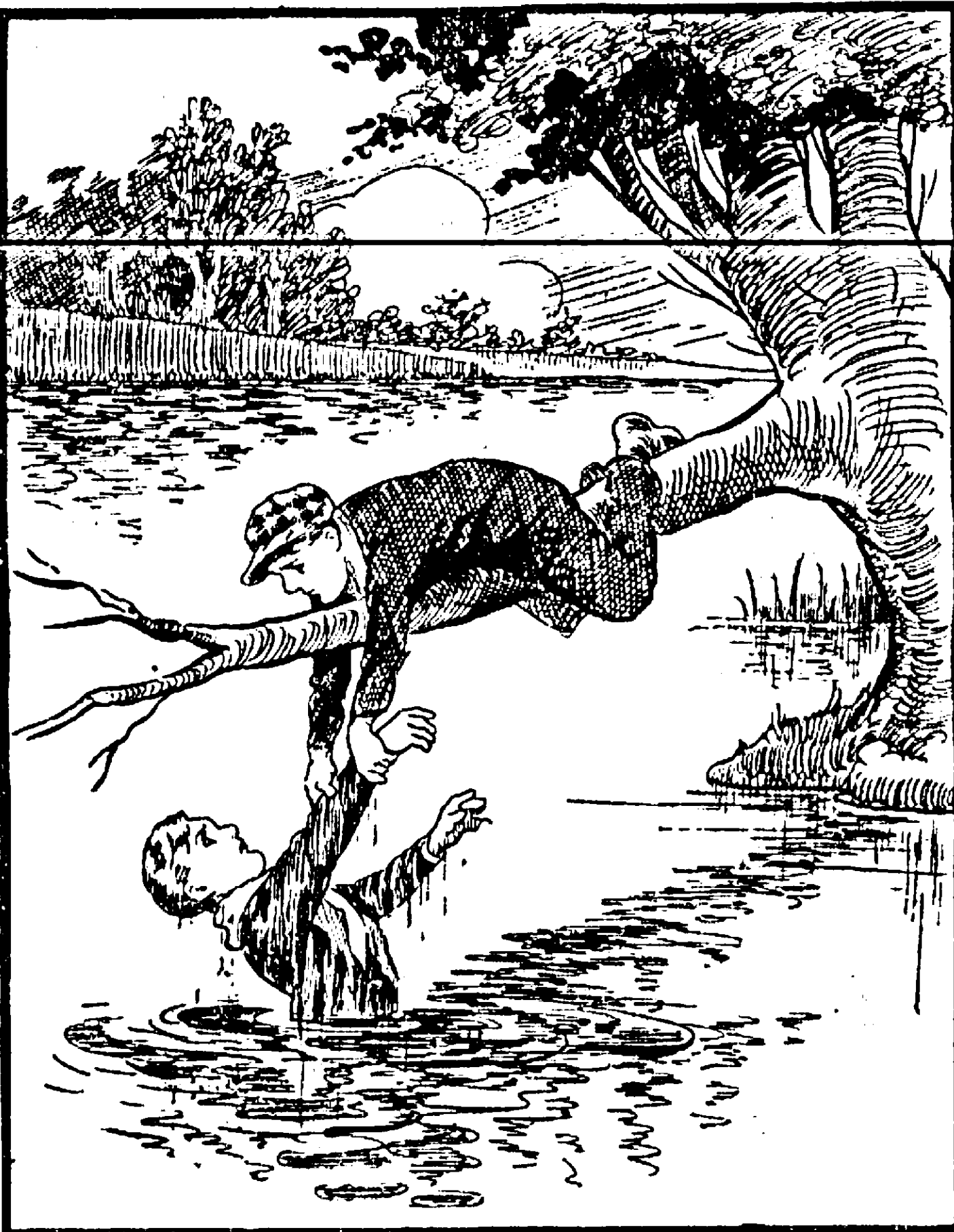
about my life before I came to Rookwood, Morny. I've told you. You know I was, for a time, in the hands of a gang of rascals when I was only a kid. I saw a lot of things it wasn't good for me to see."

"I know you kept straight, old chap," said Mornington softly. "Yes, I did, though it was hard enough at that time." Erroll's brow wrinkled. "They wanted to make a thief of me. I had pretty hard usago because—because I wouldn't. I don't know what's become of that brute I was with then. I don't want to know. I suppose he's still in prison. But I've seen a man—a man who used to belong to that gang—and—and it's brought it all back to my mind."

His voice trembled. "In Coombe?" asked Morny. "Near Coombe. I passed him in the lane."

Often he had seen that set, dark, look on Erroll's grave face, and known that his chum was thinking of the dark old days that were now, happily, behind him for ever. "Hallo! Here you are!" Jimmy Silver's voice broke in, as he joined the two juniors, rather breathlessly. "Dash it all, is this playing the game?" demanded Jimmy hotly. "Do you know Bagshot are waiting on the ground, and you stand here confabbing? Get a move on, bother you!" "I—I'm sorry!" faltered Erroll. "Keep your sorrow till after the match," said Jimmy crossly. "You haven't even changed. It's too bad." "Erroll isn't feeling up to footer," said Mornington, coming to his chum's rescue. "You'll have to let him off, Jimmy."

"Why the thump couldn't he say so



AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR! "Hold on!" The words came to the drowning junior as one in a dream. The unknown boy seized one of Erroll's arms. Crash! The branch rang again threateningly.

"Did he know you?" "No; he did not recognise me. I'm sure of that." "Then he can't be here on your account," said Mornington. "No; I don't think that. He can't know I'm at Rookwood, I think. He never had anything to do with me, even in the old days. I just saw him sometimes with the others, that's all. But he's here for no good; he's never anywhere for any good. I don't suppose he remembers me. But I remember him well enough, though he's changed his appearance a bit."

"He can't hurt you, old chap," said Mornington, after a pause. "You're not afraid of that?" Erroll smiled faintly. "No, no! It's only that it's brought it all back into my mind—those awful days I want to forget. It—it's made me feel rotten. I feel rotten whenever it comes into my mind. I try not to think about it. Now—now it all seems as fresh as if it was only yesterday that I was with Gentleman Jim and the rest—and that man Baldwin Sleath—"

"I understand," said Morny softly. Morny understood well enough.

earlier, then?" demanded the captain of the Fourth. "Lots of fellows are keen enough. I—I—" He broke off as he caught the pained look on Erroll's troubled face. "Well, never mind. I'll tell Oswald. Come on, Morny!" Jimmy Silver darted off. "Cut off, Morny," said Erroll, in a low voice. "I'm goin' to cut the match, old man, an' stick to you for the afternoon."

"No, no!" exclaimed Erroll hastily. "You're wanted. You can't leave Silver in the lurch." "But—"

"Cut off, old chap! I shall be all right. I'm going up the river, and—and I'd really rather be alone, if you don't mind."

"Right-oh, then!" said Morny. He could not help feeling relieved. He did not want to miss the match. He gave Erroll a nod, and ran after Jimmy Silver. Kit Erroll turned from the school gates and tramped away, his hands in his pockets, and his brow lined. He was in a black mood that afternoon, and in that mood he was glad to be alone.

The 2nd Chapter. In the Shadow of Death!

Crash! Erroll gave a jump. He had taken out his canoe, after parting with Mornington; but his paddle was idle now. He had tried to rouse himself from the black mood that had seized upon him, but he tried in vain. In spite of himself, the phantoms of the past were before his mind. It seemed to him, somehow, that his happy, careless life at Rookwood School was only a dream; that behind it lay the grim reality, his old life of fear and shadow, the victim and unwilling pupil of the gang of cracksmen who had held him in thrall in his early years. Gentleman Jim, whose villainy had darkened his young life, was safe behind prison walls; he had nothing to fear from his former associates. But the memory was there; and somehow, in his present mood, the memory seemed more real than present realities, since he had seen the face of Baldwin Sleath.

He sat in the canoe, his paddle idle, his chin sunk on his breast, his brows puckered. He was a good distance from Rookwood now. The brown November woods shadowed the bank on either side of him, but he did not see them. He saw only the evil faces his bitter memories conjured up from the dead past. He had forgotten where he was, and he was suddenly roused from that deep, black reverie by the crash of the canoe upon a half-submerged, floating log.

He started up, and in an instant the catastrophe came. Before he knew what was happening, the capsize canoe had slipped from under him, and he was struggling in icy water. Something struck his head as he fell; his cry was choked as he plunged under the swirling waters.

He came up dazedly. Erroll was a good swimmer, and he struck out bravely for his life. He knew that it was for his life now. The dim, brown woods were solitary; there was no one to help him.

But he was dazed; his head was singing from the blow on the log, and the chill of the water was icy and bitter. He struck out for the bank, with the swift current tearing at him. His eyes closed once dizzily, and the swift waters rushed over his head. He struggled to the surface again, strenuously resisting his fate.

"Help!"

The cry sounded faintly over the wide river.

His head seemed spinning; his senses fleeting. Again there was a rush of water over him, and again he came up, dazed and panting. There came into his dizzy mind a thought of the football-field at Rookwood; of Jimmy Silver, of his chum Mornington—Morny, who would have risked life to save him, if he had only known. He swam despairingly, a faint cry ringing from his pale lips again.

Was the bank nearer? The dim, brown woods seemed to be receding; the silence, the solitude chilled him like the icy chill of the water round him. He stared about him wildly. The canoe had vanished from his sight, drifting upturned. The water bubbled over his lips.

He came to himself, with a sudden realisation that this was death—death, if his own strength could not save him. And his strength was going; his senses were spinning. He gritted his teeth and made an effort, and the brown woods swept nearer.

Nearer and nearer. He could see a squirrel upon a gnarled trunk; but he was almost spent. He was near the rushes now; near the branches that overhung the water. But an undercurrent caught him and whirled him away, feebly resisting. Something brushed his face, and he clutched hold with a despairing hand.

For some moments the dazed junior only knew that he was holding—that the hungry river was pulling at him, seeking to sweep him away to death. His senses cleared. It was the extremity of an overhanging branch, nearly touching the water, that had brushed his face; and it was the branch that he was holding to, dragging it lower with his weight as the river pulled at him.

He held on grimly. The branch swayed and creaked, twigs and leaves splashed in the water as his weight dragged it down. But it was strong; it would bear. He would climb on it.

But he could not climb. His strength was spent, and he could barely hold on, and he could not drag himself a foot from the sucking water.

He cried out again, but his voice was only a husky whisper. The shining, rippling river whirled about

him; the trees, the bank, were whirling as in a dance of death. He groaned. It was death, after all; he could not hold on many minutes, with his numbed fingers. And there was no help—no help! Morny was far away. Morny, who would have given his life to save him. "Hold on!" The sudden call came to Erroll as to one in a dream. He hardly realised that it meant that help was at hand. "Hold on, guv'nor; I'm coming!" Erroll stared dizzily. A boy was creeping out along the swaying branch from the gnarled trunk—a boy some years younger than himself, in soiled, tattered clothes, with a rag of a cap on his head. But the little, brown, soiled face was sharp and intelligent, and full of resolution. He came crawling along the branch with the activity of a squirrel, and it swayed and sunk deeper under his weight, light as he was, and there was an ominous, cracking creak.

If it should break! It might break at any moment under the weight on it. Erroll knew it, and his rescuer knew it. And that meant a sudden plunge to death in the icy water. But the boy came on resolutely and swiftly; and in a minute more he was leaning over Erroll.

"Give us a grip, guv'nor!" He reached down and seized one of Erroll's half-frozen hands. Crack!

The branch rang again, threateningly. But steadily, between the pull from above and his own desperate efforts, Kit Erroll was dragged from the water, and rested, panting, with his chest over the branch. "Go back!" he whispered huskily. "Go back! I can manage now." "Sure?" "Yes, yes!" "All serene, guv'nor!"

The boy crept back along the branch to the trunk, and dropped lightly to the ground. He watched the Rookwood fellow curiously. Erroll rested for a couple of minutes, and then crawled on the branch, swaying but no longer cracking. The task would have been nothing to Erroll in his usual condition; but now it tried him sorely. He was panting and exhausted when he reached the trunk, and the rescuer had to help him down to the ground.

Erroll sank into the grass, and leaned back against the tree, in a pool of water. For some minutes he did not move. His strength was at its lowest ebb. He almost fainted as he sat spent in the grass. "Better get a move on, guv'nor." It was the stranger's voice. "You'll catch a chill, I reckon." Erroll staggered up at last. He leaned on the tree, gasping. He was more himself now, and he looked curiously at his rescuer, who stood watching him, chewing a straw, with a slight grin on his face. "You've saved my life!" panted Erroll. "I s'pose so." "I'm awfully grateful—I—" "All serene, guv'nor! Feel all right now?" "Yes, yes!" "Then I'm off."

The ragged youth turned, and plunged into the wood. Erroll stared after him blankly for a moment. Then he shouted: "Stop! Stop!"

The 3rd Chapter. The Wait!

"Stop!" Erroll of the Fourth made a quick step after the youngster who had saved his life. But he was still very weak, and he staggered, and had to lean against an oak for support. "Come back!" he called faintly. He heard the boy halt in the underwoods; stopping for some moments, out of sight, as if undecided. He came back at last slowly, emerging into view again as if with reluctance. His dark eyes, which had a peculiar quality of keenness in their depths, sought Erroll's face. "What is it?" he asked. "You want me?" "Don't go yet!" exclaimed Erroll. "I—I want to speak to you. Are you in a hurry?" The boy shifted uneasily. "Not exactly in a hurry," he said. "My name's Erroll," said the Fourth-Former of Rookwood. "I should like to know yours." The boy grinned. "Same here!" he said. "What? I—I don't understand!

You know your own name, I suppose?" said Erroll, in amazement.

"They call me the Kid."

"But that ain't your name?"

"I s'pose not. It ain't a name, is it?"

"It's a nickname," said Erroll. "But you are called something else?"

"Yes; I'm called the Cool Kid sometimes," said the other, grinning. "But that ain't much forrarder, is it? Sorry I can't oblige you, sir, but I haven't any name to call my own. Is that all you want?"

"No, no! I—I want to repay you, if I can, something for what you've done for me," said Erroll. "If that branch had broken when you were helping me, you would have been drowned with me. Do you know that?"

"I s'pose so."

"You risked your life."

The Kid shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"It ain't the fust time," he said. "I don't know that I'd care very much, neither, if I'd gone in. Life ain't all beer and skittles for the likes of me. I wouldn't care much."

"My dear fellow, that isn't the way for a chap to talk at your age," said Erroll gently. "You've had a hard time?"

"More or less. I ain't complain'g."

"But your people—you've got people—"

"Only my friends."

"Ah! You have friends, at least?"

"Yes—so long as I'm useful to them," said the Kid. "I don't reckon Baldwin Sleath would waste another crust on me after that."

Erroll started violently.

"Baldwin Sleath!" he breathed. Back to his mind came the dark, evil face he had seen on the Coombe road that afternoon—the face of an old acquaintance of evil days. "Do you know that man?"

"He's my giv'nor," said the Kid, with a stare. "But you don't know him—you couldn't, a young gentleman like you."

"I've seen him," said Erroll. "I didn't reckon there was anybody knew him in these parts," said the Kid. "He don't reckon so, neither, I know that. Where did you see him, then—you, a young gentleman?"

Erroll did not answer. He was thinking deeply as he looked at the Kid's face. It was not a clean face, and it had a reckless, half-cynical expression that was painful to see in a face so young. It was only too clear that the Kid's lines had not fallen in pleasant places, and that he had knowledge—undesirable knowledge—far beyond his years. Yet there was something prepossessing in the face—the features were good, the eyes dark and clear and steady—there was a lurking trace of refinement. And this boy—little more than a child—was in the hands of Baldwin Sleath, the crackman, the rascal who, if he was not wanted by the police at the present time, had been wanted by them many a time.

It was like a leaf from Erroll's own past, and his heart went out in sympathy to the hapless boy. He had been through the valley of temptation himself, and had escaped unscathed—only with black memories. But the Kid—something told Erroll that this boy had not pulled through without a stain. If he was Baldwin Sleath's pupil, he was a thief, if Sleath could make him so.

Erroll shivered.

"Never mind where I have seen him, Kid," he said gently. "I know the man. I know he is a rascal—a criminal—a man that no boy should ever see or speak to. You're too decent for such friends."

"I've got no others."

"You shall have others!" exclaimed Erroll vehemently. "I am one to begin with. You saved my life, and I will stand your friend."

"You!" said the Kid. "You're a schoolboy—a rich young cove, you are. You wouldn't touch the likes of me."

"You shall see. I will prove it," said Erroll. He shivered again, and remembered his dripping clothes. "I must go now; but I must see you again. Where shall I see you?"

The Kid shook his head.

"I dessay you mean kindly, sir," he said, with more respect in his manner. "But you don't catch on, you don't. It ain't no good. You can't do me any good, and I should only do you harm. Never mind about my saving your life. I reckon I'd have done that for a dog, if it comes to that. But you're a decent cove, you are, and—here's your watch."

To Erroll's blank amazement, the Kid produced a gold watch from his rags and handed it to him. Then he

turned and slipped into the wood and vanished.

Erroll did not call after him again. He stood staring stupidly at the watch in his hand.

It was his own watch—a handsome gold watch, a birthday present from his father. He had not missed it; but evidently the nimble fingers of the Kid had relieved him of it when he helped him from the tree. That explained his hurried departure, and his reluctance to return when called. The incident gave Erroll a pang. Yet there was good in the boy; he had risked his life to save a stranger, and he had returned the stolen watch for a few kind words.

"The poor lad—the poor lad!" whispered Erroll. "He is decent at heart—and the evil in him is the work of Baldwin Sleath. I will save him! As I was saved from such a fate, so I will save him, and Heaven help me!"

But it was dangerous to linger—he was chilled to the bone. He started for Rookwood, breaking into a trot to warm his chilled limbs. But as he went he was thinking of the cool, cheery face of the Kid—of the strange mingling of good and evil he had seen in the waif—and he repeated to himself that, Heaven helping him, he would save the boy from the sin and misery that threatened to blacken his young life.

The 4th Chapter.

Mornington is not Pleased!

"Hallo! Here's Erroll!"

"Been taking a bathe with your clobber on, old scout?" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You're wet."

A dozen fellows met Kit Erroll as he came hurriedly up the stairs at Rookwood. He was in a warm glow with running and he was in a hurry to get to the Fourth Form dormitory and change his wet clothes.

Something like a celebration was going on in the Classical Fourth passage, as the dusk of the November afternoon deepened. Jimmy Silver & Co. were in great spirits. Erroll remembered the football match. He did not need to ask how it had gone. The hilarity of the Rookwood footballers told how it had gone.

"How many did you beat them by?" he asked, with a smile.

"Three goals to one," said Jimmy Silver, with great satisfaction. "If you'd been in your usual place, you boulder, we'd have made it four or five. But Oswald played up jolly well—"

"I rather think he did!" chimed in Dick Oswald. "I bagged one of the goals, anyhow."

"You did—you did!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "And Tommy Dodd bagged another, which was quite good for a Modern. We're just going to have tea in the end study, Erroll, and Morny's coming, so come along. Better get into some other clothes first, though."

"Buck up!" said Mornington. "You'll catch cold, Erroll. I'll come up with you."

Mornington drew his chum away towards the upper staircase, and they disappeared. In the Fourth Form passage there was a march of triumph going on, Raby and Newcome furnishing music by beating with rulers upon tin cans. The overwhelming defeat of their old rivals of Bagshot School had highly delighted Jimmy Silver & Co., and they felt that the occasion was worth celebrating. So they celebrated, the Bagshot footballers having departed to hide their diminished heads.

In the dusky dormitory, Erroll stripped quickly and rubbed himself down with a rough towel. He was feeling little the worse for his perilous adventure, save for the bump on his head, which ached a little. Valentine Mornington sorted out dry clothes for him.

"And now, what's happened?" asked Mornington, as Erroll began to dress.

"I've been in the river."

Mornington grinned.

"I guessed that much in my head," he answered. "You looked as if you'd been in the river."

"The canoe capsized. I was careless," said Erroll. "I shall have to look for it to-morrow. I suppose it's stranded lower down. It's got my name in it, anyhow. I've had a jolly narrow escape, Morny. I—I should have gone under, but for a kid who fished me out."

"Good for him, whoever he was," said Mornington cordially. "A Rookwood chap?"

"No; a young waif—a little ragamuffin," said Erroll. "But—but a jolly decent chap, I think. I'll tell you afterwards."

"Tell me now," said Mornington, sitting on the bed. "No hurry to get

to tea. They're still celebrating in the passage."

"All right."

Erroll told the story of his adventure, and Valentine Mornington listened without comment till he had finished.

There was a rather curious expression on Morny's face, and he looked at Erroll twice or thrice in an odd way.

"A regular young rascal!" he said, at length. "A trained pickpocket, to have your watch off you like that without your knowing it."

"He gave it back to me, Morny."

"He thought it safer, perhaps. You'd have missed it later, and guessed where it had gone."

"I—I suppose so. But I don't think that was his motive," said Erroll, rather disappointed by Mornington's tone. "I—I think he felt that—"

"Well, what?"

"I mean, I don't think he's a thief at heart. I—I want to help him, Morny, somehow—help him clear of all that—"

"You can't!" answered Mornington calmly. "It's not your bizney, for one thing. And it's not possible. He's an associate of thieves and vagabonds, that's clear enough. He did a good-natured thing—I dare say you exaggerate the risk—but that doesn't make him a saint. You'd better keep clear of him."

"Morny!"

"That's my advice, and it's jolly good. He's mixed up with Sleath, the man you saw to-day. It's pretty plain they're here together, and for no good. You don't want to get mixed up in that kind of thing again, I suppose?" exclaimed Mornington irritably.

Erroll did not reply, but his face was very troubled.

Truly enough, he shrank with bitter repugnance from anything that recalled the old dark days. But there was such a thing as duty. He felt that the waif could be saved, and that he could help to save him. He had expected his chum to share his views. Mornington could be generous. But Morny was evidently in one of his intractable moods. Morny could be frank and generous, but there was a vein of suspicious jealousy in his nature, and that was the chord that had been touched now.

His smile was half a sneer as he watched Erroll's distressed face.

"You're simply romancing," he said coolly. "The kid did you a good turn, and you want to make him out an angel. Some young tramp, who picked your pocket. Pah! Look here, Erroll, the fellows have forgotten that talk there was about you; it was all explained away, and so on. But they'll remember fast enough if you begin any stunt of this kind. The young rascal may pick other pockets as well as yours. You're not goin' round as the champion of a young thief, I suppose? Cut it out!"

"But—"

"What is the fellow to you, anyhow?" snapped Mornington. "You could have given him a quid for his trouble; he'd have thought more of that than of all this philanthropic moonin'. Did you offer him a quid?"

"I never thought—"

"Probably he thinks you're a mean rotter, then," grinned Morny. "That was what he wanted."

"I don't think so. I—"

"You fellows coming?" bawled the powerful voice of Arthur Edward Lovell up the staircase.

"Right-ho! Ready, Erroll?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then, and let's hear no more about your precious young pick-pocket," said Mornington.

Erroll followed his chum in silence from the dormitory. Certainly, after Morny's reception of his confidence, he was not like to say anything more to him about the Kid. But he had a will of his own—a will that was stronger than Morny's, if it came to that—and his intention was unchanged. He was going to befriend the Kid—he was going to save him. But it would have to be without Morny's help.

Bang, bang, bang!

The triumphal march was still going on in the Classical Fourth passage. The rulers and the tin cans made stirring music, and the deeper notes of a boot and a tea-tray were added now. From the lower stairs came the deep voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth.

"Do you fags want me up there?"

The music ceased suddenly.

"Only if you'll come to tea in the end study, Bulkeley," called back Jimmy Silver.

To which the captain of Rookwood did not reply. But the triumphal march ceased, and Jimmy Silver & Co. crowded into the end study to tea. Mornington and Erroll joined them there. The end study was pretty well crowded. Over that merry and somewhat riotous meal the talk ran on the football-match and the crushing defeat of Bagshot; and, to Erroll's relief, he was not questioned about his adventure. Somehow, under Morny's mocking eyes, he did not want to speak of the Kid again.

The 5th Chapter.

What Happened in the Night!

Midnight!

Kit Erroll stirred restlessly, and his eyes opened.

He could not sleep that night. Round him was the sound of steady breathing; deep and resonant came the snore of Tubby Muffin. The Classical Fourth were deep in slumber, with the exception of Kit Erroll. Perhaps it was the reaction from the excitement of his adventure in the river, and the ache of the bruise on his head where he had struck the log. And he was troubled in mind, too, by Mornington's attitude. There had been coldness between them already. They had hardly spoken over prep in the study. Morny was in one of his uncertain moods—moods in which Erroll had been accustomed to bear with him with friendly patience. It troubled him now; but the thought of the Kid was running in his mind, too.

If only Morny had taken it more kindly—if that wayward, jealous temper had not broken out so inopportunistly! But Erroll had to take his best chum as he found him, and he had often found him exacting. He could not sleep; he had dozed off by fits and starts, only to wake again. There was a deep oppression on his mind. In the shadows he seemed to see the evil, leering face of Baldwin Sleath, and then, again, the cool, half-mocking of the Kid.

There was a glimmer of light in the dormitory, where all had been dark, save for the pale starlight at the high windows.

Erroll started.

A glimmer of light, and darkness again. Was it fancy? His heart beat strangely. He listened with painful intensity. Did he hear a faint footfall in the silent, lofty room?

Light again! A bar of light cut the darkness like a knife. He knew now that it was the flash of an electric-torch, turned on by someone who was groping his way in the dormitory. He started up, with a muffled exclamation.

His exclamation was answered by a quick, sharp breath. The ray of the electric-torch turned on his face, and another face bent over him for a second.

In the gleaming light he saw the face of the Kid. The dark eyes, the clear-cut mouth he remembered so well—he saw them as in a dream.

For one fleeting moment they looked into one another's eyes. Then the light abruptly vanished. All was dark.

"Kid!" breathed Erroll.

He sat up in bed, his heart thumping. What was the Kid doing there, at midnight, in Rookwood School?

"Kid!"

Dead silence—silence and darkness. Had he dreamed it? He was yet only half-awake. He passed his hand across his eyes, and wondered.

Someone stirred in a bed near.

"What's up?" came a sleepy voice, the voice of Jimmy Silver.

"You awake, Jimmy? I—I thought I heard—I saw someone—"

There was a sleepy grunt from Jimmy Silver.

"You're dreaming, old chap! Go to sleep!"

"But I thought—I thought—"

"Bosh! Go to sleep!"

Jimmy Silver turned his head on his pillow, and was quickly in the land of dreams again. Erroll rubbed his eyes and listened.

Was it a dream?

He had been thinking of the Kid, half-awake and half-asleep. Had he been dreaming when he thought that the light flashed in his face and the waif's eyes looked at him?

All was silent—silent as the grave.

"I—I must have dreamed!" whispered Erroll at last.

After all, how could the Kid have been there? It must have been a dreaming fancy.

There was no sound—though he remained long listening, there was no sound, no gleam of light. He laid his head upon the pillow at last. Surely it had been a dream!

He slept at last—soundly. His eyes did not open again till the rising-bell was clanging out in the crisp air of the autumn morning. Erroll was one of the first out of bed. He smiled as he thought of the vision of the night. The sun was creeping over the old beeches of Rookwood, and in the sunlight that vision seemed fantastic, unreal. He had dreamed that the Kid's face had looked down on him in the hours of darkness—he was sure of that now.

He joined Jimmy Silver & Co. in punting a football about in the quad before breakfast. Mornington did not join in—it suited his wayward humour to keep aloof from his chum that morning. Erroll looked at him almost appealingly when he came out, but Morny, with a curt nod, sauntered away, and joined in talk with Towns-end and Topham of the Fourth—whom he did not often honour with his society. Erroll did not follow him. He knew from of old that when Morny was in this humour there was nothing for it but to let him alone, to come out of it when he chose.

"I say, Jimmy!" Tubby Muffin came up as the crowd of cheery juniors came in to breakfast. "I say, there's something on, you know. Do you know what's happened?"

"Blessed if I do!" yawned Jimmy Silver. "Don't you, Tubby? You generally do!"

"Well, I know there's something," said Tubby cautiously. "I saw the Head—and he was looking awfully solemn. Mr. Bootles was numbling to Bulkeley in the passage, and Bulkeley said, 'Is it possible?' He said he hadn't heard a sound."

"Then he couldn't have been referring to our celebration after the match yesterday!" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course he wasn't!" said Tubby peevishly. "Something's happened, I tell you. I heard the Head on his telephone. He gave the number of the police-station at Rookham!"

"My hat!"

"I'd have heard more, only that beast Carthow came along and kicked me!" said Tubby, in an injured tone. "He said I was listening at the Head's door—suspicious beast, you know. Hallo, there's brekker!" And Tubby Muffin rolled rapidly into the dining-room. Even his curiosity took second place to his appetite.

Erroll's heart had sunk as he listened. At the breakfast-table he glanced at Mr. Bootles' face—the Form-master was looking unusually grave and preoccupied. At the Sixth Form table the seniors were talking in low tones, with serious looks. It was pretty clear that there had been some happening of an unusual kind at Rookwood during the night. Back to Erroll's mind came with painful clearness the glimmer of the electric lamp—the face of the Kid bending over him.

There was a buzz among the juniors when the portly figure of Inspector Sharp, of Rookham, was seen crossing the quad, to be shown in at once to the Head. The Rookwood fellows went into class with excited faces—Erroll with a weight like lead at his heart. Before first lesson was over the truth was known—that there had been a robbery in the school the previous night, and that the Rookham inspector had been called in by telephone to investigate. The details were not known yet—but the main fact was enough for Erroll of the Fourth.

It had been no vision of a half-awakened fancy. The Kid had been in Rookwood School that night—and there had been a robbery! Those two facts came together in Erroll's mind with crushing force. He hardly heard Mr. Bootles' voice as it droned in the Form-room. The Kid—the boy to whose generous courage he owed his life! What was he to do now?

THE END.

(Next week: "Divided Duty." A splendid tale of Jimmy Silver, Kit Erroll & Co., and the Kid. Make a point of reading it.)



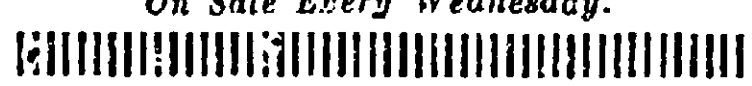
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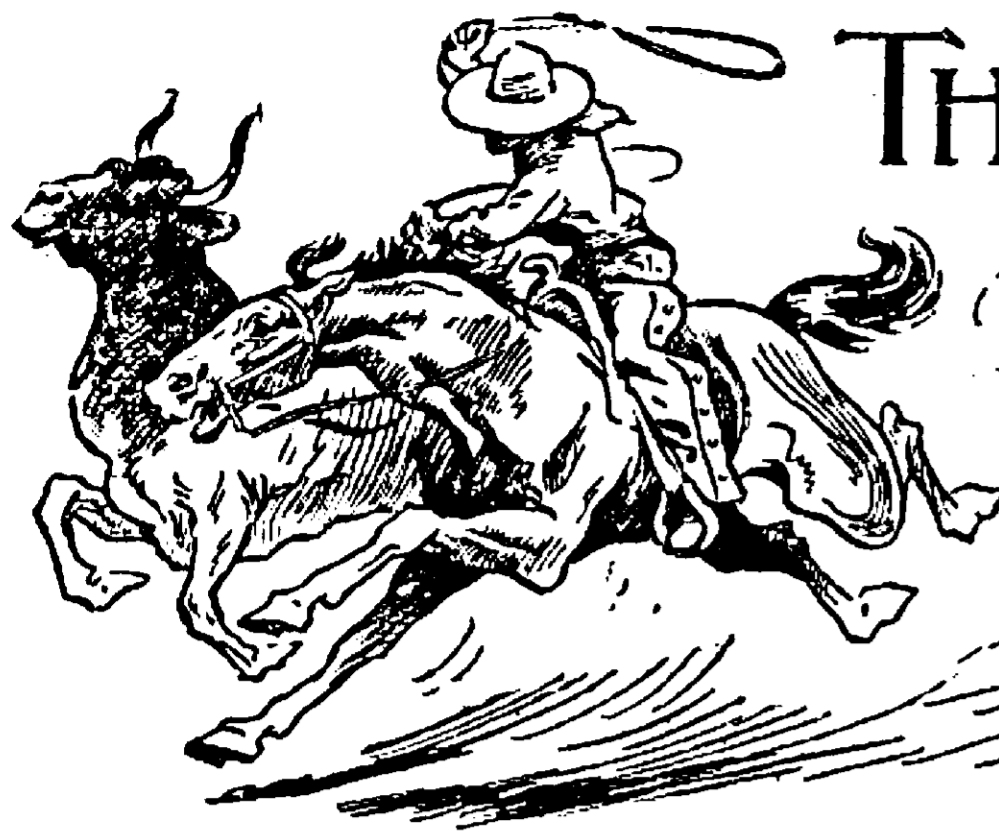
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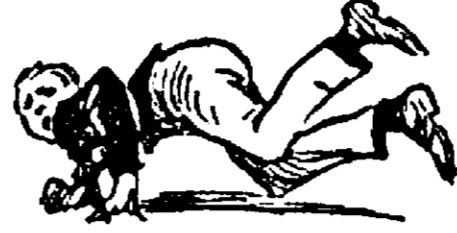


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The 1st Chapter.

The Coming of a Stranger!

Face flushed beneath its tan, his grey eyes fixed steadily upon the refractory steer, Don Darrel whipped his lasso from his saddle-bow, and touched the superb, black horse he rode with his spurs.

Great silver spurs they were, after the fashion of the Mexican ranchmen.

Not that Don was a Mexican, or, for that matter, a man. He was British to the backbone, and just a trace over fifteen; but, since the boy's father had died a month ago, he had shouldered responsibilities at which many a person twice his age might well have been appalled.

From his birth, Don Darrel had lived just over the Arizonian border in Mexico, and had come to dress very like the cowmen of that country, simply because such clothes were most easy to obtain.

He cut a fine, picturesque figure in his sweeping sombrero, ornamented with a silver cord, his black, silken shirt, and corduroy trousers, which were almost hidden by wide leather chaps, with a fringe down each leg.

He sat his horse as if he were part of it. He had been born, so to speak, in the saddle, and there was not a bucking broncho on his late father's great ranch he would have hesitated an instant to get astride of.

Of course, Great Steer Ranch had become his on his dad's death, and up till now, with the aid of a loyal lot of cowboys, a good foreman, and one very particular friend and servant, Don had run the property as well and profitably as it had been run before, the great sorrow had come into his life.

There was talk of rustlers (cattle thieves) being in the vicinity.

The herds, too far away to be rounded up and brought in before nightfall, were, by Don's orders, to be doubly guarded. Those that had been grazing near had been driven into the corral which in a wide sweep surrounded the ranch buildings and the homestead; at least, all save one ill-tempered brute, and Don had already got his measure.

After the steer that had refused to follow its fellows Don Darrel sent his horse, leaning low over the animal's neck with his lariat held ready for the throw.

"Leave him to me, boys!" he jerked, with just the slightest of twangs, as several of the hands who had driven the other cattle home would have sent their horses after him.

The group of sombreroed, sun-bronzed men sat their steeds, watching. Day in, day out, they were accustomed to seeing feats of riding that anywhere but in Mexico or the ranching districts of the States would have been counted as marvellous; but they never ceased to admire the ready and splendid horsemanship and the dogged grit of their "dead boss," son.

The steer saw the horse and its youthful rider, and, swinging round with a vicious snort, careered away across the open prairie.

Don's open, boyish face set a little grimly, and he went after it. Again his spurs just flicked his horse, and its gallop increased to a racing pace, its hoofs sending up a cloud of choking, yellow dust from out of the long, dry grass.

The steer flung up its head and bellowed defiance, and it thudded over the hard, sun-cracked ground as fast as it could go. But it might just as well have tried to outdistance an express train as to attempt to avoid its pursuer.

Slowly but surely, the horse raced nearer the bull. Thirty, now only twenty feet divided them; then—

Whiz!

True as a die, Don Darrel's lasso

went snaking through the air, and the noose fell fairly and squarely over the steer's horns and head, to settle about the thick throat.

Quick as a flash, the opposite end was wound about the horn of Don's saddle, and he had pulled up his horse with a swiftness that would have thrown a less surefooted animal.

The jerk that came when the lariat was dragged taut swung the horse half-round. Being accustomed to such work it kept its legs, and, as Don flung his lithe body back in the saddle and pulled hard upon the reins, the animal planted its forefeet into the ground and refused to budge.

The steer tugged and bellowed, snorted and flung up its horns. A struggle went on then that the distant group of cowpunchers watched with delight, though it did not last for long.

But there was no fault to be found with Snap's teeth, and it would have gone mighty hard with man or beast who dared to molest his young master. He was as faithful a dog as could be found in a day's march, and Don Darrel would not have parted with him for his weight in gold.

"Calm down, Snap!" Don laughed, patting him and caressing his shaggy head. "I guess you couldn't be more enthusiastic at seeing me if I had been away for months instead of hours! Quit on it, you owl! You'll tear my coat!"

Snap was so pleased that he was finishing his jumping and pawing with little playful bites. Don, seeing a horseman riding into the corral, drew the dog's attention to him.

"There's Chuta, boy!" he said. "Good dog! Find Chuta!"

Snap cocked an ear at the name and stood tense. Then, spying the

having given him his first lessons in the saddle.

Chuta came riding up at a smart hand-canter, Snap barking and leaping beside him. The half-caste's eyes had brightened at the sight of his young friend and master, and as the boy watched the red man and the dog, a suspicious mist came to his own.

He had seemed very much alone in the world since his father's death, and it was good to know one had friends.

"They are both what the world would call nondescripts, but both as true as steel, with hearts of gold!" he thought. "Say, Chuta, where have you been?"

"Me go help shift de cattle on de south ranges," Chuta answered. "Much too dry where de herd was, and de cattle die—dio 'pronto' if

After the meal, which all three enjoyed, and which was washed down with a generous supply of tea, Chuta settled down to clean his own and his young master's rifles, Snap, being full and comfortable, curling himself up at his feet.

Don Darrel hesitated as to whether he should make himself happy within doors or go out, and decided upon the latter alternative, little dreaming that in doing so he was to alter the whole course of his young life.

He clapped on his sombrero, slipped his grammar into the pocket of his buckskin jacket, and strolled out on to the veranda, then, after standing there awhile, something prompted him—it may have been Fate—to walk across the corral.

He reached the rails at length, and stood looking away to where a rise in the rolling prairie formed the horizon.

The lad had been born out here in this wild spot, but, nevertheless, he could always find time to admire the constantly-changing beauty of his surroundings.

He was alone with the big silence of the plains. There was not even a cowpuncher in sight on the ranch, the men all having gone to the communal ranch-house, where they bunked and ate, and that was situated in the shadow of a row of cottonwood trees far away on the opposite side of the corral to the homestead.

The prairie, stretching for mile upon mile in front and to the left and right of the corral was also quite deserted. There was not as much as a breath of wind to stir the long, scented grass, which was bathed now in the crimson glory of the setting sun.

Somehow, Don could not bring himself to take out his book and go on with the studying of it. He stood watching the sun as like a blazing ball of fire it dipped beyond the rise in the ground ahead. Then, just as the short twilight was at hand, the boy gave a start and shaded his eyes.

On the horizon, silhouetted sharply against the red afterglow of the sunset, was a man on horseback, and he was approaching the ranch at a jog-trot.

Don remained watching him, wondering whom he could be; for it was not often that strangers came to the property, and, as the rider drew nearer, the boy saw that he was certainly no plainsman.

The hand Don had let fall to one of his big, black revolver-holsters was withdrawn. Careful as one had to be on the prairie, the stranger looked harmless enough, and riding seemed to afford him a certain amount of distress.

He was far too heavily built to ride with any degree of comfort. He must have scaled nearly sixteen stone, and, suppressing a smile, Don felt glad for the sake of the horse he rode that it was sturdily built.

After his glance at the animal, Don again studied its owner, for he found him interesting. He wore a wide-brimmed panama, a soft shirt, and a collar and tie—articles of attire seldom seen near Great Steer Ranch—and a riding-costume that suggested Fifth Avenue, New York.

His face was florid, and ended in a roll of chins. It was clean-shaven, and a hard, thin-lipped mouth, and keen, steel-blue eyes rather swept away the ludicrous impression given at first glance by his bulk. He might weigh sixteen stone; but, for all that, he looked to be an alert-witted American man of business. Don Darrel put him down as that, and the future was to prove him right.

As the man guided his horse towards Don, evidently meaning to approach and address him, there happened a startling thing.

Whilst the stranger was still some dozen yards from the corral, his horse suddenly pricked up its ears, and stopped with an abruptness that almost threw him.

The next instant, the stout rider had indeed gone flying out of his saddle. The horse, obviously terrified by



THE STAMPEDING HERD!

With set face and cracking stock-whip, Don Darrel rode in front of the herd, determined to save the wounded man from being trampled to death beneath those countless hoofs.

The bull had to realise at length that he was "roped," and that to break away was impossible; and finally it was brought into the corral by its triumphant captor, panting, foam-flecked, quelled.

Tossing his end of the lasso to one of the men, Don slipped from the saddle. He was breathing a trifle quickly, but that was all, and looked quite cool and unruffled.

He turned as he heard a patter of feet and a delighted "Whoof!" behind him, and for the next few moments was doing his best to keep from being knocked down by the frantic manifestations of affection of a brown-coated, cross-bred dog.

This was Snap, his especial pet and comrade, who had glimpsed him from afar and torn across the corral to welcome him home after the day's work.

As dogs go, Snap was no aristocrat. He had the coat of an Irish terrier, and the long, thick-set body of an Airedale. His tail had not been "docked," and his paws were so large that he gave the impression of being a gigantic puppy.

rider, he swung round and made for him, giving vent to another joyous bark.

The horseman was a curious figure. No one, not even Don, knew him by any other name save Chuta, and, as suggested by his gaunt, brown face, his sombre eyes, and lank, black hair which rested upon his shoulders, he was more than half a Redskin.

Probably, when years ago the first courageous frontiersmen were pushing westward from the rolling Texas ranges, and disputing every inch of the way with the Apache Indians, Chuta's forefathers had fought with the "palefaces"; but Chuta himself was friendly enough with all whites, and would readily have lain down his life to serve one—Don Darrel.

As a lad Chuta had come to the ranch, and, as Don's father had been a widower, acted as cook and general housekeeper; for he was quick to learn, and soon became skilled in all domestic tasks.

From the first he had attached himself to Don, and, indeed, it was to Chuta that the boy owed much of his superb horsemanship, the servant

left here. Chuta know, an' Chuta tell Boss Luke!"

He spoke of Luke Hendrey, Don's foreman.

"Good for you, Chuta!" Don answered. "I hadn't noticed they were in danger from the drought out yonder; but trust you not to miss anything!"

The cowboys had ridden off, driving the lowing cattle across the corral. Don and Chuta, with Snap at their heels led their horses towards the red stables, which, with a group of sheds, lay on the far side of the corral near the picturesque ranch-house of red adobe bricks.

Having watered and fed the animals, and seen them comfortable for the night, the boy and his strange companion retired to the homestead, where Chuta hastened to prepare the evening meal.

Don, who was ever for improving his education, buried himself in a book of English grammar, whilst Snap, knowing nothing of learning and being most interested in the juicy steaks Chuta was grilling, squatted near him, and sniffed appreciatively.

something not yet apparent to the two men, wheeled about, then reared up on its hind legs, and, losing his grip on the bride-roin, the stout man thudded flat on his back in the grass. It was an ugly fall for a heavy person such as he, and, in alarm, Don leapt over the corral-rails, and darted towards him, as he saw that he remained where he had dropped.

The flying hoofs of the horse must have only just missed the unfortunate man's head, as the animal got the bit between its teeth and raced madly away over the prairie. That it was frightened out of its senses was certain.

Don Darrel saw that the fallen rider's eyes were closed, and it was possible that he was badly injured. The lad had little time to speculate as to this, however, for a sound came to his ears that he had heard once before, and remembered only too well.

It was like the rumbling of distant thunder, and seemed to make the earth beneath him vibrate. It came from afar off; but he knew that it was made by the hoofs of hundreds of steers—one of his herds which, startled at something, had stampeded!

Don realised the danger of the prostrate man, and shook him roughly by the shoulder. As yet, the cattle were not in sight, and probably a goodly distance off; but at the rate a stampeding herd travels, they would be rushing down upon them in a few moments.

To Don's satisfaction, the stranger opened his eyes. He stared dazedly up at the boy for a second or two, then twisted his lips in pain.

"Quick! Get up and come behind the rails!" Don Darrel urged, seizing his arm and trying to drag him to his feet.

"Let me lie here for a while, my lad," the stranger begged, stifling a groan. "I've injured my back, I guess, and I can't move!"

"But you must!" Don cried, shaking him in his excitement and

of cattle bearing down on us, and they'll trample you to death! It was the sound of them that startled your horse and made him throw you! For the love of Heaven, pull yourself together and make an effort, stranger!"

The man's already pale face blanched to the lips. With all his strength, he tried to scramble up, but could not even bring his heavy body to a sitting posture.

Don Darrel's teeth came together with a snap. There was but one chance left now to save the life of the prostrate stranger, and that was to try to turn the maddened herd so that it missed him in its blind, unreasoning rush.

He grabbed for the bridle of his horse, secured it, and fairly leapt into the saddle.

The horse reared, and tried to throw him; but he had it under control in an instant, and, digging his spurs deep, he rode straight towards the onrushing cattle, though he must have known that he faced almost certain death.

The herd was coming on madly, and even in the waning light he could see that it must number hundreds, at least. He knew that the front ranks might try to avoid him, but that the brutes tearing blindly behind would force them onwards.

With set face, and cracking the stock-whip, Don Darrel rode at the cattle, then swung off to the left, so as to dash along the face of them. His horse stumbled with the swiftness of the swerve, nearly coming down. Fortunately, however, it recovered itself, or Don would have been a dead lad.

Right out to the end of the foremost line of beasts Don dashed, shouting, and still cracking his whip as he went, and almost deafened by their bellowing. The tossing horns of the last steer he passed missed going his horse only by inches.

Don Darrel swung round once more, so that he rode at the end of the front rank of the multitude of beasts. Then, risking his life every second, he began to ply the whip.

Like a madman he lashed at the nearest steer, and the brute swerved from him, forcing others in a similar direction. As yet, however, it was only very slightly that the course of the onrushing beasts was altered, and, single handed as he was, it seemed impossible that the boy could make them swerve sufficiently to miss the helpless man lying in the grass only some thirty or forty yards away.

The latter had contrived to raise his arm, and slip his hand beneath his head, and by this means was able to raise it enough to witness the gallant effort Don Darrel was making for his life.

The stranger watched with the fascination of horror. The herd must surely trample upon him! he

thought. Heavens! but what was wrong with his back that he was so helpless and in such excruciating pain? Was his spine broken? Was the plucky boy's attempt to save him all in vain, in any case?

Don's horse bumped up against the side of the burly steed alongside of which it raced, and one of the bull's horns crashed into his leg and badly bruised it. He had little time, however, to think of the pain just then.

The bellowing brutes were turning a little. Hope was high in his breast until he saw how near they were to the man who stared at them from out of the grass ahead.

Don Darrel yelled at the top of his voice, and more frantically he used his whip. Fear that, after all, the steers on the flank of the herd would trample the life out of the stranger, had gripped him.

Thinking nothing of his own danger, he struck at the bull beside him—struck until the animal was dazed, and roused to fury with pain, and Don feared it would turn upon him.

He forged his horse slightly ahead, and with the long thong of the whip lashed as many of the brutes as he could reach in the eyes. They bellowed with pain and rage, and the nearest of them tried to toss him from its path, but always he was just too far away in time, and his frantic exertions now had the desired effect.

It was not until he found his horse almost stamping upon the prostrate stranger that he realised he had turned the cattle sufficiently to miss him.

With a gasp of relief Don whirled his horse clear of the man, and, panting hard, watched the line upon line of cattle sweep past, blindly following the swerved leaders.

Hundreds he had estimated them at, and as they thundered past him, shaking the ground as if it was affected with earthquake tremors, and deafening him with their bellowing,

he knew that he had been right. There must be fully five hundred beasts there, he calculated, which meant that it was one of his largest herds that had engaged in the stampede. He shuddered to think of what would have happened had he not succeeded in altering the brutes' frantic course.

He watched them until the great cloud of dust that enveloped them merged with the twilight, and grew fainter and fainter in the distance. Then he slipped from the back of his horse, and fell upon his knees beside the stranger, to see if he could find out how badly he was hurt.

"You saved me from a terrible death, my boy," the latter said huskily, as he sought for Don's hand. "I shall not forget."

Then, as with anxiety gone reaction set in, he fainted dead away.

The 2nd Chapter. Fifty Million Pounds.

It was four months later that the sequel came.

The stranger's back was not broken, but his spine was bruised, and it was six weeks before he could leave the homestead.

He had proved a curiously silent man, save that he had never ceased to praise and thank Don Darrel for his bravery.

All that the youngster learned from him was that his name was Cyrus Q. Deemster, that he was, as he put it, "comfortably rich," and that he was in the ranching district of Mexico in the interests of a combine of New York millionaires, who were buying up certain properties, and seeking options on the cattle reared by others.

He offered Don Darrel no monetary reward when he was well enough for a waggon to take him to where he could engage special trains and other conveyances to carry him the long distance to his home in New York—a fact for which Don was pleased. The lad was not of a grasping disposition by any means, and had ample income from his ranch.

Cyrus Q. Deemster went off with just a hard grip of the hand, after thanking him again for his bravery, and, in the hard work every fresh day brought for him on his property, Don Darrel forgot him until well over two months had elapsed, and another stranger rode up to the ranch.

"My name is Ponsonby," he said, when Don received him, "and for many years I have been the sole legal adviser to the late Mr. Cyrus Q. Deemster."

"Late!" Don cried, starting, and giving him a quick, inquiring glance. "Is Mr. Deemster dead, then?"

The attorney bowed his grizzled head.

"He died a month ago—not from the effects of his fall from his horse,

but from a long-standing heart trouble."

"I am sorry—real sorry," Don Darrel returned slowly. "He was not one to seek to be very friendly; but, somehow, whilst he was here, sir, I got to like him, I guess."

"He evidently took to you," the lawyer returned, in a strangely significant tone. "Did he give you any inkling that he was the richest of all America's many millionaires?"

Don shook his head. "Well, he was that, my boy," Mr. Ponsonby assured him. "And"—he paused, as though to give weight to his words—"having no relations save a nephew by marriage, who has turned out a black sheep, he has made you his sole heir."

"His heir!" Don gasped, staring dazedly at the man of law. "Do you really mean that—that he has left me his—his giddy millions?"

"He has left you his entire fortune—fifty million pounds sterling, as you, a Britisher, would count it!" was the staggering reply.

Don Darrel reeled bodily, as he had reeled mentally. His brain was buzzing, his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and the room appeared to be whirling madly round him.

As he collapsed limply into a chair, he found the lawyer's grave but kindly face swimming in a mist, and beyond it he seemed to see pile upon pile of gold, silver, and banknotes, that stretched farther than the eye could see.

Fifty million pounds! He could not estimate what it would look like if it could be all laid out before him! Fifty times a million pounds in gold! Fifty thousand thousand pound Bank of England notes, of which he had heard his father speak! And it was all his—his!

He pressed his hands to his forehead, and tried hard to think clearly.

But it was of no use. At present there was room in his brain for only

one train of thought—that he was the richest boy in the world, and that in the future he could obtain almost anything by raising his little finger, from a motor-car to an Atlantic liner!

Then fear seized him. How would he use the money? Would he, as he grew older, grind others down, and cause them misery and wretchedness, as many other millionaires were wont to do?

"Shucks! No, never that, I guess!" he thought.

And there and then Don Darrel resolved that his millions should open the way to endless travel, experience, and adventure for himself, and prove the key to happiness for all whom he met.

The 3rd Chapter.

Don Darrel Bound for School.

Dark plots were being hatched against Don Darrel, the boy with fifty millions.

By the terms of the will left by Cyrus Q. Deemster, the enormous fortune that was now Don's would revert, if he died whilst still a lad and had no heirs, to one Randolph Gurney.

Gurney was the blackguard nephew by marriage of the late millionaire whom the solicitor, Ponsonby, had spoken of, and mightily bitter and disappointed was he when he learned that his uncle's vast wealth had gone to a stranger.

For weeks he was inconsolable. He spent his time in drinking more than was good for any man and in cursing the fates that had caused his uncle to cross Don Darrel's path, not taking into consideration that, knowing his spendthrift habits, Cyrus Q. Deemster might still have willed his millions elsewhere.

Later, Gurney, who was a young New Yorker of about thirty, turned his mind to how best to sweep Don Darrel from his path and inherit the mighty legacy.

On the night prior to the opening of our chapter, Randolph Gurney had visited one of the worst criminal dens in New York's Bowery, and conferred there with a certain Captain Raymond, a crook and adventurer who had engaged in practically everything daring and shady, from fraud and robbery in America, London, and elsewhere, to bushranging in Australia and gun-running to a certain South American Republic.

But more of this anon. For the time being, it is Don Darrel who interests us.

This morning Don Darrel, followed by the faithful Snap and the half-caste Indian, Chuta, had stepped from a train at Euston, and taken his first glimpse of the place of his father's birth—London!

"So this is London!" Don said, when a taxicab had taken him and

his friends to the Strand and they had alighted. "Say, Chuta, it looks a mighty grand place, though I don't see the gold-paved streets I've read of in books."

Chuta grunted, returning with interest the curious stares of the passers-by.

"You could pave dem wi' gold," he suggested gravely.

"Shucks! So I could!" Don exclaimed. "Or, at least, an almighty lot of them! But I don't guess I will, for there's many better uses for money. Gee! Aren't we being gaped at! We'll get right along to some hotel."

There was still a touch of the plains about the attire of the boy and his friend, for they had bought the clothes they wore in a Mexican town before leaving on their long journey.

Don's idea of coming to England was that he might be educated at an English public school. He was no longer troubled with his ranch, having made a present of that to his foreman, Luke Hendrey.

Many lads would have shirked "swotting" to improve their education with endless money at their command, and have settled down to have a ripping time. Not so Don. He realised the value of grasping at the schooling which had hitherto been denied him. But—and it was a big "but"—he meant to have the good time all the same.

Mr. Ponsonby had been appointed his trustee, and had opened up negotiations with Dr. George Harding, of "Eaglehurst School for the Sons of Gentlemen," as it appeared in its advertisements.

It was situated near the village of Eaglehurst in the heart of Essex, and Don Darrel was due to arrive there on the morrow. He little thought as yet how his coming was being discussed, and the excitement it was causing those who were to be his fellow-scholars.

Don espied a rather magnificent hotel near Charing Cross Station, and led the way to it.

He entered the imposing vestibule and sauntered up to the clerk at the reception-desk, Chuta, his red face Sphinx-like, and Snap following.

"I want a suite of rooms for my friend and myself, pard," Don said, with a friendly nod.

The clerk stared at him superciliously.

"We don't take dogs here, boy," he answered very curtly.

"Why not?"

"Because it's against our rules."

"Shucks! He's a nice docile dog, and he won't do any damage."

"Nevertheless, you cannot bring him here," declared the clerk, looking at Chuta as though he suspected him of wanting to steal something.

"How much do you charge for a guest?"

"Four guineas per day inclusive," the clerk snapped, making it as high as possible in the hopes of ending the argument and being able to get on with his work.

Don Darrel whipped a cheque-book from his pocket and scribbled in it quickly.

"I've a notion I'd like to stay here," he said. "I'll pay eight guineas per day for my friend, eight guineas for myself, and sixteen for the dog. Here is a cheque for the two days we shall be here, though we shall be leaving before midday to-morrow."

"Look here, I don't want any of your tomfoolery!" the clerk cried, exasperated, and making to come from behind his counter. "If you don't clear out I'll send for a policeman and—"

He broke off with a start, as his eyes fell upon the signature at the foot of the cheque Don had tossed upon the counter.

"Great Scott! You're the young gentleman the newspapers have been speaking of—the boy with fifty millions!" he gasped.

"I reckon so," Don agreed calmly.

In a moment the man's attitude changed. He was all smiles and courtesy. Not only did he know that the ridiculous cheque would be met without question, but the fact that Don Darrel, the richest boy in the world, had selected the hotel would be a huge advertisement for it.

"Dogs were not taken as a rule." But he would "call the manager," who "would doubtless be most pleased" to convenience Master Darrel.

Don smiled a little bitterly. "The Golden Key!" he thought.

The manager came, smiling and bowing. He even tried to pat Snap, but jumped back comically as that sagacious dog, sensing his affection was not genuine, showed the whites of his eyes and said "G-r-r-r!" deep down in his shaggy chest

Probably the manager would not have minded had Don expressed a wish to bring a den of lions to his hotel. An army of pages and servants were instructed to see that "Master Darrel" wanted for nothing. He and Chuta and Snap were given the best disengaged suite, and then Mr. Manager got to work.

He saw that Don Darrel's presence at the hotel was noised abroad, and ere long it was besieged by hosts of newspaper reporters.

The manager was artful enough to see that they did not reach Don, but he invented wonderful accounts of how the boy was flinging imaginary thousands about, which were duly printed in all the evening papers, and seriously alarmed Mr. Ponsonby when they were copied by the great American dailies and came to his notice.

Don's first task was to obtain clothes more suitable for a schoolboy. But everything was easy. A tailor from Bond Street was telephoned, and sent a representative round in a taxi to receive the boy's orders. By the evening Don Darrel was attired in an immaculate Eton suit, and Chuta had one of quiet patterned tweeds.

But he refused to part with his long dark locks of jet black hair, and when he put on a "bowler." Don had bought him, the result was funny, to say the least of it.

"Dat's right! You laugh! But me don't care!" he grunted. "Me tink Chuta looks 'dinky!'"

Grimacing, Don Darrel left him admiring the effect of the hat before a pier-glass, and strolled down to the palm-court. With supreme contempt for hotel rules, Snap followed him downstairs.

Don had had a tiring day and, calling the dog to him, sank down upon a divan that was almost concealed by a great cluster of ferns and palms.

He was thinking of the school to which he was going on the morrow

when there happened a rather curious coincidence.

Tompkins minor of the Fourth Form at Eaglehurst had come up to town to join his father and stay with him a day or so before Mr. Tompkins went on a long business trip abroad.

The Tompkins were a Nottingham family, and their home being there, father and son had put up at the hotel. They had just finished dining when Don took his secluded seat, and, ordering their coffee to be brought to the palm-court, strolled there themselves, and took a couple of seats on the opposite side of the ferns and palms screening Don Darrel's retreat.

"I don't know what Eaglehurst is coming to, pater!" Don heard the rather squeaky voice of the younger Tompkins say. And his next remark caused him to start. "This American boy who is coming there was brought up on a beastly ranch."

"Dear me!" said his father, who wanted to read his paper.

"Y-u-u-s!" went on young hopeful, who spoke with an affected drawl. "The fellows say he will probably wear a slouch-hat and carry revolvers and a lasso, and—er—that kind of thing, you know, pater—in fact, he's a wretched cowboy, or was before he came into all those millions of money."

Mr. Tompkins, something of a snob like his son, lowered his paper.

"Surely your schoolmates will not tolerate him, Theodore?" he said pompously.

"You bet they will not, pater!" declared Tompkins minor. "The school, which has lost tone enough of late, was intended for the sons of gentlemen, not a lot of—er—cattle lads! What?"

He laughed unpleasantly.

"Oh, no; he'll have had enough of it after one term, pater! Most of the fellows have already decided to make matters too hot for him!"

Behind the palms, Don Darrel rose quietly to his feet. His handsome boyish face had set hard, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

He went to the reception-desk and borrowed from the clerk a telephone directory and a railway guide. He studied both for a few moments, then retired to his room.

"In the morning, Chuta," he said to his friend and servant, "I want you to go to an address of a horse and blood-stock dealer I'll give you, and buy a couple of young horses that are as near untrained as possible. Have them sent right along to Little Merstram, which is the station before Eaglehurst, where we are going. It has come to my knowledge that Eaglehurst School has certain ideas about me, and—well, it would be such a pity to disappoint it!"

(Make a point of reading next week's long instalment of this exciting tale!)

A SPLENDID TALE OF ADVENTURE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA!



ROPING IN THE RUSTLERS!

A Grand Yarn of
FRANK RICHARDS & CO.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapter.

Taking the Trail!

Sheriff Henderson, of Thompson Town, jumped from his horse at the porch of the Lawless ranch-house. The first grey glimmer of dawn was breaking in the east, over the summits of the distant Rocky Mountains. Early as the hour was, all was astir at the Lawless Ranch.

A group of cowboys stood by their horses, the latter ready saddled for the trail. The ranch-house door was wide-open, and the ruddy gleam of a log fire showed within. Rancher Lawless stood in the doorway, with a rifle in the hollow of his arm.

"Morning, sheriff!" he called out cheerily.

"Morning!" grunted the sheriff of Thompson. "All ready, I see!"

"I guess so! Come in to breakfast, and I'll call the boys. I guess you'll want to talk to them before we start."

"I reckon so!"

"And your men?"

"They'll be along in half an hour."

"Good!"

Sheriff Henderson sat down at the long pinewood table to an ample Canadian breakfast; and Mr. Lawless stepped to the stairs.

"Bob!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" came a sleepy voice from above. "That you, popper?"

"Sure! Turn out—the sheriff's here!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob Lawless yawned portentously, and turned out of bed. Frank Richards sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Get a move on, Franky!" said Bob.

"Can't be dawn yet!" mumbled Frank Richards. "I feel as if I'd only just closed my eyes!"

Bob gave a sleepy chuckle.

"Same here—but it's dawn, all the same! Look at the window! And the sheriff's downstairs!"

Frank Richards yawned and turned out.

A good night's sleep had made the chums of Cedar Creek feel better, but they were still fatigued from their exertions of the previous couple of days.

But a plunge in cold water awakened them thoroughly, and they looked cheery enough when they came down and bade the sheriff of Thompson good-morning before the log fire.

Sheriff Henderson eyed them rather curiously.

"I guess you young scallywags have been through it!" he remarked.

"I guess so, sheriff!" grinned Bob.

"But we're ready to go through it again if you're going after the rustlers to-day!"

"I reckon you'd do better to stay at home," said Mr. Henderson.

"You can tell me what you've found out about the ranch-raiders—"

"But you'll want us to guide your outfit," said Bob.

"Your father can decide that."

Frank Richards and Bob looked anxiously at the rancher. They were very keen to join in the pursuit of Handsome Alf and his gang of rustlers, whose hidden retreat they had discovered in the hills.

"Oh, let them come!" said Mr. Lawless. "I guess I'll see that they don't run into danger again. Now tell the sheriff what you've found out, Bob."

"Go ahead!" said Mr. Henderson.

"I guess we've found out nearly all there is to know," said Bob, with a touch of complacency. "We were after the strayed horses, sheriff, when we came on the raiders. They've got their camp in a locked valley in the

heart of the Wapiti Hills, west of here, and there's a big crowd of cattle and horses rounded up there—all the plunder, I guess, that they've bagged from the ranches in the Thompson Valley."

"You've seen that?"

"Sure!"

"And the rustlers let you come away to tell me about it?"

"I guess they didn't want to!" chuckled Bob. "We just got away by the skin of our front teeth, didn't we, Franky?"

"Just about!" smiled Frank Richards.

And the chums proceeded to narrate their adventures in the Wapiti Hills, and their narrow escape from the cavern in the locked valley.

"Pile into your breakfast now, boys!" said Mr. Lawless.

Frank Richards & Co. sat down to breakfast. There was an almost incessant thudding of hoofs outside, as the sheriff's men arrived in twos and threes from all quarters. The Lawless Ranch was the rendezvous for the outfit that was to take the trail in search of the rustlers, and the gathering was a numerous one. The appearance of a gang of ranch-raiders in the peaceful Thompson Valley had taken the ranchers and farmers by surprise, and hitherto no success had been met with by the sheriff in his attempts to trail them down. The news brought by Frank Richards & Co. was a "windfall" to the sheriff of Thompson. Including the cowboys of the Lawless Ranch, there were over fifty

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BLASTING THE RUSTLERS' STRONGHOLD! Suddenly there was a fearful rending explosion. It was followed by the crash of falling rock. "Forward!" rapped out the sheriff to his men.

The sheriff listened in silence, eating his breakfast the while.

"You've had a close call," he said at last. "If the raiders are still in the locked valley, I reckon they'll be rounded up pretty soon. I guess I'll be glad of a guide to locate them. But oughtn't you young scallywags to be at school?"

"School!" said Frank. "We're jolly well not going back to school until Handsome Alf is rounded up, are we, uncle?"

The rancher smiled.

"I think they've earned that much, sheriff," he said. "Hallo! Here comes the other young rascal!"

Vere Beauclerc rode up to the ranch-house and dismounted, and came in cheerily.

"In time?" he asked. "Good-morning, sheriff! Father's coming on to join your outfit."

"The more the merrier," said the Thompson sheriff.

horsemen gathered outside the house—an ample force to deal with all the rustlers in the section.

"I guess we're on in this scene," Bob Lawless remarked to his chums, as the sheriff went out with the rancher. "If they left us behind I rather reckon we'd follow on, after we've spotted where the rustlers hang out. No school for us yet awhile."

"No fear!" agreed Frank Richards emphatically.

"Handsome Alf will be on his guard," remarked Beauclerc. "If we had got away unseen we might have taken the rotters by surprise. But—"

"But we'll take them, anyway," said Bob confidently. "They couldn't get the cattle away in a hurry, and they're sure to put up a fight for their plunder. We'll round them up in the locked valley, and collar every rascal in the crowd."

Mr. Beauclerc looked into the room.

time; and it was not likely that they would abandon their plunder without a struggle.

That the enemy were still at hand was soon proved by an exchange of shots in the canyon ahead. Billy Cook came riding back, with a streak of red on his bronzed cheek.

"I guess we've roused them out, sheriff," he said. "They had scouts out in the canyon. They've vamoosed with something to remember me by, I guess. They're to home."

"Good!" said the sheriff.

With half a dozen scouts still ahead, the outfit rode on up the canyon.

The sheriff gave the order to halt at last where a steep acclivity rose before them, and the rocky walls of the canyon narrowed to a gorge.

In the narrow gorge, huge rocks had been piled in a barricade, and over the rocky barrier the gleam of rifles could be seen.

"Ready!" he called.

"We're quite ready, father!" said Vere Beauclerc, jumping up from the table. "Come on, you fellows!"

And Frank Richards & Co. ran out to get their horses and ride with the sheriff's outfit.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Rustlers' Retreat!

"That's the canyon!"

Bob Lawless pointed with his riding-whip.

The sun was high in the heavens when the Thompson sheriff's outfit arrived at the foot of the Wapiti Hills.

Before them lay the opening of the canyon, like a great rift in the hills, into which Frank Richards & Co. had ridden after the strayed horses a couple of days before.

Far ahead, at the end of that gulf in the hills, lay the narrow gorge that gave access to the hidden valley, where Handsome Alf and his gang had made their camp.

The sheriff rapped out an order, and Billy Cook and half a dozen of the cowboys rode ahead, to scout in the canyon.

The outfit followed them at a trot.

The hard rocks below the horses' hoofs gave no sign of a trail, and the traces left by the driven cattle had been carefully obliterated by the ranch-raiders. Nothing was left to guide a pursuer; and but for the discovery made by the chums of Cedar Creek, Handsome Alf would have been quite secure in his hidden retreat.

Frank Richards was wondering whether the ranch-raiders had lingered in the locked valley, up in the hills.

Handsome Alf had known before sundown the previous day that the chums had escaped, and he could not fail to be aware that the sheriff of Thompson would take the trail at dawn.

But the outlaws could not have removed the stolen cattle in the

time; and it was not likely that they would abandon their plunder without a struggle.

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The outfit dismounted, and tethered their horses among the rocks.

To ride up the gorge in the face of volleys across the barricade was certain death.

There were over fifty men in the outfit; but five hundred could not have rushed the barrier in the gorge if the outlaws were determined upon resistance.

And that that was the case was soon clear enough, for shots began to ring out from the gorge, and a bullet spun the sheriff's Stetson hat round on his head.

"I guess they mean business," said Mr. Henderson calmly. "Keep in cover, boys!"

"You bet, sheriff!" said Billy Cook, who was already deep in sassafras, with his rifle before him, watching for a chance to put in a shot at the defenders of the locked valley.

But the outlaws were cautious enough; not a head or a hat showed over the barrier of rocks.

They were waiting for a charge, when their volleys would have told with deadly effect on the assailants.

But the Thompson sheriff was not there to throw away the lives of his followers.

He sat on a boulder, in the cover of a rugged rock, and lighted his pipe.

"Are we stopping here, sheriff?" exclaimed Mr. Lawrence, one of the farmers in the outfit.

The sheriff nodded.

"I guess so, for the present."

"If we rushed them—"

"Not a galoot would get as far as those rocks alive," answered the sheriff composedly. "I guess we've got to think of a better stunt than that. Young Lawless!"

"Here, sheriff!"

"You've been on the other side of that barricade. Do you reckon there's any other outlet from the valley yonder?"

"I guess not, sheriff. So far as we could see, it was shut in on all sides by the hills—a locked valley," answered Bob. "Of course, there may be a path out over the hills; we couldn't see about that."

"I guess there would be a path," said Mr. Henderson quietly. "That's a pretty safe corner to lie low in; but the rustlers wouldn't leave themselves without a back door in case of accidents. There'll be a path over the hills on the other side, I reckon. You saw nothing of it?"

"Nope!"

"They wouldn't be able to get the cattle away by such a path," remarked Mr. Lawless.

"No; only their own skins," said the sheriff. "I reckon they'll hang on as long as they can, and if the game goes agin them they'll make a break for safety. I reckon they're hoping now that we'll run on their rifles, and give them a chance of wiping us out; then they'd be able to drive out the cattle, and look for a safer quarter to skulk in. But that isn't our game. We camp here, for the present."

"I guess we're hung up for a bit," Bob Lawless remarked. "The sheriff's right; it's certain death to advance up the gorge while they hold that barricade in force."

"But what the thump are we going to do, then?" asked Frank Richards. "There's no other way into the upper valley."

"I guess the sheriff will think that out," said Bob confidently. "Hallo! What's the game now?"

Mr. Henderson had called to one of the outfit, a mining engineer of the Thompson Valley. He was in close talk with him for some minutes, and then the miner mounted his horse and rode away down the canyon.

He disappeared in a few minutes at a gallop, evidently on his way back to Thompson.

"What's on now?" said Beauclerc.

Bob shook his head.

"I give that up," he said. "But I guess the sheriff's up to something, and there's going to be a surprise for Handsome Alf and company."

Something evidently was "on," though the chums of Cedar Creek could not guess what it was. Idleness was the order of the day now, and as the sun sloped westward the outfit hung about in groups among the rocks, chatting, or smoking, or exchanging sniping shots with the outlaws in the distance.

The 3rd Chapter.

The Sheriff's Plan!

"A white flag!" exclaimed Bob Lawless suddenly.

All eyes were turned upon the barrier in the gorge, three hundred yards from the camp of the sheriff's men.

Over the piled boulders a white flag rose into view, and it was followed by a figure the chums of Cedar Creek knew well.

A dark-skinned, handsome man, with a curled moustache, and gold earrings glimmering in his ears, stood on the rocks and waved the flag.

It was Handsome Alf. "That's Carson!" said Bob Lawless. "He's got plenty of nerve to show himself in the open. But I reckon we'll respect the white flag." The outlaw was shouting, but his words could not be distinguished at the distance.

Sheriff Henderson rose from the boulder where he was seated, and knocked out the ashes of his pipe.

"You're not going out of cover, sheriff!" exclaimed Mr. Beauclerc.

"I guess so. Keep that galoot covered, boys, and drop him if there's a shot."

"You bet, sheriff!" Mr. Henderson advanced from cover towards the outlaw.

He was within easy range of the rustlers behind the stack of boulders in the gorge; but Handsome Alf was already covered by twenty rifles, and the outlaw's life was the guarantee for his own.

He waved his hand to the man with the earrings, signing to him to come forward.

Handsome Alf jumped down from the rocks without hesitation. It was evident that the Californian had plenty of nerve.

He advanced to within a few yards of the sheriff, so that the two leaders met half-way.

Handsome Alf saluted the sheriff with mocking politeness. Mr. Henderson eyed him with cold grimness.

"Well?" he asked. "I reckon you want to talk?"

"I guess so, sheriff."

"Go ahead."

"Safe conduct on both sides for the pow-wow—ch?" asked the Californian.

"Sure."

"I know you're a man of your word, sheriff."

"Get ahead with what you want to say. Is it surrender?"

The Californian laughed.

"No." Handsome Alf gritted his white teeth. "You can hang on in the canyon as long as you like, I guess; it won't worry my crowd."

"I guess we shall hang on a bit," assented the sheriff.

"I'm ready to make terms."

"You can talk."

"Clear off, and give me two clear days to get out, and I'm open to quit this section," said Handsome Alf.

"That's a good offer, and will save bloodshed."

"Give you time to get out with your plunder?"

"That's understood."

"Anything else?"

"That's all. It's a good offer. I reckon we could hold you off here till next fall. Is it a trade?"

"I guess not."

"What do you reckon you're going to do, then?"

"I'm not confiding that to you, at present," said the sheriff. "You'll know all about it when—"

"When?"

"When you're cooling your heels in the calaboose at Thompson, I guess," said Mr. Henderson. "The only terms I can offer are—unconditional surrender and a fair trial."

"I guess we're wasting time," said Handsome Alf. "Good-bye, sheriff! We'll meet next at the end of a rifle!"

"I ask nothing better."

The outlaw strode savagely back to the rocky barrier, and swung himself up.

Mr. Henderson walked calmly back to his men.

The moment Handsome Alf was in sheriff of Thompson was behind the rocks by that time."

"No surrender, sheriff?" asked Mr. Lawless.

"Nope. I reckon the galoots are puzzled—getting rattled a bit, I guess. They don't know what the game is," said Mr. Henderson. "I calculate they'll know before morning."

The sun sank lower.

The firing died away; but it was renewed at intervals, and bullets splintered among the rocks.

As soon as darkness set in a very wary outlook was kept in the sheriff's camp.

There was a possibility of a rush from the outlaws, though it was not likely, for Handsome Alf's gang certainly did not number half so many as the Thompson outfit.

No rush came.

During the hours of darkness there were intermittent shots from the outlaws, and a steady rifle-fire from the sheriff's men. Frank Richards & Co. were rather puzzled by the fusillade. The bullets splintered on the rocky barrier in the gorge, without doing

any farther damage; but the cracking of the rifles was almost incessant.

"Looks like wasting lead," Frank Richards remarked. "They won't show their noses to catch our bullets."

"The sheriff's got his reasons," answered Bob. "Mr. Pycroft hasn't come back yet. The sheriff sent him to Thompson for something. It's a long ride. I guess Mr. Henderson's waiting for him."

"But what—"

"We'll see when he comes."

Towards midnight the chums of Cedar Creek rolled themselves in their blankets, as many of the outfit had done, and went to sleep among the rocks. But a dozen men were still keeping up a fire on the gorge, answered every now and then by a shot from the wakeful outlaws. Thick darkness lay over the camp in the canyon, when Frank Richards & Co. were awakened by a stir about them.

The mining engineer had returned from Thompson at last, and with him he brought three laden pack-mules. The sheriff's men were unloading the mules with the greatest care, and the schoolboys eyed the unloaded packs with great curiosity.

"What is it, uncle?" Frank Richards asked, finding himself near the rancher in the gloom.

"Keep back, Frank. It's dynamite."

"Dynamite!" repeated Frank, with a start.

"Giant-powder from the mines," said Mr. Lawless. "Keep back!"

Frank shivered a little.

A chance shot striking the pack-mules' load would have hurled every member of the outfit into eternity at once. There was a hush among the Thompson men; every man was awake and on the alert now. Incessantly, ringing in the darkness, came the crackle of rifles, keeping up their futile fire on the rocky barrier in the gorge.

The 4th Chapter.

The Defeat of the Rustlers!

Frank Richards & Co. waited, with beating hearts.

They understood the sheriff's plans now, grim and terrible as they were.

The outfit had passed the day idly, while the giant-powder was brought up from the mines at Thompson. The barrier in the gorge could not be rushed by living men, but a petard was a different matter. The incessant rifle-fire was kept up, so that when a desperate man went forward with the petard his movements could not be heard by the outlaws. But the man who carried the giant-powder in the darkness towards the rocky barrier would take his life in his hand.

Pycroft, the mining engineer, was the man chosen.

In the gloom the schoolboys could not see his face clearly, but his movements were calm and unconcerned. He removed his boots, and laid down his weapons. It was necessary to be as silent as the grave when he crept forward with his fatal load. One well-directed shot from the outlaws would have ruined all.

The chums waited in suppressed excitement.

"He's gone!" Bob whispered at last.

Frank shuddered.

"If a shot should touch him—"

"It won't," said Bob confidently.

"The gorge is as black as the inside of a hat. A chap could creep up as far as the rocks without a chance of being spotted, so long as he kept quiet. Getting over would be another matter, of course. No chance of that, with the rustlers watching on the other side. If he makes a bit of noise the rifle-fire will cover it. That row has been going on for six or seven hours now—on purpose. Starting it suddenly now would have made them suspicious. I guess the sheriff knows his way about, you chaps."

"Poor wretches!" muttered Frank Richards.

He was thinking of the outlaws who manned the barrier of rocks in the gorge, upon whom this fearful surprise was to be sprung.

The chums listened in painful suspense.

Excepting for the steady roll of rifle-fire they could hear no sound in the gorge.

But they pictured the creeping man advancing by inches in the darkness—they pictured him laying the petard that was to blow up the rock barrier into fragments of stone, and its defenders with it—they pictured him, his deadly work done, creeping back in the gloom, and laying a trail of powder as he crept.

Bob caught Frank Richards' arm suddenly.

"Look!" he breathed.

A red spark glittered in the blackness of the gorge.

Frank caught his breath.

"The fuse!" whispered Beauclerc.

There was a patter of bare feet on the rocks, and the mining engineer came breathlessly into the sheriff's camp.

"Ready, boys?" came Mr. Henderson's deep voice.

"Ready, sheriff!"

All was ready for a rush as soon as the dynamite had done its work.

Frank Richards & Co. grasped their rifles. But their hearts were throbbing almost to suffocation.

A shout rang in the gorge. The outlaws had seen the red spark, and perhaps they guessed what it meant.

But there was no time for them to act.

The spark ran swiftly along the powder trail, and it was a matter only of moments.

The rifle-fire had ceased.

For some terrible seconds there was silence in the canyon—silence in the gorge, save for the wild shouts from the rustlers.

Then suddenly came a fearful, rending explosion.

A red flare danced against the blackness of the night, and the deafening roar of the dynamite filled the gorge with thunder.

It was followed by crash on crash of falling rocks.

Amid the splintering of rocks wild cries and groans could be heard, and the squealing of startled horses.

"Forward!" rapped out the sheriff.

The explosion had shattered the rocks, and hurled them far and wide, and the way into the locked valley lay open, only cumbered by debris.

Among the splintered rocks lay five or six figures, still in death, and half a dozen more that moved painfully and groaned.

With a rush the sheriff and his men were through the gorge, stumbling over the shattered remnants of the barricades, and the bodies of the outlaws who had perished in the explosion.

Nine or ten outlaws who had escaped the explosion were in full flight across the valley.

Here and there a shot rang out, answered at once by the outfit with rapid fire. The squealing of horses and the bellowing of frightened cattle echoed across the locked valley. In a few minutes the Thompson men had reached the group of corrals and cabins where lay the outlaw camp, and here two or three desperate men

OUR TELEPHONE COMPETITION.

1. "Hallo! Is that Green's?"

2. "Jones, 47, High Street, speaking—"

3. "Where's my—"

4. "Yes—"

5. "What do you mean—which one?"

6. "Of course, I do—"

7. "What do you mean, haven't one left? Don't I take it—"

8. "Yes, I know there's been a rush, but where's my—"

9. "What? Do you mean you let him have it? You knew perfectly well—"

10. "Look here, Green, I simply must get it—"

11. "I know it's a special one. All the same, there must be a—"

12. "What do you mean—hold out?"

13. "Oh, sold out. How on earth—"

14. "Monday; yes, I know. But it's only Tuesday, and—"

15. "By eleven yesterday? Then you can't get me one?"

16. "For yourself, I suppose—"

17. "Well, you'll have to send me that one!"

18. "Never mind your 'buts.' I must have it, and that's all there is to it."

19. "Good! Then I'll expect it up at once!"

20. "Right! Thanks! Good-bye!"

Here is a novel wheeze which will amuse, and, we hope, puzzle you. As you see, the above represents one side of a telephone conversation. Can you fill in the other side? If so, write down what you think would be the replies of the man at the other end of the wire.

For the effort which completes the telephone conversation in the best and neatest manner in the opinion of your Editor, whose judgment must be accepted as final, a cash prize of 10s. will be awarded. There is no need to cut this out—simply number each "answer" to correspond with the number of the "question." All solutions to be received not later than Monday, November 8th, addressed, "The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4." and the envelopes marked "Telephone Competition."

put up a fight, and were shot down with rifles in their hands. But most of the rustler gang surrendered as they were overtaken, and held up their hands promptly.

Half a dozen prisoners were roped up, but among them the Cedar Creek chums looked in vain for Handsome Alf. They wondered whether the man with the earrings had perished in the gorge. It was impossible to ascertain till the morning.

The affair was quickly over, the scattered firing died out, and the sheriff's outfit camped for the remainder of the night in the cabins formerly occupied by the rustlers in the valley.

But there was little sleep that night, and Frank Richards & Co. were glad when the light of dawn stole over the high cliffs that surrounded and shut in the locked valley.

The 5th Chapter.

The Last Capture!

Frank Richards threw aside his blanket and rose. His eyes had hardly closed since he had rolled himself in it in one of the log cabins from which the rustlers had fled.

A camp-fire had been built, and was blazing away merrily, and the Thompson men were gathered round it, cooking their morning rations.

The Thompson outfit were in the greatest of spirits.

Sheriff Henderson had dealt sternly enough with the outlaw gang, and the "wipe-out" had been almost complete. It was likely to be a severe lesson to any enterprising rustlers who were tempted to wander over the border and make the Thompson River their hunting-ground. Almost all the gang had fallen or had been captured, and the stolen herds grazing in the locked valley were recaptured, and the cowboys were already preparing to drive them away down the canyon.

Frank Richards & Co. looked round over the grassy valley shut in by barren cliffs, where hundreds of head of cattle and horses were grazing.

"I guess it was a clean sweep," Bob Lawless remarked. "Handsome Alf reckoned he was as safe as houses here, but—"

"There go the prisoners!" said Beauclerc.

Half a dozen men were riding away with the captured outlaws in a bunch. The rustlers looked dejected enough. Their lawless career had come to a sudden stop, and long days behind prison walls lay dimly before them.

Some of the sheriff's men were burying the bodies of the fallen. Two or three badly wounded rustlers lay in one of the cabins, to be moved later.

"I wonder what's become of Handsome Alf?" said Frank Richards thoughtfully. "Billy Cook says that his body hasn't been seen."

Bob swept the green valley with his glance.

"I suppose there's a dog's chance that he's got away," he remarked.

"There may be a path out over the hillside somewhere. I guess the sheriff will make sure before he goes."

As the morning sunlight strengthened there was a search of the locked valley for stray fugitives from the outlaw gang. Two or three of the rustlers were found skulking among the rocks, and were rounded up, and sent off after the other prisoners. To the sheriff's questions they answered that they knew of no path out of the valley, excepting by the gorge, and the fact that they had lingered was a proof of what they said. But the sheriff of Thompson was not satisfied.

"I guess Handsome Alf hasn't gone under," he said. "There's no trace of him to be found, and I reckon if there's a way out of the valley he would know it, though he mightn't tell his men. Scatter and look for a trail. If he's alive, we're not going back to Thompson without him."

And the search went on during the sunny morning while the cowboys were driving away the captured cattle, a dozen men remaining with the sheriff to continue the search.

Frank Richards & Co. joined in it keenly. The cruel death to which Handsome Alf had consigned them, and which they had so narrowly escaped, made them eager to help in bringing the Californian to justice.

They rode round the locked valley, scanning the cliffs that shut it in, but on all sides the cliffs seemed inaccessible, save where the gorge opened into the lower canyon.

In one spot, where the torrent came tumbling down the cliffs into the valley, Bob Lawless halted. His chums drew rein.

"Nothing there, Bob," said Frank Richards. "A goat couldn't have climbed up there, and the water would wash him down if he did."

"I guess that's so," assented Bob.

"But—"

"But what?"

"I guess I'm looking under the waterfall."

"Under it!" ejaculated Frank.

From a sloping bed above the torrent fell a sheer twenty feet to the level of the valley, amid showers of spray. The sheet of water seemed unbroken against the cliff. Bob's chums watched him in amazement as he approached closer to the waterfall.

Bob's keen eyes had noted that the cliff over which the torrent tumbled was overhanging, which meant that there was a clear space below, screened by the sheet of falling water.

He plunged through the mist and spray of the waterfall at the side of the torrent and disappeared from view.

Frank glanced at Vere Beauclerc and smiled.

"Nothing there," he said.

"I fancy not. But—Hark!"

Crack!

A rifle rang sharply, and the report came from under the sheet of falling water against the cliff.

"My hat!"

Frank Richards leaped from his horse and dashed to the torrent's edge. He plunged through the spray at the side of the waterfall.

To his surprise, he found a clear space of six feet or more between the screen of falling water and the face of the cliff.

On the wet rocks two figures were struggling fiercely, locked in a deadly grip.

"Handsome Alf!" yelled Frank Richards.

Evidently Bob Lawless had tracked the skulking outlaw to his hiding-place. His hasty shot, as he sighted the crouching rustler, had missed, and Handsome Alf was upon him the next moment.

It was fortunate for Bob that his chums were at hand.

"Back up, Beau!" shouted Frank.

He rushed at the outlaw.

Bob Lawless was down on his back on the rocks, the Californian kneeling above him, and Handsome Alf was already jerking the bowie-knife from his belt.

Frank's grip on his shoulders dragged him back as the knife came out, and the Californian reeled over on the wet rocks.

He panted out a curse and rose to his knees, and at the same moment Vere Beauclerc closed in on him, and his rifle-butt swung over the outlaw's head.

"Surrender, or—"

The Californian sprang at him with lunging knife.

Crash!

The rifle-butt descended, and the blow caught Handsome Alf full upon the head.

He gave a groan and pitched sideways.

Bob Lawless scrambled up breathlessly.

"I guess he's our mutton!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

Handsome Alf stirred and looked up wildly. A rope was being knotted about his wrists, and as he attempted to struggle Bob Lawless pressed the point of his own knife to his ribs.

"Let up!" he said pleasantly.

"A thousand curses—"

"As many as you like, old scout!" grinned Bob. "Make sure of the scallywag, Frank."

Frank Richards knotted the rope.

"You bet!" he answered. "He's safe now. Get up, Handsome Alf! The sheriff's anxious to see you."

The man with the earrings gritted his teeth, his fierce black eyes glinting at the Cedar Creek chums.

"I guess I'll remember this!" he muttered. "I guess—"

"It will be a happy memory for you in the stone jug, if they don't hang you," said Bob Lawless. "Get a move on!"

The Californian was marched out from under the hollow rock, drenched with the foam of the falling torrent. In great triumph the chums of Cedar Creek marched him towards the camp.

"Sheriff!" bawled Bob Lawless.

"You've got him!" exclaimed the Thompson sheriff; and his bronzed face lighted up with satisfaction at the sight of the sullen, savage outlaw.

"I reckoned he wasn't fur off. Rope him up on a hoss, and I reckon we'll be getting."

And when the sheriff's outfit rode out of the locked valley and took the homeward trail Handsome Alf rode in their midst, bound to his horse—to imprisonment in the calaboose at Thompson till he could be transferred to Frazer for trial and punishment.

A couple of days later Frank Richards & Co. were in their old places at Cedar Creek School, schoolboys once more now that the outlaw gang had been rounded up.

THE END.

(Mind you read next week's tale of Frank Richards & Co., entitled "Judge Lynch." It is a corker!)

OUR GRAND NEW SCOUTING SERIAL! FULL OF FUN AND ADVENTURE!



The 1st Chapter.

The Storm!

A sharp cry from Patrol-leader Ted Martin.

"I say, did you see that?"

The scouts, with the exception of Wilson, wheeled round, and a quick glance at Ted showed that he was staring out to sea, although not a single thing could be seen in that pitch darkness.

The lightning came again before anyone could speak, a vivid, forked streak that came zig-zagging down from the ink-coloured sky into the sea, but it was not at the storm Ted Martin was looking.

"Did you see that rock, Kitto?"

"The rock that's between the shore and White Gull Island?" flashed back the fellow whom everybody called the "sprucer." "Yes, I saw it! Ted, there's a man on it!"

The last words came in a whisper from Kitto, but Ted Martin did not move for a moment. His hand was up, shading his eye, and he longed for the next flash to come about as much as he could have longed for anything.

The rest of the patrol stood at the alert, awaiting orders, but there were several startled cries when the lightning did play once more.

It showed up the rock Kitto had spoken of with amazing clearness, and just as clearly the form of a man standing there—a clear, black outline against the already foam-capped waves; and Ted Martin was rapping out his orders almost before the flash had died away.

"Go back to the camp and report to the scoutmaster, Wilson!" he flashed. "You others, follow me!"

He darted away down a lane as he spoke, and the rest of the patrol were close on his heels, for it was as clear as anything that there was serious work ahead.

That rock they had seen the man on was cut off from the mainland at high tide, and in such a storm as was obviously coming, it would be overswept by the waves in a manner that no human being could stand against.

All that was perfectly clear to Ted, but there was not a sign of his losing his head. He had taken to heart too thoroughly the "Be Prepared" motto for that to happen, and he was never once at fault in his way down to the shore.

At a fast run he led his patrol to where their stout boat was beached, and again his orders were rapped out crisply.

"You take the rudder-cords, Pearson, when we're afloat!" he cried. "If anybody doesn't want to come, just say so, for it'll not count against you!"

None of the scouts spoke.

There was a white face here and there, and well there might be, for the wind was increasing with every second, but there wasn't a fellow among them who thought of shirking. They just caught hold of their boat, and raced her down the beach until her bows were in the foam.

"Wait a minute!"

Ted Martin spoke quietly now, his eyes fixed on the waves as they came rolling in, then he gave the word.

"Out with her, you fellows!"

He lurched forward himself as he spoke, and the others weren't a second behind them, and the launch was made in splendid fashion, scarcely a gallon of water being shipped for all the sea that was running.

With fine speed the scouts bent to their oars, for all of them had the pilot's badge "up," and could pull a scull, and very little time was wasted in getting the boat racing through the breakers.

It was not the outward journey that was worrying Ted, though; he was pretty certain of getting to the

rock safely, but coming back was going to be a very different thing.

"Just as hard as you can!" he shouted to his crew. "Every moment is bringing more wind with it. Give a shout, Pearson, when we're between the rock and White Gull Island!"

"Right-ho!"

Young Pearson bent eagerly forward.

He thought he knew the exact spot where they could get the boat right up to the rock, in water that was sheltered from the wind by the island. He waited for the next flash of lightning, then saw that he was right.

"Steady now! We're almost there!"

"Good!"

Ted Martin panted out the word, then he saw his chance.

"In with her, you chaps! Get her nose right up to the rocks, and hold

are, well pulled! It's a cockleshell of a craft we're in, by the shudder of her—a Davy Jones' craft!"

Ted Martin and the others took no notice. They had too much on hand in the fight against the storm to be puzzled at the old sailor's running remarks, for more than one of them did not think they were going to make the shore in safety.

"It's the darkness that matters as much as anything," thought Ted, his teeth gritted. "Pearson can't see what course he's steering except when the lightning's playing. Ah!"

The last exclamation was a gasp of relief, for a steady, white light—from a good-sized electric torch, by the look of it—was gleaming steadily ahead. Someone on the beach was giving them a guiding light, and that was going to mean much to the Otters.

"Keep her bows or her stern to the waves, my men! Let nothing



THE MAN ON THE ROCK!

The lightning showed up the practically submerged rock with amazing clearness, and on it could be seen the form of a man!

her as well as you can with the oars!"

He was climbing into the bows of the boat as he spoke; then, while the lightning was playing, he sprang ashore and straight for where a middle-aged man who looked like a sailor was standing.

Ted had him by the arm in a flash. "Into the boat with you, sir, for there isn't a moment to lose! We're in for no end of a rough journey back!"

"Ay, ay!" came a hoarse, grating voice. "Sink me if this isn't a storm that is a storm! Help me aboard, whoever you are, for I'm not the man I was, I tell you—I'm not the man I was!"

Ted scarcely heard the grating voice as he helped the sailor aboard the boat; then, with an anxious about, he got his patrol to work with the oars again, and that terrible journey to the shore was commenced—a journey that was not likely to be forgotten by the Otter Patrol for many a long day.

One moment they would be poised high in the air on a white-capped billow; the next dashing down an incline of water at a speed which seemed certain to send the boat's nose right into the sea. Then up again, with the spray flying about them as if a snowstorm were raging.

"Well pulled, my merry men!" came the hoarse voice of the man they had rescued. "Whoever you

come broadside on, or down we go, sink me if we don't!"

It was the sailor again, screaming the words now in a frenzy of excitement, while Ted Martin was conscious of a flash of anger. After all, they had rescued the sailor, and the least he could do was to show himself a man, and not scream like some scared tenderfoot taking his first trip on a bit of a sea.

Again the boat was on the crest of a wave, her bows and stern out of the water, and Ted gritted his teeth again. The next wave was going to be the critical one, for on that they would have to make the beach.

Failure to do so was going to have the craft caught by the following sea, and that would mean a collection of matchwood for someone to collect next day, whatever might happen to Ted Martin and his chums.

"Get ready to pull all you know," he shouted, "the moment I give the word!"

"That's it, my sons!" raved the sailor. "Obey the skipper, and let the rest go! It's swim or sink with the old man aboard any craft. Pull, you lascars—pull!"

"Hold your tongue!" rapped out Ted.

"Pull, I tell you!" came the hoarse shout. "Call yourselves sailors! Sink me if a crew of sea-cooks wouldn't pull a better stroke! It's Davy Jones' locker for the lot of us, my men!"

The last words came in another frenzied shout, but unheeded by Ted, for the critical moment had come. The boat was on the crest of a wave again, with the beach below them, and the patrol leader of the Otters gave his command.

"It's now or never, chaps! Row like Trojans!"

The boat shot ahead, but even then there would not have been much chance of saving the craft, even if the scouts did manage to scramble ashore themselves, if there had not been help at hand.

There was help, though, in the form of a fine, stout rope which a patrol of Girl Guides had ready, with Scoutmaster Hendron and "Jonah" Wilson to lend them a hand.

Mr. Hendron came running into the surf, and Ted Martin caught the rope flung to him, making it fast with lightning-like speed, and an instant later the boat dashed ashore.

It thudded down on the beach. Before ever the next wave could reach her, though, the Girl Guides had dragged her ashore, and the danger was past.

Ted sprang from the boat, but before he had time to say a word the sailor they had rescued was shouting again, his voice sounding hoarser than ever.

"Well done, my lads, be you fishermen or landlubbers, or aught else!" came his words. "Help old Cap'n Bowers ashore, and you shall have a reward for to-night's work that'll make your mouths water. Treasure, my hearties; real treasure, and you shall share! Give me a hand, one of you!"

"I'm giving you one!" rapped out Ted Martin. "Can't you see it, Captain Bowers?"

"Not I," came the harsh, grating answer; "for I'm blind—blind, my hearty!"

how to raise money for the new hospital," came Betty's challenging answer. "Let's hope it will be fine!"

"Rather!"

Ted turned to give a hand with hauling the boat up the beach, as Betty Hanson marched her patrol off, and, of course, Scoutmaster Hendron had to be told everything.

Mr. Hendron, a young schoolmaster, listened with a grave expression in his quiet, good-looking face, for it was he who had brought the Otter Patrol down to the miniature camp on the sandhills, and he knew well enough that six of the patrol had risked their lives that night.

"I wish I had been with you fellows," was all he said. "You've brought off a fine piece of work, all the lot of you! Now to turn in for the night!"

The scouts hurried back to their little camp, thoroughly enjoyed supper round a glowing wood fire, and scrambled into their sleeping-bags in the three tents before the last of the red embers had died away.

By a stroke of splendid luck the following day was bright and sunny, and the Otter Patrol were among the first to reach the old-world garden where the fete was to be held—a magnificent old garden belonging to Mr. Seaton Quaife, who really lived on White Gull Island, which was also his property.

Mr. Quaife met Ted Martin and his patrol with a friendly laugh.

"You've come properly prepared, I see," he exclaimed, pointing to the well-loaded haversacks the scouts were armed with. "Things to sell, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Made them yourselves—eh?" went on Seaton Quaife. "That's the idea! A hospital in Glenchurch is badly enough needed, and we want every penny we can get this afternoon. You'll have to keep your eyes open if you don't want the Girl Guides to beat you, though. They've already started making money."

Even as Mr. Quaife spoke, Betty Hanson and her second leader, May Andrews, came running up, armed with cameras of the post-card size.

Mr. Quaife laughed heartily. "You see the idea, boys?"

"N-no!" muttered Ted.

"Why, the girls have rigged up the old summer-house as a dark-room, and are taking photographs of the people as they come in," explained the owner of White Gull Island. "Then they hurry off, develop and print on gas-light postcards, and sell the prints. Have you fellows got an idea as good as that one?"

"You—you wait until it gets dark, sir," said Jonah Wilson, the tenderfoot eagerly, and he kept a firm grip on a large wooden box he was carrying.

Ted Martin did not feel so hopeful, though.

Certainly young Wilson had a novel idea of his own for making cash, but Jonah's ideas didn't always come off, while it needed only a glance at Betty Hanson's pretty face to see that her wheeze was proving a huge success.

In fact, the Robins were beating the Otters hollow all the afternoon, and Ted Martin became desperate-looking as the light faded.

"Kitto, we've got to do something, old chap!"

"Jonah is our only hope now," answered the second leader anxiously. "He's not much of a read to lean on, still, we've got to lean on him. The guides will have twice as much money to hand up as we have."

"Humph!"

Ted racked his brains for a last-minute idea, but nothing in the way of an inspiration came, so he turned to young Wilson as a last resource. The tenderfoot was optimism personified.

"Everything will be all right when my show starts," Jonah said. "I've fixed up things on what used to be the tennis-court, and that's all shut in like a little quarry. People will have to pay to come through the gate."

"Well, when are you going to start?"

"Young Pearson can go round with the notice now," said the tenderfoot eagerly. "I—I shall want someone to lend me a hand, though!"

"I'll do that!" chuckled Kitto. "Get on with it, Jonah!"

About three minutes later, Pearson was hurrying round the garden, carrying a large placard and shouting the notice written on it in a ringing voice.

"Grand firework display on the tennis-court!" he cried. "Admission—anything you like to give! All the fireworks actually made by Tenderfoot Wilson of the Otter Patrol! Starting the moment it is dark!"

It was nearly dark then, and Wilson couldn't help thrilling as he heard Pearson's stentorian voice. Everything that was being said was true, too, for there was not a single bought

The 2nd Chapter.

Jonah's Fireworks!

"Oh, I didn't know that, Captain Bowers!"

Ted Martin spoke in open concern as he helped the sailor from the boat, for blindness was an affliction that roused all Ted's sympathy at once. Captain Bowers merely shrugged his shoulders and stumped away over the sandhills, feeling his way with his stick and muttering aloud as he went.

"Treasure for them all," sounded his words. "They saved me from Davy Jones! Sink me if they sha'n't have a share in the treasure!"

The echo of his muttering still hung in the air when Ted Martin turned to thank the Girl Guides for their timely help, but Betty Hanson, patrol-leader of the Robins, Glenchurch Company, laughed lightly.

"Scouts are not the only people who keep their eyes open," she said. "We saw that poor old sailor on the rock, too."

"Do you know anything about him?"

Betty shook her head.

"I knew he was blind, of course, for I've seen him heaps of times in Glenchurch. He lives at that little fisherman's cottage on the sandhills, although he hasn't been here very long. I suppose we shall see you all at the fete to-morrow afternoon?"

"Oh, we shall be there!" grinned Ted.

"Then the Robins will show you

firework in young Wilson's box; he had made every one of them himself, and already he and Kitto were fixing up a huge affair that looked very much like an overgrown Roman candle.

"But it isn't," declared the tenderfoot. "Nothing like it, really!"

"What's it do, anyway?"

"You'll see in a minute!" declared Jonah excitedly, matchbox in hand. "Is it dark enough yet?"

"You'll get the word from Ted when it's time. Hero he is!"

Ted Martin came up hurriedly, real concern on his face.

"Only about a dozen people have paid to come in so far!" he jerked out. "The rest show signs of going home. Better get a move on, Wilson!"

Jonah darted forward at once, striking a match as he ran.

"Look out, Kitto!" he whispered. "It's a pretty powerful thing. That's got it!"

Jonah had lighted his patent firework at the first attempt, and darted away from it as quickly as he could.

Kitto, too, jumped back, for there was no telling when Jonah Wilson had a scheme on hand.

For about half a minute there was a grave-like silence, then someone laughed, and it sounded very much like Betty Hanson. Wilson coloured up.

"Better light it again," he whispered. "Can't expect them to go off first time, you know. Aren't you coming, old chap?"

"No," said Kitto briefly; so the tenderfoot went alone—at least, he went to within about a yard of his patent firework; then there was an explosion that made one think the war had broken out again, while Wilson came part of the way back without meaning to.

Still, the display of vividly-coloured balls was quite brilliant, and if a few of them did find their way down the spectators' necks, Jonah Wilson couldn't be blamed for that. Besides, he was too much excited to think about it, even.

"I'm going to call the thing the Green Demon. There he goes again!"

"Yes," gasped Kitto. "Straight for me, too!"

He jumped aside, and the Green Demon darted away in the darkness on a mission of its own; but not for long, for it supplied most of the excitement for the remainder of that display.

It remained hidden and silent long enough for Wilson to get an original catherine-wheel going, then joined in with a terrific explosion that made Kitto jump in the air and the vicar drop his pipe, but where the Green Demon jumped to then no one could say.

All that was certain was that he was back again just as Wilson started up a huge tray of green fire, and the explosion that took place this time brought a whole crowd of laughing visitors on to the lawn.

In that way the Green Demon was a huge success, for money simply poured in at the "box"-office; but it got on Kitto's nerves, all the same.

"Sooner or later it'll fizzle out—won't it, Jonah?"

"Yes, rather!" It has now, as a matter of fact.

"Good!" gasped Kitto, as a louder explosion than ever raised an echo at his feet. "Sounds like it, I must say. The thing seems to be tied to me by a piece of string!"

Kitto stood it for a little longer, then retired from the scene, and Wilson finished off his display alone.

His last effort—a fine rocket—refused to go up; but that didn't matter, in the least, for the Green Demon was ready with his final effort, and Jonah Wilson nearly went up instead.

However, there could be no doubt that his show had saved the situation, for when Ted Martin handed up the money the Otters had taken, he was within a shilling of the cash that Betty Hanson and her guides had made, and the vicar had any amount of nice things to say to both of them.

As he turned away Betty Hanson faced Ted laughingly.

"Next time the Otters won't be in it, Ted Martin!"

"The next time, Betty Hanson," retorted Ted, "the Robins will be as much out of the picture as the Dodo. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" laughed Betty, for the two patrol leaders were the best of chums really, and were always likely to be.

At the gates Ted found Kitto waiting for him; and, as the rest of the patrol had gone back to camp with Mr. Hendron, the two leaders sauntered home by way of the beach.

"I say, I wonder if I could get out to that rock where we were last night, Kitto?"

"Oh, yes, with the tide as it is. But what ever for?"

"Can't say," laughed back the patrol leader. "Got a fancy to have a look at the place, that's all. Don't you bother, though, for I shan't be a minute!"

He darted forward as he spoke, and if he could have known it, that chance climb out to the last of the chain of rocks was destined to bring about the first of a series of amazing things that, later on, were to startle the whole neighbourhood.

At the moment all Ted Martin was thinking about was to get to the rock and back, and, with his pocket-lamp on all the time, it was the easiest of climbs.

He reached the great, jagged rock, then slipped forward a little on some wet seaweed, and that was the end of his pocket-lamp. He crushed the bulb in his hand, and was about to turn at once for the journey back to the beach.

Even as he spun round on his heel he was vaguely conscious of an uncanny feeling that there was somebody else present.

"Who is there?" he rapped out.

An instant later Ted Martin received one of the shocks of his life.

A pair of the most amazing eyes were staring at him from only a yard or two away—horrible, uncanny eyes, that seemed to blaze in the darkness as if they could see—and, without knowing it, Ted started back.

He looked again; but the eyes had gone, and there was not a sound to be heard anywhere, except the wash of the waves as they rippled over the low-lying rocks.

(Another exciting instalment of this fine tale in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN. Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. All letters should be addressed: The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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This, our splendid Bumper Number of the BOYS' FRIEND, will, without doubt, be the means of introducing the old "Green 'Un" to a large circle of new readers. To them, as well as to that huge circle of loyal readers for whom I work week by week, I extend my heartiest greetings. Neither labour nor expense has been spared in the preparation of the BOYS' FRIEND Boxing Annual and Guide, Part 1 of which is presented free with every copy of this issue. That the gift will be appreciated by many thousands of reader-chums I do not for a moment doubt. I shall be rewarded by their continued support of what is the oldest and, by common consent, the best boys' paper on the market. The new programme of splendid yarns starting this week speaks for itself, and this will be carried on in our next issue—another wonderful Free Gift Number—which will be packed with good things.

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